

Indirect Action: Politics and the Subversion of Identity in Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore's Resistance to the Occupation of Jersey

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Abstract

This article explores how Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore translated the strategies of their artistic practice and pre-war involvement with the Surrealists and revolutionary politics into an ingenious counter-propaganda campaign against the German Occupation. Unlike some of their contemporaries such as Tristan Tzara and Louis Aragon who embraced Communist orthodoxy, the women refused to relinquish the radical relativism of their approach to gender, meaning and identity in resisting totalitarianism. Their campaign built on Cahun's theorization of the concept of 'indirect action' in her 1934 essay, *Place your Bets (Les paris sont ouverts)*, which defended surrealism in opposition to both the instrumentalization of art and myths of transcendence. An examination of Cahun's post-war letters and the extant leaflets the women distributed in Jersey reveal how they appropriated and inverted Nazi discourse to promote defeatism through carnivalesque montage, black humour and the ludic voice of their adopted persona, the 'Soldier without a Name.'

It is far from my intention to reproach those who left France at the time of the Occupation. But one must point out that Surrealism was entirely absent from the preoccupations of those who remained because it was no help whatsoever on an emotional or practical level in their struggles against the Nazis.¹

Former dadaist and surrealist and close collaborator of André Breton, Tristan Tzara thus dismisses the idea that surrealism had any value in opposing Nazi domination. Like Claude Cahun, Tzara, one of the members of the original surrealist group, stayed in Occupied Europe and was active in the Resistance. Unlike Cahun, however, Tzara broke with surrealism in March 1935 and retained his allegiance to the French Communist Party (PCF). Tzara's dismissal of surrealism here is symptomatic of the long-standing tensions between Communist orthodoxy and surrealist positions, despite the desire of leading surrealists to link themselves with the party they saw as agent of the social transformation.

Many writers have charted the attempted rapprochements between the PCF and the surrealist group in the 1920s and early 1930s.² Following the definitive split between the surrealists and the PCF in August 1935, Cahun (Lucy Schwob) and her partner, Marcel Moore (Suzanne Malherbe) were among those who continued to work with Breton and Georges Bataille in *Contre-Attaque*, the short-lived group dedicated to opposing the slide to war and to using weapons of fascism such as 'emotional exaltation' ('exaltation affective') to serve the interests of revolution.³ In 1940, Jersey, where the women had made their home, was occupied. The tactics they adopted to resist Nazi rule drew on the lessons they had learnt from their own previous creative practice in words and images, which had evolved both independently and alongside surrealism.⁴ Cahun herself described her resistance as 'the



logical consequence of my activity as a writer during the Popular Front period' ('la suite logique de mon activité d'écrivain à l'époque du Front Populaire') and more specifically as 'a militant surrealist activity which we had wanted at the time of *Contre-Attaque*' ('une activité surréaliste militante comme nous avons voulu en avoir lors de *Contre-Attaque*').⁵

Following François Leperlier's invaluable excavation of Cahun's life,⁶ Claire Follain and Kristine von Oehsen have both explored aspects of the two women's ingenious campaign as 'The Soldier without a Name' against the Occupation of Jersey.⁷ What has not been examined in detail are the ways in which this campaign builds on not only Cahun's previous thinking on how writing engages with politics but also on her longstanding practice, in collaboration with Moore, of 'imagining I am something different' ('imaginer que je suis autre').⁸ She continually reinvented herself through a remarkable series of personae in her photographs and writing from her teens to her death, aged sixty, in 1954.⁹ Often captioned as self-portraits these photographs are now considered to have been the product of Cahun and Moore's relationship. Together Cahun and Moore developed a strategy which combined their artistic practice with the political principles they had held throughout the 1930s. In pursuing these principles they had allied themselves with the surrealists in their arguments against fascism and against Stalinism and capitalist imperialism.



Fig. 1: Claude Cahun (with Marcel Moore), Untitled, c. 1920, Courtesy, Soizic Audouard.
Fig. 2: Claude Cahun (with Marcel Moore), Untitled, c. 1927, Courtesy, Soizic Audouard.

'Une crise de conscience'

Surrealist thought emphasized the importance of a transformation in consciousness as the key to human liberation and was fundamentally in tension with a narrowly materialist focus on ownership of the means of production and the assumption that the proletariat was the



necessary source of all ideological and economic revolution. The major influence of the work of Sigmund Freud and the centrality of the concepts of the unconscious and fantasy to surrealist practice were at odds with the tendency within Marxist thought to see such concerns as 'bourgeois' deviations. The surrealists were, in many ways, ahead of their time in recognizing the importance of the psychic dimensions of individuals' investments in social systems. Breton was adamant that any social revolution must be accompanied by a 'revolution of the mind': 'Surrealism tends basically to provoke from a moral and intellectual point of view, a *crise de conscience* of a most general and serious nature and the achievement or non-achievement of that result can alone determine its historical success or failure.'¹⁰

After the initial phase of the movement where the group seemed oblivious to political events (such as Mussolini's march on Rome, October 1922, or Hitler's putsch in Munich, November 1923), it became increasingly clear that the surrealists should interact with what then seemed to be the major force for social change, the Communist Party.¹¹ But despite their overtures, the surrealists were continually found to be lacking in their adherence to basic materialist tenets. 'L'Affaire Aragon' was a key moment in the turbulent struggle on the left over the relationship between politics and art. Turning his back on previous writings, which threw up ambivalent and complex notions of the real, Louis Aragon began to write in the mode approved by the Party. His poem *Red Front (Front Rouge)* was a purely propagandistic celebration of the USSR and the Russian Revolution and led to him being threatened with prosecution in France.¹² More significant though, for Breton and his former allies, was Aragon's adoption of the party line in denying the revolutionary potential of an art that was not subordinate to an immediate political 'message.'

Indirect action

It was at this critical point in the struggle over the nature of revolutionary poetry that Cahun and Moore entered the fray and became officially active in fighting the rise of fascism. In 1932 they joined the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists (Association des Écrivains et Artistes Révolutionnaires, AEAR), the Party-affiliated literary organization which the surrealists had succeeded in entering after overcoming their doubts as to their ideological suitability. Looking back at this period after the war, Cahun claimed to have allied herself with the left because they seemed the only ones who could effectively oppose 'le racismisme hitlérien' and because their support for liberty of expression would produce 'the victory of moral freedom and human rights which have been suppressed by primitive superstitions for centuries, and which were important for me personally.'¹³ The implication is that she saw communism as leading to the sexual freedom which was important to her as a lesbian, a belief which was betrayed by the consolidation of authoritarianism in the Soviet Union.

In the early 1930s, the hope remained that radical forces might prevail and that progressive art might still contribute to a genuine revolution. This is the spirit in which Cahun



undertook her passionate, sophisticated analysis of the relation between politics and poetry, *Place Your Bets*, published in 1934, which brilliantly critiques the assumptions of a crudely propagandistic art, as advocated by Aragon, and defends the practice of the avant-garde. In particular, it anticipates many subsequent Marxist debates on the nature of artistic production and reception in its complex understanding of the ways in which the meaning of a text is beyond the conscious awareness of either the author or the reader. Meaning cannot be fixed permanently but is the product of an interaction between reader, text and context.

Place Your Bets was originally written as part of a report for the literary section of the AEAR in February 1933. The notes and the second part of the essay, following in the wake of 'L'Affaire Aragon,' take the opportunity to highlight the weaknesses and contradictions of his writing and opinions, and were added a year later. Cahun draws on the Freudian concepts of the latent and the manifest to explore how the 'secret' of a poem and thus its potential impact may not be evident from its surface content, however apparently 'revolutionary.' She gives as an example *La Marseillaise*, which 'could become counter-revolutionary when the situation that inspired it changes,' i.e. presumably when it is sung by nationalists celebrating French ascendancy.¹⁴ Poetry cannot fulfil the role of propaganda, she argues – the two are fundamentally distinct:

This is why I think communist propaganda should be consigned to the *directed thought* of consciously political writers, that is journalists ... Whilst poets act in their own way on men's sensibilities. Their attacks are more cunning, but their most indirect blows are sometimes mortal.¹⁵



Fig. 3: Claude Cahun, Untitled from *Cœur de pic*, 1937, reproduced with permission of Jersey Heritage Trust.



In *Place Your Bets* Cahun stresses the unconscious elements of literary production and highlights the impossibility of guaranteeing the ideological conformity of an entire work of art and of controlling this through conscious intention. Importantly, the example she gives to illustrate this point is one taken from photography:

a man thought he had photographed the hair of the woman he loved, strewn with bits of straw as she was sleeping in a field. When the photograph was developed a thousand arms, shining fists and weapons appeared, and he saw that it was a riot.¹⁶

The image evokes one of Cahun's own mises-en-scène of objects such as those made for *Cœur de pic*.¹⁷ One of these photographs shows a branch growing out of a pile of feathers, whose 'leaves' on closer inspection turn out to be pen nibs (Fig. 3). The juxtaposition of apparently diverse moments/objects – the woman's hair mixed with pieces of straw and the waving arms and fists of a riot – which are nonetheless graphically similar, also recalls the editing of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's *Un chien andalou* (1929). Similarly Dalí's paranoiac-critical method involved an obsessional reading which revealed several images within the same configuration. In, for example, his painting *Spain* (1938), three fighting horsemen form the face and torso of a woman. The presence of unconscious elements on the part of the author means, Cahun argues, that it is very difficult to establish whether a poem is revolutionary or counter-revolutionary. She then turns to look at the issue of whether its value as propaganda can be measured by its effect, and she points out the problems involved in obtaining consistent results or in measuring the psychological impact of a piece, and thus its value as propaganda.

The major part of the first section of *Place Your Bets* is dedicated to an incisive and witty critique of those forms of 'poetry' that claim to act on the reader in a direct fashion to inspire revolutionary action, that is to be effective as propaganda. The first form she identifies is 'L'action directe par affirmation et répétition.'¹⁸ She equates capitalist advertising statements such as 'Every elegant woman is a customer of *Printemps*' ('Toute femme élégante est cliente du Printemps') with communist slogans such as 'Proletarians of every country unite' ('Proletaires de tous les pays, unissez vous'), and sees the latter as having the effect of exhausting the energy of the masses by a kind of 'revolutionary masturbation' ('d'épuiser par une sorte de masturbation révolutionnaire l'énergie des masses'), exhorting action when none is possible or desirable, so that when the moment comes, as in making love, the bolt has already been shot. The second category she identifies, 'Direct action by contradiction, by provocation' ('L'action directe à contre sens, par provocation') has the same fault as the first in requiring an unthinking reaction and above all reinforcing the binaries of 'right' and 'left' and preventing the progression beyond existing categories. As such it is also 'a method of cretinization' ('une méthode de crétinisation').¹⁹

Cahun concludes this first part of her pamphlet, then, by extolling the virtues of 'L'action indirecte' ('indirect action') as the only efficacious means of creating either poetry or



propaganda that is truly revolutionary. This kind of writing, as she sees it, requires an active participation on the part of the reader in divining the subtext of what is being said, and thus pushing them to advance to a higher level of comprehension, or rather of questioning the status quo. She gives various metaphors to suggest this process:

It's done by starting it up and then letting it break down. That obliges the reader to take a step further than he wants to by himself. The exits have all been carefully blocked, but you leave him the trouble of opening the front door. Let him desire, says Breton.²⁰

Her two main examples of 'Action indirecte' are from Marx and a long-standing icon of the surrealists, Arthur Rimbaud. Both provoke contradiction by suggesting a truth which has not been expressed but merely suggested – as in Marx's exaggerated praise of bourgeois accomplishments of the nineteenth century: 'It is they who were the first to show what human activity is capable of: they created quite other marvels than the Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, Gothic cathedrals ... etc.'²¹

In the second section of *Place Your Bets*, written in February 1934, Cahun's refutation of Aragon's notions of literature become even more central and are the occasion for rejecting completely the idea of art as narrowly functionalist. She argues that, despite trivializing attacks on the surrealists for their supposed degeneracy in evoking 'despair,' 'naked women,' 'papier mâché,' or 'flying pianos,' ('désespoir,' 'femmes nues,' 'papier mâché,' or 'pianos volants') the journal *La Révolution surréaliste* in fact deals with wider political issues. In particular, its 'indirect' attack on nationalism interrogates the trite evocations of solidarity which Cahun claims can be used interchangeably by either left or right. Moreover, the belief that communists can simply transcend their own origins, 'leurs tics bourgeois,' ('their bourgeois habits') to preach the correct interpretation of Marxism, is given short shrift. The pamphlet closes with the claim that the dadaists and surrealists have been the most revolutionary so far under a capitalist regime as they have deconstructed the myths of art which have allowed its ideological and economic exploitation. She cites Max Ernst's *frottages*, composed of rubbings of rough surfaces, as eschewing the traditional artistic values of permanence and perfection of technique. By being removed from its pedestal, art potentially becomes the province of all and not available to be fetishized and commodified. This rhetorical flourish and utopian vision is followed on the last page, merely entitled 'Elle' ('She'), by a post-script, which after the imagined resolution of the class conflicts that inform the basis of art as we know it, returns the reader to the present. Here poetry is able to provide a kind of imaginative, intuitive knowledge that differs from both science and philosophy, 'provoking short circuits, "magical" short cuts in human consciousness of the kind of which sexual love and extreme suffering also have the "secret."²²

The rejection of propagandistic literature in *Place Your Bets* was much admired by Breton. It was part of the surrealists' assertion of independence from the growing functionalism of the PCF's approach to literature. By 1935, the surrealists had been expelled



from all communist organizations for their refusal to renounce their concern with 'post-revolutionary problems,' that is, questions of desire, fantasy and the unconscious. The crunch point came when they refused to disassociate themselves from Ferdinand Alquié, who in the last issue of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* had praised Breton's stance against propagandastic literature and criticized 'the wind of systematic imbecility that blows from the USSR.'²³ He attacked the Soviet film *Road of Life* for its moralistic view that work is the only worthwhile goal and ridiculed the heroes of the film who enter a brothel only to wreck it and abuse women. Moreover it was the communists, the surrealists argued, who were abandoning revolutionary principles by allying themselves with imperialist France. Only a short time previously, in March 1933, the AEAR had issued a declaration, signed by Cahun amongst others, not only against the burning of the Reichstag and the Nazi terror but also against the imperialism pursued by the Western 'democracies' which could not, in their view, represent peace.²⁴ They rejected the position taken by the Popular Front – the alliance of left-wing parties, including the PCF, formed to combat fascism – which proposed sinking differences in the struggle against Hitler. Such a position, they felt, was counter-revolutionary, betrayed the class struggle and played into the hands of French nationalists; above all, it contradicted the Bolshevik principle of 'revolutionary defeatism,' the notion that the proletariat should not fight in a capitalist war and that the working class should be linked by international solidarity and not nationalism.

Isolated from the rest of the Left as war loomed, the remaining members of the surrealist group, among them Cahun and Moore, persisted in their last ditch attempt to give a collective public voice to their revolutionary ideals through the formation of *Contre-Attaque* in 1935 and, subsequently, of The International Artistic Federation (*La Fédération Internationale de l'Art Indépendent*, FIARI) initiated by Breton after his discussions with Trotsky in Mexico. In a 1936 document addressed to a meeting of *Contre-Attaque*, Cahun condemns patriotism, because, according to her, even where it is supposedly proletarian, it leads only to its adherents becoming 'marionettes des impérialistes' ('puppets of imperialism').²⁵ This was what she and the others judged the Communist Party, in its endorsement of the French-Soviet pact, to have become. Cahun (and Moore's) series of photographs, entitled *Poupée* was produced the same year and shows a small mannequin with a skin comprised of newspaper cuttings (Fig. 4).²⁶ Prominent along its body is the title page of *L'Humanité*, the PCF's organ. The puppet's cap associates it with militarism and the headlines on its arms reference the start of the Spanish Civil war with the fascist rebellion against the Republican government. One implication is an analogy between fascists and the Communist Party, which the figure's false teeth may also imply is 'toothless,' although the figure is deliberately ambivalent.





Fig. 4: Claude Cahun, *Poupée 1*, 1936, reproduced with permission of Jersey Heritage Trust.

Cahun, Moore and their colleagues advocated both defeatism and ‘un *pacifisme agressif*’ (‘an aggressive pacificism’) in opposing both the colonialist ‘democracies’ and a remilitarised USSR. Instead of vilifying ‘the Hun,’ they saw the German workers themselves as the victims of fascism, refusing to adopt a hostile stance towards the whole nation and relinquish their critical faculties in the name of a supposed unity between the liberal democracies and the Left against the threat of Hitler.²⁷ This was arguably a naïve position given the seriousness of that threat by 1936, but Cahun and the other surrealists saw themselves as remaining faithful to the cause of international socialism in the face of the desire of repressive capitalist governments and of the Stalinist state to defend themselves from the workers within their own countries by constructing the enemy as an external, preternaturally evil menace. One of the last pamphlets issued by *Contre-Attaque*, ‘Under Fire from the French and ... Allies’ Canons’ (‘Sous le feu des canons français et ... alliés’) criticizes a Stalinist document headed: ‘HITLER AGAINST THE WORLD THE WORLD AGAINST HITLER’ (‘HILTER CONTRE LE MONDE LE MONDE CONTRE HILTER’). The *Contre-Attaque* pamphlet takes the Stalinist approval of this slogan as evidence that ‘communist politics have definitively broken with the revolution’ (‘la politique communiste a rompu définitivement avec la révolution’) since it meant that the USSR was allying itself with the ‘monde bourgeois’ and the ‘monde capitaliste.’²⁸ The pamphlet concludes with the contentious, and possibly intentionally provocative statement:



'We... prefer in any circumstances, and without being duped, the brutal anti-diplomacy of Hitler, surely less fatal to peace than the slobbering agitation of the diplomats and the politicians' (Nous ... préférons, en tout état de cause, et sans être dupés, la brutalité antidiplomatique de Hitler, moins sûrement mortelle pour la paix que l'excitation baveuse des diplomats et des politiciens').²⁹ By the end of March 1936, the surrealist members of *Contre-Attaque* issued a statement dissolving the group because of 'surfascist' tendencies within the group.³⁰ This was signed by Adolphe Acker, Breton, Cahun, Marcel Jean, Moore, Georges Mouton, Henri Pastoureau and Benjamin Péret. Mark Polizzotti explains that Bataille had drafted the leaflet 'Under Fire...' in Breton's absence and that Breton was angered by the implied condonement of Hitler. Apparently he signed the leaflet against his will.³¹ Cahun and Moore were also signatories, but whatever they thought of this ironic whitewashing of the German dictator, could they maintain this position when the Nazis occupied France and what had become their home, Jersey?

La bonne propagande

In *Place your Bets* Cahun is at pains to distinguish propaganda from poetry because poetry, she argues, can never be reduced to the 'mercenary indignity ... of a role' ('l'indignité mercenaire ... d'un rôle')³². Six years after she wrote this, in 1940, the political situation in Europe had worsened dramatically. Not only had all hopes of resisting Stalinism been dashed, but the Nazis had overrun Europe. Reflecting on her position in *Place your Bets* after the war, Cahun questioned the simplicity of her earlier polemic. Having rejected 'the pious poetry of bad propaganda ... there remained the question of good propaganda. I did not go into that as much as I should have done' ('la pieuse poesie de mauvaise propagande ... restait la question de la bonne propagande. J'étais loin de l'avoir approfondir comme j'aurais dû').³³ The need for an effective and immediate way to resist the Nazi Occupation made her reconsider her earlier categorical condemnation of propaganda. After being imprisoned for her leafleting, the appropriateness of adopting a more propagandistic style seemed to her to have been proved by 'the moving experience of the fraternal welcome I received (in prison in 1944) from those in whose name I wrote' ('l'expérience émouvante du fraternal accueil (en 1944, en prison) de ceux au nom de qui j'écrivais').³⁴

The method and content of Cahun and Moore's resistance strategy showed a wish to produce writing which shared some of what Cahun had identified as desired effects of poetry, but was also designed to have immediate political impact, given the very changed political circumstances of subjection to Nazi government. The intention of the counter propaganda she produced with Moore is not to represent all 'the enemy' as vicious aggressors, reinforcing simple binaries between 'us' and 'them'; rather it is to encourage the Germans themselves to doubt the validity of the war, specifically appealing to the rank and file to reject their leaders and disobey orders. The intention is to spur the German troops into action, or rather inaction, without 'cretinizing' by facile exhortations but by highlighting the contradictions and injustice of



their position. In one of the last meetings of *Contre-Attaque* (9 April 1936), she advocates fostering the ambivalence about the coming war amongst those who are wavering: 'The ambivalence that they feel, that we all feel in relation to the war – and also to rebellion – will no longer appear to be a shameful illness but a potential for living forces.'³⁵ The tone of the published account of her contribution to this meeting is more realistic than some of the more strident declarations of the group and maybe signals Cahun's own sense of both the increasing marginality of their position and inability to have any real influence in promoting pacifism, despite the final appeal to militants to be ready for revolution. Mark Polizzotti comments that 'despite the union's exhortations to the proletariat, it is doubtful that workers ever read, or even heard of a single *Contre-Attaque* broadside.'³⁶

In the dramatically different circumstances of occupied Jersey, Cahun was finally able to find a way of putting into action some of the ideas and principles she had developed with *Contre-Attaque*, albeit on a smaller scale and with much more limited means than she and her fellow revolutionaries had envisaged in Paris in the mid-1930s. What is more, she was able to witness the impact of her subversive activity not only on the German commanders, who dubbed her and Moore spiritual 'franc-tireurs' ('snipers'),³⁷ but, she believed, also on the German soldiers with whom she was imprisoned from July 1944 to May 1945.³⁸

Cahun recorded the details of their activity at the time of the Occupation in much detail in notebooks found when the couple were finally arrested (notebooks now missing, and probably destroyed by the Germans as the capitulation approached). After the war she documented with lucidity, humour and some pride what they had achieved in several autobiographical writings, which are a remarkable testimony to the women's bravery, ingenuity and unwavering integrity.³⁹ From the beginning of the German arrival in July 1940, she began with small acts of subversion – writing the words 'Without End' ('Ohne Ende') on cigarette boxes and other places to signify the endless war to which the Nazis were subjecting their troops. In a tactic that was to be central to their approach, the phrase 'Ohne Ende' was appropriated from a Nazi pre-war slogan, 'Terror without end or an end to terror' ('Schrecken ohne Ende oder Ende mit Schrecken'). This was followed by acts such as putting fake coins which read 'Down with war' in the amusement park and in the Catholic church, and hanging a banner in St. Brelade's church next to their house which read 'Jesus died for us but we must die for Hitler.'⁴⁰ The German army used St. Brelade's cemetery to bury their dead and, at night, the women stuck cardboard crosses on the graves painted with the ironic statement: 'For them the war is over.'⁴¹

Cahun and Moore's most sustained and systematic activity was the writing and distribution of leaflets signed 'The Soldier without a Name' ('Der Soldat ohne Namen'), written mainly in German. Other leaflets were written in Czech, Greek, Spanish, Italian and Russian to give the impression the typewriter was being passed from hand to hand and that there was an international conspiracy. They were distributed by various means, according to their desired addressees: placed in empty cigarette boxes, which were inevitably picked up by



civilians and German soldiers who were short of tobacco; posted into the letterboxes of officers; and pinned to barbed wire fences. Cahun came up with the idea of creating the persona of 'The Soldier without a Name' and overcame Moore's initial reservations about using the alias. Moore knew German, having learnt it from her German governess, and she doubted the wisdom of using 'without a name' ('ohne Namen'); 'to begin with "*Namenlos*" ("nameless") would have been more correct in German' ('d'abord "*Namenlos*" eût été d'un allemand plus correct').⁴² 'The Soldier without a Name' recalls, but differs significantly from, 'The Unknown Soldier,' the emblematic figure who represented the countless dead of the First World War who had sacrificed themselves for their countries. Instead, 'The Soldier without a Name' is irreverent, refusing to lay down his life in the name of a dubious patriotism, debunking the rhetoric that justifies the war and exposing it as futile and exploitative.

Underpinning their campaign was a profound belief that Nazism was an aberration, no matter how powerful, that the German soldiers had the capacity to question the versions of reality they were being fed by their masters, and that they, like other human beings throughout the world, were capable of 'une libération morale complète.'⁴³ This confidence owes as much to an assumption of the revolutionary potential of the proletariat as to a more anarchic conception of an ideal society of free individuals 'who bow their head to nothing' ('qui ne courbent la tête devant rien').⁴⁴ In particular, Cahun and Moore realized that disrespect for Nazi authority could be very effectively evoked through laughter; irony and humour were anathema to the literalism and rule-bound thinking of their oppressors. Towards the end of the 1930s, Breton saw black humour as a way of puncturing social myths, such as those perpetrated by fascism, and releasing the unconscious aggression associated with them: 'such a view was hardly popular; war was surely not to be overcome by telling jokes.'⁴⁵ Breton quotes Freud's analysis of humour:

Humour does not only have something liberating about it ... but something sublime and elevated. The sublime leads to the triumph of narcissism, to the invulnerability of the ego which victoriously asserts itself. The ego refuses to let itself be subjected, to let itself suffer because of exterior realities, it refuses to admit that the traumas of the external world can touch it; rather, it makes them into occasions of pleasure.⁴⁶

Breton cites the following example from Freud: 'The condemned man, who, as he is taken to the gallows on Monday exclaims: "What a good start to the week!"' ('le condamné que l'on mène à la potence un lundi s'écriant: "Voilà une semaine qui commence bien!"). This comes very close to Cahun's own response to the verdict of the German court at her own condemnation. When the two women were given nine months and six years for possessing a radio, and the death sentence for exhorting German soldiers to shoot their officers, Cahun recalls her reaction: 'And I said, to conclude, making them burst out laughing again with my feigned naivety, "Are we to do the nine months and six years before we are shot?"'⁴⁷

Cahun employs a very dark satire in a post-war document beginning: 'Have you had any dealings with the Nazis? Did you notice that they have a certain sense of humour? Is it



different from yours?'⁴⁸ François Leperlier notes how in this piece Cahun contrasts '*l'humour non objectif* nazi (*l'humour nihiliste*)' with '*l'humour noir*.'⁴⁹ Lacking a sense of contradiction, desublimated nihilist 'humour' manifests itself in the brutal reality Cahun evokes at the Matthausen concentration camp. Here, among other grimly farcical events, a gypsy orchestra is obliged to play the popular French song 'I will wait' ('*J'attendrai*') whilst the inmates watch three of their comrades being hanged for trying to escape. These abominations are only possible because of a failure to imagine oneself in the place of the other, to be able to identify. As Cahun puts it: 'Have the non-objective humorists ever let themselves feel their bonds with the mass of the herd? Is the humour of others powerless?'⁵⁰ As a black humorist and dialectician, however, Cahun is able to appreciate the ultimate irony confronting the master race: if mass extermination continues, there will be no slaves left, no one to do the dirty work. The master's existence depends on the presence of the slave.

As Cahun's mouthpiece, 'The Soldier without a Name' is fully aware of the contradictions and ironies of his masters' positions, using mockery to undermine the Nazi leadership, highlighting German defeats and allied triumphs. 'He' makes fun of, as well as ironically reappropriates, the slogans and ideology of National Socialism. The method of Cahun/Moore's resistance recalls not only the many personae in their own art but also such creations as Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy*. While the creation of an alter ego more generally owes much to surrealism, its content is also influenced by Marxist theory in its emphasis on highlighting the contradictions both within ideology and between ideology and actual power relations.

The anti-nationalist sentiments which had long informed Cahun and Moore's position even before the 1930s also remain foremost in the position adopted in their resistance leaflets, where the nation is not defined by its governing class's reactionary politics.⁵¹ Von Oehsen notes that leading themes of their counterpropaganda are an emphasis on the cultural heritage of Germany and on discrediting Hitler. She comments:

Schwob and Malherbe emphasise repeatedly that the National Socialist culture is quite distinct from the German heritage of *Dichter und Denker*, 'the great Germany of Goethe, which the national socialist Grossdeutschland of Hitler strives to smear in vain.' The objective is to encourage the soldiers to reflect on their sense of self-worth, by evoking German instead of national socialist values.⁵²

Out of the small proportion of the couple's original production of leaflets that is extant, another identifiable tactic is to directly satirize Nazi ideology and rhetoric.⁵³ One example entitled 'Lied' begins bombastically enough: 'We are the heroes of the Herrenvolks/We are the German soldiers/We have besieged the whole of Europe/And seen the coasts of England.'⁵⁴ The song, however, continues with this chorus where one of the soldiers returns to Germany to find his wife pregnant by another man. The wife ironically uses the National Socialist policy of encouraging women to have large families as an act of national service as an alibi: 'And when I came home on holiday/My wife had fallen pregnant/Don't quarrel my laddie, she



said, 'The Fatherland needs soldiers!'⁵⁵ At the bottom of one of the copies of this 'song' leaflet is a note written in English by Cahun reading: 'This was distributed during the first months of the North African campaign.' The other verses evoke the hardships endured by the German armies as they freeze in Russia and are blinded in Africa in a futile dance of death to serve their warlords.

Another flyer ostensibly quotes Goebbels as revising the Nazi slogan 'Strength through Joy' ('Kraft durch Freude') to 'Strength through Flight' ('Kraft durch Verzweiflung'). In other examples, the troops are exhorted to slow down, sabotage the war and stop wasting their lives and get home before their houses are burnt down (Fig. 6).⁵⁶ The spectre of the German defeat in the First World War is evoked and allusions abound to the Allies' progress in retaking Europe as Nazi fortunes begin to wane. Utilizing simple language and often short lyric forms, the ludic voice adopted by the women nonetheless provokes rather than commands, encouraging the readers to question their roles in the war and the worth of giving their lives for their murderous leaders. The carnivalesque mockery of authority figures who are made to seem grotesque is reminiscent of dada,⁵⁷ as in this example: 'HITLER leads us ... GOEBBELS speaks for us ... GOERING gobbles for us ... LEY drinks for us ... Himmler? ... HIMMLER MURDERS FOR ... But no one dies for us' (Fig. 5).⁵⁸ In other leaflets, the dialogue form is used: 'So have we lost the war? /Precisely /Are you really glad about it? /Absolutely /I don't understand. Why? /Because I don't want to waste all my life in uniform!'⁵⁹ This style recalls the one adopted in a *Contre-Attaque* document written by Bataille in February 1936 which begins with a series of questions and answers, although in somewhat less humorous vein: 'What does capitalist society offer those who give it their labour? /Bones to gnaw on. /What on the other hand does it offer the holders of capital? /Everything they want, until they are satiated, ten, a hundred, a thousand turkeys a day, if they have a big enough stomach.'⁶⁰



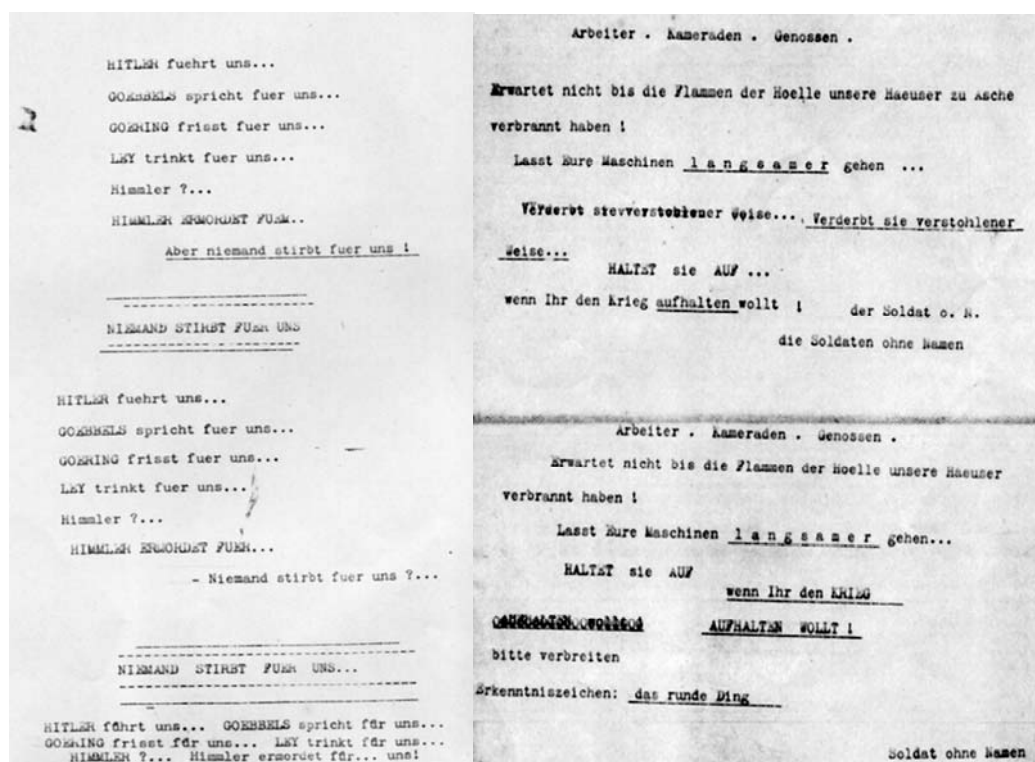


Fig. 5: Claude Cahun (with Marcel Moore), Leaflet distributed during German Occupation, 1940 – 44, reproduced with permission of Jersey Heritage Trust [begins ‘Arbeiter, Kameraden, Genossen’].

Fig. 6: Claude Cahun (with Marcel Moore), Leaflet distributed during German Occupation, 1940 – 44, [Begins ‘Hitler fuehrt uns’].

The creation of an alter ego as a means to resist Nazi oppression – in this case a young German male, belonging to the ‘Aryan’ race – echoes the sustained project of self-invention that Cahun undertook with Moore in her photographic portraits. In another article, we discuss how her major tactic in her photographs is to ‘evoke the unrepresentable by subverting representation from within’ and explore how ‘through paradox, reversal and repetition, [her] multiple identities, her monstrous and abject objects, create mischief, denying the power to control and categorize through the gaze.’⁶¹ For instance, in her portrait c.1928⁶² she has her back to camera, her shaven head turned back over her shoulder to reveal her Jewish-looking profile, her skin a ghostly white; clearly resembling Nosferatu, she is performing the dominant anti-Semitic conception of the Jew as vampire, deliberately constructing her identity through the reversed gaze of the other.⁶³ This ironic performance of the abject, which condenses prevailing social fears, like many of her images of herself, at once affirms and challenges the beholder’s sense of a coherent self. During the Occupation, by writing through the voice of a German soldier, who understands German culture, and who uses familiar idioms but deploys them to proclaim scurrilous and provocative attacks on the Nazi war effort, she and Moore achieved a similar effect in unsettling the German commanders. The identity the women assumed inverts the abject one of the Jew previously assumed, taking on instead that of a member of the ‘master race,’ apparently one of their own



but heretically spouting defeatism. In one leaflet, the anti-Semitic discourse, extensively deployed by the Nazis to construct the Jews as parasites, is reversed and the women identify Hitler himself as an ‘...unGerman Vampire who is sucking the blood of our youth.’ (‘... nichtdeutschen Vampir das Blut unseren Jugend saüft!’)⁶⁴ Nazism not only proclaimed the purity of the German race but the integrity of the Teutonic body. Cahun’s work is primarily concerned with the fluidity of identity, and after dada, with the disruption of hierarchies of the body, of gender, and of the gaze.

This disruption receives a particularly vivid expression in the text and photomontages of Cahun’s experimental autobiography *Disavowals: Cancelled Confessions (Aveux non Avenus, 1930)*, which have been discussed by many critics.⁶⁵ Photomontage had been developed by the dadaists to critique the culture which they felt had been discredited by the Great War, interrogating the classical tradition by juxtaposing elements from high and low culture and contradicting the representational claims of realism. John Heartfield then used the technique for more specific purposes in deconstructing Nazi propaganda.⁶⁶ It seems very likely that Cahun was familiar with Heartfield’s work as there was an exhibition of his work in Paris in 1935, prefaced by Aragon. Little of the visual material that she produced during the Occupation has survived but Cahun describes how she collected any German objects she could find, without knowing how she would re-use them, recalling the practice of Duchamp and other dadaists in recontextualizing *objets trouvés*. Finding the page of a German magazine showing triumphant troops, she crops the photograph to invert its meaning and reveal its contradictory unconscious significance – in an analogous process to the one discussed in *Place Your Bets* of perceiving a riot in photograph of a woman’s hair:

On the page was a photograph of a marching regiment. They looked full of ardour. I turned it around. I realized that if I hid half of the photo it would completely change the impression it gave. The legs, the boots (without the faces) had nothing that seemed exultant about them. They were covered in with mud (it is true that there was some occasionally even that ultra dry spring), and, isolated from the rest, extremely tired.⁶⁷

In this way, Cahun precisely utilizes the understanding of context and the unconscious as two factors key to the creation of meaning that she had explored in *Les paris sont ouverts*. The tired feet, highlighted by her cropping of the image, undermine its manifestly propagandistic intention. After framing it, she placed the cropped image in a house that was about to be occupied by German troops.

An episode from her interrogation, which she recounts twice with pleasure, reveals her use of humour directly to mock her persecutors. She is delighted that she can make even these creatures laugh, outwitting them at their own game, at the same time as making their guiding principles seem totally absurd. One of the two complete satirical magazines that the women montaged was intended for a *Kommandant* Knackfuss (who had since left the island) and was shown at their trial. At this point in the interrogation, they were questioned on the



subject of a leaflet that was the key evidence for their condemnation to death. It calls for desertion with, if necessary, the killing of officers. The lead judge, Cahun recalls, said that such a revolt could not succeed without the involvement of the officers and asked her to respond to this point, to which she answered:

'I addressed the officers as well. For example, I sent the magazine you have in your hand to *kommandant* Knackfuss in 1942.' They burst into laughter. To understand the humour of my answer, you need to know that the magazine in question contained personal insults directed at Knackfuss, – in particular, adverts for products for tired feet where the pun on his surname was used in promotional style.⁶⁸

The fact that two middle-aged French women of 'a very unpleasant kind' were able to successfully pose as a member of the German military without detection for four years, was an affront to Nazi ideology.⁶⁹ If the identity of the master could be so adeptly appropriated then the foundations of his power on the basis of an essential difference and superiority over his 'others' – Slavs, Jews, homosexuals, gypsies – was undermined. In this way, the tactic of mimicry that they adopted struck at the heart of their oppressors in a way which would not have been achieved with a more direct approach. It was a strategy which naturally evolved from the central preoccupations of Cahun (and Moore's work) both before and during their association with the surrealists and from the lifelong inclination for, and necessity of, disguise. Carolyn Dean, in one of the best articles on Cahun's aesthetics, explores her Sappho narrative in *Heroines* (1925) as a metaphor for Cahun's own practice.⁷⁰ In Cahun's version of Sappho's story, the poet fakes her own suicide by having a dummy of herself pushed off a cliff. Apparently having taken her own life because of unrequited love for a man, she is free to pursue her love of women. Similarly 'The Soldier without a Name' provided a cover for the couple to undertake their daily acts of subversion, effectively disguising their actually very precarious position as lesbians and avant-garde artists.

While they conducted their campaign, Cahun and Moore lived at 'La Rocquaise,' a house next to the St. Brelade's Bay Hotel, where the Luftwaffe were billeted. Their proximity to the German troops, as Cahun recognized, protected them from suspicion because the authorities clearly could not imagine that anyone would have the effrontery to perform such acts under their noses. The German Secret Police (Geheime Feldpolizei) suspected one of their own ranks until linguistic mistakes in the leaflets began to be recognized. Their failure to suspect Cahun and Moore was not least because of the German investigators' misguided assumptions about gender, class and race and their stereotyped notions of who would be capable of opposing them so persistently. Describing their interrogation and imprisonment, Moore is quoted as saying in an interview after the war: 'I complained once of the hardness of my plank bed and all the satisfaction I got was the remark: "You have acted like a man you must expect to be treated as a man".'⁷¹ The fact that even after they were arrested the Germans found it so hard to believe the couple were actually the traitors whom they had been searching for two years or that they were acting on their own, testifies to the appropriateness



of the Cahun and Moore's surreal approach to resistance. The success of their performance in parodying Nazism and mimicking a German identity was the source of much fascination to the women's interrogators as it was both familiar and uncomfortably subversive of all they stood for.



Fig. 7: Claude Cahun (with Marcel Moore), Untitled, 1945, reproduced with permission of Jersey Heritage Trust. (Cahun with Luftwaffe badge between her teeth after the Liberation).

The couple's strategy may have been far removed from the more romantic notions of poetry which Cahun had expounded in *Place Your Bets* in 1934, but it owed much to the carnivalesque inversions of high and low and the use of *objets trouvés* which connected dada and surrealism to the everyday. Despite the doubts she expressed in 'Confidences au miroir' ('Secrets in the Mirror') (1945-6) about whether she had sufficiently addressed the question of 'good propaganda,' she had indeed found an inventive means of interrogating Nazi rule that was a form of performative, populist 'indirect action.' Cahun recalls, with some pleasure, that when she and Moore were interrogated after their arrest, the German authorities were still preoccupied by one of the false trails that they had planted as 'The Soldier without a Name':

They remained very perturbed by one of our inventions ... 'Rendez-vous at Plemont Grotto.' This invitation was not only written in German but in the same terms as an announcement for a Nazi cultural meeting. We had been lucky to find one of these notices lost or thrown beside a path ... Even in August 1944 'our announcement' worried them; they could not believe it was purely imaginary.⁷²

The ability to imagine oneself another, to put oneself in the place of the other, of the 'enemy,' was precisely what the German leaders did not have or had suppressed within themselves.



For Cahun and Moore, it was a weapon which proved effective not only in undermining the security of the German commanders but also in empowering the disaffected amongst their ranks. The totalitarian desire to fix subjects and meanings was undermined by the couple's radical relativism, their ability to blur the reified distinctions of Jew/Aryan, male/female, to hide their radical politics and to pass, when necessary to subvert the absurd categorizations of Nazi thinking, as both 'quiet bourgeois ladies' and a seditious young soldier.⁷³



Fig. 8: Claude Cahun, Untitled, 1926, Courtesy, Soizic Audouard

¹ 'Loin de moi l'intention de reprocher à qui que ce soit d'avoir quitté la France au moment de l'occupation. Mais on doit constater que le Surréalisme était absent des préoccupations de ceux qui sont restés, parce qu'il ne leur fut d'aucun secours ni sur le plan affectif, ni du comportement devant les nazis, ni sur celui, pratique, de la lutte entreprise entre eux,' Tristan Tzara, *Le surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, Nagel, Paris, 1966, 74.

² The complex relationship between the surrealists, PCF and left politics has been explored in several studies. For example, most recently in Steven Harris's invaluable study, *Surrealist Art and Thought in the 1930s: Art, Politics and the Psyche*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, see especially chapter 2: Helena Lewis *Dada Turns Red: The Politics of Surrealism*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1988: Raymond Spiteri and Donald LaCoss, eds. *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2003, and Robert Stuart Short, 'The Politics of Surrealism,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1966, 3-25.

³ Lucy Schwob adopted the name Claude Cahun in about 1917. Claude is gender ambiguous in French and Cahun was the name of her paternal grandmother. The surname Cahun (the equivalent of Cohen) emphasized her Jewish heritage, even more than that of Schwob – though the Schwobs were known to be of Jewish descent too. The reasons for Malherbe's choice of the specific male pseudonym, Marcel Moore, are not known.



⁴ The work of Cahun and Moore has begun to receive sustained critical attention in the last fifteen years, aided considerably by the acquisitions of their work by the Jersey Heritage Trust in 1995 and 2002, which made available a large quantity of images and documents which had remained obscured in private collections since Moore's death in 1972. Early studies include Therese Lichtenstein, 'A Mutable Mirror; Claude Cahun,' *Artforum*, Vol. 30, No. 8, April 1992; David Bate, 'The Mise en Scène of Desire,' in *Mise en Scène*, eds. François Leperlier and David Bate, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 1994; Whitney Chadwick, ed. *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998 and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'The Equivocal "I": Claude Cahun as Lesbian Subject,' in *Inverted Odysseys: Claude Cahun, Maya Deren, Cindy Sherman*, ed. Shelley Rice, Grey Art Gallery, New York, 1999. The first dedicated collection of critical essays about their work was Louise Downie, ed. *Don't Kiss Me: The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, Tate Publishing/Jersey Heritage Trust, London, 2006. This collection follows the emphasis of Tirza True Latimer and Jennifer Shaw who highlighted Moore's role in the production of the Cahun's portraits. See Tirza True Latimer, 'Looking Like a Lesbian,' and Jennifer Shaw, 'Collaborative Self-images in Claude Cahun's *Aveux non Avenus*,' in *The Modern Woman Revisited: Paris between the Wars*, eds. Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 2003.

⁵ 'Lettre à André Breton,' 18 January 1946, cited in François Leperlier, *Claude Cahun: l'écart et la métamorphose*, Jean Michel Place, Paris, 1992, 267.

⁶ Leperlier, *Claude Cahun*.

⁷ Claire Follain, 'Constructing a profile of resistance - Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe as paradigmatic "résistantes,"' unpublished MA paper, University of Sussex, 1997, republished as 'Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe – Résistantes,' in *Don't Kiss Me*, ed. Louise Downie; Kristine von Oehsen, 'Der Soldat ohne Namen: Lucy Schwob's Resistance Work on Jersey 1940-1944,' paper given at *Surrealism Laid Bare, Even*, West Dean College, May 2003. See also von Oehsen's PhD thesis, 'Claude Cahun Published/Unpublished. The Textual Identities of Lucy Schwob, 1914-1944,' University of East Anglia, 2003.

⁸ 'Aveux non Avenus,' in *Claude Cahun; Écrits*, ed. François Leperlier, Jean Michel Place, Paris, 2002, 250. The text of 'Aveux non Avenus' has recently been translated by Susan de Muth as *Disavowals: Cancelled Confessions*, Tate Publishing, London, 2008.

⁹ See Cahun catalogue, <http://www.jerseyheritagetrust.jeron.je:80/wwwopac.exe?DATABASE=collect&LANGUAGE=0&DEBUG=0&BRIEFADAPL=ARTBRIEF&SRT0=IN&SEQ0=ascendingOCC0=1&FLD0=VV&VAL0=Cahun,+Claude&BOOL0=and&FLD1=CL&VAL1=Art&LIMIT=50> (accessed 20/9/09). For examples of Cahun's changing personae in addition to Figs. 1 and 2, see on this site JHT/1995 numbers 26/p, 27/f,30/g,32/a, and 36/g.

¹⁰ 'Le surréalisme ne tendit à rien tant qu'à provoquer, au point de vue intellectuel et moral, une *crise de conscience* de l'espèce la plus générale et la plus grave et que l'obtention ou la non obtention de ce résultat peut seule décider de sa réussite ou de son échec historique,' André Breton, 'Second manifeste du surréalisme,' in *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Paris, 1972, 133.

¹¹ See Herbert S. Gershman, *The Surrealist Revolution in France*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1969, 85.

¹² This example gives a sense of it: 'Gloire à la dialectique matérialiste/et gloire à son incarnation/l'armée /Rouge/Gloire à/ l'armée/Rouge,' ('Glory to dialectical materialism/And glory to its incarnation/ the Red /Army/Glory to/the Red Army') 'Front Rouge,' in *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives*, Vol. 1, 1922-1939, eds. Eric Losfeld and José Pierre, Le Terrain Vague, Paris, 1980, 464.



¹³ 'La conquête de la liberté des mœurs, des droits de l'être humain opprimé par des siècles de superstitions féroces, m'importaient personnellement,' Claude Cahun, 'Lettre à Paul Levy,' in *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 716.

¹⁴ 'Pourra même devenir contre-révolutionnaire lorsque la situation qui l'a inspirée sera modifiée,' Claude Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, Jose Corti, Paris, 1934, note 1, 8. Steven Harris notes that the PCF leader, Jack Duclos, declared the Marseillaise to be a revolutionary song at a rally consecrating the Popular Front on July 14 1935, another context which Cahun would have certainly considered 'counter-revolutionary.' He also discusses the use of the statement 'La Marseillaise est un chant révolutionnaire' ('The Marseillaise is a revolutionary song') juxtaposed with the 'La loi punit le contrefacteur des travaux forcés' ('The law punishes the counterfeiter of/with hard labour') on the base of her 1936 *Objet*. Here 'Cahun uses the apparent contradiction between the two statements to trouble or undo political identities or identifications, while underscoring their secret affinity as expressions of the law or by those aspiring to power,' Harris, *Surrealist Art*, 168.

¹⁵ 'C'est pourquoi j'estime que la propagande communiste ne saurait être confiée qu'à la pensée dirigée des prosateurs conscients, des journalistes ... Cependant les poètes agissent à leur façon sur la sensibilité des hommes. Leurs atteintes sont plus sournoises; mais leur coups les plus détournés sont parfois mortels,' Claude Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 8.

¹⁶ 'Un homme a cru photographier les cheveux mêlés de brins de paille de la femme qu'il aime, endormie dans un champ. Le cliché révélé, apparaissent mille bras divergents, des poings brillants, des armes, on s'aperçoit qu'il s'agit d'une émeute,' Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 10.

¹⁷ Lise Deharme, *Le Coeur de Pic* (32 poems for children illustrated with twenty photographs by Cahun), Librairie José Corti, Paris, 1937. The photographs by Cahun for this book are reproduced in *Claude Cahun: Photographie*, Jean Michel Place, Paris, 1995, cat. nos. 167-202.

¹⁸ 'Direct action through assertion and reiteration,' Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14. Aragon is also derided in this manner by Cahun's colleagues elsewhere: '[il] s'est converti aux plus sinistres méthodes de crétinisation des masses,' Aragon, 'La Mobilisation contre La Guerre n'est pas la Paix,' in *Tracts surréalistes*, 243.

²⁰ 'Il s'agit de mettre en marche et laisser en panne. Ça oblige le lecteur à faire tout seul un pas de plus qu'il ne voudrait. On a soigneusement bloqué toutes les sorties, mais la porte d'entrée on lui laisse le soin de l'ouvrir. Laisser à désirer, dit Breton,' Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 14.

²¹ 'C'est elle qui, la première, a fait voir ce dont est capable l'activité humaine: elle a créé de tout autres merveilles que les pyramides d'Égypte, les aqueducs romains, les cathédrales gothiques ... etc ...,' Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 14.

²² 'Provoquant dans cette prise de conscience humaine des courts-circuits – des raccourcis "magiques" dont l'amour sexuel et la souffrance extrême ont aussi le "secret,"' Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 32.

²³ Helena Lewis, *Dada Turns Red*, 121.

²⁴ See 'Protestez!,' *Feuille Rouge* No. 2, March 1933, reproduced in *Tracts surréalistes*, 238-40.

²⁵ 'Réunion de Contre-Attaque du 9 Avril 1936,' in *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 563.

²⁶ See *Claude Cahun: Photographie*, cat. nos. 144-46.

²⁷ See 'Pour un rassemblement révolutionnaire,' 31 March 1938, in *Tracts surréalistes*, 526.

²⁸ 'Sous le feu des canons français...et alliés,' March 1936, in *Tracts surréalistes*, 298-99.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 298



³⁰ Steven Harris notes that Pierre Dugan (known as Pierre Andler after 1937) was responsible for this term and that although the *Contre-Attaque* manifesto had advocated the use of fascist strategies for popular mobilization, 'what must have been disturbing was [Dugan's] notion of a Marxism being put back on its feet *by fascism*,' Harris, *Surrealist Art*, 280, note 29.

³¹ Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton*, Bloomsbury, London, 1995, 430. When interrogated by Robert Short, Jean Dautry, the author of the pamphlet, and one of Bataille's circle, is quoted as saying that Breton did however sign a second version of the leaflet after 'minor modifications' and that it was only after a further pamphlet, *Travailleurs, vous êtes trahis!*, written by Bataille, Jean Bernier and Lucie Colliard appeared without his consent that Breton decided to split from the group. See *Tracts surréalistes*, 505. Claude Cahun and Suzanne Malherbe's names do not appear on the later pamphlet.

³² Cahun, *Les paris sont ouverts*, 30.

³³ 'Confidences au miroir,' 1945-46, in *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 584.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 584.

³⁵ 'L'ambivalence dans laquelle ils se trouvent, dans laquelle nous nous trouvons tous vis-à-vis de la guerre – et aussi l'insurrection – apparaîtra, non plus comme un honteux malaise mais comme un potentiel de forces vives,' 'Réunion de Contre-Attaque du 9 Avril 1936,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 563.

³⁶ Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 429.

³⁷ 'Testament,' unpublished statement by Cahun, 'written between 16 November 1944 and the following Wednesday,' held at the Jersey Heritage Trust, f.2. She and Moore were condemned to death by the German military court in St. Helier on November 16 and reprieved, against their will, the following February.

³⁸ Claire Follain writes that Cahun and Malherbe 'became good friends with many of German soldiers imprisoned for desertion or insurrection, and many claimed the [women's] tracts to have been the impetus behind their actions,' 'Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe – Résistantes,' 92.

³⁹ See 'Confidences au miroir,' 1945-6: 'Le muet dans la melée,' 1948: 'Feuilles détachées du scrapbook,' 1948-1951: 'Lettre à Gaston Ferdière,' 1946, and 'Lettre à Paul Lévy,' in *Claude Cahun: Écrits*.

⁴⁰ 'Confidences au miroir,' 607-8.

⁴¹ 'Für sie ist der Krieg zu Ende.'

⁴² 'Lettre à Gaston Ferdière,' 693. From 1943, the women also began to sign themselves 'Der Soldat ohne Namen und seine Kameraden' ('The Soldier without a Name and his Comrades') to heighten Nazi paranoia about a resistance movement on the island.

⁴³ Cahun, 'Réunion de *Contre-Attaque*,' 564.

⁴⁴ '*Contre-Attaque* manifesto,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 550.

⁴⁵ David Bate, *Photography and Surrealism: Sexuality, Colonialism and Social Dissent*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2004, 252.

⁴⁶ 'L'humour a non seulement quelque chose de libérateur, ... mais encore *quelque chose de sublime et d'élevé*, ... Le sublime tient évidemment au triomphe du narcissisme, à l'invulnérabilité du moi qui s'affirme victorieusement. Le moi se refuse à se laisser entamer, à se laisser imposer la souffrance par les réalités extérieures, il se refuse à admettre que les traumatismes du monde extérieur puissent le toucher; bien plus, il fait voir qu'ils peuvent même lui devenir occasions de plaisir,' André Breton, *Anthologie de l'humour noire*, Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Paris, 1966, 19-20.



⁴⁷ 'Et moi, pour finir, les faisant de nouveau rire aux éclats par ma naïveté simulée: 'Are we to do the nine months and six years before we are shot?' 'Lettre à Paul Levy,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 721.

⁴⁸ 'As-tu déjà eu affaire aux Nazis?,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 762. The original title is in English.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, note 3.

⁵⁰ 'Les humoristes non objectifs ont-ils jamais été conçus pour faire sentir leurs liens avec le gros du troupeau? L'humour des autres est-il impuissant?' *Ibid.*, 762.

⁵¹ Cahun and Moore's relationship to the tradition of opposing nationalism in Cahun's paternal family, the Schwobs, has recently been explored by Patrice Allain in 'Contre qui écrivez vous?' De l'esprit pamphlétaire à l'insurrection des consciences,' paper given at the symposium 'De Marcel Schwob à Claude Cahun,' Centre Culturel International de Cérisy-la-Salle, 13-20 August 2005.

⁵² Kristine von Oehsen, 'Der Soldat ohne Namen,' f.11.

⁵³ There are 45 examples of the leaflets in the Cahun/Moore papers at the Jersey Heritage Trust.

⁵⁴ 'Wir sind die Helden der Herrenvolks,/Wir sind die deutschen Soldaten./Wir haben Europa ganz besiegt/Und die Küste von England gesehen' [sic], Leaflet by Cahun and Moore, held at the Jersey Heritage Trust.

⁵⁵ 'Und wenn ich zu Haus auf Urlaub kam,/Meine Frau war schwangen gegangen./Zank nicht, mein Bübchen, sagte sie,/Das Vaterland braucht Soldaten' [sic], Leaflet by Cahun (with Moore), held at the Jersey Heritage Trust.

⁵⁶ 'Workers, Comrades, Accomplices ... Don't wait until the flames of war have burnt our houses to ashes!/Let your engines slow down ... Act sneakily ... Stop if you want to stop the war! The soldier without a name, the soldiers with no name,' Leaflet by Cahun (with Moore), held at the Jersey Heritage Trust, see Fig. 6 for German original.

⁵⁷ Christian Weikop has analysed the carnivalesque aspects of Dada, 'Berlin Dada, Bakhtin and the Carnavalesque,' talk given at the University of Sussex, 8 February 2006.

⁵⁸ 'HITLER fuerht uns ... GOEBBELS spricht fuer uns ... GOERING frisst fuer uns ... LEY trinkt fuer uns ... Himmler? ... HIMMLER ERMORDET FUER ... aber niemand stirbt fuer uns!' The word play here is suggestive - might Himmler murder 'der Führer'? The verse is repeated with slight but provocative changes in punctuation.

⁵⁹ 'So haben wir den Kreig verloren?/Gewiss/Aber Du freust Dich darüber?/Ganz Gewiss/Das verstehe ich nicht. Warum?/ Weil ich nicht wünsche mein ganzes Leben in Uniform zu verschleudern!' [sic], Leaflet by Cahun (and Moore) entitled *Finstres Lachen (Dark Laughter)*, held at the Jersey Heritage Trust.

⁶⁰ 'Qu'offre la société capitaliste à celui qui lui donne son travail?/Des os à ronger./Qu'offre-t-elle par contre aux détenteurs du capital?/ Tout ce qu'ils veulent, plus qu'à satiété, dix, cent, mille dindes par jour, s'ils avaient l'estomac assez grand,' *Contre-Attaque*, 'Appel à l'Action,' *Tracts surréalistes*, 295-296. Pierre comments in the same volume that 'the importance of this leaflet is great because it adopts a spoken style which makes it understandable by the working class. But could *Contre- Attaque* really hope to exert an influence on the workers? At best, articles in the tone of this *Appel à l'Action* would have had the greatest repercussion if it could be published in the newspapers read by the working class. But neither *L'Humanité* nor *Le Populaire* were disposed to open their columns to Bataille, Breton and their friends,' 504, note b.

⁶¹ Laura 'Lou' Bailey and Lizzie Thynne, 'Beyond Representation: Claude Cahun's Monstrous Mischief-Making,' *History of Photography*, Vol. 29, No .2, Summer 2005, 135-48.

⁶² *Claude Cahun: Photographe*, cat. no. 68 and the portrait may be viewed at <http://www.jerseyheritagetrust.jeron.je/wwwopac.exe?DATABASE=collect&LANGUAGE=0&D>



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⁶³ See the film *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, dir F. W. Murnau, Germany, 1922.

⁶⁴ Handwritten draft of leaflet by Cahun (and Moore) beginning 'Nieder mit Hitler!' ('Down with Hitler!' held at the Jersey Heritage Trust. It is signed 'Die Soldaten ohne Namen' ('The Soldiers Without a Name') and a note has been added which reads: 'This one was typed and stuck on the windows of the police cars.'

⁶⁵ See, for example, Honor Lasalle and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Surrealist Confession: Claude Cahun's Photomontages,' *Afterimage* Vol. 19, No. 8, March 1992, 10-13, and Jennifer Shaw 'Collaborative Self-Images in Claude Cahun's *Aveux non Avenus*,' *The Modern Woman Revisited*.

⁶⁶ Samples of Heartfield's work may be seen at <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/heartfield/> (accessed 3/4/2010)

⁶⁷ 'Sur cette page une photographie d'un régiment en marche. Ça avait l'air plein d'ardeur. Je la tournai en tout sens. Je m'aperçus qu'il suffisait de cacher la moitié de la photo pour changer *complètement* l'impression qu'elle donnait. Les jambes, les bottes, (sans les visages) n'avaient rien qui put sembler exaltant. Elles étaient tachées de boue (il faut croire qu'il y en avait tout de même eu parfois durant cet printemps ultrasec) et, isolées du reste, fatiguées à l'extrême,' 'Lettre à Gaston Ferdière,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 681.

⁶⁸ '«Je me suis *aussi* adressée aux officiers. J'ai adressée, par exemple, l'illustré que vous avez en mains au *kommandant* Knackfuss, en 1942». Ils éclatèrent de rire. Pour saisir l'humour de mon réponse, il faut savoir que l'illustré en question contenait des insultes personnelles à l'égard de Knackfuss, notamment les annonces de produits pour les pieds fatigués où le calembour au sujet du nom propre était utilisé en style publicitaire,' Claude Cahun, 'Lettre à Gaston Ferdière,' 700. 'Knacken' in German literally means to crack so 'Knackfuss' might be translated as 'cracked foot.'

⁶⁹ Hans Max von Aufsess, *The von Aufsess Occupation Diary*, ed. and trans. Kathleen J. Nowlan, Phillimore, Chichester, 1985, 61. Von Aufsess was a German officer responsible for liaising with Jersey's civil authorities on behalf of the German Military Command. Aufsess describes both women as Jewish in his lurid reference to their arrest. However, since Cahun was only of Jewish descent on her father's side she did not fall within the National Socialists' 'legal' definition of Jewishness, as she acknowledges in 'La muet dans la mêlée,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 629.

⁷⁰ Carolyn J. Dean, 'Claude Cahun's Double,' *Yale French Studies*, No. 90, 1996, 71 – 92.

⁷¹ 'Sentenced to Death by Island Nazis: the Story of Two Gallant French Women,' *Jersey Evening Post*, Saturday July 14, 1945. Many thanks to the late Joe Mière for passing me this article as well as sharing his memories of Cahun and Moore with me from when they were all imprisoned by the German authorities.

⁷² 'Ils resterèrent forts inquiets d'une de nos inventions: ... "Rendez-vous aux grottes de Plemont." Ce rendez-vous là était non seulement rédigé en allemand mais les termes mêmes d'une convocation de groupe pour réunion culturelle nazie. Nous avons eu la chance de tomber sur une de ces convocations perdue, ou jetée au bord d'un chemin... Mais encore en août 1944, "notre convocation" les inquiétait; ils ne pouvaient croire qu'elle était purement imaginaire.' 'Le muet dans la mêlée,' *Claude Cahun: Écrits*, 629.

⁷³ 'bourgeoises paisibles,' Cahun 'Le muet dans la mêlée,' 629.

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