

TOWARDS THE HISTORY OF SURREALISM BOREAL;

– a reasoned chronology in three parts
of surrealist initiatives and some parallels
in Sweden (with outlooks to its neighbouring countries)

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Part 1

When the artists and writers were still searching 1924-50
– the introduction of surrealism and the early encounters with the surrealist movement

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Overall introduction

In brief

This is a contribution to the historiography of surrealist activities, and when such are scarce, surrealist influences and parallels, in Sweden, but extending to the neighboring countries of northern Europe.

It has been divided into three chronological parts, of which this is the first. All parts have this “overall introduction”, and the concluding references.

For a serious discussion of basic concepts and delimitations, which did not fit in here, please read the accompanying pdf “Defining/delimiting surrealism”.

It is also important to note that this pdf lacks images entirely and it is strongly recommended that the reader actively browses the Internet, or in the cases where such are available, art books, to see examples of art of discussed artists.

The pdf is searchable but only with the aid of a commented index will this search function become useful also for those who don’t know exactly what they are looking for; such an index is forthcoming.

Purpose, scope and technicalities

The history of surrealism in Sweden remains not entirely unexplored but a characteristically vague story, not yet turned into a highly respectable academic enterprise, probably due to its peripheralness in several respects. A few works of general overview are available (von Holten *Surrealismen i svensk konst* 1969 focusing on pictorial arts, and more recently Söderberg (ed) *Ögats läppar sluter sig, Surrealismen i svensk poesi* 1993 focusing on written poetry), being sympathetic, certainly conveying a defense more sentimental than militant, though rich and largely adequate, but neither thoroughly researched, innovative, very systematic or intellectually challenging. In general works of surrealism, in the few cases where their coverage actually is broad also spatiotemporally, there is usually a somewhat fragmentary presentation of glimpses from Sweden, either by Edouard Jaguer, by von Holten or by José Pierre (in the latter case, the data probably largely emanating from von Holten). There are a few academic papers of minor circulation (Parès, Moberg, Sjölin, Forshage) which include more information, but apart from that, only scattered works dealing with particular artists or writers and not particularly with surrealist ideas and certainly not surrealist collective activity or surrealist organisation.

Personally, I was researching the topic a lot during the early 90s, but grew tired of it, especially since I had no good idea of a form to present it all in. With modern techniques it has suddenly become possible to make this available without involving publishers and reproductions (reproductions of artwork of most of the mentioned artists can be traced on the internet,

copyrighted or not). On the other hand, I no longer have the time to complete the research and write up such a big project. Which suits me fine, as I am far more interested in making all of this available for anyone who would be inclined to pick it up and take it forward in some substantial sense, than by claiming it as a merit of my own.

This chronology is not the history of surrealism in Sweden. It is rather just a systematic presentation of some of the central classes of data with comments. Some people may think that this is the same as writing history, but I would certainly disagree. Writing history does not merely require thorough empirical data and a little thinking; it actually requires a lot of thinking and also some systematic methodology.

In the absence of this, what we have is little more than a commented chronology, probably nerdy enough to have little entertainment value to the cultural audience, and thus useful primarily for those who want to find sources of inspiration for their own activity (though inevitably also for those who might want to address these issues from academic viewpoints, within a sympathetic or a hostile framework).

What I planned to do when I was working with the project, beyond what is presented here plus a slightly deeper focus on some authorships and artistships, was:

1. a broad historic background concerning the conditions in Sweden, the general social-socioeconomic-political stage this country presents and the specific forms of social, cultural, organisational institutions and habits available; the understanding of which in at least some superficial form would be important to understand the motives involved in the reception and the indigenous origins of any kind of surrealism, as well as its different forms in different periods of time,

2. a thorough attempt to characterise the ingredients of surrealism on an objective plane, as well as the specificity of its historic forms and the cultural bonds innate to it, which would be necessary to systematically recognise what may be culturally different and genealogically unrelated parallel or related activities (so called parasurrealism, or sometimes quasisurrealism, or surrealizing (*surréalisants*) activities or works, which we usually acknowledge on an intuitive basis in the most obvious cases),

3. an attempt to broadly chart and understand the interactions between different fields or level of organisation and infrastructure in the relevant areas; political organisations, intellectual organisations, cultural organisations, amateur research organisations, cultural workers trade unions, art schools, publishing houses, printers, gallerists, etc.

Having said this, it might still be necessary to point out that I do not believe there is such a thing as a “Swedish surrealism” distinct from surrealism on the whole, while I still think it is a very interesting subject to investigate in what way surrealism has appeared, appealed, transformed, and developed in this particular context. Surrealism is one, but it will necessarily look a bit different considering what cultural characteristics and traditions it gets implanted with (and against).

I focus on indigenous surrealist activity and participation by people in or from Sweden in the international surrealist movement. In this discussion I also include neighbouring movements, more or less objectively surrealist, such as Phases, Cobra, the two situationist internationals, etc.

Apart from this I also mention various attempts to introduce surrealism in Sweden, and various artists and writers with a particular interest in, and/or particular affinities with, surrealism.

I also mention activities in the neighbouring countries, especially Denmark but also others (Norway, Finland, Iceland, Estonia, Poland) – but for countries other than Sweden I lay no claims whatsoever to completeness. And of course for Sweden too I hope there will turn up remarkable works and isolated outsiders, as well as information on historical meetings and attempts with surrealist games and experiments, that I have no idea about yet...

(Denmark is usually slightly more substantially treated than Sweden in the standard works about surrealism, but there is no comprehensive overview of the history of Danish surrealism. Regarding Finland most of my information comes from Timo Kaitaro's French-language overview in Kirstina, V & Jacob, P (ed): *Clavier affectif. Vingt poètes finlandais au regard du Surréalisme* 2003, as many other sources are linguistically inaccessible to me. Regarding Norway there isn't much to say and the meagre historiography in *Uroen og begjaeret: surrealisme i Skandinavia 1930-1950* (Okkenhaug ed, Bergen kunstmuseum 2004) confirms this. About Iceland, Estonia and Poland, available data is all just a few scattered crumbs too. But of course there might be sources I don't know of.]

The way I mention events that are not explicitly related to surrealism; particular works in literature, art, film, music etc which feel in some sense relevant, is not in any way complete. It has some systematics to it, but it has big holes, and obviously reflect the author's main interests and biography: focusing on written poetry and music more than visual arts for example, and mentioning humour and children TV shows particularly from the 70s and 60s, etc. Beyond this, there are several areas which are even less systematically treated, which would probably prove to somehow include some of the most important forms of strictly objective (non-subjective that is) surrealism had an analysis of such an objective form been carried out; I am referring to various radical undercurrents in political organisation, in science, and perhaps more than anything else, in passionate or innovative crime. An ambitious study from the viewpoint of intellectual history would involve the two former, but other historiographic methods will have to be employed for the latter.

Nevertheless, the method involved in the present work is rather different for the three different parts.

For the old days, 1924-50, there are several historiographic sources available, and thus fairly complete coverage, including journals, books and exhibitions and fairly detailed reception history. On the other hand, at least for the early part of this period, there have been very few people around to ask questions about what actually happened, and even from the later period memories have gotten more or less vague and the possible informants have started dropping off one by one and not many remain.

For the intermediate years, 1951-80, sort of desert years in terms of indigenous activity, I have fairly good coverage of journals and books, but less of newspapers and exhibitions. A lot of oral information has been possible to upbringing.

For the current period, 1981- , I focus on the indigenous surrealist activities in which I have been participating myself. Here the ambitions of the account turn rather contradictive. There is only casual coverage of journals, newspapers and exhibitions. Mostly I rely on my own experiences and archives and on continuous discussions with the persons involved. This is because I think the most interesting thing to do is to make an overview of the activities for evaluation and mediation of experience, but as this is an ongoing process and this chronicle is

obviously not the best forum for a plaidoyer in still – or not yet – controversial questions, I still focus on the unambiguous traces, printed works, public performances and general directions, ambitions and turns. A lot is not said, regarding the detailed movements of people (in and out of the group as well as travelling) and detailed activities and functioning of the group, which might be undesirable or uncomfortable for the sense of autonomy of the group, for juridical reasons, or in some cases for personal integrity. For this reason, it will be obvious, even within the course of this section, that the account will start out as fairly detailed and gradually turn increasingly sketchy.

In order to enhance (or perhaps create an illusion of) readability, I have distinguished between more central parts (central events and the main points of critical discussion) and more peripheral parts (more of bibliographic details, suggestions of possibly relevant phenomena in the periphery, events in neighboring countries, etc) by putting the latter in a smaller font.

Technical note: After extended doubts whether to refer to my own actions under my name or under a first person pronoun, I have finally settled for the former, not in order to detach myself from such actions and lay claim to a dispassionate objectivity in the chronicling, but more in a general antihumanist vein – we no longer believe in the unified integrative individual, the person committing those acts and the person chronicling them is in an important sense not the same person. As Friedrich Schlegel once wrote: “It would be desirable for a transcendental Linnaeus to classify the different selves and give them a very careful description, if possibly with illuminated copperprints, so that the self philosophizing wouldn’t all that often be confused with the self philosophized.” And this is more or less what has been realised since, in the advances of modern antihumanism by, say, Rimbaud, Nietzsche, Freud, Jakobson, Breton, Lacan, Levi-Strauss, Luca & Trost, Audiberti & Bryen, Blanchot, Foucault and Deleuze (not necessarily additive but here placed in a chronological order nevertheless).

Overview

Historical point of departure

At the commencement of this story, Sweden is on the periphery of European capitalism, but the forefront of its social security and social peace. Social democracy reigns on all levels of organisation of life. Protestant state church and a very large percentage of atheists still upholding christian rites. A lot of heavy industry, but at the time only halfway urbanised, more or less non-industrialised agriculture and forestry dominating the larger part of the country. The only continuous source of immigrants is Finland, which was once the non-privileged far provinces of larger imperial Sweden and since then retains many of the characteristics of a former colony; people from other parts of Europe come only with the second world war, and from other parts of the world much later. A general high level of education; at the time everybody learns German as a second language, but often also English or French or both (later English and German switch places here). In terms of cultural import there are parallel strands of francophilia, germanophilia and anglophilia. Germanophilia soon becomes unpopular in many circles because of political implications, and americophilia begins to overcompass them all, bearing modernist and popularcultural implications because of its strong association with cinema and jazz. Modernism gets some attention with european cultural imports, and thus depends a lot on the journal and newspaper correspondents, and the art students, sent away to either Paris, London or Berlin dependent on which of the -philias they subscribe to.

Geographical conditions

But let us take one step back to some elementary geography.

Sweden is a long country in North Europe, together with Norway making the Scandinavian peninsula, with a shared mountain range (old and not very high) as a backbone. It has a short marine west coast at a corner of the North sea, and a long brackish east coast in the Baltic. Together with Finland, on the other side of the Gulf of Bothnia (but also with an extensive land border in the north), the Scandinavian countries make Fennoscandia. Very close to south Sweden but part of the main European landmass and thus with water inbetween it and Scandinavia is Denmark, and together with Iceland far off into the north Atlantic, this makes up the Nordic countries (– with the Norwegian islands of Jan Mayen and Svalbard (Spitzbergen), the Danish Færøyerne (the Faeroe islands) and politically also the huge Greenland (which has some autonomy versus mother Denmark but also American settlements, and which geographically, geologically and biogeographically is a part of North America and not Europe)). In different times, there have been various friendly and non-friendly contacts with the other countries surrounding the Baltic sea; Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany.

Of the other nordic countries, Denmark and Iceland have always been distinct from Sweden, but Norway was forced into a union 1814-1905, and Finland was a region of Sweden through centuries up until 1809, still displaying very much a colonial structure where Swedish is an official language along with Finnish in spite of being talked primarily (but not solely) by a small upperclass minority, descendants of former rulers. The areas on the south side of the Baltic have once been colonised by Sweden too, but that was very long ago and does not affect present culture, except when the then Baltic Soviet republics claimed it in their fight for independence from mother Russia.

The whole of Sweden was recently glaciated and is therefore rich in lakes and other young landforms, and most of the country is on solid granitic bedrock covered with glacial till, but

several minor regions, particularly in the south but locally even up in the mountains, have younger sedimentary rocks and richer soils. Sweden is divided into a rather large number of provinces, which can be grouped for overview into three regions: Götaland, Svealand and Norrland. Götaland is south Sweden, very roughly coinciding with the nemoral zone (with broadleaved forest), having a lot of agriculture, but also much industry and forestry. It includes the semi-large cities Malmö and Göteborg, the peninsula of Skåne, the west coast, and the Baltic islands Öland and Gotland. Svealand, usually called the middle part of Sweden in spite of being rather far to the South (with boreonemoral forest, a broadleaved-coniferous mix), is dominated by Stockholm, with forestry and industry and some agriculture (but much less than the south), and historically important mining. Norrland makes up the northern two thirds of the country (mostly boreal, pure coniferous forest, the taiga, but also treeless alpine habitats and furthest to the north even some tundra), with no larger cities and in a European perspective extremely sparsely populated. Mostly based on forestry and almost no agriculture, but of course also industry, and even some mining having survived to this date, it also includes the mountains and the home area of the traditionally nomadic reindeer herders of the sami people.

It may seem ridiculous that I am repeating this school geography lesson, but material conditions are important, and I would like to stress that for modern mentality Sweden has been much divided into a dominant Stockholm culture and an almost equally important Skåne culture. Many proponents of the southern cultural milieu localpatriotically claim its independence from the Stockholmish rest of Sweden, preferring to refer to its past as a part of Denmark, claiming on the basis of these historical reasons as well as the geographical proximity of København to be more European and less provincial than the Stockholm official Swedishness; well, mostly such claims are made from the industrial city Malmö and the academic town Lund in the southwest, while the rest of Skåne is mainly agricultural. And as a rival candidate of independence visavis Stockholm, the west coast region with the second largest city Göteborg, usually also claims such wider outlook because of being the traditional port for trade with England and the rest of the world.

Also in the history of surrealism in Sweden there is usually one Stockholm and one Skåne side to things, and occasionally a little west coast side. In the 30s most things happened in Stockholm, but things were starting to move in Malmö, and there was a strange subdominance to the west coast smalltown Halmstad not far from Göteborg. In the 40s & 50s Stockholm and Skåne represented distinct centra, with Lundkvist, Laaban, Kriland, Fahlström, Söderberg, Odysse etc in Stockholm and Imaginisterna in Malmö; and Nemes and his pupils in Göteborg. In the 60s and the 70s the pattern remained, Skåne receiving new centers with Kalejdoskop in Åhus and Drakabygget in Örkelljunga. And also the commencement of organised surrealism in the 80s took place in both: with Dunganon in Skåne and Surrealistgruppen in Stockholm.

What happens in part 1

In the 1920s surrealism made some impact in Sweden through reverberations in travellers, mostly art students who had gone to Paris. But for most of them it is only in the 30s that their own work starts reflecting similar lines of investigations, and people start acknowledging the label surrealist for themselves. To most however, surrealism does not really appear as a distinct movement, but mostly as the most advanced part of general modernism, so the major part of all this interest is decidedly eclectic. There are some contacts with the surrealist movement in France and England, but most of all with that in Denmark, which is equally eclectic, and the Swedish and Danish surrealists work a lot in collaboration. They even work hard to find some representatives in

Norway and Finland to make it an all-nordic collaboration, but the Norwegian and Finnish contacts are a lot less active. The major names in Sweden are the poets Ekelöf and Lundkvist, the poet-draughtsman Dahlberg, the sculptor Grate, and the painters in Halmstadgruppen, especially Mörner, E Olson and Thorén. Most activities are centered around the journals *Spektrum*, *Karavan*, the nordic *Konkretion*, and the Danish *Linien*, around the “literary salon” of Jaensson & Dahl, the Dalarö collective, and around exhibitions in København 1935, London 1936, Lund 1937 and Paris 1938.

During the war, most people who were involved in surrealism in Sweden in the 30s soon go on to other types of questions, but instead there arrives a generation of war refugees (Nemes, Laaban, Weiss, Freddie, Bjerke-Petersen, Møller-Nielsen etc), and Lindegren makes great impact as a poet. Surrealist-oriented painters form the shortlived Minotaur group, out of which the Imaginisterna group is formed, centered in Malmö (Svanberg, Hultén, Österlin).

After the war modernism takes over mainstream culture, and as surrealism is one of the major pillars of it, it already seems established and/or outdated to many. Several journals present surrealist poets and artists and sometimes surrealist questions 1948-50. Imaginisterna are active in Skåne, but in Stockholm there is an informal collective surrealist activity, which partly is a Stockholm section of Imaginisterna, partly Ilmar Laaban writing very advanced surrealist criticism and tutoring the new overenthusiastic surrealist poet Öyvind Fahlström, and partly the collaboration by Laaban, Kriland and Freddie around the surrealist exhibition Expo Aleby 1949. Several other surrealist poets surface, and Nemes influences many of his pupils at Göteborg artschool Valand with fragmented insights from surrealism.

What happens in part 2

But then much less happens for decades. Surrealism seems quite domesticated as a necessary part of modern art and modern poetry. It is mostly single poets and artists on the fringe who discover that it could be far more than that. During much of the 50s though, Skåne remains a rather dynamic center where Imaginisterna joins the Cobra and then Phases movements, and provides one of the major organisation points for art-brut-inspired art and lyrical abstraction in Europe with their journal *Salamander* and their Galerie Colibri. But Svanberg has left the group to become a loudly praised favourite of the French surrealist group. In Stockholm the young poet Lasse Söderberg encertains the presence of surrealism in the group Metamorfos, and Laaban & Fahlström collaborate on the weird journal *Odyssé*. Söderberg moves to France and meets the French group, which is also frequented by the Swedish art historian Ragnar von Holten.

In the 60s various elements of surrealism becomes popular with painters again, in parallel and partly conflict with several other currents: a neo-Dada revival, the resurrection of revolutionary politics, and a scholarly retrospective interest in surrealism. The cultural journals do write a lot about old and contemporary surrealism, especially the leading art journals *Konstrevy* and *Paletten*, and in connection with this Breton’s manifestoes and other cornerstones of surrealist theory is translated into Swedish for the first time. Laaban remains the representative of Phases, and von Holten of French “official” surrealism. The Danish and Swedish post-Cobra artists involved in the Situationist International set up office in Drakabygget, Örkelljunga (Skåne), and soon the movement is split in two halves so that the Swedish colony becomes the world headquarters of the Second Situationist International. New important names are the poet Lars Norén and the painters Thea Ekström, Uno Svensson, Roj Friberg and Sven-Erik Johansson, but there are a lot of others.

When the 68 movement is safely institutionalised in the 70s, surrealism seems mostly to be an issue for stately museums and other institutions, but many artists keep on with a more or less surrealist “style”. As von Holten is involved with the faction disbanding the French surrealist group in 1969, a major international liquidationist exhibition is held in Stockholm 1970, followed by an exclusively Swedish one in Västerås 1977. In Skåne on the other hand, new surrealist-friendly journals are launched, *Kalejdoskop* in pictorial art and *Tärningskastet* in written poetry. Some surrealist inspiration is found in the artists and writers around *Kalejdoskop* and elsewhere but the major newcomer of the decade is perhaps humorist Claes Tellvid (Ejdemyr).

What happens in part 3

In the 80s for the first time groups that are explicitly part of the international surrealist movement form in Sweden. First it is the nordic collaboration “Surrealister i Norden” (SIN), for the Swedish part organised by Tony Pusey, an emigré of an English surrealist group. This activity is centered in Skåne and close to the Drakabygget (along with strong Danish and Icelandic contributions and less significant Norwegian and Finnish ones); publishing the journal *Dunganon* and holding an international surrealist exhibition in Sjöbo 1986. In Stockholm a youthful group comes together under the name of *Surrealistgruppen i Stockholm* (the surrealist group in Stockholm). The latter immediately gets involved in international organisational issues, closely allied with the supposedly “orthodox” surrealist group in Chicago and others; while *Dunganon* is an important pole in the anarchic “dissident” surrealist network. The group in Stockholm publishes *Nakna läppar* (and its shortlived followers *Kvicksand* and *Kristall*), tries having a Bureau of Surrealist Research, and frantically try out all other aspects of surrealist life and experimentation. Of the old surrealists Kriland joins the group, and later Laaban, while also Hillarp, Söderberg and others get in touch. A splinter group is active for some years as *Agamexpeditionen* (the Agama expedition), reuniting with *Dunganon*.

The Stockholm group keeps up close contacts with the European surrealist groups, to begin with particularly with the groups in Paris and Prague, then with a new group in Leeds. It diminishes in size (publishing *Mannen på gatan*) and then grows again and cultivates its contacts with artists, intellectuals and activists within the country (with the extrovert journal *Stora Saltet*), at the same time growing more explicitly critical and provocative towards much of the international movement. Through this sudden extrovertness the Stockholm group finds a large number of contacts within contemporary “unintelligible” poetry, musical improvisation, occult studies, anarchism, and publishing enterprises. Very little surrealist activity in Skåne. Exile members of the Stockholm group form a surrealist nucleus in New York. Side projects are for example the live poetry group *Köttkropp*, several musical groups, the surrealist comic book *Diabolik*, the publishing house Vertigo, alchemy studies, etc. Acknowledged surrealist poets are mostly Aase Berg and Eva Kristina Olsson (both in the group), but on his side also Söderberg revives his feelings for surrealism in a cluster of books.

After the publishing of the anthology *Lucifer* many longstanding and relatively well-known members of the Stockholm surrealist group leave for cultural careers or for the shadows, and the group assumes a more underground approach, making the fanzine *Lösdrivaren* and a number of pdf publications, as well as blogs. In its vicinities the loose artists group Styx is formed, under the aegis of which most public activities of the members of the group are then carried out. International collaborations keep on, and become intimate with the English surrealist group SLAG. Exile members of the Stockholm group form nuclei in both Nagoya, Japan and Szczecin, Poland.

Part 1: When the artists and writers were still searching 1924-50

– the introduction of surrealism and the early encounters with the surrealist movement

Nodes: Otto G Carlsund, Folke Dahlberg, Dalarö collective, Denmark, Gunnar Ekelöf, "Expo Aleby", Öyvind Fahlström, Wilhelm Freddie, Eric Grate, Halmstadgruppen, Rut Hillarp, CO Hultén, Imaginisterna, Jaensson-Dahl salon, *Karavan*, Greta Knutson, *Konkretion*, Gösta Kriland, "Kubisme-Surrealisme", Ilmar Laaban, Erik Lindegren, *Linien*, Artur Lundkvist, "Minotaur", Stellan Mörner, Endre Nemes, "Paris 1932", *Spektrum*, "Surrealister i Norden", Max Walter Svanberg, Gudrun Åhlberg, etc

1924-29 Tentative reverberations

In Paris

A number of Swedish artists who would be interested happen to be in Paris for their studies when surrealism is publicly launched in 1924; painters Otto G Carlsund, (count) Stellan Mörner, Waldemar Lorentzon, Greta Knutson, and sculptor Eric Grate. Most of these are pupils at Leger's and Ozenfant's cubist-purist art school, and Carlsund is a little older, an explicit "favorite" of the teachers at the school, and very much the center of the Swedish artist colony.

Mörner finds and buys a thin journal called *Surréalisme* [Stupid art historians have claimed that this is the first issue of the surrealist group's journal *La Révolution Surréaliste*, but the time of the year, the title itself and Mörner's description of it makes this impossible; it must of course be Goll's competing journal *Surréalisme* (which tried for a short time unsuccessfully to monopolize the term surrealism for a well-established classic modernism following Apollinaire who indeed invented the word) and thus not an example of surrealism in our sense! Anybody slightly more inclined towards historic irony might suggest that this is emblematic for the history of surrealism in Sweden on the whole, from the very beginnings founded on being a bit beside the point!].

Of these six, the first one to apply the new ideas in his own work is Eric Grate, making surrealist sculptures already by 1926 (such as "Ökenfågeln" (the desert bird)), and also attending the periphery of the surrealist group, making friends with Desnos, Arp, Ernst, Eluard, Brignoni, Calder and others.

Greta Knutson meets Tristan Tzara, and they marry in Stockholm 1925. At this time, the Dada leader Tzara is not a member of the surrealist group.

Somewhat later than the others, Christian Berg joins the Swedish colony in Paris and is immediately interested in the surrealists' work. At approximately this time he also switches from painting to sculpture. While Mörner and Lorentzon return to Sweden, they are replaced by Nils Wedel and Bengt Österblom in the little Swedish Paris colony. But more importantly, in 1927

Erik Olson comes to Paris (Carlsund, Knutson & Grate are still there) and is very impressed by works of Ernst and Tanguy. Also the Danish Franciska Clausen comes to Léger's-Ozenfant's school and is much inspired by surrealism.

Finally in 1929, young rich poet Gunnar Ekelöf comes to Paris. Ekelöf and Carlsund see Dalí's first Paris exhibition as well as the Buñuel-Dalí film *Un chien andalou*. At the time, Ekelöf is interested in surrealism but regards it as a retreat from Dada, and for himself he tries all modernist styles. Grate makes some of his major works this year.

In the classic investigations of surrealist precursors done in the movement, no Swedish sources are mentioned during the 20s. In later decades, some are recognised by the French and thus officially stamped as international: Carl Fredrik Hill, Emanuel Swedenborg (who has been more popular abroad than in Sweden for centuries) and August Strindberg (who was indeed a French writer as well as a Swedish one).

Elsewhere on the continent

The Dada movement is of course already dead in Zürich, and the Swedish filmmaker Viking Eggeling who was an important (but shy) person there dies in 1925.

Axel Olson (Erik's brother) studies not in France but with Archipenko in Berlin, and thus engages in the most chaotic sense of cubism – often his early works come close to Dada appearance. Also Lambert Werner is in Berlin, takes much impressions from Kandinsky and Klee and becomes at first a standard abstractionist.

In Sweden

Surrealism is first mentioned in the Swedish press by Isidor Torell in *Göteborgs Handels- och Sjöfartstidning* in January 1925. Soon after comes Sven Stolpe, aggressive Swedish intellectual but not yet quite the reactionary clown he later became famous as, in *Stockholmsidningen*. The following year, Sven Stolpe discusses surrealism in *Ord och Bild*, as does Carl-August Bolander in *Dagens Nyheter*. Stolpe, just like the actors Emy Ek and Per Lindberg in an enquiry in *Stockholmsidningen* [?], are eager to see surrealism as a broad current, including Breton's variety as well as Romains' unanimism (!), and the local representations, anxiety-expressionist Pär Lagerkvist (!) and "totalist" folkish-mystic-utopic social commentator Ludvig Nordström (!).

With more insight, anarchist novelist Eyvind Johnson sympathetically relates the origins of surrealism in *Ny Tid* 1926, followed in 1927 by presentations of Rimbaud and Apollinaire as surrealist precursors, and of Soupault, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Delteil, Aragon and Crevel, followed in 1928 by more about Soupault. The same year Bolander collects his articles where he presents surrealism, Lautréamont and Jarry in his book *Ismer och dikt*. Victor Vinde in *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* is fairly enthusiastic about surrealism but doesn't seem to grasp at all what it's about. While Kjell Strömberg is clearer than the others but without enthusiasm. [This press overview would have been a lot less complete if Moberg and Parès had not done most of this boring work before me!]

There is an isolated painter named Gunnar Löberg (acknowledged by von Holten as an important pre/parasurrealist). He is involved with a strange German art philosopher called Zierer, not quite as a disciple but rather as an illustrator and inspirator of his theories, based on which he and his wife Beda Löberg often executed their motives in four versions in various degrees of dissolution and transcendence. One painting, which is the "futurist motive" variety of the "portrait series E" is particularly suggestive – von Holten calls it "Mannen som tittar sig själv i nacken" (the man who looks himself in the nape of his neck, a fairly good description) [but I can't see from where he got the title, which is strange, probably more strange than the fact that he lacked the philosophical or scientific education to recognise that this is a popular view of representing optics in a (non-euclidian) Riemann space].

Another painter who has been suggested to be an early Swedish parasurrealist is Nils von Dardel, whose softly dreamlike atmospheres are far more romanticist than modernist though.

In Gösta Adrian-Nilsson (GAN) we have a restless modernist spirit who couldn't but parallel or be influenced by several developments leading up to surrealism. His own works are mostly in a figurative postcubist-futurist style, occasionally spilling over in kandinskyesque abstraction, pure provocation, early-Ernst-like enigmatic figuration, and very Dada machine collages. Even more importantly, he was as a promoter and contact link with various modernist currents, having introduced Kandinsky in Sweden already in 1916, when he was also active in the early Swedish modernist journal *Flamman* (1917-21, ed Georg Pauli, promoting "expressionism, cubism, futurism, simultanism, etc, and totalism!"), also discussing Dada, he had been spending time with Herwarth & Nell Walden in Berlin when

they were publishing *Der Sturm*; and he was in Paris to see Dada exhibitions in 1921 and even exhibited himself next to a Picabia at the Salon des Independants that year; he will be instrumental in encouraging the formation of the Halmstadgruppen, and defending surrealism at a small number of occasions.

In Finland

The Swedish-language modernist milieu in Finland is well-known for being the stronghold of the perhaps most advanced early poetic modernism (but also severely eclectic) in the nordic countries. Their greatest poet Edith Södergran is already dead by this time, but Gunnar Björling, with his dadaist/brutalist simplicity/nonsense/everyday-mystic is partly paralleling, partly inspired by, surrealism. In an essay in their journal *Quosego* 1929 he shows himself interested in automatism. Hagar Olsson is enthusiastic about surrealism in her essay collection *Signal* 1927, where she explicitly regards it as a synthesis of all currents of modernism. Also Henry Parland and Elmer Diktonius show a vague interest.

In Denmark

In Denmark Wilhelm Freddie and Eugéne de Sala are surrealist-inspired painters, at least by 1929.

1929-39 The classic days of nordic surrealism

Foundation of Halmstadgruppen

In 1929, in sleepy southwest Swedish smalltown Halmstad, mostly known for its beaches, some of the painters mentioned as Paris travellers; Erik Olson, Stellan Mörner and Waldemar Lorentzon, along with their relatives or neighbours Axel Olson, Sven Jonson and Esaias Thorén, form the painter group “Halmstadgruppen” (Halmstad group) on the initiative of their friend and mecenate Egon Östlund and their painting master the old cubist-futurist Gösta Adrian-Nilsson (GAN). At this point, the members of the group still paint in the usual postcubist-purist style of the day, but not without disturbing or distinctly poetic elements. Most of them are based in Halmstad, but several spend most of the time with studies abroad, and Mörner & Thorén only spent the summers in Halmstad, otherwise living in Stockholm. The group has its first exhibition in Göteborg 1930.

The early work of Mörner and Erik Olson, far more than the others in the group, have some interesting qualities. I would not say that an earlier and more distinct influence from surrealism is obvious (as they themselves and many commentators claim, with a certain retroactive manoeuvre), but at least there is a little more interest in the poetic effects of the formal experiments on the canvases; creating a spatial depth full of shadowplays, weather, electricity and actual playfulness among the geometrical elements.

It could also be mentioned that several other Swedish painters, particularly from Léger’s-Ozenfant’s school, showed such a poetically inspired postcubism; such as Bengt Österblom, Nils Wedel, Knut Lundström and perhaps even more Christian Berg in his sculptures (Berg remained very interested in surrealism, and much of his morphological fantasies, often based on beach trouvées are relevant from that viewpoint, but he also always remained deeply christian, for one thing).

The proletarian modernists

Another group is formed the same year in Stockholm by autodidact modernist-masculinist-primitivist poets, called “Fem unga” (Five Young Ones: Artur Lundkvist, Harry Martinson, Erik Asklund, Gustav Sandgren, Josef Kjellgren), most of which will cross paths with surrealism. Lundkvist is the one already interested in surrealism, when he visits Paris in 1930 he meets ex-surrealists Soupault and Delteil but fails to get in touch with the surrealist group, and he defends surrealism in *Fönstret* the same year. The following year he translates a film scenario by Soupault in *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, and one by Ribemont-Dessaignes in anarchist *Brand*. Sven Stolpe hails “Fem unga” as representing a frighteningly fresh civilisation critique, in his confused allegedly freudian and anti-aesthetic journal *Fronten*.

The direction of “Fem unga” is a highly eclectic masculine modernism, and very characteristic is its combination of a futurist-inspired belief in machines, speed and development with a primitivist praise of soil, agriculture and base sexuality. Its sexuality is usually connected by commentators with psychoanalysis and surrealism, but actually very little direct influence (or parallelism) with either can be found in their early works, the male libido fetishism of which is much more in the line of DH Lawrence and possibly Havelock Ellis. [It should be noted, that while modernday feminists have fiercely attacked these old primitivist-modernists, often with very good reasons, there was at the time much less of a contradiction. This was the time when the

leading feminists, with Elin Wägner in the lead, held essentialist views and equated femininity, nature and pacifism, in fact much like Breton somewhat later did.]

But they are significantly all proletarian autodidacts and more or less active leftists, and their sense of modernism is in large parts a very modern one of a new sensibility and a transformation of life, and particularly Artur Lundkvist, the one most interested in surrealism, is particularly eager to point out how popular culture, and particularly jazz and film, is central to this modernist project. Lundkvist writes several manifestoes for modernism, radicalism and internationalism at the time, occasionally mentioning surrealism. Lundkvist also gets the chance to travel a lot and get paid for writing impressionistic reportage books, making him the local pioneer modernist-superficial exotic journalist-ethnographer.

These proletarian-modernists are quite active in for example regular debates in Klara Folkets Hus about the relationship between politics and art, and Artur Lundkvist defends, already from the start, more or less purely surrealist standpoints in these questions (that art is most revolutionary if it renounces external propagandistic aims and imposed motives and instead follows its own dynamics, experimentation, freedom). The older, more realist, proletarian writers were interested in merging with “Fem unga” as the Dynamists, which never happened, but nevertheless “Fem unga” did not really exist as a group for a very long time. It has been told that those in Stockholm most interested in the wider implications of modernism, including political, formed a discussion club called “Trettonklubben” (Lundkvist, E Johnson, Carlsund, GAN, Stolpe and others).

In 1930 the anarchist magazine *Brand* launches a cultural page “Life and literature”, probably edited by anarchist and “Fem Unga” member Harry Martinson. It starts out with a manifesto by Lundkvist and anarchist nature romantic Carl-Emil Englund, in eclectic terms but unmistakably surrealist ambitions, even claiming that modernist poetry opposes realism by including the totality of life, imagination and dream and becoming “överrealism” (an unusual literal translation of surrealism). Even the old anarchists temporarily join in with this enthusiasm, but Eyvind Johnson, the single creative writer among the most active anarchist organisers, is suspicious about their loudmouthedness.

In 1931, the Anarchist League puts together a modernist-anarchist journal, *Kontakt* [not *Kontrast* as Söderberg inexplicably suggests!]. The editor is Carl-Emil Englund, and Eyvind Johnson sums up his 20s *Ny Tid* writings on surrealism here. Lundkvist writes yet another manifesto, putting literary and social revolt side by side, invoking destruction to make place for novelty. There is also material from all of the “Fem unga” group (but none of any particular surrealist interest), the Finland-Swedish modernists and some purely political articles by Albert Jensen and others.

But *Kontakt* remains a oneshot, and already later in 1931 the cultural page disappears from *Brand* with the explanation that it was suspected that the young poets regarded it as a career springboard. Obviously, Lundkvist regarded it as an alliance between the two revolting forces and was never very interested in anarchism as such, but also the convinced anarchists like Martinson and Englund are thus pushed away by the anarchist organisers.

In Paris

As her husband Tristan Tzara joins the Paris surrealist group in 1929, Greta Knutson comes close to it, and among other things partakes in a number of classical *cadavres exquis*. According to her own account in her old age (which does not seem entirely accurate) she always disliked Breton but was friends with Arp, Täuber-Arp, Eluard, Nusch, Crevel and others.

Norwegian art critic Haakon Bugge-Mahrt is the Paris correspondent of the leading Swedish art magazine *Konstrevy* and occasionally mentions surrealism from 1929 on.

Carlsund in Paris takes part in the forming of the “Art Concret” group and neoplasticism, together with former dutch dadaist van Doesburg and others; famous as the only group of abstract artists who were not into occultism. After only one year the group is transformed into “Abstraction-Création”, where also Arp participates. But Carlsund does have a very wide contact net among artists in Paris, which is also shown at in the exhibition he makes in Stockholm 1930.

Collecting the traces

Otto G Carlsund returns from Paris and arranges an exhibition of “New Currents” or “Postcubist art” within the 1930 enormous “Stockholm exhibition”. As surrealists are presented Grate together with Arp and Charchoune; as neoplasticists Carlsund himself, GAN, Erik Olson, Bengt Österblom (along with Mondrian, Van Doesburg etc), as a cubist Knut Lundström (along with Léger and Moholy-Nagy), as a surimpressionist Greta Knutson, and finally as postcubists in general Christian Berg, Mörner, Jonson, Thorén, Clausen (along with Täuber-Arp and others). Regardless of designations, most of these are in a postcubist style with more or less poetic atmosphere. In the magazines and news papers, art critic Ragnar Hoppe is carefully positive about surrealism in *Konstrevy*, Sten Selander very negative in *Dagens Nyheter*, claiming surrealism has entirely misunderstood psychoanalysis.

The magazine *Fönstret* is a place where many beginnings are collected: there Lundkvist defends surrealism against its critics in 1930, and the next year Carlsund calls Mörner and Erik Olson surrealists in his Halmstadgruppen essay. Also in *Fönstret* Ekelöf presents surrealism and translates Desnos, and Bertil Bull-Hedlund makes surrealist drawings, which could perhaps also be said about the isolated mystic Börje Veslén.

As the final “first introductions”, Gunnar Löwegren presents surrealism in his book *Soldyrkare, excentriker och puritaner*, as does christian socialist Erik Blomberg in *Tidens romantik*, both 1931.

Spektrum

Modernist journal *Spektrum* (Spectrum) is launched in 1931 by a group of modernists from the Stockholm Clarté circles interested in psychoanalysis and marxism (Russian emigré Josef Riwkin, poet Karin Boye and boring literature critic Erik Mesterton). Gunnar Ekelöf is brought into the editorial group on his arrival in Stockholm from Paris, because the others are quite impressed with both his experience from Paris and his wealth (he soon loses the latter as a consequence of the big stock market crash, by the way).

At this point, Ekelöf decides to launch himself as Sweden’s surrealist, and publishes surrealist poems already in the first issue of *Spektrum*. These poems form the last part of his first book, published in 1932 as *Sent på jorden* (Late on earth), the first Swedish poetry volume containing unambiguously and consciously surrealist poetry. These voluntarily surrealist poems are edited automatic texts with a particular feverdream feeling and desperately-apocalyptically mumbling quality. But also the rest of the book is remarkable, disregarding the teenage-anxiety-mysticism tint there is also a particular desolate cosmic animism occasionally bursting out in linguistic aggressivity, bitter love, or necrophilia.

According to rumors published later, the editors and contributors of *Spektrum* occasionally tried surrealist games (Ekelöf, Riwkin, Harald Bore, Jan-Erik Andrén and possibly others). The second volume of the journal 1932 contains surrealist poems by Ekelöf and occasionally Karin Boye and Harry Martinson, essays of these three plus Lundkvist, a lot of Rimbaud, a Desnos translation, Andrén about jazz, weirdo Pehr Henrik Törngren addressing the relation between art and life as well as modernist aspects of architecture and psychology, radical psychoanalysts like Reich and Fromm are presented, images by Stig Åsberg, Sven Jonson, Otto G Carlsund. Ekelöf also translates Desnos and Eluard in *Stockholmstidningen*. The special Harry Martinson issue of *Spektrum* is to a large part a surrealist journal, with an enthusiastically freudomarxist (shall we say “surrealist of a variety”) editorial, a Karin Boye essay about “language beyond logic”, an interview with Martinson by Lundkvist where they talk about surrealism, plus relevant poems by Ekelöf and Martinson himself.

At this time, Martinson later claimed he was having a “surrealist period” and that Ekelöf was assembling an anthology of Swedish surrealist poetry, which apparently didn’t get far.

Karin Boye’s surrealising poems (or more strictly speaking expressionist poems where the images take over) are later published in her *För trädets skull* (For the sake of the tree, 1935).

In 1933, *Spektrum* only publishes strange special issues, including one on modernist music, and a classic one by Törngren on psychoanalysis and society, before it is cancelled. Törngren effectively defends orthodox psychoanalysis and its leftist additions against critics, and he exposes the total confusion of Sven Stolpe’s alleged freudianism (as well as his neurotic character, of course). Sometimes considered one of these special issues, but usually a book on its own, is the first Swedish surrealism anthology, *Fransk Surrealism*. Ekelöf is credited as the sole editor, but it seems that he has done most of it in collaboration with Joseph Riwkin, and Greta Knutson has acted as an intermediary towards the French surrealist group. But Riwkin has been in Paris and met the surrealists too, as has one of his sisters, the famous photographer Anna Riwkin, whose portraits of the surrealists can be found in Swedish print. Joseph’s wife Ester Riwkin was a psychiatrist and translated psychoanalytic authors in *Spektrum*. [Another sister, Eugenie Söderberg, later wrote a memoir essay about “The collective around *Spektrum*”. But tragically, the most accessible source of information about the Riwkin family today is Radio Islam’s antisemitic webpage about the Jewish conspiracy in Swedish publishing.]

The surrealism anthology contains poems and images but remarkably little theory or agitation. Ekelöf has written the introduction, which is a decent attempt at summarising the ambitions of surrealism and also includes the often cited three points “which surrealism shares with an enlightened communism”, and there is poems by Breton, Eluard, Péret and Tzara, theory only by Dalí, and only a few small blackandwhite reproductions.

Official launch 1932

1932 is the year when surrealism finally becomes unavoidable to the cultural caste and the culture audience in Sweden. This is partly because of the publication of Ekelöf’s *Sent på jorden*, but even more of an exhibition in Stockholm arranged by Eric Grate, presenting new art from Paris, “Paris 1932”. As it is a formal requirement that exhibitors live in Paris the only Swedes represented are Grate himself, Carlsund and Erik Olson; others include Arp, Chirico, Ernst, Hayter, Kandinsky, Klee, Masson, Miró, Picabia and Picasso; thus it is the first major show of surrealist art in Sweden. Beside Grate’s enthusiastic introduction there is also one intended as more objectively informative by Ragnar Hoppe, explaining that surrealism is big and international, in art as well as in literature, and has connections with research within psychology.

This results in wild attacks on surrealism by Marc Hentzel in *Fönstret*, by Georg Svensson in *BLM*, by Isaac Grünwald and Gustaf Näsström in *Stockholmstidningen*, Karl Asplund and Grünwald again in *Svenska Dagbladet*. Grate defends himself in *Dagens Nyheter*. Other defenders in the polemics in *Dagens Nyheter* are Asklund, Carlsund, Lundkvist and Adolf Hallman. Lundkvist claims to be a surrealist in an enquiry in *BLM*. He also mentions surrealism in connection with the recognition of film as an artform very significant for modernism in his *Atlantvind*. In *Fönstret* Bull-Hedlund presents the long tradition of pre-surrealist art. *Fönstret* also contains surrealist poems by Martinson and Asklund, as well as surrealist images by Bull-Hedlund and Thorén. Bugge-Mahrt presents surrealism in *Stockholmstidningen*. Sven Stolpe discusses the obscure French parasurrealist journal *Le grand Jeu* in his *Fronten* (it is unexplained why he knew of it).

Hentzel is actually a rather interesting case here: himself a painter in a soft postcubist dalí-inspired way, thus very similar to Halmstadgruppen, he is recognised as “close to surrealism” by Bull-Hedlund in *Fönstret*, which pushes him to dissociate himself and join into the violent attack on Grate’s exhibition, and also to add more bile in denouncing surrealism, claiming in a hateful review of a Halmstadgruppen show later the same year that surrealism is a total lie, except in the cases where the artists are actually mentally ill.

Some of Grate’s own most famous works are from this year (such as “Atlantiderna begråter sina förlorade påskar”), but scared by the negative reception of his exhibition he soon backs away from surrealist sculpture to rather classicistic or nature romantic work.

A few other early scattered pieces

In isolation Gunnar Löberg keeps on his pictorial investigations, among other things painting a beautiful “germ suite” (“Bacillsvit”) 1931.

“Fem Unga” poet Erik Asklund’s *Frukt* (Fruit) 1932 contains some unmistakably surrealist-inspired poetry though (eluardian and song-of-songs-style - and thus Breton-parallelling - woman worship). Another possibly-interesting writer in the “Fem unga” circle is Stina Aronson (pseudonym Sara Sand), who resisted the persuasion campaigns to become the token female of the group, but contributed to *Kontakt*, and also wrote a delirious story about her love affair with Lundkvist, *Feberboken*. Also Carl-Emil Englund, the anarchist-modernist editor of *Kontakt* and manifesto writer with Lundkvist, shows a slight inspiration from surrealism in some uncanny atmospheres in his Norrland forests nature romantic poems, of for example *Dimma* 1933.

In the French journal *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* Greta Knutson publishes poems 1933. The same year she translates essays by her husband Tristan Tzara about “primitive art” in *Konstrevy*, which are not published in French until decades later in Tzara’s *Oeuvres complètes*. Knutson also provides that journal with art chronicles from Paris, which often mention surrealism, including praise for Miró and an explanation of Dalí’s paranoic-critical method. Some of these years, Knutson exhibits with the surrealists at the Salon des Surindependants in Paris, which also Erik Olson of Halmstadgruppen also does (this annual exhibition had a significant surrealist section every year but was not run or dominated by surrealists, as its name might possibly seem to suggest). In 1934 she publishes surrealist poems in *Cahiers d’Art*, a journal rather close to the surrealist group. Around that time, Tzara quits the surrealist group and Knutson’s association with it ceases as a consequence. Her writings remain essentially surrealist but her paintings never went much beyond a vaguely lyrical postcubism.

Karavan and the Lidingö salon

New modernist poetry journal *Karavan* (Caravan) is already from the beginning very interested in surrealism. The editors are Ekelöf, Lundkvist and critic Knut Jaensson. The first “sample issue” 1934 includes results from surrealist “questions-and-answers” games (Ekelöf, Lundkvist, Tora Dahl, Gustav Sandgren), a Lundkvist translation of Eluard, an essay on film by Lundkvist, surrealist-inspired poems by Ekelöf, Jan Fridegård and Carl-Emil Englund, original surrealist-inspired art by Bertil Bull-Hedlund and Stig Åsberg, and also pictures by Balthus and Rousseau. The *Karavan* circle make up a sort of a “literary salon” based in the home of Knut Jaensson & Tora Dahl in Stockholm upperclass suburb Lidingö, and in this circle surrealism is one of the major shared interests.

The important surrealist poet-draughtsman Folke Dahlberg published nothing more than a few pieces in *Karavan* during this decade. This is because the publisher Georg Svensson at

Bonniers thought it was his responsibility to obstruct surrealist poetry from poisoning Swedish literature, so he bought the rights to Dahlberg's works and never printed them! Not a very sociable person, Dahlberg preferred retreating to some small islands in lake Vättern and not engaging in artistic fights in Stockholm. Among Dahlberg's papers there are many surrealist experiments from this period, and also a surrealist poetry anthology with entirely unknown names, whom one wonders whether they were ordinary friends of Dahlberg's whom he pushed to write, or mere heteronyms of himself.

Ekelöf publishes a major essay on surrealism in *BLM* 1934, but is beginning to doubt surrealism already, and he includes some surrealist poets in his French anthology *Hundra år modern fransk dikt*. *BLM* also has surrealist poems by Martinson, and mentions of Czech surrealist poets. Ekelöf's new book *Dedikation* (Dedication, illustrated by Grate) is still a surrealist collection of poems, but already far less advanced. He is still in the same sphere of motives and emotions; dreams, death, despair, tragic love, animism, gnosticism, but now also leaning into nordic mythology-folklore and nature romanticism, and all in a much simplified form. More of surrealist poetry is found in Harry Martinson's major volume *Natur* (Nature) the same year. Martinson is foremostly a nature romantic, but he shows much of whatever surrealist potential there might be in such a perspective, dream ambiances, seemingly arbitrary hangups with significant details, animism, reenchantment. Carl-Emil Englund's most surrealist poems are later included in *Alla går vi mot tystnaden* 1936 (We all walk towards silence - even there a desolate nature romanticism dominates over the simply poetic Eluardian love tones).

On the fringe of the *Karavan* group is art maestro Otto G Carlsund, painting his possibly most surrealist work, "Den sista kubistiska harlekinen" in 1934. Also his drawings are very relevant from this viewpoint, as are Bull-Hedlund's fairytale-nightmare-zoological ones and Åsberg's naturecabinet-necrophilic graphics.

In *BLM* also antisurrealist emotions by Bertil Malmberg. In the general suspiciousness against surrealism, of course also some numbers of artists and writers with no relation at all to surrealism are being dismissed in the press as unwanted surrealists, including the timid central-lyric christian poet Ebba Lindqvist. At this time also the marxist critics awaken and start attacking surrealism as an example of bourgeois decadence (Ture Nerman and soon also Arnold Ljungdahl, not retreating before pointing out surrealism as allied with nazism, and specifically Ekelöf as "our little Hitler" (!)).

Four issues of *Karavan* appear in 1935 before it is cancelled, in which Ekelöf presents Rimbaud, Jaensson writes about poetry in general from the viewpoint of "the surreal", surrealist poems by Folke Dahlberg and also by Englund, Lundkvist and Ekelöf, while Lundkvist & Gunnar Erikson emphasize the bonds between modernism and jazz, there is an English poetry chronicle by fringe surrealist Charles Madge bringing up Humphrey Jennings, Carlsund presents Grandville, Lundkvist & Åsberg present Carl Fredrik Hill, Lundkvist translates Eluard and excerpts from *l'Immaculée Conception* while Carlsund translates an excerpt from Breton's *Les Vases communicants*; more or less surrealist images by Bull-Hedlund, Åsberg, Thorén, and the Danish surrealists Bjerke-Petersen and Mortensen. Ekelöf now clearly refutes surrealism.

Rise of the Halmstad group

Halmstadgruppen seem to be leaning towards surrealism in their exhibitions in Göteborg and Stockholm in 1932. But in fact it is only in 1934 that most painters in the group suddenly display a very strong influence from pictorial surrealism, in exhibitions in Helsinki and Örebro (with a sovereign contempt for chronology since this is some time *after* they became known as the

foremost proponents of surrealism in Sweden). They start collaborating with the surrealist or surrealist-oriented artists in København, soon to result in a big exhibition and in the journal *Konkretion*, and Thorén in Stockholm takes part in the Lidingö salon and in *Karavan*. Most of the outside contacts are arranged by Erik Olson, living in Paris until 1935 and then in København. From 1936 Halmstadgruppen claims their exhibitions as “Surrealist manifestations”.

The surrealist side of the paintings is very much a case of mere Dalí influence (and some Tanguy, Magritte, Ernst etc). Vast flatlands with more or less nightmarish lighting and scattered more or less distorted everyday objects, Sven Jonson leaning more towards funeral atmospheres, Waldemar Lorentzon more towards cosmic softness, the Olson brothers more towards assemblages and transformations in the objects, Thorén towards wildly inclusive mixes and turns, and Mörner towards diffuse nightmarish scenes. Yes, for the latter half of these occasionally with some originality or at least some interesting effects.

In Mörner’s case, this is now often with stormy night landscapes with suggestive apparitions or other diffusely monumental threats (“Nattlig vision”) or simply obsessive-nostalgic scenes of aristocratic mansion interiors [count Mörner’s own class position seems to condition this strong inclination to nostalgia – which I hope is a more fruitful line of thought than the irritating rhetorics of those who claim that Mörner always kept himself “aristocratically independent”].

Erik Olson picks up a lot of trouvées from the beach, and engages in morphological fantasizing around those. Sometimes his transformations also involve human bodies and musical or artistic activities, sometimes creating strong suggestions in terms of allegories or synesthetics in these fields. But he is also very fond of reutilizing the effective elements, and even just stack them as so many props, just like both Dalí and Magritte did before him.

While it is commonplace to refer to Mörner and E Olson as the two best and most surrealist painters in the group, I’d certainly like to add Esaias Thorén there. A more playful personality, he is also much less consistent, but his constellations of beach trouvées are more poetically sensitive than the olsonian ones, and he is occasionally capable of creating true poetic enigma scenes (such as “Blodsfåglarna” and “Poetens trädgård”).

If the paintings of Jonson and Lorentzon are more or less boring but sometimes not without a dreamy beauty, Axel Olson is at least less *pleasing* in his intense Dalí-ism, where he usually lets the transformative blobs inhabiting his flatlands start or end in shipwreck fragments, agricultural tools or both.

But the only ones in the group getting into contact with international surrealists are Erik Olson and Stellan Mörner. Stellan Mörner makes contact with the British surrealists in 1936, but Erik Olson has been living in Paris all the time, keeping up contacts with the surrealists without becoming part of the group. He exhibits alongside the group in the surrealist section of the Salon des Surindependents, he befriends several individual artists, and he receives visitors for the nordic countries introducing them to said artists. But he keeps working hard in his painting school, and when he actually adheres to a group it is not the surrealist group but the soon forgotten *transhylists* – a group of surrealist-oriented painters who insisted on exploiting the pictorial discoveries of surrealism on an aesthetical level and keep quiet about any other, radical claims of surrealism. Of course, such a reduced-diluted surrealist project was what went as the real thing in most countries, but in France there was an active surrealist group to watch over the word surrealism so the banalifiers had to make up a name of their own. The spokesman of the transhylists was the gallery owner Louis Cattiaux, and artists included Lucien Coutaud, Fernand Marc and Jean Marembert.

***Linien* in København**

Openminded modernist artists and writers were gathering in København too, of course. Several of those who are to become surrealists get together in 1931. When Lundkvist visits in 1933, he meets a lot of them, including the two surrealist-inspired poets Jens August Schade and Gustav Munch-Petersen. Closer ties are formed between the Swedish and Danish surrealists in 1934, probably resulting from a meeting of Erik Olson and Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen in Paris.

The Danish surrealist-oriented artists launch the group and journal *Linien* (The line) 1934. As a group, it is explicitly an “an association of abstract-surrealist artists”, and the journal is eclectic but with a strong surrealist element. The members in the group, partaking in its exhibition and journal during its first year are: Ejler Bille, Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen, Henry Heerup, Richard S Mortensen and Hans Øllgaard. Contributing to the journal are also among others Munch-Petersen, Neergaard, Schade, Vasegaard, and from Sweden Lundkvist (but with pre-surrealist stuff); Bjarne Rise is the Norwegian correspondent. Also presented are Giacometti, Bosch, Dalí, and (unaccredited and anonymous) Tzara’s speculations about the sexual significance of women’s hats.

Bjerke-Petersen publishes his enthusiastic book *Surrealisme* in København late 1934. It is (early 1935) favourably received in Sweden by Adrian-Nilsson in *Konstrevy*, but creates a brawl within the *Linien* group and actually serves to break up the group, leaving the explicitly eclectic faction led by Ejler Bille in charge of the journal, and the more “orthodox” surrealists Bjerke-Petersen, Wilhelm Freddie and Harry Carlsson outside. The Swedes stay in touch with both sides.

So, in *Linien* in 1935 there is polemics against Bjerke-Petersen, impressions from the København cubist-surrealist exhibition, a presentation of *Karavan* by Bille, a Paris chronicle by E Olson, surrealist poems by Lundkvist, a presentation of the French surrealist group, one of Ernst, of Prassinos, translations of Eluard, Péret and Breton, and a critique of surrealism by “young revolutionary” pseudonym Tillim. In their christmas album *Julefluen* there is also presentations of Lautréamont, Chirico and Grandville, and the addition of Paris-based sculptor Sonia Ferlov to the group.

“Kubisme-Surrealisme” and *Konkretion*

The Danish and Swedish surrealists celebrate their collaboration with a big exhibition in København “Kubisme-Surrealisme” (organisers Bjerke-Petersen and Halmstadgruppen’s mecenate Östlund), to which Breton writes the catalog preface and in which large numbers of international surrealists contribute. [Breton mentions “the light of salt” in the preface in connection with the Scandinavian painters, and this little phrase, for Swedish art historian Victoria Bosson – who happens to be Erik Olson’s daughter – is proof that Breton realised that Halmstadgruppen stood for something original and fresh represented by the marine presence, as opposed to the continental surrealists with their “artificial dreamlight and perfumed atmospheres”. Not only is this ridiculous and amusingly farfetched, it should also be noted that Breton used the same text some months later at the surrealist exhibition on Tenerife, where he had the Canarian painters’ names instead of the Swedes and Danes in that sentence.] Swedish participants are Adrian-Nilsson, Christian Berg, Bengt Österblom and the whole Halmstadgruppen; Danish Bjerke-Petersen, Carlsson, Clausen, Freddie, Henry & Mille Heerup, Kernn-Larsen, Mortensen, Munch-Petersen, Egon Møller-Nielsen and Rie Nissen; Norwegian Karen Holtmark and Bjarne Rise. A small volume presenting Erik Olson is printed in the Danish-Swedish series “Unge skandinaviske Kunstnere” for the occasion.

Then, a nordic surrealist journal replaces *Karavan* and surpasses *Linien*, under the name *Konkretion* (Concretion). The main editor is Bjerke-Petersen. The Swedish editor is again mecenate Egon Östlund, and they worked hard to find a Norwegian artist interested enough in surrealism, which was Karen Holtmark. This was clearly a surrealist journal, referring surrealist ideas and news, reprinting surrealist poems and images, and concentrating on surrealist original contributions, even if most of the Norwegian and several of the Danish and Swedish ones remain eclectic and often formally artistic. The first two issues include surrealist contributions by Lundkvist, Mörner, Thorén and E & A Olson from Sweden, and Bjerke-Petersen, Freddie and

museum owner CV Petersen (Bjerke-Petersen's father) from Denmark. The third issue is a special issue on England, including the first publishing ever of an excerpt of Gascoyne's first English surrealist manifesto, and also other pieces by Gascoyne, Read and Moore [note that this is well before the English surrealist group is formed! Academic-surrealist expert of British surrealism Michel Rémy as well as other chroniclers usually overlook this publication, thereby claiming that the French publication of Gascoyne's manifesto fragments in *Cahiers d'Art* is the original publication].

Also in 1935 Bjerke-Petersen visits the surrealist group in Paris, and is scheduled to talk at the "systematic circle of conferences on the most recent positions of surrealism" there, which never take place. He also supplies a declaration "Pourquoi je suis surréaliste" for a surrealist issue of *Cahiers d'Art* 1937 (which may be, or at least surely is based on, his manuscript for the cancelled conference). Also in 1935, Erik Olson moves from Paris to København, and Gustav Munch-Petersen from København to Stockholm. Munch-Petersen undeniably came from the surrealist circles, but his own poetry, which has been called surrealist, seems largely classic-pathetic to me and even displays a christian faith. He wrote a still unpublished collection in Swedish, "Solen finns".

In 1936, *Konkretion* publishes two issues; #4 is a combined exhibition catalog of one Halmstadgruppen exhibition and one Bjerke-Petersen; while #5 is an anthology of French surrealism, selected by Eluard & Breton, all in Danish translation, including a wealth of minor theoretical pieces, poetry and images. A special issue on Prague is planned but never appears.

Artur Lundkvist

Lundkvist's first published book of surrealist poetry is *Nattens broar* (Bridges of the night) 1936. Mostly it is actually not very far from rather conventional poetry, but with a very strong sensual element of taste, smell, night, love, of women's bodies everywhere, of a wealth of nature elements and exotic-rustic scenes, which are not only put side by side but transformed into each other, and with a dignity of the image placing it safely past the border to the conventional. By this time it has become standard to review surrealist books by praising the author's skills and instincts but strongly regretting the unnecessary surrealist methods and exaggerations, which remains how surrealist books are reviewed even today.

1935 Lundkvist presents Breton in *BLM*. In 1936 his reportage journeys take him to Madeira, the Canarys (befriends the surrealists of Tenerife!), Spain (sees Miró and experiences anarchy in Barcelona) and København (hangs out with the surrealists), and he writes a book about the journey (without all biographical detail) as *Drakblod*. On his way back to Stockholm, he joins in at the exhibition "Surrealister i Norden" and presents a thorough introduction to surrealism at the opening.

Sirensång (Siren chant) 1937 is his second surrealist collection. Its tone is more tormented, the blood is flowing, and the perpetual women crowding the forests and lakes are now usually dead or dying.

In 1938 he visits Paris and succeeds in meeting the surrealist group for the first time. He presents Picasso's poetry in *BLM*. Then in 1939 he finally criticises Halmstadgruppen for their eclecticism and timidness. His writings about surrealism (and some other topics) are collected in *Ikarus flykt* (Flight of Icarus). He also publishes a poetic volume, *Eldtema* (Fire theme), with apocalyptic war visions inspired by the war in Spain, but prophetically appearing just in time for the world war to break out.

International

In the big International Surrealist exhibition in London 1936 Erik Olson and Mörner are represented (of the Danes Bjerke-Petersen, Freddie and Kernn-Larsen). Mörner goes to England to participate, where he meets Breton, Eluard, Mesens, Dalí and others, and becomes friends with Penrose. At the exhibition he distributes the little presentation *The art of the surrealists in Denmark and Sweden*; Mörner also writes about the exhibition in *Konstrevy*. In Herbert Read's anthology *Surrealism* published in connection with the exhibition there are reproductions of works of E Olson and Freddie.

In the big (non-surrealist) exhibition of surrealist art in New York the same year no Swedes are represented (as far as I know), but Bjerke-Petersen, Freddie and Kernn-Larsen of the Danes.

The surrealist-frequented Parisian graphics workshop Atelier 17 is presented in *Konstrevy* 1936, and also the fact that an interesting Swedish surrealist artist, Siri Rathsmann, is one of the active participants there, seemingly as a pupil of Stanley William Hayter, who taught graphics techniques to most of the surrealists. [The very few images by her I've managed to find are enough to raise an interest and place her among our unambiguously surrealist artists, but not enough to characterise the spirit or project of her work.]

In the mobilisation in 1936 for the Spanish republic among radical intellectuals, as elsewhere many are tempted, but from the nordic surrealist circles only Gustav Munch-Petersen goes to fight in Spain, and he is killed.

Also in 1936 Matta visits Sweden, before he made contacts with the surrealist movement. It is also around this time that the two poets Charles Madge and Kathleen Raine, peripheral in English surrealism, naively visit Sweden to see an example of socialism in practice... It is the same year that Lundkvist make his journey visiting Canarian, Spanish and Danish surrealists.

But no nordic representation in the international surrealist exhibition in Japan 1937 (as far as I know). In the large surrealist section of a huge antifascist exhibition in England, Mörner participates.

In the huge International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris 1938, three Swedish artists are represented, Erik Olson, Mörner and Thorén; more Danes: Bjerke-Petersen, Carlsson, Freddie, Kernn-Larsen, Thoresen. In the *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme* serving as an exhibition catalog, the Danish surrealists are presented as one of the extraFrench surrealist groups with portraits and with reproductions of paintings, Bjerke-Petersen even as an entry in the surrealist dictionary, but the Swedes are nowhere to be seen in the booklet; the exhibition is presented in *Konstrevy* by Bjerke-Petersen.

In 1938 Lundkvist visits the surrealist group in Paris, and Rita Kernn-Larsen moves from København to London, taking part in some of the activities of the surrealist group there.

Summit and decline of the Halmstad group

Halmstadgruppen are now more or less internationally established as surrealist artists, and were actively involved in organising the 1935 København exhibition as well as *Konkretion*, some of them take part in the international surrealist exhibitions in London 1936, the antifascist exhibition in London 1937, and the international exhibition in Paris 1938, and they are all in the "Surrealister i Norden" exhibition 1937.

In 1936 Carlsund gives a lecture about surrealism opening a Halmstadgruppen show, and based on this he writes about their surrealism in *Konstrevy* and *Fönstret*. In *Nutida svenskt måleri* some of the painters in Halmstadgruppen write, and Sven Jonson displays one of these common but interesting misconceptions of surrealism that it is all just humanistic therapy, to create a

harmless outlet for potentially dangerous repressed imagination in order to make the human being harmonic and capable of surviving in this rather cold reality. Mörner publishes a major essay on surrealism in *Presens* 1937, with a far more accurate image of the subject.

In 1938 they are further treated in *Konstrevy*, and a small pamphlet in the series “Unge skandinaviske kunstnere” presents Mörner (text by Martinson); the following year one about Thorén (text by Lundkvist).

Lundkvist writes about Halmstadgruppen 1939 and wishes them to be more daring; around the same time they start one by one leaving surrealism to become even more severely eclectic than they were already, most of them also warmly christian.

Throughout the last years of the 30s, the painters of Halmstadgruppen pursue those avenues of image investigations they started earlier, but soon mostly deteriorating into mere repetition on one hand, and an inclination towards christianity on the other hand. For Jonson's silent death monuments and Lorentzon's cosmic softness this comes very easy, for the others slightly more difficult. The Olson brothers start throwing in christian symbols in their perfectly Dalí-ish landscapes, which creates a distinct sense of perversity (of course Dalí did this himself later). For Thorén christianity is but a short intermission (in the soft cosmic vein) and then he returns to his uneven production with occasional poetic highlights, while Mörner is the only one among them not to be seduced by christianity at all, pursuing his nostalgic-haunted visions, occasionally also as infantile or directly absurd configurations.

In Skåne

In 1935, the young painter-poet Max Walter Svanberg quits art school in Stockholm and moves back to Malmö because of illness (polio, which leaves him partly lame for the rest of his life) and because of his teacher's lack of understanding of surrealism. He starts collaborating with another surrealist-interested painter from Malmö, Carl O Svensson, and the two of them exhibit single works at the Skåne art society's annual exhibitions from 1937 on, except 1938 when they were refused and instead had a show of their own.

“Surrealister i Norden” is a major academic exhibition in Lund 1937, arranged by art historian Ernst Josephson, opened by Artur Lundkvist (with a big introduction to surrealism, then printed in *Konstrevy* with plenty of illustrations by Swedish and Danish surrealists). Swedish participants in the exhibition: the entire Halmstadgruppen, Bull-Hedlund, Christian Berg, Siri Rathsman, Adrian-Nilsson, Bengt Österblom, Nils Wedel and the entirely unknown Wilhelm Törnqvist and Anders Karlsson; from Denmark Bjerke-Petersen, Carlsson, Clausen, Freddie, Heerup, Kernn-Larsen (thus not most of the Linien group); from Norway Holtmark and Rise, and from Finland only Otto Mäkilä.

Young poet-painter Sven Alfons is an enthusiastic visitor to the exhibition, and he also exhibits surrealist works at pupil exhibitions in Lund. Another Skåne painter enthusiastic about surrealism is CO Hultén in Malmö, who shows his works at studio exhibitions in 1938 and 1940, in the latter introducing the handmade catalog with a Breton quote.

In Finland

In Swedophone Finland, Bertel Hintze makes the opening general presentation of surrealism in his modern art survey *Modern Konst, 1900-talet* 1930.

The Halmstadgruppen exhibition in Helsinki 1934 was apparently the first show of surrealist painting in Finland, and received mostly a hostile criticism, though some critics, namely Nils Gustaf Hahl, was remarkably insightful and sympathetic.

Geomorphologist and poet Aaro Hellaakoski was obviously also interested in surrealism, and wrote a strange but interesting introduction, which however remained unpublished until quite recently.

Otto Mäkilä, the painter represented in the “Surrealister i Norden” exhibition, does not take part in any activities of the surrealist movement. He has developed a personal style, partly inspired by surrealism, which, along with his painter friends in the Turku association “Pro Arte” is later called “Åbosurrealismen” (Turku surrealism). Another Finnish painter who is presented as a surrealist is Arvid Broms.

Of course the Finland-Swedish modernists remain active, but without ever feeling the need to closer investigate surrealism nor clarify their own position towards it.

Was there Norwegian surrealism?

Haakon Bugge Mahrt was interested in surrealism in Paris, but the first serious introductions to surrealism in Norway was a showing of Grate’s “Paris 1932” exhibition in Oslo 1933, and a talk by Bjerke-Petersen in Oslo 1934. In 1935, Karen Holtsmark and Bjarne Rise participate in the København Kubisme-Surrealisme exhibition and in the internordic surrealist journal *Konkretion*, and 1937 in “Surrealister i Norden”.

According to official Norwegian art history, surrealism had a brief blossoming in Norway in the mid-30s. However, Karen Holtsmark and Bjarne Rise were the only ones to enter into the nordic collaborations, and the only ones to defend any somewhat comprehensive version of surrealism, and seemingly the only ones to grasp to a fair extent what surrealism was about. Still, their paintings are all in a soft-lyrical postcubist style, which many used without claiming to have any relation to surrealism, and after a few years they changed their mind and denounced surrealism. While all the other Norwegians who were supposedly in this surrealist trend, painters Strømme, Winge, Johannesen, Jynge, Fjell, Bjaerke, Ekeland and novelist-artdealer-stockbroker Rolf Stenersen, are post-Munchian expressionists or abstractionists without any obvious connection to surrealism whatsoever. (Stellan Mörner wrote about Arne Ekeland’s “surrealism” but failed to demonstrate wherein it consisted.)

In Denmark

Bjerke-Petersen visits the French surrealists again 1937, and publishes in Danish his *Surrealismens billedverden* (The world of images of Surrealism, discussed in *Konstrevy* in 1938). In København, the police seizes Freddie’s “pornographic” work “Sex-paralys-appeal”.

“Linien” produce one journal issue/exhibition catalog 1937, mixing their own works with those of Arp, Ernst, Miró and others. The *Linien* people Bille, Ferlov, Mortensen, Øllgard visit Paris, seemingly without taking contact with the surrealists. Asger Jorn joins the *Linien* group.

In 1939 *Linien* has one big final exhibition, and the surrealists outside *Linien* (Bjerke-Petersen, Carlsson, Freddie, Erik Olson, Thoresen) have another. *Linien* is cancelled. The same year *Konstrevy* writes about Danish surrealists.

Scattered press, psychoanalysis and poetry

Apart from the more central contributions in the magazines, mostly by Lundkvist but occasionally Carlsund or Mörner, a few more from the second half of the 30s should be mentioned: the attack from Bendz in *Ord och Bild* 1935, several parodies of surrealist poems (some not bad!) and then an introduction by Carlsund in *BMF* 1936, a presentation of some French surrealist photographers and mentioning of Czech surrealist painters in *Konstrevy* 1938, an attack by Gunnar Brandell in *BLM* 1938, in *Konstrevy* 1939 presentations of Max Ernst, and finnish alleged surrealist painters, and finally a very sympathetic article by Adrian-Nilsson in *Dagens Nyheter* 1939.

Gunnar Ekelöf keeps writing about Rimbaud wherever he gets the occasion, but not about surrealism anymore, and his own poems, in *Sorgen och stjärnan* (1936) and *Köp den blindes sång* (1938) are much less interesting from a surrealist viewpoint. There are still true poetic images in there, but arranged in a simple form of everyday-language pessimist grooming. Some traces of exciting imagery could also be found in Erik Asklund’s *Solo i kör* (1938).

Pehr Henrik Törngren from *Spektrum* publishes his major book *Striden om Freud* 1936, a critical review and rebuttal of all criticism of Freud everywhere, ardently defending politically radical interpretations of psychoanalysis (attacking Ellis, Adler and Jung while defending Fenichel, Fromm and Reich). The introducers of psychoanalysis in Sweden before him, both practitioners such as Poul Bjerre and literary figures such as John Landqvist and Olle Holmberg, had been very inclined to politically-morally reactionary positions, for example in the big “sexual debate” (including legal prosecutions) triggered by leftist sexual information (*Populär Tidskrift för sexuell Upplysning* 1936) and a rather erotic novel by Agnes von Krusenstjerna. The debate about psychoanalysis, politics and artistic creations was one of the main issues for the Clarté groups. From the Clartéists in Stockholm, the *Spektrum* editors came in the early 30s, while the Clartéists in Lund included marxist thinkers with other odd interests such as the oddball stalinist, literature theorist and pornographer Per Meurling and the Thorild scholar, school reformer and later burning atheist Stellan Arvidson.

Picasso's "Guernica" is exhibited in Stockholm 1938.

Last minute newcomer is the norrländic poet Erik Lindegren, having made his debut as a poet already in 1935 with *Posthum ungdom*, which for some reason was called surrealist by some critics. Then in 1939, he actually comes under the inspiration of surrealism, writes a very enthusiastic review of Lundkvist's surrealism presentations in *Socialdemokraten*, as well as surrealist poems of his own in *Ord och Bild*.

30s discussion: Limitations of peripheral eclecticism

So, during the classical days of surrealism in Sweden there are still very few surrealists. There are very few subjective surrealists at all, at least for any longer period (Lundkvist and Halmstadgruppen being something of exceptions); there is no one that sees and makes use of the breaks implied by surrealism, everybody sees it as more or less vaguely current summing up much of modernism, and accordingly usually includes all kinds of things in their view of surrealism in the most absurd way, and remain severely eclectic themselves. A few persons are conscious about surrealism being a comprehensive project involving everyday life, knowledge and sensibility on the whole, and real world politics; but no one makes much efforts to acknowledge that side of things.

Artur Lundkvist seems to be as near as we come an active surrealist. He seems to have a surrealist self-image and an encompassing defense of all of surrealism between circa 1932 and 1940. He works hard to spread surrealist views, takes contact with surrealists in other countries, and he makes some efforts for collaborations between those poets and artists that are interested here. He acts as a potential organiser, but he does not have a sufficiently sharp image of what surrealism is to be able to really encourage that side in others nor to make necessary breaks. As an activist, he remains an eclectic. And also as a writer; even during his most "surrealist period", it is only the majority of his poems and some of his essays which display this involvement, not the rest of his books that he keeps squirting around himself like so many ejaculations. But he does have an image of a new sensibility connected with surrealism, one which encompasses all of life, not only literature and art, but equally popular culture and social relations. But for him this new sensibility is modernism, of which surrealism is but the most advanced variety.

Those in Halmstadgruppen most interested in surrealism (Mörner, E Olson and probably Thorén) are perhaps more inclined to identify the whole of their own activity with surrealism, but this is also a symptom of an even more narrow and vague notion of what surrealism is. Defending surrealist painting, and collaborating with other surrealists in the country and internationally, sure, but never really grasping that surrealism could imply ideas that could be spread or developed, nor that any other activity than painting could be fundamental to it. Halmstadgruppen is, at least between circa 1935 and 1940, a surrealist grouping, in that it is an explicitly surrealist association of subjective and objective surrealists, but the way it is a surrealist grouping is by being a group of surrealist painters, not seeing collectivity as a forum for any other task than company, mutual aid and marketing.

Gunnar Ekelöf and Eric Grate both had their short period of being subjective and objective surrealists and spokespersons for surrealism. They both seem to have had an overall view of new sensibility, wide aims, political applications of surrealism, but for themselves they were very much restricted to being interested in surrealism in poetry and visual arts, respectively. They were both very eager to leave surrealism behind when they felt that it did not hold all its supposed promises regarding their own production, and at the same time showed to be highly controversial with the critics. For them, surrealism was a phase, an honest phase for sure, but fundamentally instrumental in their own artistic careers.

Similar in having short enthusiastically surrealist periods, more or less quickly left behind, is Erik Lindegren, Harry Martinson, and probably in some sense Folke Dahlberg and Sven Alfons, even though the two latter never got much opportunity to show this development publicly.

Others like Bull-Hedlund and Åsberg (and perhaps Rathsman, even though I know even less about her) recognised how what they were doing made sense in a surrealist framework, but without caring much for the designation, nor for what else it might imply, nor whether they stuck to it or not. They were primarily artists, whose personal inclinations happened to partly converge with those of surrealism.

As their encounter with surrealism was honest, in all of these more or less can be traced of this surrealist sensibility in their works also after they consciously left it, but usually overvoiced by their personal faults and personal concerns. Of course Grate returned to surrealism later, Lundkvist seemed to be able to occasionally pop in and out of it, while Dahlberg pursued a personal project in isolation which was very much congruable with surrealism, and there is something about the tone of Lindegren and of Mörner which makes them remain in the general area.

A couple of people had such strange conceptions of surrealism, so that their own confessions and their participation in surrealist connections wouldn't necessarily imply any congeniality with a surrealist spirit whatsoever. I could suggest that this is the case with Lorentzon, Jonson and A Olson (which of course does not imply that they didn't make two or three interesting works!). Someone else might suggest that there are more names in this category, who have just fooled me to read more into their works by personal preferences, chance connections and superficial similarities.

A special case is of course Greta Knutson, who never was a surrealist subjectively, and never was a surrealist in her own production as far as her artist's career is concerned, but who took part in certain activities in the French surrealist group, and who also in a sense was unambiguously a surrealist in her poetic writings which she kept separate from her artistic career. This particular dissociation is in fact more a part of the history of the French group than of surrealism in Sweden. In the latter she is acting mostly through her art chronicles, which show her as a knowledgeable commentator of surrealism rather than a practitioner.

In a similar way, several others were not at all surrealists subjectively nor objectively but displayed a serious and sympathetic interest, and some parallels can be found in their own work. I'm referring primarily to Carlsund, Alfons, Boye, GAN, Eyvind Johnson. But the transition to weird misunderstandings is continuous. Someone like Sven Stolpe is definitely on the side of the weird though.

But we did also see a glimpse of two persons, young and yet resourceless and nonpublic, whose inclinations towards surrealism seemed to be of a more robust kind, founded on actual congeniality and attraction, potentially lifelong, in Svanberg and Hultén.

Particular conditions for surrealism in Sweden were not explicitly addressed, and a particular indigenous traditions not systematically sought. Some candidates for isolated precursors are of course mentioned. The foremost one is Carl Fredrik Hill, the Swedish representative on the madhouse artist's parnassus. Perhaps less fittingly John Bauer, Nils von Dardel and Ernst Josephson are invoked. And then of course August Strindberg, CJL Almqvist, EJ Stagnelius. Beside such local sources of inspiration, there will be a local selection of themes from within surrealism, and some local particulars which will merely be the product of the individual preferences of the local animators; the primitivism-masculinism of Lundkvist, the

mysticism-depression-simplicism of Ekelöf, and the “dalí-ism on the beach” of Halmstadgruppen. The dreamlike atmospheres seems to be one of the things in surrealism which most strongly appeal to the Swedish practitioners, which everybody stresses, and which is also the one single aspect which for example Mörner focuses on in his appreciation of Strindberg out of the many possibly surrealist aspects available there. Also morphologic and animistic fantasies of the found object, very often a natural object, is a surrealist theme which is locally very important.

A set of attentive-imaginative modes which seems to combine this dreamlikeness and this life of the natural object and which could be regarded as characteristic for many surrealist practitioners in Sweden in the 30s, perhaps then after all, is a sort of nature romanticism. Admittedly one which will look quite different in different oeuvres, and we will find similar tendencies in surrealist works from other countries of course, but it may also represent an important part of a possibly local way of establishing a link between the possibilities offered by surrealism and the local traditions and selfimages in Sweden. Reenchantment and animation of natural sceneries, most often the classical dark “trollish” mossy coniferous forests with boulders and bogs and tarns (experienced live anywhere, or more often from fairy tales), but also the cliffs and sandy beaches towards the larger lakes and the sea (experienced in Vättern or the Stockholm archipelago or the west coast, or equally often from art), and also some softly rolling or flat agricultural landscapes (experienced in the villages of Skåne, or more often from continental art); mostly in a blurry, dark romanticist-dreamy light, but also in a sharp, “dead” nature cabinet light; with a presence (or a distinct *possible* presence) of various common folk-mythology creatures. As you see, this characterisation is full of alternatives and not much keeps it together, but I still think it summarises a movement turning the attention to nature and the secret lives of natural landscapes and natural objects.

In the choice of surrealists presented, there is most of Eluard, Dalí and Picasso, but also a lot of Breton, Desnos, Tzara, Soupault, Arp, Miró, Ernst, Masson, Read, Tanguy, Dada, etc, not only French surrealism but (beside the Danes of course) also several examples of English surrealism, and minor glimpses also of Czech and Belgian surrealism; this whole picture is probably not significantly different from that reported in other countries (or the only particular thing is a remarkable lack of enthusiasm for Aragon, which helped avoiding some difficulties of course; while the lack of attention regarding for example Bataille and Artaud on the other hand is commonplace in the peripheral countries, they were not recognised as key surrealists until later). In the choice of general surrealist precursors emphasised locally we might notice that there is a particular stress on Rimbaud, and an unusual insistence on the connections with JJ Grandville and with Ibn-el-Arabi and other sufi poets (which would be due to the personal tastes of Carlsund and Ekelöf, respectively), along with particularly little about Lautréamont, Jarry, Sade and Carroll.

There certainly were painters, poets, sympathetic intellectuals etc enough here to potentially make a dynamic surrealist activity, there was just no one with a clear enough view of what surrealism was to point out any limits and thus establish a platform that was somehow exclusive and thus could exert some centripetal tension to the general attraction of surrealism.

1939-45 The War years

Political situation, refugees

Most artistic and political activities are diminishing in Sweden during the war, partly for shortage of supplies and partly for the government's fear of not pleasing Nazi Germany. Officially Sweden was neutral throughout the war, but this was maintained only at the price of allowing German troops and material transports through the country. However German police activity does not extend to Sweden, while the native Nazi movement never grows strong, so Sweden remains a haven for refugees from surrounding countries, especially from 1940 when Norway and Denmark are occupied by Germany. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are occupied by the Soviet Union the same year. Finland starts a war against the Soviet Union in 1939, and big campaigns enrolled many voluntary Swedes in this war, but Finland had to surrender in 1940, then joining the Nazis against the Soviet Union again in 1941 and losing again in 1944.

As the first surrealist-interested migrant, Peter Weiss comes to Sweden from Germany in 1939 (joining in Alingsås his textile industrialist parents who fled from Nazi-occupied Sudetenland the year before). Many of his famous writings show little affinity with surrealism, but what he did in the visual arts always retained its surrealist focus. Kurt Schwitters in Norway instead flees to the west and reaches England. In 1941 Danish surrealist sculptor Egon Møller-Nielsen arrives in Stockholm, as do the painters Adja Yunkers from Latvia-Russia and Endre Nemes from Hungary-Czechoslovakia (via Finland and Norway). In 1943 poet Ilmar Laaban from Estonia, and painter Olev Mikiver. Finally in 1944, Nazi repression is increased in Denmark, and Wilhelm Freddie, Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen and Elsa Thoresen come to Sweden along with Erik Olson who had been living there for some years.

The Dalarö collective

Just after the war outbreak a small surrealist collective forms in small harbor town Dalarö outside Stockholm, with Artur Lundkvist, Erik Lindegren and Esaias Thorén, plus Lindegren's wife, and Lundkvist's new Danish poet girlfriend Maria Wine, where they study Lautréamont and indulge in apocalyptic visions of the war, such as those just published in Lundkvist's *Eldtema*. The collective scatters the following year. Lundkvist, who has gotten used to extensive travelling, feels isolated in Stockholm and starts going back and forth to Göteborg, while Lindegren works hard on his poems. Lundkvist finally concludes that Halmstadgruppen were never real surrealists, and accuses them for this in the papers from 1941 on.

In Nazi-occupied Denmark

The Danish quasisurrealists from *Linien* still refer to themselves as "abstract surrealists" and found the journal *Helhesten* (Hell horse) in 1941. 12 issues are published until 1944, and the activities of this group seem strangely unrestrained by Nazi occupation censorship. The editor is architect Robert Dahmann-Olsen, from the *Linien* group come Bille, Heerup, E Jacobsen, Jorn, Mortensen, Pedersen, Schade, and newcomers in this journal are Else Alfelt, Robert Jacobsen, Jorn's brother Jørgen Nash, Erik Ortvad, Ole Sarvig and Erik Thommesen. Also Lundkvist collaborates.

While the "orthodox" surrealist grouping, after a collective exhibition 1940, finds a lot more troubles, due to the more openly provocative – and often erotic – character of their works. An exhibition opened in 1943 (?) in central København, and even including alleged "surrealist demonstrations" [which might perhaps be just talks/readings at the opening, or what?], had to be taken down later at night facing the threat of straightforward confiscation. The group consists of Freddie, Carlsson, Bjerke-Petersen, Thoresen and Erik Olson – all of which (except Carlsson) flee to Sweden when repression increases around 1944 as Germany is forced to the retreat (in a

similar way as in occupied France where several members of the surrealist group “La Main à Plume” are executed at the same time). Even *Helhesten* is cancelled.

Minotaur, Malmö

In 1941, after having seen his works at some group exhibition, Hultén contacts Svanberg and they join forces in trying to rally other surrealist-oriented artists for group formation. The next year they have found some, including Svanberg’s oddball friend Carl O Svensson (with his own misconception of Dalí’s method and, on top of that, paranoid himself) and two of the immigrants in Stockholm, Endre Nemes and Adja Yunkers. A few other artists were involved but could not participate for different reasons, the afore mentioned postcubist Nils Wedel, the mediumistic pessimist Börje Veslén, and Dalarna nature mystic Verner Molin. The group’s name is “Minotaur”, taken from the French journal. It is considered to be a surrealist grouping, only Nemes is slightly reluctant to appearing under a united front as surrealists, but he does not make any public disclaimers. The group has one exhibition in Malmö in spring 1943, and effectively break up over a controversy at the opening of the show. But for some time afterwards, new activities are discussed, among all the participants except Svensson, and still involving Wedel in the discussions.

Nemes’ paintings at the time are usually varieties of metaphysical interiors, all with assemblaged elements and brown, old colour scale, mostly in tempera. But he is also including increasingly more colours and more vertiginous assemblage elements. Svanberg’s painting at the time includes all the well-known elements of his, including the obsessions with ornaments and womens bodies, sometimes grotesquely distorted, often with body parts juxtaposed with various animal parts, but at the time also often with a more conventional threedimensionality (which is also more easily recognisably surrealist). Hultén is very variable, much is thick-spontanist or pre-cobra abstract-surrealist, while several paintings are more of disorienting collage, and some are vertiginous-joking architecture sketches; except for the recurrent birdheads there is a wealth of genitals, which also dominate his remarkable drawings from the time, thinned confrontations of architecture and sexuality. Yunkers is said to have been a conventional surrealist painter at the time, but few reproductions are available and he later got famous for totally different things.

Exhibitions

In 1941, a number of interesting exhibitions take place, detailedly chronicled in Carlsund’s new paper *Konstvärlden*. First newcomer Endre Nemes exhibits (and makes his most famous painting “Barockstolen” the same year), and then Peter Weiss. In a collective show Folke Dahlberg shows his drawings for the first time, and in a pupil exhibition Ann-Margret Dahlqvist-Ljungberg appear as a Bull-Hedlund/Åsberg epigone. In the autumn, in Malmö, Bertil Gadö has his first exhibition, still an abstractionist. Åsberg and Halmstadgruppen also exhibit, now much less interesting from a surrealist viewpoint.

Later in Stockholm, Yunkers and Nemes, then Minotaur members, are involved in arranging an alliance of “artists in exile”. The forest industry provides the group with a large barrack in the middle of the city, where three exhibitions are held 1943-1944. Much of the press is hostile for openly xenophobic reasons, and within the group some German stalinists work against surrealist influences.

In Stockholm

Estonian poet Ilmar Laaban reaches Sweden 1943. A polyglot, he writes poetry in quite a number of languages and soon also Swedish, while working as a daylaborer with for example hay-harvesting in Stockholm suburbs (proving them to be still rural rather than suburban!). More or less at the same time Weiss moves to Stockholm from Alingsås, and with Nemes and Møller-Nielsen they form a nucleus hanging out with the other modernist refugees at Café Wiwel on

Kungsgatan. One person in the circle who was here already before the war is the Belgian poet-painter Olivier Herdiès (at the time Olivier Meurice).

At Konstfack art school, young art students Gösta Kriland and Gudrun Åhlberg meet in 1943, sharing a great interest in Herbert Read's pedagogic ideas and in surrealism, and soon getting married.

International

Apart from the closeness to the Danes, Swedes have no contacts with surrealists in other parts of the world during the war. Halmstadgruppen, which used to be in exhibitions, have gone christian of course. As far as I know, no nordic artists participate in the international surrealist exhibitions in Mexico City 1940 or New York 1942, nor in any of the exhibitions in London during the war.

Poetry

In 1942 two important poetry volumes appear; Erik Lindegren's *Mannen utan väg* (The man without a way) and Sven Alfons' *Ensamhets himmelshuva* (Heaven-hood of loneliness). They are often considered the beginnings of "fyrtiotalsismen" (40s-ism) in Swedish literature, which is supposed to be a dark, pessimistic, more reductive than expansive, advanced lyrical modernism. But they both have a clear foundation in surrealism, Lindegren's book is actually a nightmare vision surrealist classic, and Alfons' rather classically condensed imagebased lyrical. Also Karl Vennberg is a "40s-ism" classic, but more in the mildly depressed-absurd vein.

A follower of Lindegren, but with a looser style and occasionally obvious surrealist tone, is Gustaf Rune Eriks, who sends in his poems to several publishers without getting them published. He later appear as one of the active "40s-ist" and anarchist writers, but then with shortstories in another vein and his early poems remain unpublished [except for an example in Olle Thörnvall's PhD thesis about him]. According to some rumours, Eriks tried surrealist games together with fellow poet Axel Liffner and others. Even the old classicist-recently-converted-into-moderate-modernist Bertil Malmberg tries the inspiration of letting the imaginative language machinery loose (though still in bound meter) [these attempts were not published by Malmberg himself but cited in a biographical sketch by Johannes Edfelt].

Artur Lundkvist's 1942 collection *Korsväg* (Crossroads) retains a partly recognisable surrealist tone (and an ode to Lautréamont), but *Dikter mellan djur och gud* 1945 much less so, just like Ekelöf's *Färjesång* (1941) of course. When Lundkvist hangs out in Göteborg, he spends much time in the harem (!) of Gunnar Erikson and his disciple Bertil Schütt. The latter publishes his first novel, *Förbjudet att beträda* in 1945 and will later become a remarkable storyteller. Maria Wine publishes her first volume of poetry 1943, *Vinden ur mörkret*.

The first poem Ilmar Laaban publishes in Swedish is his unreserved commitment to freedom in "Att leva fritt eller dö" (in *40-tal*).

The journals

Modernist dancer Birgit Åkesson makes the strange artists-journal *Création* 1941, with a very incoherent content including a translation of a Frois-Wittman essay on psychoanalysis and modern art including surrealism, Åkesson herself about modernism in dance, Picasso, Arne Häggqvist mentions surrealism, plus original graphics by Møller-Nielsen, Wedel, Åkesson and Yunkers.

Next year a followup appears under the name *Ars*; just as incoherent, edited by Yunkers & Häggqvist, with images by (among others) Nemes and Grate, as well as Rivera and Masson, and poetry by Ekelöf.

Carlsund still discusses Swedish surrealists in essays in the journals in 1940, but much less so afterwards in his own *Konstvärlden*.

The major literary journal during the war is the new literary almanac *Horisont* (with Lundkvist among the editors). A presentation of Lautréamont and poems by Lindegren being the most important the first year 1941, but

there is also a long essay on surrealism by British critic Hinks (informative but academically “nuanced”, warning for excesses etc). Contributions by Ekelöf, Martinson, Thorén etc bear fairly little relation to surrealism.

In 1942 *Horisont* includes poems by Maria Wine and images by Åsberg, as well as Moa Martinson’s dislike of surrealism. In 1943 introductions of Apollinaire and Dylan Thomas. In 1944 interesting poems by Dahlberg and G Erikson, as well as presentations of Kafka, Huidobro, Rilke, Novalis and others.

In *Ord och Bild*, Lundkvist publishes film criticism, Lindegren great poems, rather interesting poems by Ekelöf and Johannes Edfelt. The art journal *Konstrevy* and its new competitor from Göteborg, *Paletten*, both write about Halmstadgruppen and various never-really or not-anymore surrealists, but also include collaborations of Danish surrealists (Jorn, Nash), and in *Paletten* 1943 a report from London by Herbert Read, where he mostly speaks of the postsurrealist “New Apocalypse” movement, while *Konstrevy* in 1944 instead has a letter from Julian Trevelyan (Read and Trevelyan were participants in British surrealism in the 30s). *Konstrevy* also writes a lot about Carl Fredrik Hill.

A new literary journal, *40-tal*, is launched in 1944. It is often illustrated by Møller-Nielsen, but otherwise surrealist-oriented material is scarce to start with. In mid-1945 Ilmar Laaban’s powerful poetic declaration ode “Att leva fritt eller dö” is included. The same year the editor Axel Liffner suggests that a radical poet like Erik Lindegren is more anarchist than the anarchist movement as incarnated in the country by the Anarchist Propaganda League, a shrinking circle of old men resolved merely to keep the tradition alive. Liffner himself is also a regular contributor to the lively literary page of SUF:s (the syndicalist youth league) magazine *Storm*, as is Eriks.

In Finland

“Turku surrealism” seems to quietly disappear. Endre Nemes, fleeing from Czechoslovakia, spends some months in Helsinki (before he continues to Norway and ends up in Sweden). He even participates in an exhibition which is favorably reviewed, but according to legend he is also repeatedly harassed by the Finnish police, who even warn him not to try to introduce surrealism in Finland!

1945-50 Triumphant modernism

Reorganisation of the surrealist movement

Throughout Europe, many surrealist groups regroup after the war, according to either new principles or old, and very often a lot of people want to join. Surrealism is old and respected and often have a sort of “living legend” status, which of course is double-edged, as many people will prefer to start their own groups and movements taking surrealism as a point of departure (while others of course prefer to simply rally to what seems to be the current trend, which in these general regions of activity would be existentialism [I noticed I found it very difficult to find the right few words for whatever common denominator or genre designation there is between surrealism and existentialism, and perhaps I will be allowed a slightly more explicit comparison to ease my conscience. Both are obviously frames of minds, general ideas and activist-intellectual movements with various modernist-leftist attachments, but existentialism is fundamentally based in speculative thinking within a philosophical framework and is essentially individualist, extending to creative activity and to collectivity only in a secondary way; while surrealism is fundamentally based in creative activity and in an investigative-radical-experimental attitude towards everyday life, both in a necessarily collective sense, and extending to philosophy only in a secondary way]). One obvious advantage is that internationalism is more granted now, and for many people it seems quite natural to organise over state borders. In some places, the central role of the stalinists in defeating the Nazis makes a lot of people rally to the communist parties again, while in other places, radical minds take for granted the need to distrust all the state apparatuses and turn towards anarchism.

In France a number of small groups start 1945-46, some of them joining in when the surrealist group is reorganised, others remaining outside, and some of the latter forming the stalinist-opportunist international *Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire* with similar groupuscules in many countries (including the Danish “abstract surrealists”). SR dissolves after a year, and from its ashes rises a purely artistic network, *Cobra*. From the same dissident surrealist environments soon an even more shortlived international network *Rixes* is formed. (The pieces of *Cobra* and *Rixes* are later stirred and dealt anew, forming *Phases* and the *Mouvement pour un Bauhaus imaginiste*, and from the latter the *Situationist International*.)

Imaginisterna start

From the remnants of the “Minotaur” group, Hultén and Svanberg keep struggling to organise surrealist-oriented artists in Sweden. The origins of Imaginisterna have been subject to much controversy, as has most of the group’s history, but from 1945 Hultén, Svanberg and Hultén’s friend Anders Österlin form a core of a group in Malmö using the word “imaginism” about their pictorial directions. And still in 1947 Svanberg writes to various artists to ask them if there might be some interest for an annual “surrealist, abstract and imaginist” exhibition, extending the enquiry to the new concretists as well as the old Halmstadgruppen. Svanberg had exhibited separately in Stockholm 1945, staying with Gösta Kriland and Gudrun Åhlberg during his visit in town, and in autumn 1947 all the participants physically converge in Malmö; Kriland and Åhlberg on their way back to Stockholm from their London & Paris journey, and Hultén and Österlin returning from their visit to Paris and the international surrealist exhibition there. Kriland and Åhlberg form a Stockholm department of Imaginisterna, which also involves Ilmar Laaban, who is often not considered a proper member just because he is not a painter.

In 1947 the group starts their publishing house, "Image förlag"; Hultén's frottage book *Drömmar ur bladens händer* (Dreams out of the hands of the leaves) is published. Ekelöf presents it sympathetically in *Konstrevy*, ascribing to it a true poetic vision as opposed to the "scholastic system" of surrealism. In 1948 Crevel *Herr kniv och fröken gaffel* illustrated by Kriland. Plans which were never fulfilled on Image förlag include Stagnelius, Swedenborg, Almquist, and translations of Sade, Jarry, Hoffmann, Lautréamont, Baudelaire, Apuleius. Formal members of the publishing house, beside Hultén, Kriland, Svanberg and Österlin, were a psychiatrist Ingemar Flodström, the printer Birger Hammarstedt, and the translator Helmer Lång, but involved around it were also Laaban, the literary historian Stig Lindqvist, and with Laaban as an intermediary also Öyvind Fahlström. In 1948, the group publishes a graphics set, for the first time using the name *Imaginsterna* in print, with an introduction by Laaban.

At this point, Imaginsterna, at least in its extended sense, obviously fulfils some of the functions of a Swedish surrealist group, even though its common activities are not supposed to go beyond the level of artistic collaboration and publishing.

The meaning of imaginism is first sketched in a text by Svanberg to an exhibition 1949. The next year Hultén sharpens the characteristic in a acrid dismissal of Halmstadgruppen, and Svanberg adds to his first text. Imaginism, he says, is just like surrealism an artform obsessed with the imagination, but surrealism has been seduced by simple formulae (Halmstadgruppen and Dalí) and only strives for a direct shock effect, while imaginism is based on continuously unfolding images, progressively shocking by sucking the spectator into the vision and into imaginative thinking.

Svanberg's work already loses its grotesque elements and from now on they are basically monomaniac grand monuments of a personal vision of sacral-sexual beauty, carried out with immense ornamentation; it is entirely similar in structure and outlook to schizophrenic art. Hultén, Kriland, Österlin and Åhlberg are more variable and keep experimenting with the various wellknown surrealist techniques of frottage, collage, decalcomania, photogram, etc; with Hultén and Österlin also rushing ahead deep into "cobraistic" brut-expressionism. This variability is usually among art critics a symptom of minor artists with a lack of individual style, but from the surrealist perspective it is more often a sign of the tireless curiosity about the investigation of the world of images, and it is also quite fascinating to what extent this creative explosion is a collective endeavour and how difficult it sometimes is to characterise the different individual artists. One soon finds that Hultén and Österlin have most colour; Hultén and Kriland include most genitals; Hultén has a lot of birdheads, but we can find those also in most of the others; Hultén made most of the frottages but sometimes others; bacchanals and various strange animals is characteristic of Kriland but sometimes others; photograms are mostly made by Kriland but sometimes others; Åhlberg has most of the braunerian figures and most of the obvious underlying humour, but sometimes others (though she seems to be the only one to also make some classic 30s flatlands); Österlin has most of the totemistic and the prismatic constructions and also most of the freeflying doodle elements, but sometimes others; all of them are fond of decalcomania, and the good old xylography collages are of course impossible to tell apart.

It is quite obvious that Svanberg has one vision of imaginism and the other members together have another. And this soon led to Svanberg leaving the group and to some three or four decades of polemics...

In Denmark (between *Helhesten* and *Cobra*)

In 1945 the *Helhesten* artists in Denmark publish a manifesto for a so-called "new realism" in connection with the autumn exhibition in København (including Alfelt, Bille, Heerup, E & R Jacobsen, Jorn, Mortensen, Pedersen and

others). In 1947, they appear under the designation “Linien II” but they also join the oppositional-stalinist surrealist international “Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire” along with the Belgian and factions of the Czech and French surrealists and individuals in other countries.

A major international anthology of surrealist poetry in Danish is compiled and translated by the surrealist poet Steen Colding from the *Helhesten* circle, aided by Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire associated art critic Claude Serbanne in Paris, *Tvivlens Plageaand* (The tormenting spirit of doubt, 1946); not a single native Dane is included and Lundkvist is the only Swede.

Boreophilia

Several interesting exhibitions in Stockholm 1945: Dahlberg (with a catalog preface by Carlsund), Svanberg (with one by Lundkvist), and also Weiss.

Of the war refugees, some return to where they came from (Thoresen), some go on elsewhere (Yunkers), but most stay (Weiss, Laaban, Mikiver, Nemes, Møller-Nielsen, Bjerke-Petersen, Freddie). Turkish poet and photographer Lütfi Özkök arrives in Sweden 1949.

For some reason, the nordic countries become popular for a brand of surrealist tourism, certain West Europeans developing a real boreophilia. As these include Christian Dotremont, Edouard Jaguer, Jean-Clarence Lambert, Max Clarac-Serou and Iaroslav Serpan, who are important persons in surrealist organising at the time, the nordic artists are pulled closer into international collaborations. It seems like most of these visit Malmö and/or Stockholm, but the real boreophiles are Lambert and Dotremont, travelling extensively in Sweden, Lambert staying for more than a year and also marrying a Swede, Åsa Scherdin.

Cobra and Imaginisterna

The “Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire” movement in 1948 has an exhibition in Paris and a shortlived journal (Jorn is on the editorial board, Bille Danish correspondent, also Jacobsen, Mortensen and Schade in it), before it dies only a year after its inception. From the shatters, a purely artistic movement is founded under the name of “Cobra”, where København contributes with the first two letters of the name, and the Danish formula of “abstract surrealism” becomes the dominant pictorial direction in it (still, the movement is not based on any stylistic circumscriptions!).

In 1949 Imaginisterna are enrolled into Cobra. Helmer Lång, who was formally just the secretary of “Image förlag” now deals with the foreign-language correspondence, and becomes increasingly important in the group. Parts of Cobra are still stalinists of course, but Imaginisterna declare they won’t have anything to do with politics, and that obviously goes just as well! Cobra exhibitions in Bruxelles, Amsterdam and Malmö, and the two journals *Cobra* and *Le Petit Cobra*, gather contributions from Swedes Hultén, Österlin, alongside Danes Alfelt, Bille, Dahlmann-Olsen, Jacobsen, Jorn, Pedersen, Thommesen, and probably others. In connection with this for example Jaguer, Dotremont, Constant, Appel, Corneille, Gilbert, all visit Sweden. Jaguer writes about “Les Imaginistes suédois” in *Le Petit Cobra*. The same year Bertil Gadö takes the initiative to an exhibition in Malmö of “Skånsk Avantgardekonst” including himself and Imaginisterna plus Lars Engström and Bengt Orup. In 1950 several exhibitions and journal issues from Cobra; newcomer from the nordic countries are Icelander Gudnason. Hultén compiles a Swedish issue of *Cobra*, which is never published. Bertil Gadö joins Imaginisterna, and didn’t really have a notion that the group existed before him. Svanberg publishes lithographies, prefaced by Colding, but Svanberg is never enthusiastic about Cobra and strongly dislikes Jorn. At this point the discussion about the word imaginist is becoming heated; while both sides wants to distinguish it from “ordinary surrealism”, Svanberg wants to restrict it to things in line with his personal visions while Hultén and Österlin want to use it for the more informal-expressionist or lyrical-abstractionist interests in the Cobra group.

Additional international

It seems like the first travellers setting out after the war are Gösta Kriland and Gudrun Åhlberg, visiting the London surrealists in 1946, making friends with Roland Penrose and meeting Scottie Wilson and others.

The painter-psychiatrist Frédéric Delanglade from the Paris surrealist group visits Sweden in 1947 for an exhibition (Delanglade has an absurd connection to Sweden in that he is related to the French noble family Bernadotte, who happened to become the current Swedish royal dynasty). It is probably also he who looks for contributors to the huge 1947 international surrealist exhibition in Paris [I have notes from conversations with Ilmar Laaban saying that it was Marcel Jean who was in Sweden, but Jean had at this time just returned to Paris after a many years in Hungaria and was quite busy fulfilling more or less a function of secretary in the surrealist group – while Delanglade, also in the organisation committee of the exhibition, was obviously in Sweden for his own exhibition, so I keep thinking it is probable that I wrote the wrong name in my notes, or Ilmar happened to say the wrong name]. In the Paris exhibition, Bjerke-Petersen, Freddie and Thoresen participate (Olev Mikiver sends in a contribution but is rejected). Hultén & Österlin of Imaginisterna visit Paris and see the exhibition. Not speaking French, they selectively contact the painters they expect to speak German, particularly the East Europeans, Brauner, Hérold, Goetz, Serpan and others. They also visit Facteur Cheval's Hauterives. Sven Alfons also sees the exhibition. Kriland & Åhlberg are also in Paris, meet Valentine Penrose.

Rut Hillarp visits Paris 1948 and makes contact with the Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire group, particularly Noël Arnaud.

The following year Artur Lundkvist visits Paris, gives a presentation of surrealism in Sweden to the French surrealist group. Also Kriland and Åhlberg visit Paris and meet the surrealist group, who to them seem tired and nostalgic, and they are more enthused by meeting Dominguez and Brauner, no longer in the group.

Clarac-Serou and Serpan spend some time in Sweden in 1949, mostly with Laaban, when they are making the plans for what will become the *Rixes* network, founded the next year in Paris, with Jaguer and Laaban in the core as well. In the first issue of their journal, Fahlström publishes his first poems along Freddie, Jorn and Colding.

One rather isolated Swedish surrealist-oriented painter, ambulating between Paris and Stockholm, is Lambert Werner, who has his first separate exhibitions at this time and also participates at the Salon des Surindependants in Paris.

In a big exhibition of contemporary European art in Tokyo 1950, where two surrealists, Simon Watson Taylor and Taro Okamoto, are among the principal organisers, Svanberg for the first time exhibits outside Sweden.

Old and new

Lundkvist launches the “pessimism debate” which keeps on for years, where he defends good old classical Freud, modernism and surrealism against any novelties including pessimism, homosexuality, current communism, existentialism etc; not without some effective specific points but on the whole in a quite nostalgic and slightly reactionary vein. Other surrealist poets are more openminded, Lindegren is a leading figure of the “pessimists” while putting some faith in modern anarchism, Laaban is very interested in (but critical of) lettrism, as two examples.

In a Halmstadgruppen monograph appearing in 1947, Erik Lindegren has written a number of poems to their paintings. [He has written them to the pre-religious 30s paintings, but the association is still a bit weird, and perhaps the explanation lies in Lindegren's patricidal rebellion against Lundkvist, who was of course now an enemy of Halmstadgruppen?] These poems are also included in Lindegren's *Sviter* (Suites) the same year. Erik Lindegren also gets to name several paintings by Endre Nemes this year.

Finally, in 1948, Folke Dahlberg publishes a book after 14 years of suppression: *Cartesiansk dykare* (Cartesian diver). Many of the youthful surrealist experiments are now left out, but pieces of valuable poetry from the whole period is retained, along with his marvellous drawings.

Stockholm Imaginisterna, Expo Aleby, Öyvind Fahlström

There is a surrealist circle in Stockholm at the time. To some extent it is formalised as a Stockholm department of Imaginisterna, in which case its core members are Gösta Kriland,

Gudrun Åhlberg and Ilmar Laaban. But surrounding them are several others, Laaban's fellow Estonian refugee the painter Olev Mikiver, the Belgian poet-painter Olivier Herdiès, the two surrealist poets Öyvind Fahlström and Rut Hillarp, the art critic Gunnar Hellman, and most notably the experienced Danish surrealist Wilhelm Freddie, whom the Malmö painters allegedly refuse to have anything to do with because of his supposedly outdated Dalí-ish style. Kriland, Åhlberg and Laaban also keep expounding Read's philosophy at Konstfack [several people have said they were much inspired by this, but Laaban later claimed he never was much involved in it.]

Laaban publishes his *Ankruketi löpp on laulu algus* (The end of the anchor chain is the commencement of singing) illustrated by Olev Mikiver in 1946; it is mostly in Estonian but a few poems are in other languages, including Swedish.

An intimate collaboration by Freddie, Kriland and Laaban results in "Expo Aleby" 1949, to this date the most important surrealist exhibition in the country. It takes place in a little second-hand bookshop at Klarabergsgatan in Stockholm, with paintings, sculptures and objects packed on the walls, shelves, in the shopwindow and in the ceiling. The "environment" of the exhibition, as well as many individual objects included, are collaborations between the three. Other participating Swedes are Åhlberg, Svanberg, Hultén, Österlin, and Mikiver [even though it is also said by historians that the Malmö members of Imaginisterna boycotted the event because of Freddie!], from Denmark Colding, Dalsgaard, Roos; exhibited are also Arp, Brauner, Ernst, Hérold, Tanguy, and Watson Taylor. Laaban and Gunnar Hellman have texts in the catalog, the former attacking Halmstadgruppen, and seemingly inventing the surrealist game "for/against" (Hellman had also attacked Halmstadgruppen as a background to his praise of Svanberg in an essay in *Ord och bild* 1948). The critics are of course negative, from now on repeating that surrealism is outdated. After the show, Freddie returns to Denmark.

Rut Hillarp did not take part in the exhibition, but she was treated with much advice by Laaban. Her *Solens brunn* (Well of the sun, 1946), *Dina händers ekon* (Echoes of your hands, 1948), *Båge av väntan* (Arch of waiting, 1950) are all filled with poems of eroticism and painful love, in a mostly expressionist mode building up stormy landscapes with the single lines contributing elements to one integrative image, obsessedly strong, often violent and occasionally surprising ones but very different from an automatist or elsehow verbally-imaginally expansive writing. In the first of the books she also includes her translations of poorly known early French surrealist poet André Gaillard. Then she turned to filmmaking and prosewriting.

This is also the period (ca 1948-50) when the young poet-painter Öyvind Fahlström is most violently enthusiastic about surrealism, tutored by Laaban but claiming to be "Sweden's only surrealist". With a manic creativity he writes, but does not publish, several collections of poems (such as "Trumpeter i stjärten" (Trumpets in the ass) and "Borborygmernas fall" (Fall of the borborygmi)), two novels ("Ryska dansöser" (Russian dancers) and "Bröd" (Bread)), one long story ("Älskade hyra" (Beloved rent)) and many short, one film scenario "Det här är ingen dröm" (This is not a dream) – apart from a few small journal publications at the time and some more substantial ones posthumously (Moderna Museet catalog 1979, *Halifax* 1989, and *Ord & Bild* 1998) all of this has remained unpublished, much of it lost, some remaining in the Stockholm royal library but with his widow suspicious about all publishing opportunities. The poems which have been published are above all frenzied, infuriated, vertigial, wildly galloping fantasies in burnt landscapes where no images are held on to, with aggressive, sexual and disgusted emotions perpetually evoked, preferably more or less together, in rash sadistic masturbation statements, and also with some elements of wild-running boyish fantasies of technology and logic. The first poems he publishes are two short automatic prose poems in *Rixes* in Paris 1950 (translated by

Herdès). Fahlström also has a short period of intense friendship and collaboration with Kriland; among other things they work on a translation of Sade's *Juliette* together.

Prisma, Utsikt and Poesi 1948-50

The three surrealism-friendly modernist journals *Utsikt*, *Poesi* and *Prisma* are all published 1948-50. The first two are small but rich poetry journals, but the latter is a luxurious all-media cultural journal, with Erik Lindegren as main editor and in the editorial board Nemes, Møller-Nielsen, highly interesting director Alf Sjöberg, anarchist writer Stig Dagerman, philosopher Hedenius, composer Blomdahl and others. Not unfittingly, it has been called "the flagship of triumphant modernism in Sweden". It is obviously built on the model of *Minotaure*, and approaches it in the width and quality of the collaborators and the texts, but not at all in the art reproductions, which are relatively few and simple.

Prisma (Prism) starts out its very first issue with a big enquiry "Has surrealism played out its role?", to which Mörner, Laaban and Svanberg clearly says no, Lundkvist is not sure but unambiguously defends surrealism, Alfons is not sure but provides an interesting and sympathetic critique, Ahlin and Martin boringly say yes probably but something similar will remain an eternal source of inspiration [the eternal platitude of the eclecticist aestheticist], Ekelöf and Rodhe say yes and good riddance (Rodhe is one of the geometrical concretists which are launched with much noise at the time). The presentation of the enquiry is supported by a lot of surrealist art, and poems by Breton, Eluard, Picasso and Char. The first volume of the journal also includes poetry by Lindegren, Björling and Östen Sjöstrand, presentations of Isou, of Jean's & Mezei's Lautréamont readings (both by Laaban of course), Lundkvist's polemics defending surrealism versus existentialism, plus essays by Blanchot, Read, and discussions about the Kinsey report, free dance, quantum physics etc.

In the second volume we find a big presentation of mondialism (which the French surrealists were very enthusiastic about at the time), Laaban attacking Sartre, a Carl Fredrik Hill special, free dance, translation of Bryen.

The last volume includes a really devastating review of Marstrander's Breton translation by Laaban, and a Denmark special with mostly ex-surrealists.

Utsikt (Outlook) is a small but frequent poetry journal with an explicit internationalist direction, edited by 40s-ist poet Axel Liffner; JC Lambert is a frequent collaborator and its official French correspondent.

The first volume includes the first poems by remarkable but forgotten surrealist poet Eivor Burbeck (playful lightheaded automatism), discussions of lettrism, translations of Péret, Arnaud, Césaire, Gascoyne, Hénein, Huidobro, Michaux, some surrealist-inspired tones from Lars Forssell (an aggressive-romantic pathetic-lyrical outburst), later famous without traces of this element; the whole volume illustrated by Peter Weiss.

In the second volume we find Gunnar Hellman explaining the sense of "Expo Aleby", plus Laaban and Lambert, translations of Clarac-Serou and Prévert, the whole volume illustrated with surreal-humoristic photography by Rune Hassner. In the last volume Fahlström presents Sade and Arp.

Among the editors of *Poesi* (Poetry) are Lundkvist, Martinson, Ask Lund and Englund. The first volume has poetry by Dahlberg, Sven Alfons and Hillarp, Laaban on translating, translations of Breton, Eluard, Carrouges on automatic writing, Reverdy, and surrealizing drawings by Dahlqvist-Ljungberg, Björn Landström and Birger Ekman.

In *Poesi* 1949 poetry by Bjerke-Petersen, translations of Tzara, plus Jean's och Mezei's presentation of the whole canon of pre-surrealist writers. One special issue is about black poetry with a lot of Césaire, and also Senghor and Rabearivelo, but with Sartre's major essay introducing Negritude.

In the last volume of *Poesi* translations of Tzara, Arp, Read, Gascoyne (Eugen Wretholm writes a big Tzara essay), and Lasse Söderberg's presentation of a group of French dissident surrealist poets inbetween Surréalisme-Révolutionnaire/ La Revolution La Nuit and Rixes/Phases: Battistini, Bonnefoy, Clarac-Serou and Jaguer. In Dahlqvist-Ljungberg's drawings the insects finally start transforming and playfully orchestrating sinister plans. In the very last issue some strong love poems are written by Harry Schein, a sewage technician who later became a leading socialdemocratic bureaucrat.

Various poetry

"40s-ism" goes on, not without surrealist elements, but usually pompous-depressed or naïve-pretentious, not trusting the dynamism of imagination as an organising principle. Occasionally the pretentiousness borders to true incomprehensibility and almost genuinely mad voice and thereby occasions for convulsive poetic effects, such as with the emblematic 40s pale-sick poet-genius Gösta Oswald (*Den andaktsfulle visslaren* (1946), *En privatmans vedermödor* (1949), and then he drowns in 1950) or with the older Gunnar Erikson, whom we have seen as jazz writer and harem organiser, who publishes *Skådarsånger* and tries to form a mysticist-modernist group called the Initiationists (1945). A less original but occasionally surrealist-inspired 40s-ist is Maria Wine with *Naken som ljuset* (1945) and *Feberfötter* (1947).

Vilhelm Bjerke-Petersen publishes *Diamanter i askan* (Diamonds in the ashes) 1949, poems written in Swedish. The poems are strong nightmare visions, often with motives actualised by the war but also involving gnomic meditations on the absence of colours and the relations between objects. They certainly make surrealist sense, but Bjerke-Petersen has left surrealist painting, and more concretely left organised surrealism and takes part in no such things in Sweden.

Eivor Burbeck, Lars Forssell and Harry Schein make their first (and in the case of the latter only) interesting appearance in the journals of this period.

Stellan Mörner's beautiful *Timmarna innan* (Before-hours, 1948) is a dreamstory with the same elements as in his paintings, the same childhood-nostalgic atmosphere but the explicit dreamlogic also gives it a certain black humour. Included is also statements of his atheism, in opposition to the rest of Halmstadgruppen.

Peter Weiss: *Från ö till ö* (From island to island, 1947) and *De besegrade* (The conquered, 1948), prosepoems already displaying the particular pessimism and guilt he got famous for, but at this time with inventive imagery and a sense of black humour.

Folke Dahlberg writes a prose book about his beloved lake *Vättern* (1949) and a new poetry volume *Den berusade båten* (The intoxicated boat, 1950).

Artur Lundkvist: *Skinn över sten* (1947), and then *Fotspår i vattnet* (1949) again with some material interesting from a surrealist viewpoint.

Bertil Schütt publishes novels *Lyktfisken* (1946) and *Triangelsolo* (1947), before *Min enda glädje* (My only joy, 1948) where his style has turned into a wild absurdism-expressionism.

Other media

Only with this new sense of established modernism, other media become acknowledged on a fairly large level: free dance, modernist composers, modernist scenography, experimental film, etc (in the two first mentioned, the most

important proponents, and also of potential surrealist interest, are the two represented in *Prisma*, Birgit Åkesson and Karl-Birger Blomdahl respectively). On the other hand, also the popular modernist currents of jazz and Hollywood film retains a wider impact.

Nemes, Mörner and Grate make scenographies for plays, operas and ballets on the national scenes in Stockholm.

Not really relevant from the viewpoint of literature, but certainly of mythology: with the invention of Pippi Långstrump by Astrid Lindgren 1945, modern mythology gets an emblematic character of playful nonconformism.

Egon Møller-Nielsen makes his famous playground sculptures in Stockholm in 1949.

1950 Rut Hillarp makes a poetic short film "De vita händerna" (The white hands, including JC Lambert as an actor). Alf Sjöberg and Ingmar Bergman on the other hand become well-known as commercial directors.

Other journals and translations

In *40-tal* there is important poetry by Ilmar Laaban (1945), and also more or less surrealist poetry by Rut Hillarp, Wine, Weiss, Lindegren and Nash, a lot of Gracq translations and scattered ones of Césaire, Char, Michaux and others. Really good Lindegren poems in *Ord och Bild* (1945). Jørgen Nash frequently writes in *Konstrevy*, mostly about his fellow Danish "abstract surrealists". Also Ekelöf is a frequent collaborator in *Konstrevy*, occasionally revisiting his surrealist interests, writing about Hultén (1945) and the Lascaux caves (1950), among other things. Sven Alfons sympathetically discusses Swedish surrealism in *BLM* 1947. Gunnar Hellman presents Svanberg in *Ord och Bild* 1948. Laaban writes about Rimbaud in *BLM* 1950. Laaban also writes some criticism for the newspaper *Expressen*, bringing up Eluard and Breton in 1947.

The "Kokardserien" and "Panacheserien" are two book series including contemporary literary translations; in either of them appear the following: Swedish translation of Breton's *Nadja* (by Eva Marstrander, on the initiative of her then-lover Artur Lundkvist), Gracq's *Evighetens gäster*, Michaux, Queneau, Read, and above all Lindegren's & Laaban's major anthology of French poetry *19 moderna franska poeter*, dominated by surrealists, parasurrealists and ex-surrealists. Several books by Schade are translated.

Two critics-translators who are openly sympathetic to surrealism, not only in their writings but to the point of befriending various foreign surrealists, without being surrealists themselves, are Arne Häggqvist and Eugen Wretholm.

In Göteborg: Nemes at Valand

In 1947 Andre Nemes is appointed the main teacher at Göteborg art school Valand. Most of the local opinion is very much against this, him being both an alien and a modernist, neither desirable in this town. A few of his pupils who will later appear as surrealist-inspired arrive more or less at the same time, Acke Oldenburg and Hardy Strid. Among Nemes own paintings from this time are the most crowded baroque assemblages with tiny elements and numerous colours, but still with a very old finish. There is a growing tendency for elements to lift the anchor and rise up into the air away from the mottle surfaces. Together with his efforts to give his pupils opportunities, he also tries new techniques for himself and becomes very active in public decoration, such as his strange public clock in Västertorp.

In Denmark

After Expo Aleby, Wilhelm Freddie returns to Denmark and starts making films in collaboration with Jørgen Roos. Their famous film *Spiste horisonter* (Eaten horizons) is from 1950.

The fundamental Danish contribution to Cobra has been mentioned above, but what is not known by all is that Cobra was constituted as a federation of groups and not individuals, and the Danish participants were two different groups: the mostly older ones in "Høst" around Bille, and the younger in "Spiralen" around Jorn.

In Finland

Zoology professor and writer Lars von Haartman is very inspired by surrealism in his (Swedish-language) poems, most of which [seemingly] remain unpublished.

The first detailed description of surrealism in Finnish appears in 1950 with Matti Kurjensaari's *Hyvä ja paha Pariisi*.

40s discussion: The critical moment

In the 40s and especially the years after the war, there is even more surrealist activity in Sweden than during the classic 30s; but still to a large extent eclectic and purely artistic. During this time, the grouping efforts taking place ended up in the mostly artistic collaboration around Imaginisterna, with the postwar activity in Stockholm as a short flare of more comprehensive but still informal surrealist activity. But it could have turned out otherwise.

Everybody agreed that Halmstadgruppen's painting represented a dead alley, but Artur Lundkvist still sat there as a somehow trustworthy authority of surrealism without being interested in surrealist activity. For Erik Lindegren, the patricidal break with Lundkvist even created a personal distance to surrealism, as he apparently associated Breton's person and the whole of surrealism intimately with the hated Lundkvist. Ilmar Laaban who was considered the main surrealist authority beside Lundkvist made a lot of contacts and gave a lot of advice, but refrained from acquiring any leading role in a more ambitious organising effort. The two prime animators in Malmö, Hultén och Svanberg, were obviously not afraid of such efforts, but pushed them only to a certain level, which among other things must have to do with the obvious differences and growing contradictions between the two, with Hultén's voluntariness and thus eagerness to partake in various collaborations, and Svanberg's "purity of vision" and individualism. But any of these capable persons could probably have taken the initiative to formalise a more comprehensive activity had they wanted.

Everything changed during the 40s. With the war and particularly the war refugees, a certain innocence and provincialism became more or less impossible to keep up. With the booming of the Swedish industry, untouched by bombs or occupant armies, the country quickly after the war had a blossoming economy and very much switched from a largely premodern rural society to one more dominated by industrialism and urbanism. Modernism in general and surrealism in particular, which had been largely regarded as unwanted extremist novelties throughout the 30s and even the war years, suddenly after the war were main pillars of modern culture. Of course there were still conservative and provincial critics around, but not really any monolithic classicist structures. The limelight was on modernism, and the surrealists didn't do much to clarify the sense of surrealism, very little to separate it from this general modern culture, and even less to stress its nonconformist aspects. Indeed surrealism became that low-intensity perpetual reminder of the imaginative sources for art and poetry which well-meaning eclecticist intellectuals want it to be, but which the surrealists are not very interested in.

Some of the surrealist efforts of the 40s extend into the following decade, most importantly Imaginisterna but to some extent also the informal circle in Stockholm, but on the whole surrealism failed to implant itself as a reliable and radical point of identification and rallying in Sweden in those years in the late 40s when it seemed to have a very good chance. The following three decades become desert years in a sense.

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- and shit, yes, this is a long term project so communications with a lot of people have provided information or perspective to it; in the shape of discussions or interviews with and/or letters from many, perhaps most, of the participants who were not dead in the early 90s, and most of the enthusiastically interested, and a few researching into transecting areas;

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