

Analysis of André Breton 'First Surrealist Manifesto 1924'

I find this manifesto particularly interesting in the way that it is written and how it goes about saying what needs to be said. It is written almost in the style of a thought experiment, I believe this was done so that society may comprehend the dreamlike nature of the topics that are being discussed. The main thing to keep in mind that before this the genre of surrealism didn't exist, it may have existed in ways of things that looked like and represented a dreamlike quality; as many of the anti-realist notions conveyed in surrealism has its roots in Dadaism. But before this Manifesto, surrealism as a definition did not exist. Meaning that everything discussed in this manifesto is being debated for the first time, as such many of the ideas would have been dismissed as nonsense or misunderstood by our largely rationalist society; unfortunately not much has changed, the masses can still appreciate the beauty of art, but they are still very close-minded when it comes to understanding or looking for the deeper connotations that the work has to offer. To truly understand anything of what lies beneath a surrealist painting, one must be truly open-minded.

During the first part of this Manifesto Breton talks about the current society that she lived in, a society that had seen the rise of the art movement Dada and the fall of the communist uprising of World War two. This is a world that had previously been shaped by fear, stress and violence and now that the conflict is over; they were seeing the changes that would mark a new era. A society built upon the ideology of knowledge, creativity and freedom. I believe the genre of Dada marked this era and that the First Surreal Manifesto was making the next leap in the creative progress. This idea of a developing and evolving creative colligate, can be summed up in 2 short sentences of the first paragraphs of this manifesto. 'We are still under the reign of logic' and 'perhaps the imagination is on the verge of recovering its own rights'. There are parts in the manifest that truly challenge my knowledge and reasoning, such as the repeated use of the highly acclaimed name of Sigmund Freud; who is mentioned in the first paragraph, he was mainly known as the founder of psychoanalysis and for his written work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Within the confines of the book he states that dreams are in principal symbolic allowing the sorting of repressed wishes and emotions. So the idea of this manifesto being more of thought excrement is brought up again.

The next 4 paragraphs are done in a much more poetic style, but each paragraph represents a reflective view from Breton's perspective on the different states or phases of one's dream. In the 1950s Eugene Aserinsky and Nathaniel Kleitman. Hooked people up to an EEG (Electroencephalography) Machine, they thought that they would prove that a sleeping brain, was an inactive brain. They found the contrary; the brain is actually rather active during sleep and that brain waves will oscillate. During this time there is acutely a cycle, much like the 4 phases described within these paragraphs.

Phase 1 within the limits

This paragraph tries to describe the confines or emancipation of the dream. She is trying to understand a dream in some respect; she is trying to tease out her thoughts. To make the idea of a dream less of a paradox.

'Only memory claims the right to edit', an interesting sentence as it puts forward the idea that dreams never seem whole, due to their random nature.

'(1) It is important to note that noting leads to a greater dissipation of the constituent elements of the dream', this is because dreams are made up of our experiences; meaning that your emotions play a large role in a dream's landscape.

'Perhaps my dream of last night was a continuation', the idea that dreams are a running narrative continued from one night, to the other. This is where the idea of the dream and the contemplation of what makes a dream, delves into the world of philosophy.

'The 'reality' with which I am concerned even exists in the dream state, or that it does not sink into the immemorial'. This is brought into question what is reality and if her reality is the basis of her dreams.

'Then why should I not concede to the dream what I sometime refute to reality', If her reality makes up her dreamscape, does mean refusing to except her dreams as part of that reality, is a way of refusing actuality although?

"Why should I expect more of a dream sign that I do of a daily increasing degree of consciousness?" this is yet another reference to Freud; the more aware we become of our dreams, the less tangible the dreams become in return.

Phase 2 I return to the walking state

This next passage is much in the style of Freud, in the sense that it almost conveys the psychosexual nature of a dreamscape and how it

realities to the awakened mind. 'The mind hardly dares express itself and, when it does, it is limited to stating that this idea of that woman has an effect on it'

Faze 3 the mind of a Dreaming man

This paragraph tackles the idea that dreams are angelic and chaotic in their nature. Because of this the dreaming man will have no idea where the dream will lead him or how it will lead him. All the man knows is the events are happening before his eyes and because of this the mind is satisfied. And when the mind does get a hold of things, one will either go mad with power through a lucid dream or wake-up. 'A man's awakening is harsher, if he breaks the spell too well.'

Phase 4 when the times comes

The final phase shows the realization of their dreams and is a documented account of the creation of the surrealism movement. 'I believe in the future resolutions of these two states—outwardly so contradictory—dream and reality, into a sort of absolute reality a surreality, to speak.' A short antidote is provided about Saint-Pol-Roux a French poet, basically it is that The Poet Works whilst he sleeps. One of the largest and most symbolic points provided during this manifesto was this short sentence. 'A man is cut by the window', this sentence was suggested to have come to her in a dream; which adds to the overall symbolic meaning and conjecture this sentence has. This sentence is trying to make a statement, that there is a difference between a man in the waking world and a man in the sleeping world. It's slight differentiation like the refraction caused by a pane of glass, no matter what side of the glass you're on, the other side will look distorted. The other meaning is that you cannot physically touch the other side of the glass. There is one more meaning and that is only if this sentence truly came from a dream; the meaning of this sentence reflects Breton's struggle caused by her emotions and distress.

The final lines of this manifesto go about elaborating and documenting the creation of the term surrealism. It also shows the methods in which Breton and Philippe Soupault went about creating poetry that had a form of pure emotion. The creation method was to speak your mind for long periods of time without stop.

The most important part of this manifesto is the end, where Breton defines the term Surrealism.

This entire manifesto is in a way a thought experiment, as well as a literal experiment and a form of poetry. For these reasons it should

not be a manifesto. But what makes it a manifesto is that ones dreams and goals are being layer out on the table for all to see. The thing that makes this manifesto truly unique is that its one true and stated goal is realized. Burton dreamed, to bring dreams into reality to create a new medium that would be recognized for its unique out look on life. The surrealist out look a nonconformist outlook, to deny what others say, to object to laws of physics, to object to logic and reason, to make, do and feel whatever you want. Where world is created by the mind of a madman, where chaos and harmony reign tougher.

This is what this manifesto is about, the realization of a dream.