



Dreams, the Female Gaze, and the City of Paris: Urban Landscapes through the Writings of the Surrealist Movement

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Recibido: 10-07-2020 / Aceptado: 28-06-2021

Abstract. From the time of the Renaissance, treaties on architecture, odes to the arts, and the study of their canons through written sources, have served to defend, emphasise, or proclaim the validity of different artistic forms and styles. In this way, programmes and manifestos have reinforced the character of organisations and movements through their fundamental ideas. The artistic Avant-gardes have thus used this literary resource to lay the theoretical foundations for their future artistic contributions, being able to justify without any qualifications their most extravagant occurrences. The Avant-garde manifesto shall therefore be considered a literary contribution written in the first place for the subsequent development of the artistic and creative activity of the group or school. The Surrealist Movement generated a lot of written work because the founders, André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Philippe Soupault, were writers. Some of these texts included the Movement's two manifestos, periodicals such as *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, *Littérature*, or *Minotaure*, and individual writings that were penned by Breton and Aragon. This study will relate the Surrealist written work with the Movement's idea of the city and its urban imaginary.

Keywords: Surrealism; Literature; Photography; City; Urbanism.

[es] Sueños, la mirada femenina y la ciudad de París: Paisajes urbanos a través de los escritos del movimiento surrealista

Resumen. Desde los tratados de arquitectura renacentistas o la defensa de las artes y su canon a través de las fuentes escritas, estos textos han servido para defender, enfatizar o proclamar la validez de las formas y estilos artísticos. De esta forma, los textos programáticos o manifiestos, han reforzado el carácter de una organización o afiliación a través de sus ideas fundamentales. Así, las vanguardias artísticas se han servido de este recurso literario para sentar las bases teóricas de sus futuras aportaciones artísticas, y así poder justificar sin ningún reparo sus más extravagantes ocurrencias vanguardistas. El manifiesto de vanguardia ha de ser por esto, una aportación literaria redactada en primera instancia para el posterior desarrollo de la actividad artística y creativa del grupo o escuela. El Movimiento Surrealista generó mucha obra escrita gracias a que sus fundadores, André Bretón, Louis Aragón y Philippe Soupault eran escritores. Desde sus dos manifiestos a las publicaciones periódicas como *Él Surréalisme al Servicio de la Revolución*, *Litterature* o *Minotaure* además de la obra individual que producirán referentes del movimiento como Bretón o Aragón. A través de este estudio relacionaremos la obra escrita surrealista con su visión de la ciudad y su imaginario urbano.

Palabras clave: surrealismo; literatura; fotografía; ciudad; urbanismo.

Sumario: 1. Introduction; 2. Surrealist Manifesto and Theory; 3. Literary sources for an Urban Understanding; 4. *Nadja* (1928), André Breton; 5. *Paris Peasant* (1926), Louis Aragon; 6. *The Communicating Vessels* (1932), André Breton; 7. *Last Nights of Paris* (1928), Philippe Soupault; 8. Conclusions; 9. Bibliography.

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Cómo citar: Barreiro León, B. (2021) “Dreams, the Female Gaze, and the City of Paris: Urban Landscapes through the Writings of the Surrealist Movement”, en *Escritura e Imagen* 17, 89-101.

1. Introduction

Much has been said, written, and researched about Surrealism throughout the History of Contemporary Art since it is one of the main Avant-garde Movements and has interested theorists, researchers and even the general public. Due to its importance regarding its revolutionary artistic methods, the Movement has generated many studies, writings, exhibitions, and documentaries focused on some of its most famous members. Surrealist photography is thus widely known not only in the Art world but through informative publications. However, in this study we must focus on its symbolic value to understand the relationship that Surrealism had with the city as an urban and creative space. Thus, we will keep our study focused on studying the surrealist group in Paris and the activity they carried out in the 1920s and 1930s.

In this way, and despite what it is already known about the Surrealist Movement, we must understand different ideas to delve into more specific concepts about image and urban planning in this theoretical case. The first thing we must do is to clarify the basis his thinking through his two manifestos in order to extract an aesthetic characteristic of Surrealism, something that can be then applied to the graphic and photographic documents that will be analysed later. As a result of this, we can begin to study the birth of an interest in the city. It is important to follow these steps since, having not carried out actual architectural work, we must use the Movement’s theories and writings to understand some of their practices and the relationship that the Surrealist Movement has had with the city and Parisian urban planning.

In our research, the sociological study of works and events that occurred in our geographical and chronological framework will provide us with a broad spectrum of study to understand the importance of society in the evolution of cities and the architectural and urban elements that are part of her.

2. Surrealist Manifesto and Theory

The Surrealist Movement generated a lot of written work thanks to the fact that its founders, André Bretón, Louis Aragón and Philippe Soupault were writers. From his two manifestos to periodical publications such as *Surrealism at the Service of the Revolution*, *Litterature* or *Minotaure*, as well as the individual work that will be produced by references of the movement such as Bretón or Aragón.

Surrealism was officially born in October 1924 thanks to the Surrealist Manifesto created by André Breton. During all this time and since the Congress that Breton had held in 1922 to make a change, what had been done was to modify the group of artists, entrances and exits; but in essence the artists passed from one group to another, abandoning Dadaism in favour of Surrealism.

One of the bases of Surrealism is the oneiric component, not knowing how to differentiate between dreams and reality, since it is in that moment of uncertainty – halfway between dreams and lucidity– that the surrealist artist must create his work.

Breton is convinced that it is at this moment that the mind and imagination run free, just as they do in infantile states of play, regardless of all their moral conscience.

Despite all this, every act carries with it a justification, a reality and an intellectual and cultural background. In this way, Breton introduces us to the studies of Freud as an influence of movement, using psychoanalysis to enhance the imagination and return it to the state it should occupy. Thus, we return to that unreal state where the imagination operates. Dreams maintain a structure, but due to our memory, this structure is lost when reason interferes, so our dreams will not be continuous once we are awake, starting from a fragmentary reality.

Breton also intends to relate the word to Surrealism, reaching linguistic and semiotic conclusions. He understands that the language is more than susceptible to being treated in a surreal way, he goes further and affirms that the language is solely for that, and that its surrealist use denotes an excellent brilliance that goes beyond the banal. A spirit that is guided by the images that are presented to the surreal subject, believing in the supreme reality of these images even when the image of the highest degree is the most arbitrary. It is precisely these images that feed the spirit, the ones that make it reach the necessary maturity to be able to create its surreal expression. This maturity is reached when the individual returns to his childhood, insofar as the images are free and arbitrary. This is the breeding ground for the creation of surrealist poems, since, as Breton indicates, they follow the grammatical guidelines, but are composed with the assembly of phrases in an arbitrary way.

After the publication of this first manifesto and with the consequent configuration of the group, the surrealists already had their own magazine *La Révolution Surréaliste*, where they will publish documents related to the movement, as well as events, exhibitions and illustrations and works by surrealist artists. *The Revolution Surréaliste* (1924-1929) was the organ of the movement, emerging the same year as the First Manifesto and the Surrealist Research Centre, ending *Littérature*.

On December 15, 1929, the last issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste* was published, thus ending the period known as “heroic” of the surrealist group. It is in this same publication where a second manifesto appears, written and signed again by Breton. This now has an implicit more aggressive character, since it tries to reaffirm the values begun six years ago. With this second manifesto, we attend to the triumph of Surrealism, now wanting to impose certain social questions through this writing

3. Literary sources for an Urban Understanding

The Surrealist Movement has always been characterized by having a rich artistic theory and eminently visual representations; but little or nothing has been revealed about the surrealists’ concern for the city and the urban elements that surrounded them.

Surrealists would see the city as a symbolic space in which to create their own artistic experience. It would be in a sense as a place of inspiration, but also a setting to carry out their works. Thus, the surrealist group would appeal for a city detached from radical urban transformations against a city in ruins and almost decomposing in the romantic sense. In line with this, they reject the Haussmann Plan and the transformations carried out during the Second Empire. Recalling the meeting they had in 1933 about the ornamental elements of the city, the Surrealists rejected the

monumental sculptures of this time².

After the own debates among members of the group regarding the city and its urban transformations, the most immediate theory and practice on the part of the Surrealist Movement was represented through photographic and literary works. In this sense, we are interested in studying the writings first in order to understand the most visual of the group's work. Some of these writings are more novel in nature than essay, and vice versa. However, their true value lies in their understanding of the city and its incursion into Surrealist practice itself, which will be later reflected in his photographic work. The surrealists wanted to use this method to recreate and understand spaces and thus produce a paradox: reality understood as a sign or presence transformed into absence, in representation, in literature, in space³.

The city has always been considered an object of desire as well as a muse for artists, since they have used the diversity of its streets—empty, crowded, illuminated, chiaroscuristas, gloomy, ornate or devoid of any type of decoration—for create their work around it. They have made a trip to the most remote places to find archetypal characters there or those more unknown or less striking. Thus, they have been able to visually capture an environment from which it seems that there is nothing left to discover, however, within this urban landscape we will always have to understand the relationship between the individual and the space in which it is inscribed. However, the previous artistic group, the Dadaist—largely formed by the same people—saw the walk as the “anti-art” a concept on which they based their movement. However, with the Surrealist group already formed, this idea of wandering the city became a kind of automatic writing within the city's own space⁴.

Thus, we are dealing with works of great value for the understanding and assimilation of Surrealist thought itself, materialising it in this way through the Breton's works *Nadja* (1928) and *The Communicating Vessels* (1934). However, they will not be the only ones, since Louis Aragon's *The Peasant of Paris* (1926) somehow initiated this trend of introducing us to the lesser-known neighbourhoods of Paris, analysing its architecture with a properly Surrealist vision. Lastly, we will briefly analyse *Last Nights of Paris* (1928) by Philippe Soupault in relation to *Nadja* and its correspondence with the city.

4. *Nadja* (1928), André Breton

Artistic movements have their own characteristics not only plastic and stylistic, but also on the basis—theoretical or not—of the treatment of the different components that generate their characteristics. In Surrealism, one of these basic components is the feminine image and the feminine as a symbol. Thus, Surrealism places the image of women at the centre of their sensual appearance, this being the object of their dreams as they reveal in the first issue of *Révolution Surréaliste*.

In reference to femininity and what the female figure meant within the group; we find *Nadja*. It seems that Breton himself re-established a theoretical basis on

² Spiteri, R., «Surrealism and the irrational embellishment of Paris », en: Thomas Mical, *Surrealism and Architecture*, Nueva York, Routledge, 2005. p. 192-193.

³ Krauss, R., Livingston, J., *L'Amour fou: Photography and surrealism*, Nueva York, Abbeville Press, 1985., p. 31.

⁴ Carreri, F., *Walkscapes. Walking as an aesthetic Practice*, Barcelona, Gustavo Gili, 2013.

the subject with his work *Nadja*. She is an unreal woman, a fantasy that takes her all over Paris in order to showcase the city, to also fall in love with it, to fall in love with Nadja, and with women in general. By the end of Breton's story, Nadja is hospitalized in a mental hospital, symbolising insanity, the irrational, the primitive⁵, and after all, that is Surrealism. In this sense, the group of Surrealists used a stereotypical image of women as a symbol of madness, being in turn a devouring subject⁶. Woman as a symbol of madness is a being closer to the unconscious than man, and the unconscious is Surrealism itself. In this sense, we could see the woman of the Surrealists as a muse, since she is closer to surreal irrationality than the artists themselves.

André Breton's story has eminently surreal overtones throughout the writing. In the first part, the author focuses on introducing a whole class of personalities from the group of Surrealists, as well as authors with whom they have a relationship. Likewise, it takes us to visit various places in Paris, especially theatres or different performance halls where several artistic gatherings are or have taken place. Sometimes, the text refers to how it reaches certain places unconsciously and how it continues to do it repeatedly. This practice is a behaviour related to urban planning and the city, in which individual practices such as drift, walking, and walking the city without a specific destination. Thus, we can also see a clear reference to the *flâneur* since the theory refers again and again to the term 'walking'. The *flâneur* is closely related to Charles Baudelaire as he was the first one to explore it as such. This nineteenth-century walker, in its original form, based his walk through the streets of Paris as a reflective or inspirational method, both literary and philosophical, since as Rebecca Solnit describes "in the experience of walking, each step Is a thought"⁷. The *flâneur* here oversees the urban aspects, the ordinary activities of the city and its common inhabitants. In this way, the *flâneur* intends to discover the depths of urban and city life from an intellectual and critical point of view, being Breton the *flâneur* of his own work in this case.

When Nadja appears on the scene, it seems that she is not going anywhere in particular either, she just keeps walking. She tells him a past love story and how she realized two years later that her lover had a deformity, asking Breton if that was possible. It seems that everything is on the spectrum of unconsciousness and sleep. The streets of Paris become not only a geographical space in Breton's story, but also have symbolic value, something that will be closely linked to surrealist practice and its relationship with the city.

The work is full of references to "steps" and to "opening new paths". This, however, does not mean that it is directly about the city, but rather can be related to Breton's own artistic. Nadja does not make decisions beforehand, but rather let herself go, something that is also related to drift. For example, when Breton asks her where she is going to have dinner, she responds "in that restaurant, or in that other one, anywhere, it is always like this, you know"⁸. Furthermore, there are also references to an almost disoriented or lost Nadja in the city and who even goes so far as to say that she does not know how she ended there, as it is the case of the meeting

⁵ Fer, B., Batchelor, D., Wood, P., *Realismo, Racionalismo y Surrealismo: el arte de entreguerras (1914-1945)*, Madrid, Akal, 1999, p. 187.

⁶ *Ibidem.*, p. 216.

⁷ Solnit, R., *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, London, Granta, 2002, p. 51.

⁸ Bretón, A., *Nadja*, New York, An Evergreen Book, 1960, p. 71.

in Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, when Nadja is looking for a place to buy Dutch chocolate and Breton enters the scene and, "without knowing how", they enter the first café they find⁹.

The work itself is accompanied by photographs that show us some of the places where Nadja and Breton meet or simply those that appear mentioned in the novel. He refers again and again to the buildings he goes through, and even pays attention to the sign of the stores and their names, but also the behaviour of the people who pass through those same places.



Ilustración 1. Jacques-André Boiffard for Nadja, 1928.

@ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ ADAGP, Paris

For instance, in this photograph, Boiffard here seeks more the real representation of the city so that there is no doubt about what we are witnessing, who perfectly portrays the places described in André Bretón's work. However, at the end of the work, Breton expresses his dissatisfaction with the photographic representation of the places he visited with Nadja, since, according to him, they do not have the right atmosphere. In this sense, capturing the atmosphere that another person has felt – wanted to give to his work is too hard work; since the only way to do that is to do your own recreation. And even then, the reader or viewer may not recreate those experiences.

In *Nadja*, Breton constantly wonders if he is living in a dream or since he cannot

⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 77.

differentiate one state from another –the main characteristic of the Surrealists and their method of work. As a matter of fact, Breton ends the chapter saying that he prefers to walk at night to believe himself a man who walks in daylight¹⁰ referring a few lines later to the appearance of Nadja. The ambiguity of the reference to nighttime and daylight and the non-differentiation between dream and reality may lead us to think that Nadja herself may be a part of her dream and she is therefore not real. Surrealists had a certain admiration for old-fashioned places and outdated objects, but not only that, also a certain interest in marginality¹¹.

One of the bases of Surrealism is the dream component, not knowing how to differentiate between dream and reality, since it is at that moment of uncertainty – straddling dream and lucidity– that the surrealist artist must create his work. Breton is convinced that it is at this moment that the mind and imagination fly free, as in the infantile states of play, disregarding all their “moral conscience”, in the words of Breton himself. Surrealism is understood as an ode to the imagination, rejecting the realistic aspect and attitude, not only of art, but of the vision of the world, something that they will reflect through their photographic works. But on the other hand, it links the imagination and its freedom with madness, hallucinations, visions ... something that is sensual, that produces pleasure.

Nadja defines herself as a ‘soul in limbo’¹² when Breton asks who she is. This answer is very much in line with the surrealists and their inability to differentiate between dream and reality. It is now that we begin to wonder if Nadja really exists or is she just a Breton dream. In another episode, Breton wonders how he can find Nadja to which she replies that she cannot be found. In this way, she also refers to dreams when she tells the anecdote of the man who called her Lena in honour of her daughter. Here, and according to the story, Nadja says that calling her Lena is as if she were in a dream, being almost in a trance from which Breton must free her.

At the end of the story, Breton begins to talk about the sanatoriums and his opposition to them, since according to him, these do not help you to heal, but rather they worsen all the symptoms and even create new ones. He also mentions how these types of sites serve to silence artists and theorists as they did according to him with Sade, Nietzsche, and Baudelaire¹³. The story goes on describing that Nadja has been admitted to a psychiatric hospital, although Breton does not say it with completely clear words, nor does he say the exact place where he has left Nadja - something unusual in this book since she has been detailing all the places for those who have walked and where they have gone. Now Breton wonders again if there is someone else there - Nadja - or is he just leaving us between seeing once again the game between dream and reality, whether Nadja really exists or is part of her dreams of imagination. However, some historians point out that it may have been Léona Camille Guislaine who was behind Nadja’s character. Léona - who would have practiced prostitution during her stay in Paris - and Breton were together for a brief period of three months, however, she marked her literary work according to the author himself¹⁴.

¹⁰ Bretón, A., *Nadja*, New York, An Evergreen Book, 1960.

¹¹ Linchtenstein, T., Kelley, J., Jones, C., *Twilight Visions*, California, University of California Press., p. 48.

¹² Bretón, A., *Nadja*, op.cit., p. 71.

¹³ Bretón, A., *Nadja*, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁴ Adsuar Fernández, M. D., «Nadja encendía las lámparas», en *Cartaphilus 5 Revista de Investigación y Crítica Estética*, 1-5, 2009., p. 1.

Nadja is understood by Breton as the personification of Surrealism itself. She contains all the Surrealist elements described in the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924). In this way, Nadja becomes almost an icon of the movement that will inspire later works, not only literary, but also in the plastic arts. Nadja's irrationality is a cry for freedom and Surreal creation, as well as for the feminine vision within the group. In this way, the figure of Nadja goes from being a muse to being the one who directs Breton's work and life at that moment, she is the one who sets the guidelines for where and how to meet, the one that tells her where to stroll and what to visit. Nadja's irrationality involves Breton in an urban-descriptive story at first but that ends up being an ode to creativity and surreal automatism, reaffirming again and again the validity of his method.

5. *Paris Peasant* (1926), Louis Aragon

Paris Peasant is considered a key work for the Surrealist Movement since although we know Breton as the main ideologue of the group, he had the support of both Aragon and Philippe Soupault to consolidate Surrealism as such.

Despite the close relationship Breton and Aragon had, their individual works were distancing themselves over the years since Aragon was not a participant in some of the group's premises. Due to his break with the group and his commitment to the French Communist Party, Breton relegated Aragon's works. Even some fundamental writings were forgotten, such as *A Wave of Dreams* (1924), precursor of the First Surrealist Manifesto (1924)¹⁵. However, Breton also remembered Aragon as one of the most active people on walks through the streets of Paris¹⁶, something that will be essential to understand *Paris Peasant*.

Aragon intended to create a mythology of the Modern. He begins his work talking about his own thoughts reflecting the Surrealist ideology and making references to how, at times, he feels that he is not aware of himself, a circumstance linked to automatism and dreams. However, it should be also noted that Aragon rejects automatism, the purest act of creation according to the Surrealists of the first stage of the movement¹⁷. This work evokes fantasy diaries such as *Le Flâneur des deux rives* by Apollinaire.¹⁸ In contrast to Breton's work, Aragon's writing follows a model of spontaneous but conscious creativity, without being carried away by the automatism of the writing seen in Breton's oeuvre¹⁹.

Aragon focuses on an environment that will soon be unidentifiable since the Passage de l'Opéra would soon be demolished to make way for the Boulevard Haussmann. The first part of the book is focused on this passage, talking about metaphorical worlds and the metaphysical entity of places, criticising in turn the Haussmannian transformations underwent by the city of Paris, and how this leads to the lack of personality of the French capital and the dehumanisation of individuals. Later, *Paris*

¹⁵ Ferrando Mateu, R. A., «El sueño en el Arte. La vertiente onírica del Surrealismo», *Forum de Recerca*, nº19, pp. 177-189, p. 181.

¹⁶ Aragon, L., *Paris Peasant*, Boston, Exact Change, 1994, p. 8.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 10-12.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

¹⁹ Ferrando Mateu, R. A., «El sueño en el Arte. La vertiente onírica del Surrealismo», *Forum de Recerca*, nº19, pp. 177-189, p. 181.

Peasant focuses on describing the Passage de l'Opéra in detail, providing us with an exhaustive content not only architecturally, but also historically, developing the type of walkers or inhabitants that could be found in that same place.



Ilustración 2. Passage de l'Opéra ca 1865-1868, Charles Marville. Musée Carnavalet, Paris

In *Paris Peasant*, architecture works as a differentiating element between dualities. This architecture is a kind of atmosphere and a border, building a perception that moves between dream and reality. The buildings and architecture in Aragon do not act as metaphors since he insists on describing these elements twice so that it is clear what they are, or how he sees them. In this way, he describes them objectively and then analyses them from a more subjective perspective²⁰.

Aragon creates dualities – light against darkness – since this is how he perceives the world, being in turn a criticism of rationalism²¹. We find time and again references to how darkness can distort visible reality by contrasting the dark with the same urban experience during daylight hours. In this way, architecture is the threshold between light and darkness. This is a threshold between reality and dreams, between the material and the surreal. Aragon struggles between these two trends since he is almost in his last years alongside the Surrealist movement. We can see almost an internal debate of the author himself about his ideas and ideals.

²⁰ Read, G., «Aragon's armoire», en: Thomas Mical *Surrealism and Architecture*, Nueva York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 31 – 32.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 32.

6. *The Communicating Vessels* (1932), André Breton

The text is a philosophical and political essay with the goal of studying dreams and how they influenced Surrealist creation. In this way, Breton exposes several theories and points to Freud and his work published in 1900 as the main promoter of this method²².

Unlike his other written works, *The Communicating Vessels* are closer to an essay than to a novel. In this regard, this work could have well been treated as part of the Surrealist writings and their manifestos due to its certain relationship with studies regarding the theory of dreams. However, *The Communicating Vessels* is not a manifesto, but rather a work that tries to reinforce the Surrealist practice through sleep and wakefulness. This text also constitutes an ode to Surrealism and its creative method, dream and reality, applied and set within an urban and architectural environment that we cannot ignore.

The Communicating Vessels are the dreams themselves, the same ones that take us into a world of awakening and dreaming²³. Breton studies here the dream as an absence of time and space, these being mere representations in the waking state²⁴. In *The Communicating Vessels*, Breton recounts how he lost consciousness during his walks in Paris, causing him to walk and wander aimlessly through the city. In this way, what Breton relates in this work is somewhat more related to sleepwalking with the differentiation that the sleepwalker does not remember what happened, while here Breton is in fact aware of what has happened and where his walk has passed by, despite not being voluntarily.

Freud's Psychoanalysis was of great interest to the Surrealists, so much so that they took Freud's pure psychic automatism as a Surrealist mode of expression. However, the Surrealist group was not interested in these studies from a scientific point of view but based the experience of dreams and sexual desire as the basis for Surrealism. For Freud, every psychic process first passes through an unconscious phase (darkness, negative) before accessing consciousness. In this sense, many parts of the unconscious remain undisclosed, although this does not mean that they will be lost. Furthermore, passing from the dark zone to the light does not mean that the image finds a new meaning that already existed, but becomes one that never existed.²⁵

However, this could not have directly influenced Breton since by the year the *First Surrealist Manifesto* was written, these texts were not yet available in French, which is why it seems more than surprising that this metaphor between psychoanalysis and photography is nonetheless present in Surrealism from the beginning²⁶. In this way, Breton introduces us to Freud's studies as an influence of movement, using psychoanalysis to praise the imagination and return it to the state it must occupy. Thus, we return to that unreal state where the imagination works. Dreams maintain a structure, but due to our memory, this structure is lost when reason interferes, so our dreams will not be continuous once we are awake, starting from a fragmentary

²² Bretón, A., *Los Vasos Comunicantes*, México: Serie del volador, Editorial Joaquín Mortiz, 1978.

²³ Ferrando Mateu, R. A., «El sueño en el Arte. La vertiente onírica del Surrealismo», op. cit., p. 185.

²⁴ Bretón, A., *Los Vasos Comunicantes*, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁵ Laurent, J., *El fin de la interioridad: Teoría de la expresión e invención estética de las vanguardias francesas (1885-1935)*, Valencia, Frénesis, 2003, p. 167.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

reality. A will that depends directly on our need as human beings, since it is a part of ourselves that is not subject to consciousness or consciousness and that awakens our most hidden and true desires: sexual desire.

In this sense, we must let ourselves be carried away by our dreams, since it is when we are really satisfied with what we are. These dreams belong to a greater stage, a higher one that combines the dream and the reality, an absolute reality, a superreality or surreality. This is how the idea of Surrealism arises, a superior state of dream and reality that Breton tries to achieve, although he himself admits that he will never enjoy such a thing.

André Breton starts to investigate the resources and psychoanalytic studies, which he would use to create his own aesthetic and artistic thought²⁷. Later, Breton also starts to combine psychoanalysis with sleep. In this sense, the subconscious will now be somewhat prophetic, moving away from the darkness that was linked with the photographic negative, now relaxing the conscience²⁸.

Due to the interest that Freud generated regarding the study of dreams, Breton and Freud got to know each other but the visions of one and the other did not coincide and the meeting was eventually not to Breton's taste, since he, as an artist and a writer, intended to use the Freud's theories as a technique for his creative support. However, Freud, as a psychoanalyst, always gave a more scientific vision that has nothing to do with Surrealism or the historical Avant-gardes. From this meeting onwards, they wrote to each other several times, and samples of these letters can be found published in some versions of *The Communicating Vessels*. We can interpret this not as a union of Breton with Freud, but almost as a rupture of his ideas since despite this, the Surrealists would find their own theory depending on their own experiences, school, moments, and techniques.

7. *Last Nights of Paris* (1928), Philippe Soupault

It should be mentioned that these are not the only works that are related to the idea of the city in Paris during the surrealist movement. Another great example of the group's relationship with the urban environment is the work of Philippe Soupault, *The Last Nights of Paris* (1928). The author collects here several clear references to the city, comparing people with statues or ornaments of small squares.

The whole work is a reminiscent of *Nadja*, not in style, since *The Last Nights of Paris* is a non-autobiographical novel and deeply based on automatic and dreamlike writing since it oversees following in the footsteps of a woman, Georgette, presumably a prostitute, wandering the streets of Paris. However, Soupault's work is fiction, unlike *Nadja*. The story is also interrupted by other stories that flourish during the narration, for example, gangster gangs and Georgette's own relationship with her brother, distancing herself from the mystery that emanated in Breton's work.

However, and with respect to what concerns us, *The Last Nights of Paris*, is a magnificent work that exemplifies the relationship of the surrealist movement with

²⁷ Sanchez Moreno, I., Ramón Díaz, N., «La realidad quebrada, Dalí Pujols y Freud: afinidades y estéticas psicológicas», *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*, nº 2/3, (2007), pp. 99-105, aquí p. 102.

²⁸ Laurent, J., *El fin de la interioridad: Teoría de la expresión e invención estética de las vanguardias francesas (1885-1935)*, op. cit., p. 173.

the city. In this novel there is no page without reference to town planning, citing the streets they run through - from rue de Medicis to rue de Tournon passing through the Senate.

8. Conclusions

The members of the Surrealist group were mainly writers, painters, and photographers. Despite the large amount of work, they all produced, we do not find any architectural materialisation. However, we cannot deny the interest that urban practice and architecture regarding the city generated for the Surrealists. From outings to experience drift, to debates over whether Paris monuments should be preserved or not, the Surrealists saw in architecture a perfect setting for their artistic practice, especially for literature and photography.

It is essential to look at literature in this case in order to understand the Surrealist movement, their culture, and art production, since it is the one that will guide us to understand its architectural work thanks to works such as *Nadja*, *The Communicating Vessels* and *The Peasant of Paris*. To a large extent, these writings aim to understand the city as a source of inspiration and as a place to get lost and practice its automatism. In this way, they have been able to see the resources that the city of Paris provided them through their urban transformations and the diversity of its urban fabric.

Thus, Surrealism emerged as a means of escape from the events of the early twentieth century. We have before us a fascinating movement, whose theoretical basis not only influenced artistic creation, but was presented to those belonging to the group as a way and philosophy of life, something that is in turn demonstrated through their artistic practice. In this way, there is no doubt about the importance of Surrealism as an artistic movement as a meeting point for many theories and techniques that will have a later development.

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