

'Patastrophe! #3



The Journal of Surrealerpool Collage of Alchymical, Flâneurial and 'Pataphysical Studies



Image: Bill Bulloch

Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty

Kate O'Leary

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a theatre practitioner, actor, essayist and director and was briefly a member of the surrealist movement.

Artaud outlined his theory for a theatre of 'cruelty' in his 1938 *The Theatre and its Double*. Frustrated by what he thought was stale and outmoded theatre, Artaud launched an assault on moribund Western theatrical practices, stating the need to break from old, tired traditions and wake up audiences to the thrill of the senses. At the heart of traditional drama was language that had lost its vibrancy, characters that were dull and settings that pathetically attempted to look 'real'.

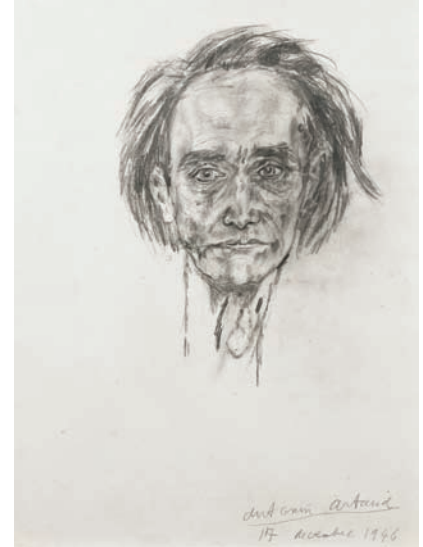
His use of the term 'cruelty' is more subtle than at first appears, implying an assault on the sensibilities of the audience by various means. For instance, the demarcations between actor and audience become less defined; indeed, he suggests an interaction between them, with the audience/actor mingling in a space that no longer resembles the usual theatre. Language is not prioritised

over other dramatic modes of communication, so variable sounds, visuals, movement share an equal presence. All subjects are possible; in fact, Artaud felt that theatre had become so dislocated from everyday experience that he encouraged performers to engage with violence, war, crime, intensifying an understanding of the brutalities which surround us.

By subjecting the audience to these relentless shocks and thrills, they become spectators to the action, whilst also being part of it. Quite forcefully, this theatre nudges them into a re-assessment of how they see the world. He called this performance space a 'vortex', constantly changing and making the individual feel uncertain and powerless.

Here's what Artaud has said of his theory:

The Theatre of Cruelty has been created in order to restore to the theatre a passionate and convulsive conception of life, and it is in this sense of violent rigour and extreme condensation of scenic elements that the cruelty



Antonin Artaud *Self Portrait* (1946)

on which it is based must be understood. This cruelty, which will be bloody when necessary but not systematically so, can thus be identified with a kind of severe moral purity which is not afraid to pay life the price it must be paid. Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre of Cruelty', in *The Theory of the Modern Stage* (ed. Eric Bentley), Penguin, 1968, p.66

Perhaps the two playwrights most associated with Artaud's ideas are Jean Genet, (*The Maids*, *The Balcony*) and Peter Weiss, (*The Marat Sade*). Jerzy Grotowski is probably the most recent theatre practitioner whose ideas have been influenced by Artaud.

No pleasant gin and tonics in the bar after an Artaud production, then; rather, the shaken theatre-goer may be in need of something much, much stronger!



Artwork: Shelda-Jane Smith



British Surrealism

Simon Ryder

This article is prompted by the exhibition 'British Surrealism' at Dulwich Picture Gallery (DPG), London, and the accompanying catalogue. The exhibition and the catalogue cover an interesting scope. They also prompt thoughts about some wider aspects of the connections between surrealism and British art, so this is part review, and part reflection.

The exhibition opened on 26th February 2020, but was forced to close on 16th March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a curator talk plus Q&A on the website. I was fortunate to be able to see the actual show at the end of February.

The exhibition is organised under three headings: The Ancestors of Surrealism; The Surrealists; and Influenced by Surrealism. The catalogue contains examples of the work of all the exhibiting artists, together with a short biography of each. The catalogue also contains three essays: Surrealism in Britain; Surrealism's Literary Precursors; and British Women Surrealists.

DPG chooses to cover artists who were born in Britain or who were raised there as children or adolescents, rather than, say, surrealist activity in Britain (regardless of the nationality of the artist). This might not be the most obvious focus, but DPG are helpfully clear that this is their scope.

The early (French) surrealists were poets and writers, rather than visual artists. André Breton and his associates sought out and celebrated their literary precursors, such as the Comte de Lautréamont, Mallarmé and the Marquis de Sade. As the catalogue notes, the early Surrealists also acknowledged a debt to various British writers, such as Matthew Lewis, Jonathan Swift, and William Blake. Lewis Carroll was particularly

admired, although it is interesting to note that Carroll's works are unlikely to have been familiar in a French childhood, unlike in Britain – Louis Aragon was the first to translate Carroll's work into French, in 1929. So there is somewhat of a mismatch between these literary precursors, and what is on display in the first part of the exhibition. (Tenniel's illustrations for Alice, for example, are no substitute for Carroll's writing.)

In the early 1930s, surrealist art started to make its way to Britain (or at least London). The key figure in really raising the profile of surrealist art in Britain was Roland Penrose, who had been living in France since the early 1920s. He was a friend of Max Ernst and an art collector. With David Gascoyne he organised the first International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936, the core of which was Penrose's personal collection. Of the 68 different artists, 23 were British, although the connection of the latter to surrealism was in some cases tenuous. Conroy Maddox, a life-long (British) surrealist, claimed he refused to be involved because he felt they included artists he described as 'anti-surrealists'.

The main focus of the DPG show, 'The Surrealists', includes 27 artists, 15 of whom were participants in the 1936 show. Another 10 are from the same generation (born 1892-1912). Nearly half the pictures were created in the period 1936-1940, with none after 1952. The catalogue makes no attempt to explore any aesthetic or other connections between the artists, but does discuss the 'British' group established in London after the 1936 exhibition, even though this is at odds with DPG's own choice of focusing on British-born artists.

While André Breton in Paris was determined to



Marion Adnams *Aftermath*

establish a group ethos (and regularly expelled those he felt deviated from this), the British group appears quite different. Primarily, it was a visual art group, with no wider political or philosophical agenda or manifesto (despite being chaired by ELT Mesens, the Belgian surrealist). Herbert Read, who was one of the organisers of the 1936 exhibition, put this down to the British artist(s) suffering from ‘a disastrous form of individualism’, and in 1945 Mesens himself said that there had never really been a surrealist movement in Britain. Certainly the group was short-lived: several of the inaugural members left in 1938, and Mesens expelled five more in 1940.

Those expelled in 1940 included Grace Pailthorpe and Reuben Mednikoff, and Ithell Colquhoun. Pailthorpe served as a surgeon during the First World War, and subsequently became interested in Freudian analysis. She met Mednikoff in 1935 and they began to explore the relationship between psychoanalysis and art. Breton praised their work in the 1936 exhibition. Colquhoun had a lifelong interest in the occult. The Paris surrealists had a great interest in psychoanalysis, the occult, politics and wider society, so these expulsions perhaps reflect the more parochial focus of the London group. Colquhoun noted that these expulsions were not endorsed by Breton.

Particular highlights in the exhibition for me, amongst the artists I did not already know, were the works of Pailthorpe, Mednikoff and Sam Haile. There is also an Exquisite Corpse created by Eileen Agar, John Banting, Roland Penrose, and Antonio Pedro de Costa.

The third essay in the catalogue discusses British Women Surrealists. Gender politics within surrealism has been a significant area of contention. The essay emphasises the difficulties women artists had working within a male-defined agenda, but also celebrates their perspectives and achievements. Eileen Agar, when interviewed about what a surrealist painter is like, said “Just being a woman is a surrealist experience”. Nearly a third of the artists in the main section of the DPG exhibition are women.

The ‘Influenced by Surrealism’ section of the exhibition shows paintings created at the same time as the main section, with the latest being created in 1945. This was a surprise, since there is no indication that the show is limited to a specific time period. The post-WWII influence of surrealism on British art would be the subject of a valuable complementary exhibition.

In conclusion, the exhibition is well worth seeing, and the catalogue is excellent. Both the exhibition and the catalogue prompt questions and areas for further exploration.

www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Haunted

Chris Furby



A one-minute film, viewable at: vimeo.com/426506044 Password: *Waterfall*

A surreal piece, a domestic interior, a haunted fireplace – filmed in Aberarth, Wales. The house was originally built for a retired sea captain in the 19th Century and although it's only a few minutes away from the beach the captain had so fallen out of anything to do with the sea that the front door looks inland to the hills. When the wind gets up, the wood (of which there's a lot) in the building creaks, open doors bang and a high pitched whistle sounds from the complicated tracery around the eaves. It feels like you must be at sea in a square rigged ship... so he must have always been reminded of the seafaring he wanted to forget...

Image: Slim Smith



The Faculty Of Medico-Politico-Pataphysicians
COLLAGE OF PRESIDENTIAL STUDIES

(Formerly The Institute Of Charlatans)

PS718: 'The Presidential Reflexes.'

(10 Credits)

(1er As -14th Sable 148)

(Professor: Timovey Paflofich Pnin, Room 101)

· **Root Reflex.** The Presidential Root Reflex occurs when the corner of The Presidential Orifice is stroked or touched. The President will turn The Presidential Head and open The Presidential Orifice following and 'rooting' toward the stroking direction. The Root Reflex helps the President find Donors or Lobbyists. It is not the Galant Reflex. This is a misnomer that The Presidential Intellect is not keen to dissipate. It is frequent that The Presidential Electoral Campaign is based upon rooting for The President.

· **Suck Reflex.** When the roof of The President's Orifice is touched to a donor or lobbyist pap, The President will commence suckling. This reflex does not begin until about the thirty second week of Campaigning and is not fully developed until about thirty six weeks. Premature Presidents may have weak or immature sucking competences, in consequence of election prior to Reflex development. Presidents also have a hand-to-Orifice Reflex that accompanies rooting and sucking. Presidents may suck on their own digits. It is believed that this enables Presidents in the task of avoiding biting the hand that feeds them.

· **Moro Reflex.** The Presidential Moro Reflex, often called The Presidential Startle Reflex, occurs as The President is startled by a Soundbite or Movement. In response to the Soundbite, The President throws

back The Presidential head, throws out both The Presidential Arms and The Presidential Legs, cries The Presidential Cry, and, then pulls The Presidential Arms and The Presidential Legs back in. It is possible that The Presidential Cry can startle The President, initiating The Presidential Moro Reflex continuously. The Presidential Moro Reflex lasts until The Presidential campaign is about five to six months old. Unilateral absence of The Presidential Moro Reflex may indicate Presidential Electoral Trauma.

· **Tonic Neck Reflex.** The Presidential Head, when turned to one side, causes The Presidential Arm of that side to stretch outwards and the Complimentary Presidential Arm to bend upwards at The Presidential Elbow. This is often called The Presidential En Garde Position. The Presidential Tonic Neck Reflex lasts until The Presidential campaign is about six to seven months old. The Presidential Head may turn to the Presidential Left and to the Presidential Right depending upon the source of the Presidential Turn. Combined with the Presidential Root, Suck, and Moro Reflexes if The Presidential Voice enunciates "En garde! Prits? Allez!" or "En garde! Prits? Allez!". Non-English Speaking Countries may have different announcements.



• **Grasp Reflex.** The Presidential Grasp Reflex occurs when stroking the Presidential Hand causes The President to close The Presidential Fingers into The Presidential Grasp. The Presidential Grasp Reflex lasts several months and is stronger in premature Presidents. The Presidential Grasp Reflex results in the grasping of only those things that stroke The Presidential Hand and not the grasping of things proximate but separate from that which stroked The Presidential Hand. The Presidential Grasp is inappropriately present where The Presidential Hand Grasps a non-stroking but strokeable thing. Despite The Presidential Grasp Reflex, this may not be grasped by The Presidential Intellect.

• **Babinski Reflex.** With the Presidential Babinski Reflex, The Presidential Sole of The Presidential Foot is firmly stroked and The Presidential Big Toe bends backwards toward the top of The Presidential Foot as The Remaining Presidential Toes fan out. This is a normal Reflex until the Presidency is about two years old. The origins of the Presidential Babinski Reflex can be found in the pedagogic performance – *Les Détraquées* (1921) – written by Pierre Palau and Joseph Babinski and reviewed by André Breton in *Nadja* (1928).

• **Step Reflex.** This Reflex is called the Presidential Walking Reflex or the Presidential Dance Reflex in consequence of a President appearing to take steps or dance when held upright with The Presidential Feet within touching distance of a solid surface. The Presidential Step Reflex is present both before and after The Presidential Election, however it is unclear if the Presidential Step Reflex before The Presidential Election is identical to the The Presidential Step Reflex after The Presidential Election. The Presidential

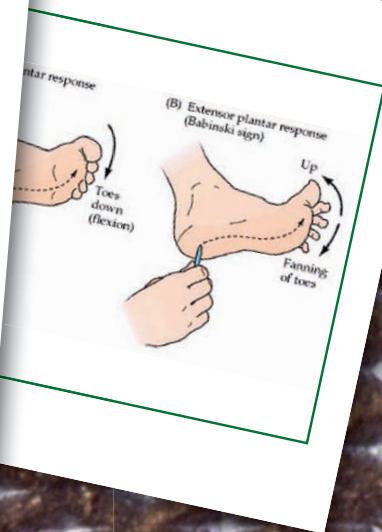
Step Reflex may be confusing as it comes after The President 'runs' for office and then disappears before The President 'runs' again. The Presidential Dance Reflex may be strong despite The Presidential Grasp Reflex being weak and should always be evaluated with reference to the Presidential Suck Reflex.

• **Galant Reflex.** A Presidential Reflex elicited by holding The President face down and stroking along the one side of the Presidential Ego. The normal Presidential reaction is to laterally flex toward the stimulated side of the Ego being stroked. The Presidential Galant Reflex does not evoke the Root Reflex excepting insofar as the Presidential Ego and the Presidential Orifice are connected. The Presidential Galant Reflex is not a typographical error for The Presidential Gallant Reflex. The Presidential Gallant Reflex is a discredited mid-Fifteenth Century thesis, broadly described, of The Gallant "man of fashion and pleasure," – deriving from the earlier, "dissolute man, rake," – being applied to the office of The Holy Roman Emperor.

• **Parachute Reflex.** Occuring in slightly older Presidents and beginning between the six and seventh month of The Presidency, becoming fully expressed at the end of the first year. When restrained and upright, The President's body is rotated quickly to face forwards. The President will extend their arms forward as if to break a fall. The Presidential Fall is theorised to be inevitable. Within 10 to 30 milliseconds of a trip the motor centres take control of The Presidential Fall and evaluate the probability of breaking The President or of breaking The Presidency. It is unclear which of the President or the Presidency is preferred by motor centre.



c neck reflex



Words: Hubert Huzzah

Blowing Gold

Adam Hassan

Two caterpillars wriggle
over a kaleidoscope

The swelling shadow looms
ruby and indigo vines
sticky inside

The goblin's nightmare
runs like a hare
into a hole

and the veil of the Mistress of clouds
melts into misty shrouds
of never, of never

Is this the pinnacle of flight
a ball of scorching light
and a nocturnal kite

as the inner breeze blows cold, it blows so cold, so cold, so cold...

Wires for hair and a
dead eyed stare
Borderline dwarf in a
hovel of warts

as the inner breeze blows cold, it blows so cold, so cold, so cold...

The Witch's Fountain

Adam Hassan

Grimson sun throbs,
scarlet rain descends
Cascades of flaming hail,
cinder spangled trail

Stars twinkle, the ottoman is open
Crystal path, swishing stream
Laughing sprites of Jupiter beam



Photo: Slim Smith

Surrealism and Transgressive Desire

Reuben Saxment

For the Surrealists, the liberation of erotic Desire was always the holiest of holy grails. The ‘Establishment’ keeps itself in power and us in our place through various means, but the regulation and suppression of Desire has always been one of its principal devices – clamping down on those who would deviate from its prescribed codes of behaviour, and infiltrating our heads with irrational ‘moral’ values to police us from the inside. Fighting back against such oppression and mind control, the Surrealists celebrated the free expression of Desire, especially in its transgressive modes – *‘The noblest Desire is that of combating all obstacles placed by bourgeois society in the path of the realisation of (our) the vital Desires... of body (and) imagination.’* (Éluard, 1932)

The fightback had successes. Since the 1960s and 70s women, gays and lesbians and sexual subcultures have made giant strides towards the light, but in recent years the clouds of a new Victorian age have been gathering, with conservative and supposedly ‘progressive’ forces forming a strange alliance in their shared committed to censorship. It is now commonplace to hear of books and films from previous decades that ‘could not be released now’.

In Freud’s view we all have transgressive Desires, and he outlined three main psychological stratagems for ‘handling’ them: *‘the unconscious phantasies of hysterics (which psycho-analysis reveals behind their symptoms)... the clearly conscious phantasies of perverts (which in favourable circumstances can be transformed into manifest behaviour), (and) the delusional fears of paranoiacs (which are projected in a hostile sense onto other people)...’* (adapted from Freud, 1905)

However, all of these stratagems are potentially

harmful to self and others, so Freud championed a fourth way: to ‘Know thyself’ through psychoanalysis. For the Surrealists, however, these other stratagems were worth exploring as routes to new levels of experience and understanding. Freud wanted to bring us back to reality; the Surrealists were in search of ‘sur-reality’.

In *Hysteria*, the conscious mind feels threatened by transgressive Desires and tries to ‘forget’ them by repressing them into the unconscious. But repressed material is not forgotten and strives to find alternative ways of expressing itself. Usually this is through dream, the safety-valve on the pressure-cooker of the unconscious, but if repressed material is too powerful or pungent for dream to cope with, the ‘return of the repressed’ will manifest itself as neurotic symptoms, mental and/or physical. Any story the conscious mind cannot or will not articulate will tell itself in other ways, more disturbed and disturbing. Indulging neurotic symptoms held little interest for Surrealists, but Dreamscapes exerted a fascination for many, Breton, Ernst, Miró and Leonora Carrington included.

In *Perversion*, the Desire is acknowledged, and expressed in conscious phantasy or activity. Danger arises if the Desire involves violence or abuse inflicted on unwilling victims, but Freud saw the controlled expression of perverse Desire as *‘the opposite of neurosis’*, and usable in consensual erotic play, the arts (which, providing a privileged space for untrammelled expression, should be free from moralistic interference and censorship), or sublimated (into the mystical etc.). The Surrealists agreed, and further, following the Marquis de Sade, saw art itself as a weapon, a breeding ground for revolutionary impulse, a space for liberty of expression and liberty of Desire,

and a searchlight to expose the perversions harboured and denied by the ‘upright citizens’ who call loudest for censorship – ‘Beware of your deviations...we shall not miss a single one.’ (Aragon, 1925). Admiration for Sade and the celebration of the liberating and revolutionary power of ‘perversion’ was widespread in Surrealist circles: Artaud, Bataille, Bellmer, Breton, Buñuel, Leonor Fini, Annie LeBrun, Masson, Picasso, Man Ray, Dorothea Tanning, Toyen and many others.

In *Paranoia*, the Desire is disavowed, and converted by syllogistic reversals into delusions, which can then be projected aggressively onto others. The Desire concealed in Paranoia is often homosexual – (Freud insisting the problem lies *not* in the desire itself, but only in any fear or denial of it). So if a man rejects his homosexual feelings, he may deny that ‘I love him’, and reverse it into ‘I hate him’, which if that is still disturbing, may shift again into ‘He hates me’, precipitating a delusion of persecution. A man in a heterosexual relationship struggling with homosexual feelings, may reverse ‘I love him’ into ‘I don’t love him’ and then into ‘She loves him’, leading to paranoid jealousy – the *Othello* syndrome. (Delusions of grandeur have another root: a man disturbed that ‘I am a narcissistic infantile brat’ can reverse into ‘I am a nice baby’, and then again into ‘I am great man.’ This might be of interest to White House watchers.)

Among the Surrealists, Dalí, having been a champion of Perversion – ‘*the most revolutionary form of thought and activity*’ – then decided to make Paranoia his territory, which fed his fascination for his own delusions, provided a veil over his own unacknowledged homosexuality, and also spawned his major contribution to the Surrealist tool-kit – the ‘Paranoiac-Critical Method’. This he described, with perhaps less than crystal clarity, as ‘*a spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the interpretative-critical association of delirious (delusional) phenomena*’, by which the viewer, in a state of ‘distracted concentration’ or lucid frenzy, perceives doublings



Salvador Dalí *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*

and superimpositions leading to transformations and multiplications of associations. His *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937) was the first work ‘obtained entirely by integral application of the paranoiac-critical method’ (the alienated ‘disgusting’ hand, a regular trope in Dalí’s work since *Un Chien Andalou* (1928) and *The Lugubrious Game* (1929), reveals another of his sexual anxieties). Dalí heralded the time when ‘*by a process of thought, paranoiac and active in character, it will be possible (simultaneously with automatism and other passive states) to systematise confusion and to contribute to discrediting the world of reality entirely*’ (1930). This offered Surrealism a pro-active addition to its arsenal, while simultaneously rejecting its objective, substituting a ‘discrediting of reality’ for the Surrealist aim of incorporating and transcending reality into sur-reality. Dalí’s relationship with Surrealism was becoming awkward some time before his right-wing sympathies and ‘Hitler-complex’ led to the final falling out.

Aragon, Louis (1925): *Declaration of the Bureau of Surrealist Research* (in Harrison, G. & Wood, P.(ed.): *Art in Theory 1900-1990* (Blackwell 1992))

Dalí, Salvador (1930): *L’Âne Pourri (The Stinking/Rotting Ass)* (in Harrison, G. & Wood, P.(ed.): *Art in Theory 1900-1990* (Blackwell 1992))

Éluard, Paul (1932) (in Mundy, J. (ed.): *Surrealism, Desire Unbound* (Princeton Press 2001))

Freud, Sigmund (1905): *Three Essays on Sexuality* (in Richards, A. (ed.) *Sigmund Freud 7: On Sexuality* (Penguin 1977))

It occurred to me recently that
Nursery Rhymes are in their
own way Surreal



I saw a pack of cards gnawing a bone... a dog
Seated on Britain's throne... the Queen shut up
within a box... a shilling driving a fat ox... a
man lying in a muff all night... a glove reading
news by candle light... a woman not twelve
month old... a greatcoat all of solid gold.....

Words and artwork:
Dai Owen

How do you play Exquisite Comics?

Slim Smith

From the Twilight Zone that is today's Royal Mail emerges an envelope which I excitedly tear open. Inside is a part-completed comic-book panel with words and images that my playmates have created. It's a delightful surprise and a challenge that requires my response.

This is *Exquisite Comics*, a game of the familiar 'exquisite corpse' in comic-book form. There are four players, eight panels, envelopes, stamps and a pile of imagination. The players exchange the part-completed panels with each other through the post, until all have contributed to each panel. None of them sees all the other panels in progress until the eight are complete. Finally, the panels are randomly assembled into an order that reveals

(or otherwise) the previously unconscious storyline.

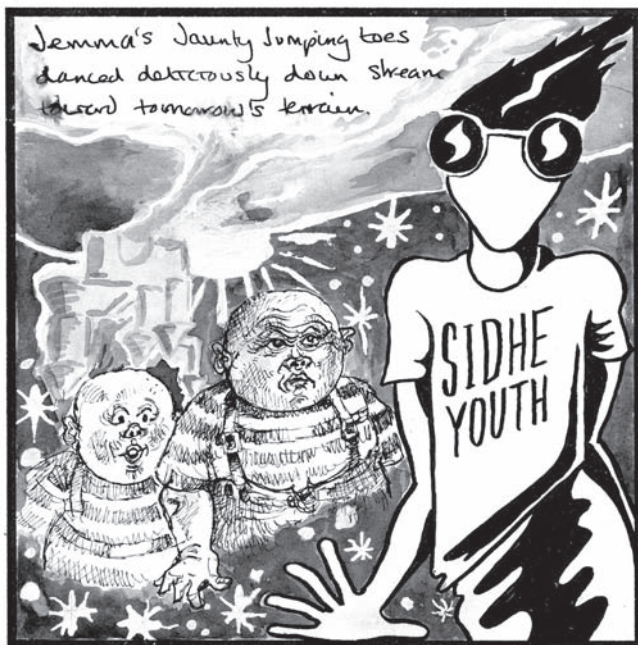
Exquisite Comics #1, shown on pages 18-19, was played by Sue Comer, Dai Owen, Shelda-Jane Smith and Slim Smith.

Exquisite Comics #2, pages 20-21, by Lucy Francis, Nadine Hobro, Dave Manuell and Slim Smith.

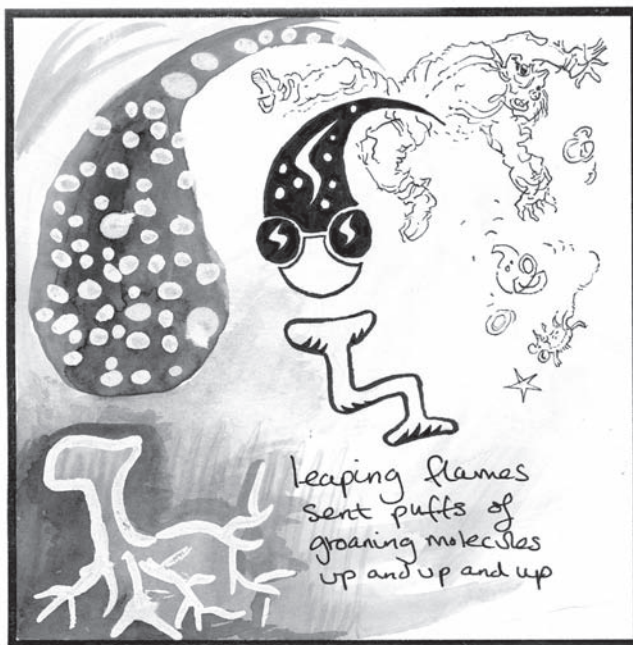
Exquisite Comics #3 was given a theme: "How do you decolonise?" Starting on page 22, Shelda-Jane Smith provides a commentary on this edition, alongside the finished artworks by Sue Comer, Jah Jussa, Shelda-Jane Smith and Slim Smith.

Each edition is available as a stand-alone booklet and can be ordered from surrealerpool.online





Jemma's jaunty jumping toes danced deliciously downstream towards tomorrow's terrain



Leaping flames sent puffs of groaning molecules up and up and up



Maria danced with the smiling plates, heavy with treasured commestibles



An upturned ear detects the joyous song of youth



Memories escaped as intoxicated fish



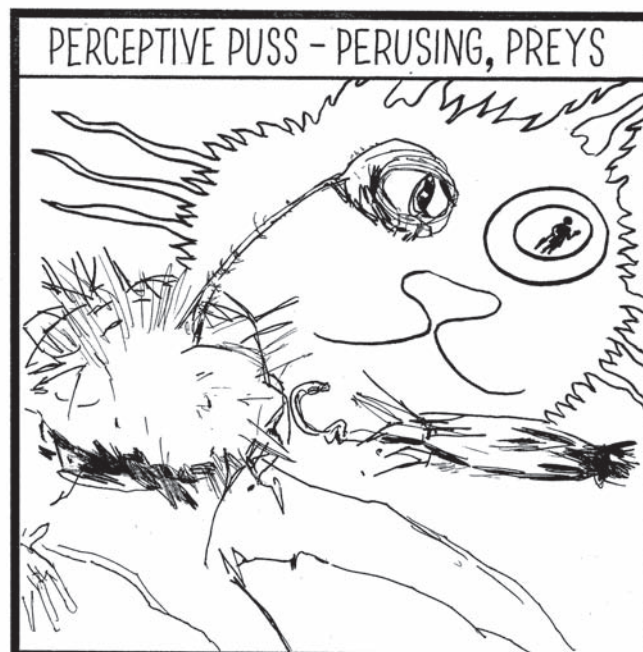
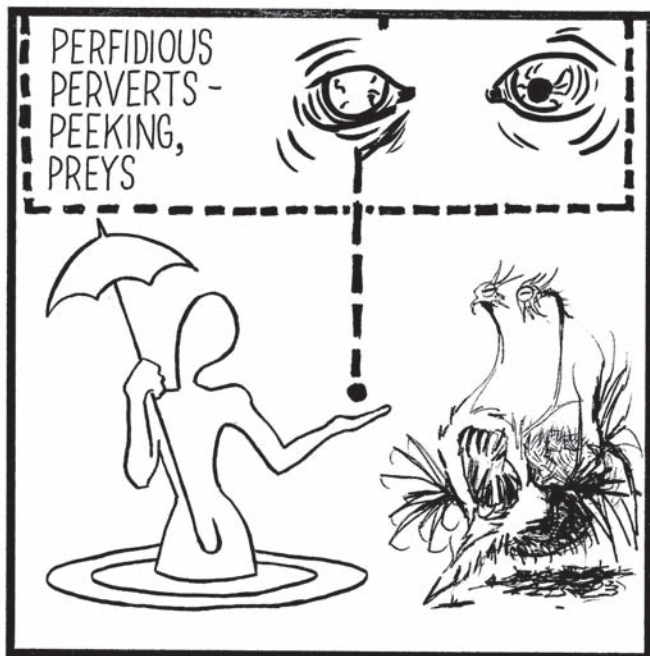
Gregory sat, Gregory waited. There was a way. It was not showing. The craft was to come



Life had been high and a cackle released the eight



An unseeing mass crawls through a darkness bestowed by a malevolent grinning force



PROWLING PANTHER - PACING, PRAYS



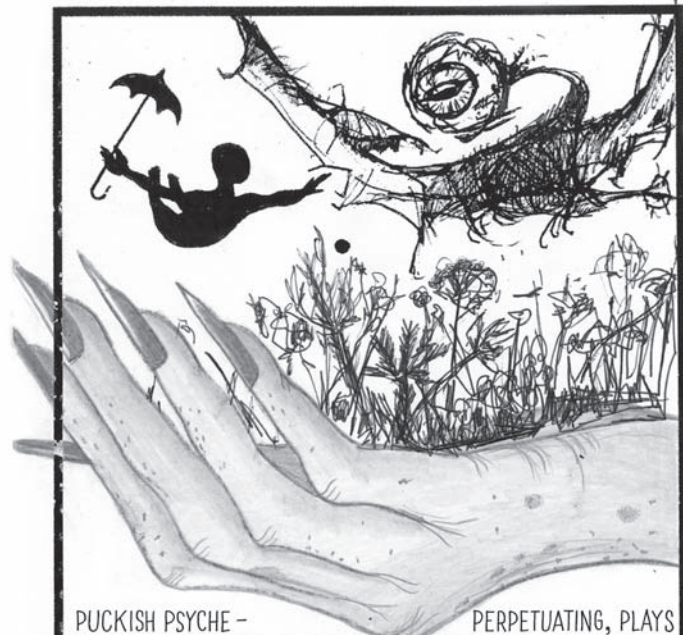
PAWED PSYCHE -



PIOUS PHANTASM - PROSELYTISING, PRAISE



PUCKISH PSYCHE -



Exquisite Comics #3

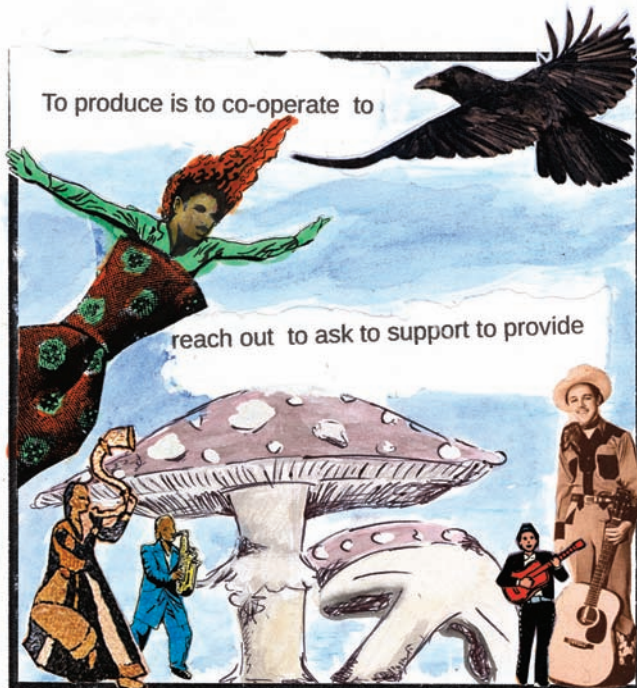
The Sleeping Beauty Dreams: A side note on snowfall, sleepwalking and the self in processes of decolonisation

Shelda-Jane Smith. *EC#3* created by Sue Comer, Jah Jussa, Shelda-Jane Smith and Slim Smith

I still marvel at how swiftly my previous life's thinking pattern slid away from me, like snow off a roof – Malcolm X (1965)

This third round of Exquisite Comics responded to the resurgence of mainstream efforts toward decolonisation of public spaces, institutions, practices and knowledge itself. Inspired by U.S. civil rights 'preachies' of *EC Comics* (Whitted, 2019), our current theme centres upon a terribly vague question – *How do you decolonise?* – asking contributors to reflect on this before diving into the comic making process. It was intentionally vague – who (or what) is 'you', and who (or what) can claim to be decolonising.

Using surrealism as a framework allowed us to centre the psyche and internal processes of self-discovery and confrontation when exploring what it means to decolonise. Our methods comprise collage, automatism, and child-led drawing that, in the face of grand gestures (such as rewriting curriculums and reforming institutions) may seem rather small. And yet what is larger than the worlds we create in our minds? Herein lies the possibility of transformation. Therefore, *Exquisite Comics #3* turned toward moments of deep and uncomfortable reflection. Not to point the finger in accusations of wokeness but to consider the texture and character of 'the self' in any



process of decolonisation. And yet wokeness, despite what its detractors say, remains a significant metaphor for assessing the amount of snow still left on one's roof, in other words the old ways of thinking and being.

i

How will you ever wake her up when she is deep in her dreams – Nneka

The WEIRD¹ are in a state of slumber. And whilst, it is not sufficient to binarize: us and them, Global North and Global South, East and West, I use this term regardless of race, gender, sexuality or religion. There are norths inside the south and souths within the north, nonetheless the dominance of WEIRD persists. The dichotomy is a lie, we are them as much as they are us.

But there are sleepwalkers with much to keep them sedated. Sleepwalkers are in need of an intervention

[1] WEIRD: Inhabitants of western, presumably educated, industrialised, rich and supposedly democratic countries. Interchangeable with 'the west', 'Global North', 'Minority World' – but none truly represent the state of the world.



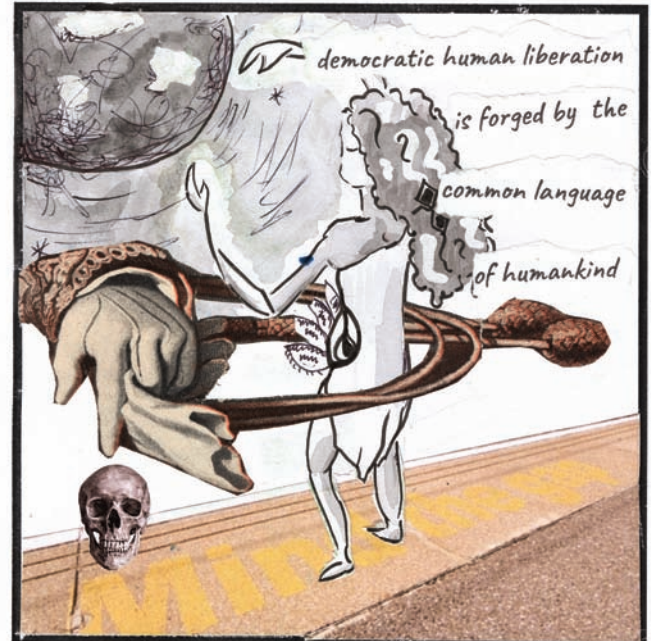
to 'shake themselves and stop playing the game of the Sleeping Beauty.' (Fanon, 1963). But in all of their gaming can we really characterise these sleepers as beautiful? Furthermore, are methods of introspection, art and creativity sufficient to wake them from their dreams? Dreams wherein billionaire superheroes are saviours of planet earth, developers of the third world, exporters of universal standards edging out from the west to the rest. No, these are not dreams at all, they are illusion.

Dreams have movement, agitation and desire. Illusions mollify the soul and keep us where we lay.

ii

We shall slip our fingers of laughter and calabash, between the icy teeth of the Sleeping Beauty in the woods – Aime Césaire
Where can I situate *Exquisite Comics #3*? Possibly via its contributors; born mid-late 20th century. Artists and writers. 2020, Liverpool.

The irony of decolonisation is not lost on us. The fruits



of our city's colonial past surround us; docklands, slave gates, Windrush descendants, Catholic Irish heritage and universities that celebrate genocidal politicians. We know and live alongside our histories but sleepwalk between them, conscious of the fact that, on the whole, we are unconscious. But snow tends to fall silently.

For the WEIRD, sleepwalking carves a schism in the mind; a mental collage of sorts. This duality is formed by decrying violence and subjugation on one hand, whilst comfortably benefiting from it on the other. It is amongst our sleepy wakefulness that I situate *Exquisite Comics* #3. This is what decolonisation wrestles with, the fact that human lives and livelihoods are a dream and a nightmare all at once. Yes, the WEIRD are indeed sleeping but they are certainly no beauties.

iii

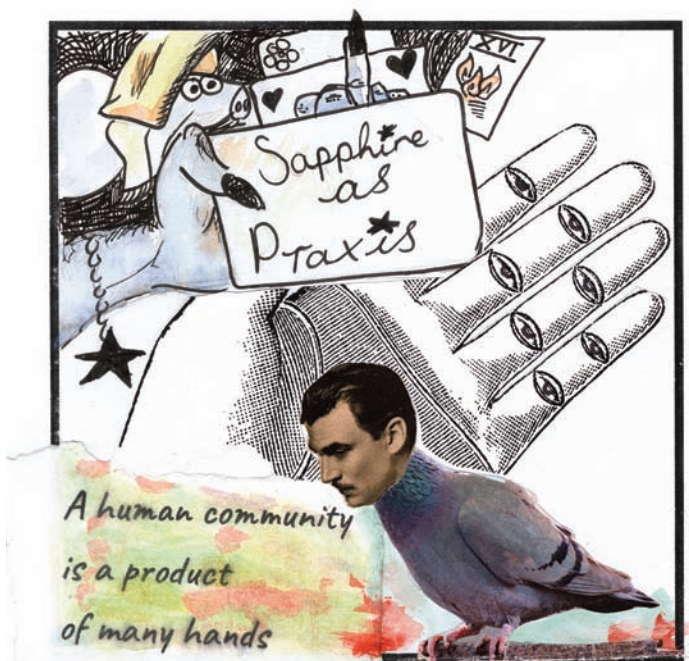
In its response, *Exquisite Comics* #3 is nascent. Largely because decolonisation deserves so much more than

'nice' liberal people offering uncertain and emerging gestures towards their own fable of equality. As Paulo Freire cautions us against false generosity, we know that our response does not go far enough to directly undo systems of oppression, nevertheless our goals lie in raising our own critical consciousness.

Our attempts are embryonic;
they require thinking about and then eventually enacting changes within ourselves;
they negate recourse to what society 'ought' to be doing;
they are ostensibly quieter, subtle and mostly introspective;
they are unlikely to topple statues or propose any directive.

Their power lies in planting a seed. A seed that will germinate into something more marvellous and beautiful than what is presently tying us down and keeping us locked in inertia.

Surrealism, tightrope of our hope – Suzanne Césaire



iv

Of course, tackling decolonisation via means of introspection is not nearly enough. Furthermore, it runs the risk of becoming yet another iteration for liberals to perform virtue.

However, I'd like to offer introspection as a starting point, a means to an end. For me, the place where decolonisation begins is within our minds. This approach does not carry mouthpieces and placards. This approach takes seriously all attempts towards liberation, but prioritises the fact that if we want to unsettle the status quo then we need to unsettle ourselves.

And yet the internal conflict remains; a self-made anxious juxtaposition. It's easy to point the finger, stating what everyone else ought to be doing, but the onus is also on us. Revolution from below, never above; within and without. The value and use of our quiet methods of dissent (e.g comic making) is something we can judge for ourselves – figuring out whether our

efforts are true or false, i.e. for liberation or business as usual.

I don't want to run the risk of providing explanation, so I will stop here and let Audre Lorde (1984) ask the final question: *"Perhaps for some of you here today, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian, because I am myself – a Black woman warrior poet doing my work – come to ask you, are you doing yours?"*

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Surrealerpolitan Linda Bromilow is now the “Uzhupis Ambassador in Surrealerpool”. Congratulations!
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forarthistory.org.uk

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🔒 Private group

About



1 July

I haven't the slightest idea what or who this group is and, more importantly, how my name got in it.



