

**EROTICISM, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:  
TOYEN AND THE PRAGUE AVANT-GARDE**

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## **EROTICISM, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL CONTEXT:**

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University of Pittsburgh, 2008

This dissertation situates the life and work of the artist Toyen (Marie Čermínová, 1902–80), a founding member of the Prague surrealist group, within the larger discourses of modernism and feminism/gender studies. In particular, it explicates Toyen’s construction of gender and eroticism within the contexts of early twentieth-century Czech feminism and sex reformism, the interwar Prague avant-garde, and Prague and Paris surrealism. Toyen’s interest in sexuality and eroticism, while unusual in its extent and expression, is intimately related to her historical and geographic position as an urban Czech forming her artistic personality during first a period of economic boom, avant-garde optimism, increased opportunities for women, and sex reformism, and then a period of economic crisis, restriction of women’s employment, social conservatism, and tension between the subconscious and the socialist realist. Toyen’s ambiguously gendered self-presentation, while again unusual, needs to be considered in light of her enthusiastic reception within three predominantly male avant-garde groups (Devětsil, Prague surrealism, and Paris surrealism). I stress that the social and cultural environment of her childhood and youth created an atmosphere that enabled her to pursue lifelong personal interests and obsessions in a manner that was unusually public for a female artist of her generation.

As a case study of one artist working within a specific avant-garde movement, this project contributes to critical re-evaluation of surrealism, the Central European contribution to modernism, and the role of female artists in the avant-garde. This intervention in the history of

surrealism makes its intellectual contribution by changing our perception of the movement, giving vivid evidence of the Prague group's difference from and influence on the Paris group, and presenting a more complex and nuanced view of women's role in and treatment by surrealism.

This dissertation employs a mixed methodology that combines investigation of historical context with aspects of feminist, psychoanalytic, iconographic, and semiotic approaches. No previous study of Toyen or the Czech interwar avant-garde has been done in this manner.

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## PREFACE

A great many people and institutions deserve my thanks, and it is difficult to know where to start. Perhaps the best place to begin would be well before I was born, with the Odvody and Kufner families of Merklín, who befriended my father and began what is now over sixty years of Czech-American friendship. All my life I have had the benefit of what could be considered a large adoptive family overseas. Tomáš and Jana Odvody were like a third set of grandparents, and I am sorry they could not live to see me write about their famous contemporary. Their extended family is a wonderful and interesting group of people, of whom I must specifically mention Jana Straková, Zdeněk Straka, and their daughter Zuzana; Hana Petraňová, Mila Petraň, their older daughter Jitka, her husband Milan Novotný, and the twins Tomáš and Tereza; the late Pepik Kufner and his wife Marie Kufnerová; and Alenka Šteigerová and Zdeněk Šteiger, who actually live in a house designed by Otakar Novotný and who have created a garden to rival the house. Along the way, other Czech friends have come into my life, including the late Věra Ševčíková and her son Milan Ševčík; Martina Bejsovcová and her parents; the Kudla family; Štěpanka Korytová-Magstadt and her son Michael; and Věra Krekanová.

Also very much present in my mind are the friends and faculty of my undergraduate life at UCSC. While they are too numerous to list in full, I must note Audrey Stanley, Elaine Yokoyama and Norvid Roos, Tom Corbett, and Kathy Foley as the faculty members who got to see me in both my best and worst moments and kept encouraging me along (Audrey and Kathy

eventually wrote me letters of recommendation long after the average person would have forgotten who I was). Bruce Kawin's film classes had a strong effect both on my writing and on my obsession with digging up the cultural context for the avant-garde, and I first wrote about art history for Barry Katz. The senior projects done by my friends Brad Clark and Paul Haxo impressed me and fed my ambitions to do equally interesting things, and while I am not sure either of them quite understands what possesses me to want a PhD in art history, each of them has been known to encourage me now and then.

David Van Ness gave his enthusiastic and tireless support of my early research in feminist art history and my decision to apply to graduate school. The long-time members of my writing group, Betty Dietz, Denise Minor, Kathleen White, Gabriella West, and Janet Kornblum, were also very supportive of my turn towards art history despite the fact that our group was intended as a fiction group. During my year at San Francisco State, Richard Mann, Whitney Chadwick, and Paula Birnbaum encouraged my studies both personally and professionally. At American University, Norma Broude, Helen Langa, and Mary Garrard ensured I got a solid foundation in my new field, while Kathe Albrecht helped keep me sane.

At University of Pittsburgh, my department has been extraordinarily pleasant and supportive, and any praise I can offer would probably be insufficient. I had really not expected that anyone would want to direct a dissertation on a topic so little known to most American art historians, but Barbara McCloskey is an adventurous person and divined that Toyen would keep both of us interested. She has done her best to give advice when needed, leave me alone to work most of the time, and from time to time does succumb to the lure of an hour or two of entertaining conversation. Kirk Savage and Terry Smith have been very supportive of my work from the start, and Helena Goscilo has done her best to persuade me that my academic prose is

not quite as leaden as it seems to me. Other faculty members have also done their best to help me and/or keep me entertained. Bob Donnorummo has stood by my work from the start and advised me on FLAS and other grants. Martin Votruba let me practice my Czech in his Slovak class, despite his natural desire for Slovak supremacy. Irina Livezeanu, who can always track me down at our neighborhood cafe, has given many useful pointers on proposals. And then there are the anonymous faculty members who voted with remarkable frequency to give me money! Whoever they are, I am most grateful that they liked my grant proposals. In my department, Ann Sutherland Harris always cheers on my investigations of Toyen's erotica; Anne Weis agreed to be one of my Fulbright interviewers; Kathy Linduff almost makes me regret I am not working on ancient China; and Drew Armstrong has not only given most of my French translations a rigorous eye but will probably be responsible for my choking to death laughing while eating a cake made in the form of a scale model of the Pittsburgh courthouse. Our support staff can't be left out either; Linda Hicks and Emily Lilly in History of Art and Architecture should be worshipped as divine beings, as they can certainly solve all mortal academic problems that we bring to them. Our art librarians treat the grad students with almost as much solicitude as they do the rare books, and Marcia Rostek in particular has done her best to make my hours in the library resemble some sort of Shangri-la despite the fact that I cannot figure out our shelving system. Administrators Nadia Kirkoff, Gina Peirce, Rose Wootten, and Eileen Malone over at UCIS and REES have also all done what they could to make my life easier.

My fellow grad students can't be left out either. Kristen Harkness keeps me from getting either too uppity or too depressed. April Eisman and Cornelia Piok-Zanon shared some of their proposal- and prospectus-writing secrets, as did Cindy Persinger, who has also been a comrade in our final throes of dissertation. Kate Dimitrova and Sheri Lullo have shared part of the final-

throes process with me as well. Annie Krieg and Travis Nygard have always been good friends. In fact, the vast majority of the grads in History of Art and Architecture keep one another afloat with good cheer, kvetching, snacks, and favors of one sort or another, and I am glad to have been part of so amiable a group.

But that's by no means all. I've been fortunate enough to receive funding not just from my department, but from FLAS, Fulbright-Hays, Mellon, and the University of Pittsburgh's Czechoslovak Room. This largesse enabled me to spend the summers of 2003 and 2004 improving my Czech in Prague, and to spend 2005–2007 researching in the Czech Republic. In addition to my thanks to these funders, I would like to thank Hana Ripková and the staff of the Prague Fulbright office for all of their kind assistance, and the archivists at the PNP, the NA (formerly SÚA), and the AV ČR. By the time I left, the librarians at the Národní knihovna in Prague were well acquainted with my research interests and went out of their way to hunt for mislaid books for me. And while I was in the Czech Republic, the presence of an unexpectedly delightful contingent of Fulbrighters and other characters didn't improve my spoken Czech much but *did* keep me in good spirits nearly all the time, for which I praise Deanna Wooley, Jesse Johnston, Megan Shea, Alex Katis, Hubert Ho, Dawn McKenna, Deborah Edwards, Bruce Berglund, Nathan Slezak, Alice Lovejoy, Cage Hall, David Danaher, Shawn Clybor, Anna Drozda, Seth Hindin, Julia Bryan, Julia Heywood, and Lawrence Wells.

In California, John Smalley, Cesar Love, and Dirk van Nouhuys (among many other friends) have encouraged me in my strange academic and other pursuits. And from Sydney, Australia, the remarkable Paul K., curator of BibliOdyssey.blogspot.com, keeps distracting me with art-historical and other entertainments.

I've had the encouragement of surrealist scholars in England, notably but not only those connected with the Centres for the Study of Surrealism, and also, wherever I went, of scholars in all matters Czechoslovak. In Houston, Mary and Roy Cullen and their friends were warm and enthusiastic in sharing their Czech modernist collections with me.

Right here at home, the Spotted Pair (Calypso Spots and Orion) keep me functional and covered in loose fur, as did Orion's predecessor, the stalwart black Holland Lop George. Although rabbits don't actually care about dissertations, and Orion believes that old drafts should be eaten, they do understand that grad students need lots of attention.

Finally, my family has been pretty enthusiastic about the whole adventure right from the start. My brother, historian Todd Huebner, copyedited my manuscript as if it were about to go to press and has improved many of my Czech translations. Although he advised me to cut some of the quotations, he and Drew persuaded me that certain bits of strangeness absolutely had to be included in the final draft. And my parents remain mysteriously certain that having a third PhD in the family could be at all a good thing.

I am sure I have forgotten some people and institutions who deserve a prominent place here, but I will be happy to thank them in some other way if properly reminded.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

What remains of the Prague celebrated in verse by Apollinaire and its magnificent bridge with the topiary statues, leading from yesterday to *forever*; its electric signs which were illuminated from within rather than on the surface—the Black Sun, the Golden Wheel, the Golden Tree and so many others; its clock whose hands, cast from the metal of desire, turned anti-clockwise; its Alchemists' Street; and, above all, that intense and unparalleled seething of ideas and hopes, those impassioned exchanges at human level aspiring to wed poetry to revolution, while the gulls churned the Vltava in every direction to make stars spurt out? What remains of all this? There remains Toyen.<sup>1</sup>

—André Breton, 1953

In 1928, the Devětsil poet František Halas inscribed a copy of his new collection, *Sepie*, “To Toyen, who was shot out of a divine magical pistol in order one day to become queen of the fire-eaters on the Dream Shore, from Halas, one of the next black people.”<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five years later, surrealist leader André Breton wrote that “The cry for freedom received an absolutely noble and authentic answer in the work of Toyen, work as luminous as her own heart yet streaked through by dark forebodings.” He added, “One would gain only a partial impression of Toyen’s universe if one attempted to reconstruct it solely on the basis of her paintings. In distinction to all those today who think of painting solely in terms of a riot of colour, Toyen has always insisted very strongly on the importance of drawing, not only as the framework without which a construction

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<sup>1</sup> André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: MacDonald & Co., 1972), 209.

<sup>2</sup> Dedication by František Halas in a copy of his collection *Sepie*, May 1928, quoted in Karel Srp, *Toyen*, trans. Karolina Vočadlo (Prague: City Gallery Prague and Argo, 2000), 301.

can never achieve solidity and validity, but also as the *Ariadne's clew* which allows her to wander indefinitely along the endless paths of her quest without ever losing her way.”<sup>3</sup>

Who was Toyen? Why did she attract this kind of extravagant attention from two major poets? What made her significant both as an artist and as a person not just to Halas and Breton but to numerous other Czech and French avant-gardists from the late twenties on? How did she achieve consistent recognition by her peers during a time when women artists were usually not taken very seriously, especially by the avant-garde? Why did her personality and her vision capture so many imaginations?

Surrealism continues to be a major representational and cultural mode in Czech culture, but only now, post-Communism, are more precise understandings of Czech surrealism emerging. Toyen (Marie Čermínová, 1902–80) was, like Halas, a member of Devětsil, and later became a founding member of the interwar Prague surrealist group. Though a respected and successful member of the interwar Czech avant-garde, for political reasons (she was an anti-Stalin Communist) she would spend the second half of her career in relative obscurity in Paris, known best to other surrealists. Her importance within the movement has been repeatedly acknowledged by other members—José Pierre called her “the least acknowledged of the great surrealist painters.”<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly for an artist whose career spanned nearly six decades, her work encompassed several periods and styles, and investigated various media and themes. One of the things she did particularly well, however, was to invent haunting images of strangely spectral, disembodied women and girls; and one of the things she is particularly known for is her erotic imagery in which women’s bodies are very much present and men’s, if present at all, are only shown in part.

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<sup>3</sup> Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 210, 213.

<sup>4</sup> José Pierre, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Surrealism* (New York: Barron’s, 1979), 160.

This dissertation explores Toyen's construction of gender and eroticism, contextualized within the changing cultural and political realms of Prague and Paris surrealism. As a case study of one artist working within a specific avant-garde movement, this project contributes to critical re-evaluation of surrealism, the Central European contribution to modernism, and the role of female artists in the avant-garde. By showing how Toyen's work grew from her early life in Hapsburg and First Republic Prague, how this work both conformed to and resisted surrealist norms, and how collage aesthetic and iconographic choices give meaning to her imagery, I provide a richer reading of the varieties of surrealist approaches to sexuality and the erotic, and offer a deeper understanding of her work and the contexts in which it was created.

## 1.1 RATIONALE AND APPROACH

A woman Surrealist [...] cannot simply assume a subject position and take over a stock of images elaborated by the male imaginary; in order to innovate, she has to invent her own position as subject and elaborate her own set of images—different from, yet as empowering as the image of the exposed female body, with its endless potential for manipulation, disarticulation and rearticulation, fantasizing and projection, is for her male colleagues. —Susan Rubin Suleiman, 1988<sup>5</sup>

No movement more easily defeats the attempt to see it autonomously [than surrealism]—Jack Spector, 1997<sup>6</sup>

Though Toyen is the subject of this dissertation, it is neither a biography nor a study of her entire oeuvre. Instead, I seek to illuminate her construction of gender and eroticism. In conjunction

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<sup>5</sup>Susan Rubin Suleiman, "A Double Margin: Reflections on Women Writers and the Avant-Garde in France," *Yale French Studies*, no. 75, *The Politics of Tradition: Placing Women in French Literature* (1988): 164.

<sup>6</sup>Jack J. Spector, *Surrealist Art and Writing 1919–1939: The Gold of Time, Contemporary Artists and Their Critics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 9.

with analysis of the work, I emphasize the social, intellectual, and artistic contexts in which Toyen lived and worked. Certain aspects of Toyen's life circumstances are of special interest in this regard. Toyen's interest in sexuality and eroticism, while certainly unusual in its extent and expression, is intimately related to her historical and geographic position as an urban Czech forming her artistic personality during first a period of economic boom, avant-garde optimism, increased opportunities for women, and sex reformism, and then a period of economic crisis, restriction of women's employment, social conservatism, and tension between the subconscious and the socialist realist. Toyen's ambiguously gendered self-presentation, while again unusual, needs to be considered in light of her enthusiastic reception within three predominantly male avant-garde groups (Devětsil, Prague surrealism, and Paris surrealism). While it is not usually possible to link individual works to specific historical events or to popular visual culture, especially prior to 1950, I stress that the social and cultural environment of her childhood and youth created an atmosphere that enabled her to pursue lifelong personal interests and obsessions in a manner that was unusually public for a female artist of her generation.

Any study of a surrealist—for that matter any study of a member of the interwar Czech avant-garde—ignores something vital if it does not take into account the larger social and artistic milieu. While this of course is true more generally, the surrealists and Czech avant-gardists functioned within a particularly dense network. This is especially true of an artist like Toyen, who worked closely with other artists and poets and who nonetheless avoided revealing the usual clues to her oeuvre.

Because of this, and because the specific social/cultural milieu has not been analyzed in relation to Toyen's artistic production, this dissertation employs a mixed methodology that

combines investigation of historical context with feminist, psychoanalytic, iconographic, and semiotic approaches. No previous study of Toyen or the Czech interwar avant-garde has been done in this manner. One of the dissertation's goals is to examine Toyen's work in light of Czech avant-garde norms and practices relating to gender and eroticism; the dissertation also situates the eroticism and gendering of Toyen's surrealist work within the larger international surrealist movement. By examination of Czech avant-garde and surrealist documents, as well as by visual analysis of Toyen's work dealing with gender and erotic themes, I explicate how her work responded to surrealist thought and developed her own semiotics of gender identity. Investigation of literary texts significant to the surrealists and the Prague avant-garde, such as Lautréamont's *Maldoror* and Mácha's *Maj*, helps to reveal some of the sources of Toyen's imagery, while examination of psychoanalytic texts by Freud, Rivière, Rank, Reich, and Bohuslav Brouk uncovers aspects of Toyen's approach to her subject matter. Thus, I explore Toyen's relationship to the central concerns of surrealism—such as the use of unconscious material, objective chance, juxtaposition, convulsive beauty, and transgressive eroticism—via investigation of historical context, literary influences, semiotics, and gender theory.

Toyen, however, is an elusive quarry. While I have uncovered information that has not been used by previous scholars, we surely share a frustration at the artist's astonishing ability to cover her tracks. Unlike the surrealist icon Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), she left her share of bureaucratic traces, had many friends, and left a significant estate that included art by herself and others, a personal library, and even a collection of art postcards and cheesecake photos. Yet over and over again, I have found myself weighing circumstantial evidence to conclude that she “possibly” or “probably” shared an opinion, met a particular person, or participated in an activity. This has prompted me to work in a roundabout manner, exploring her

through her milieu, her associates, her known interests and likely inspirations. As Jindřich Toman has written of the Prague Linguistic Circle, much about Toyen and Prague surrealism can only be understood “if data from the margin are moved into the center.”<sup>7</sup> Archival research into Toyen’s associates coupled with examination of more than seventy First Republic periodicals has helped me come to a better understanding of both the artist and her world.

Furthermore, while there is a growing English-language literature on the Czech avant-garde, the need to introduce and contextualize continues. The French orientation of most literature on surrealism obscures both Toyen’s contribution and that of the Prague surrealist group as a whole. Partly for this reason and partly as a result of Toyen’s personal reticence, I approach her work via several connecting contextual themes. In combination, these provide an understanding of aspects of early twentieth-century Czech culture pertinent to understanding this artist and her work, but which also contribute to understanding the larger interwar Czech cultural milieu. In other words, this dissertation intertwines examination of the individual artist Toyen and her work with an investigation of the Czech avant-garde from Devětsil to surrealism.

Each chapter centers on a particular historical anchor that reveals something about Toyen and her work. First, subsequent to a discussion of the literature in the introduction, I examine Toyen as an artist more mythologized than researched.

The second chapter presents three formative influences: Czech feminism, Jindřich Štyrský, and the Devětsil group. Toyen’s internalization of common feminist ideas strongly influenced her artistic and lifestyle choices as an independent, innovative, and unconventional female artist. Next, I situate Toyen and her work within the interwar Czech avant-garde, first in regard to her working partnership with Jindřich Štyrský, and then within Devětsil. An

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<sup>7</sup>Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language: Jakobson, Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, and the Prague Linguistic Circle* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), viii.

internationalist and leftist group with numerous ties to Communism, Devětsil included not just visual artists but architects, poets, playwrights, journalists, actors and directors, and composers. Devětsil's emphasis on interaction with avant-gardists from all over Europe provided a rich and stimulating intellectual and personal matrix for Toyen's early development, including for her exploration of erotic themes.

The third chapter considers Toyen's first Paris period (1925–28) in light of 1920s Parisian sexual subcultures and early surrealism. Czechs flocked to Paris in the hope of finding an artistic, literary, and even sexual paradise; what did they find, and how did Toyen internalize what Paris represented to her? Meanwhile, the early surrealists were defining their movement and feuding with other, similar groups; what caused Toyen and Štyrský to reject surrealism in the 1920s only to embrace it in the 1930s? How did 1930s surrealist ideas relating to women and sexuality relate to Czech surrealist ideas? Women began to join surrealism in significant numbers during that decade, but most occupied a peripheral position; what made Toyen different and more central?

The fourth chapter looks at theories of sexuality and gender among sexologists and psychoanalytic theorists whose work was familiar to the Prague surrealists. As Toyen claimed an attraction to women, the chapter also explores the situation of sexual minorities in interwar Czechoslovakia. The chapter then zeroes in on popular Czech attitudes about gender and sexuality, first investigating interwar Czech interest in hygiene and sex reformism, and then tracing Czech erotica from the Decadents to the surrealists, focusing on Toyen and Štyrský's erotic production during the 1930s.

The fifth chapter considers the Prague surrealist group's development and relationship with the Paris group up to 1938. It compares the Czech and French relationships to shared

surrealist literary precursors, as well as considering specifically Czech precursors Mácha and Deml, then discusses the Czech avant-garde's increasing interest in French surrealist ideas, particularly in light of a shared desire to align artistic goals with Communism. It explores the growing artistic interest in surrealism, then details the formation of the Prague surrealist group, undertaken by Toyen's friend Nezval. The foundation of the group took place against a contrasting backdrop of growing interest in socialist realism, and the chapter concludes by summarizing the growing tensions between the Prague group and Czech Communists, which ultimately resulted in the ousting of the Stalinist Nezval when he attempted to dissolve the surrealist group in 1938.

The sixth chapter analyzes Toyen's work iconographically and in relation to collage aesthetic, and scrutinizes its production of meaning via Prague School semiotics and Freud's theory of the uncanny. It looks first at the semiotic theories of Roman Jakobson, Jan Mukařovský, and the theater director Jindřich Honzl, which were developed when all three were in close contact with Toyen and other future members of the Prague surrealist group. Next, the chapter examines Toyen's iconography of girlhood, dream, fragmentation, insubstantiality, and absence, and considers how her imagery relates to Roger Caillois's theory of legendary psychasthenia and mimicry as disorder of spatial perception. Examination of collage aesthetic and surrealist use of metaphor, metonymy, the dream, and the freudian uncanny combine to develop an analysis of Toyen's pictorial content as it relates to her underlying exploration of gender and eroticism.

The final chapter returns to Paris to consider the significance of exile, new collaborators, and new surrealist explorations of the feminine, the occult, and Fourier's utopianism for Toyen's postwar work. It further investigates Toyen's iconography of gender and eroticism, focusing on

imagery specific to the postwar work. It concludes with an evaluation of Toyen's work's development within the Prague avant-garde and its meaning for international surrealism.

Thus, this dissertation is organized both chronologically and thematically, moving through Toyen's career with attention to specific historical circumstances and intellectual developments approximately as they entered into her life, although the majority of the chapters focus on the important developments relating to her early career in the 1920s and 1930s. These, I stress, enabled her to become a woman central to a surrealist group, who emphasized erotic themes, rather than necessarily contributing specific iconographic ideas. By exploring Toyen's environment and oeuvre in this broadly conceived manner, I hope to lay the groundwork for further scholarship in several areas, including modern Czechoslovak art prior to World War II, international surrealism, and the role of gender and sexuality in the work of female modernists.

## **1.2 TOYEN IN THE LITERATURE**

Surrealism's position vis-à-vis modernism and the avant-garde has been controversial, and tension between canonical formalist modernism and surrealism has never been purely aesthetic. During the mid-twentieth century, many art historians rejected the idea that surrealism belonged to either modernism or the avant-garde, and relegated it to a form of romanticist kitsch. Surrealism's exclusion from modernist criticism goes back to Roger Fry's 1924 essay "The Artist and Psycho-Analysis," in which Fry rejected psychoanalytic ideas about art. Fry and later critics divided pure (objective, formalist) art from impure (anything that could be considered wish-fulfilling); for Fry, the only important art was that which caused an aesthetic emotion in the trained or naturally sympathetic viewer, and only a thing's final form, not its origin, was worthy

of note.<sup>8</sup> Later, Clement Greenberg placed surrealism with kitsch (this is ironic in view of the surrealists' own rejection of kitsch), calling the surrealists "revivers of the literal past and advance agents of a new conformist, and best-selling art."<sup>9</sup> These influential viewpoints were diametrically opposed to surrealist thought, and it was not surprising that in 1977, J. H. Matthews observed that critics "often treat participation in surrealism as an accessory activity on the artist's part, something of a *péché de jeunesse*, even."<sup>10</sup>

More recently, Peter Bürger claimed surrealism to be the ultimate avant-garde.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the state of scholarship on surrealism as a whole is a large and complex issue, involving several academic disciplines, curious historiographical problems, and surrealist fear of being embalmed in the morgue of the canon. While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed analysis of even the art-historical scholarship on surrealism, until recently, most writing on surrealist artists came from friends and followers, and, as Werner Spies notes, tended toward "poetic mimesis," analogy rather than analysis.<sup>12</sup> This, however, is much more true of French than Czech writers. The situation has also changed in recent years, as surrealism has moved back into academic fashion among art historians and is no longer automatically regarded as outside the modernist canon.

Nonetheless, as late as 1985, it could be stated that surrealist visual artists were "generally overshadowed" in the critical literature by surrealist poets.<sup>13</sup> The situation has been somewhat different for women associated with surrealism than for the men; Penelope Rosemont

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<sup>8</sup>Roger Fry, *The Artist and Psycho-Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1924).

<sup>9</sup>Clement Greenberg, "Surrealism," in *Perceptions and Judgments 1939–1944*, vol. 1 of *Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 230.

<sup>10</sup>John Herbert Matthews, *The Imagery of Surrealism* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977), xiv.

<sup>11</sup>Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

<sup>12</sup>Werner Spies, *The Return of La Belle Jardinière: Max Ernst 1950–1970*, trans. Robert Allen (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1971), 8.

<sup>13</sup>Jennifer Ann Gibson, "Surrealism's Early Maps of the Unconscious" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1985), 3.

recently observed that, in the United States at least, only a few “stars” are written about, mainly painters and photographers, and that this neglects the many women who are or were primarily writers. “Generalizations about surrealism based entirely on painters are bound to be misleading,” she notes, “because surrealism has never been primarily a movement of painters.”<sup>14</sup> Matthews pointed out that “books about surrealism generally fall into two studiously separated categories: those treating surrealism as ‘art’ and those that speak of it as ‘literature.’” He stressed that “Studies of serious proportions, focused on the work of major painters who have made a significant contribution to surrealism, do little to advance our understanding of surrealism itself.”<sup>15</sup> Painter though Toyen was, her work needs to be considered in relation to surrealist and precursor literature.

Not surprisingly, Toyen and her work have been better known in Europe than in North America, particularly in France and the Czech lands, her chosen homes. Yet serious obstacles have impeded scholars interested in her work.<sup>16</sup> First, the francocentric tendencies of most writing on surrealism have limited awareness of Czech surrealism, while the standard focus on the interwar rather than postwar French group has also served to keep Toyen’s contribution relatively obscure. Czechoslovakia, a country culturally and politically aligned with France during the interwar period, was cut off from France after the Communist coup of 1947 and reoriented to the Soviet Union, a situation that continued until the Velvet Revolution of 1989. French scholars had little access to materials in Czechoslovakia, while Czech scholars were discouraged from studying surrealism and were relatively unfamiliar with Toyen’s later work.

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<sup>14</sup>Penelope Rosemont, ed., *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xxix.

<sup>15</sup>Matthews, *The Imagery of Surrealism*, xv.

<sup>16</sup> As late as 1990, František Šmejkal could write that there had been no single book or exhibition in Czechoslovakia dedicated to Devětsil art, that Czech museums “have completely failed to collect the work of Devětsil” and that only two picture poems were accessible to the Czech public (Rostislav Švácha, et al., *Devětsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s* [Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1990], 8).

The artist's personal reticence, which increased with age, also contributed to the relative paucity of writings about her and to the difficulty of situating her work in either its Czech or French contexts.

The disjuncture between the two halves of Toyen's working life has meant that until relatively recently, her oeuvre was known in two distinct groupings. Works that remained in Czechoslovakia were known there (albeit less and less), while works that went to France or were done there postwar were known to Western aficionados. The meaning of the work was, necessarily, different in the two locales. To the extent that Czechoslovaks knew Toyen's work, it represented First Republic avant-gardism, which is to say either something lost and lamented, or something unpleasantly alien to socialist realism. To the extent that Westerners knew the work, it represented an interesting mystery by an exotic lesser-known surrealist.

For the most part, then, one traces art-historical discussion of Toyen via general works that deal with either the interwar Prague avant-garde or international surrealism. During the 1950s, Stalinist repression stifled nearly all Czechoslovak scholarship on surrealism. During the 1960s, political liberalization enabled a brief flowering of scholarship. František Šmejkal was almost the only Communist-era Czech art historian to dare write about First Republic surrealism,<sup>17</sup> although members of the postwar, underground Czechoslovak surrealist movement certainly kept alive the memory of the group's original founders, and literary historians such as Jiří Brabec worked to republish the writings of the interwar avant-garde. Still, a look at the contents of *Umění* (Art, the major Czechoslovak/Czech journal focusing on the country's art history) shows that prior to the Velvet Revolution, Šmejkal was almost the only person

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<sup>17</sup> See František Šmejkal, "Surréalisme et peinture imaginative en Tchécoslovaquie," *Phases*, no. 10 (September 1965): 47–57.

publishing on surrealist artists outside the postwar Czechoslovak surrealist group itself.<sup>18</sup> In 1964, Šmejkal, who was particularly interested in the psychoanalytic aspect of surrealism, reviewed Toyen's career to date in *Dějiny a současnost* (History and the Contemporary); in 1965 *Umění* published a theme issue on surrealism and imaginative art; in 1966, Šmejkal published an article on Artificialism in *Výtvarné umění* (Visual Art) and the following year the surrealist theoretician Vratislav Effenberger published on Štyrský, Toyen, and surrealism in the same journal.<sup>19</sup> (In 1966 Jan M. Tomeš noted wistfully, at the end of a lecture on Czech surrealist painting, that Czech surrealists were mentioned only sporadically in Western European histories of the movement, but he stressed, with a certain pathetic optimism, that “we suspect, we know” that several personalities definitively linked Czech art to European and world art.<sup>20</sup>) By 1967 the political situation had loosened up sufficiently that there was actually a Štyrský-Toyen retrospective at Mánes, the dominant Prague exhibition space for modern and contemporary art.

These publications and the retrospective exhibition need to be understood as occurring within the context of the easing of political pressure during the extended Prague Spring; almost

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<sup>18</sup> The situation was less dire for Czechoslovak interwar avant-garde *literature* as many of these writers embraced postwar Communism. Certain of these authors, notably the former surrealist Nezval, were promoted heavily by Ladislav Štoll and other shapers of Communist literature. The forthcoming dissertation by Shawn Clybor (Northwestern University) examines the relationship of the avant-garde overall to politics.

<sup>19</sup> See František Šmejkal, “Toyen,” *Dějiny a současnost* 6, no. 12 (1964): 22–28; Eva Petrová, “Bilance surrealismu,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (September 1965): 475–83; Vratislav Effenberger, “Krise kritérií a imaginativní malířství,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (1965): 515–18; František Šmejkal, “Imaginativní malířství,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (September 1965): 440–61; Jindřich Chalupecký, “Surrealismus a léta třicátá,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (September 1965): 461–74; Luděk Novák, “K hodnocení meziválečné malířské avantgardy,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (September 1965): 483–93; Věra Linhartová, “Vnitřní monolog a vnitřní model,” *Umění* 13, no. 5 (September 1965): 502–10; František Šmejkal, “Artificialismus,” *Výtvarné umění* 16, no. 8 (1966): 381–91; Vratislav Effenberger, “Surrealismus v tvorbě Jindřicha Štyrského a Toyen,” *Výtvarné umění* 17, no. 5 (1967): 220–35. For discussion of younger Czechoslovak artists in relation to Toyen and the first-generation Prague surrealists, see Luděk Novák, “České malířství po roce 1945,” *Umění* 13, no. 4 (September 1965): 331–6.

<sup>20</sup> “Surrealistické hnutí má svoje historiky. Na stránkách jejich knih, u Maurice Nadeaua (*Histoire du Surréalisme*, 1944, edice z roku 1964), J. L. Bédouina (*Vingt ans de surréalisme 1939-1959* z roku 1961), u Patricka Waldberga (1962) jsme však nacházeli jenom sporadické, sotva náznakové zmínky o účasti českého umění na bouřlivém průběhu hnutí. Pro nás má však tato linie českého malířství veliký význam. Tušíme, víme, že to bylo hnutí, které v několika osobnostech na čas spojovalo české umění zcela bezprostředně s uměním evropským a celosvětovým.” (Lecture given at the House of Culture in Ústí nad Labem, February 1966, published as Jan M. Tomeš, “Archiv: Surrealistické malířství v českých zemích,” *Umění* 45, no. 3–4 [1997]: 371.)

no articles on interwar surrealism appeared in Czechoslovakia from 1969 to the late 1980s, the repressive so-called Normalization period that followed the Soviet-led invasion of 1968.<sup>21</sup> During Normalization, Šmejkal and others found outlets for scholarship on Czech surrealism primarily outside Czechoslovakia and most notably in France.<sup>22</sup> The main scholarly works relating to the overall interwar avant-garde to see print in Czechoslovakia during this period were anthologies of reprinted interwar essays, such as the three-volume compilation *Avantgarda známá a neznámá* (The Known and Unknown Avant-garde).<sup>23</sup> To some extent such anthologies can be explained as works of patient scholarship that saw print despite external pressures, but they can also be understood as serving Normalization-era goals by providing a mountain of evidence that members of the interwar avant-garde were staunch Communists.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Miroslav Lamač, “Štyrský a Toyen,” *Literární noviny*, 4 February 1967, 3 (a review of the exhibition of Štyrský and Toyen’s work at Mánes); Effenberger, “Surrealismus v tvorbě Jindřicha Štyrského a Toyen”; Jiří Brabec, et al., “Historická skutečnost a falešné vědomí aneb Karel Teige bez pověr a iluzí,” *Orientace* 3, no. 1, 2 (1968): 65–73, 58–71; Vratislav Effenberger, *Realita a poesie. K vývojové dialektice moderního umění* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1969); Jindřich Štyrský, “Markýz de Sade,” *Světová literatura* 14, no. 5–6 (1969): 435–63, with an afterword by František Šmejkal; Jindřich Chaloupecký, *O dada, surrealismus a českém umění* (Prague: Jazzová sekce, 1980).

<sup>22</sup> See: František Šmejkal, “L’Oeuvre onirique de Štyrský,” *Opus International* 19–20 (October 1970): 120–24; František Šmejkal, *Surrealist Drawings*, trans. Till Gottheiner (London: Octopus Books Ltd., 1974); “Hommage à Jindřich Heisler,” *Gradiva*, no. 5 (1974): 4–?; Vratislav Effenberger, “Jakobson and the Czech Avant-Garde,” *American Journal of Semiotics* 2, no. 3 (1983): 13–21, trans. Iris Urwin; Petr Král, *Le surréalisme en Tchécoslovaquie. Choix de Textes 1934–1968* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983); A. Fárová, “Un Tchèque: Jindřich Štyrský,” *Photographies*, “Colloque Atget” (March 1986): 74–81; František Šmejkal, “Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos,” in *Du Surréalisme et du plaisir*, ed. Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron (N.p.: Librairie José Corti, 1987); František Šmejkal, “Devětsil, l’avant-garde tchèque et ses rapports avec la France dans les années vingt,” *Critique* 43, no. 483–4 (1987): 662–73.

<sup>23</sup>Štěpán Vlašín, ed., *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, vol. 1: Od proletářského umění k poetismu 1919–1924 (Prague: Svoboda, 1971), Štěpán Vlašín, ed., *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, vol. 2: Vrchol a krize poetismu, foreword by Milan Blahynka (Prague: Svoboda, 1972), and Štěpán Vlašín, ed., *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, vol. 3: Generační diskuse, foreword by Vladimír Dostál (Prague: Svoboda, 1970); Vlašín, *Vlašín III*.

<sup>24</sup> Witkovsky points out that the three-volume edition of Teige’s essays (*Výbor z díla*, ed. Jiří Brabec [Prague, 1966]; Karel Teige, *Zápisy o smysl moderní tvorby. Studie z třicátých let*, vol. 2 of *Výbor z díla*, ed. Jiří Brabec, et al. [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1969]; Karel Teige, *Osvobozování života á poesie. Studie z 40. let. Výbor z díla*, vol. 3 of *Výbor z Díla / Karel Teige*, ed. Jiří Brabec, et al. [Prague: Aurora, 1994]) was begun by Effenberger, who was banned from public activity after 1968. This makes obvious, if it were not already, the reason that the first two volumes appeared in 1966 and 1969, while the third was not published until 1994 (Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center: Devětsil and Czech Culture, 1918–1938” [Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, History of Art, 2002], 495). Examination of the Ladislav Štoll papers shows that Vlašín was in direct contact with Štoll, a major shaper of Communist-era literary and cultural criticism and historiography.

In France, meanwhile, small amounts were published from time to time on Toyen and Czech surrealism, initially mainly within Paris surrealism (for example the 1953 Breton-Péret-Heisler monographlet on Toyen,<sup>25</sup> and subsequent exhibition catalogues), but also, as noted above, by Czech specialists such as Šmejkal and Anna Fárová.<sup>26</sup> Interest in Toyen grew after her death. In 1982 the Pompidou held a retrospective devoted to Štyrský, Toyen, and Heisler, with a catalogue that introduced their work and the ties between the artists.<sup>27</sup> On the whole, however, French-language information on Toyen and Prague surrealism has been written either by Toyen's friends among the younger Paris surrealists, such as Robert Benayoun, Georges Goldfayn, Annie le Brun, and Radovan Ivšić, or by Czech art historians like Šmejkal.<sup>28,29</sup> Surprisingly little, in fact, actually seems to have appeared in French over the years, apart from work by other surrealists.

German-language scholarship has contributed some serious attempts to examine the Prague avant-garde, including Rita Bischof's 1987 monograph on Toyen's paintings, which largely examines their formal qualities but offers a start at a feminist analysis, and Frank Illing's

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<sup>25</sup> André Breton, Jindrich Heisler, and Benjamin Péret, *Toyen* (Paris: Éditions Sokolova, 1953).

<sup>26</sup> Fárová writes primarily on photography and is linked to postwar Czech surrealism through her husband, the artist Libor Fára. The couple's connection to surrealism began in the 1940s (Vojtěch Lahoda, "Libor Fára a surrealismus," *Ateliér*, no. 21 [10 October 1996]: 16).

<sup>27</sup> Jana Claverie, ed., *Štyrský, Toyen, Heisler* (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982).

<sup>28</sup> For example, Robert Benayoun, "Entre chien et loup, énigme et sortilèges de Toyen," *Edda*, no. 3 (March 1961): np; Edouard Jaguer, "Toyen ou la fête accomplie," *Combat-Art*, no. 89 (1962): 2; Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, Radovan Ivšić, *Toyen* (Paris: Editions Filipacchi, 1974); E. Jaguer, "Planisphere Surrealiste," *XXe Siècle* 36, no. 43 (December 1974): 140–8; A. Jouffroy, "La Revolution est femme," *XXe Siècle* 36, no. 42 (June 1974): 108–16; José Pierre, "Toyen," in *An Illustrated Dictionary of Surrealism* (London, 1974), 157–61; P. Audoin, "Les Ambassadeurs de la Tradition Hermetique: Genealogie des Images Neuves," *XXe Siècle*, no. 46 (June 1977): 54–65; Robert Benayoun, *Erotique du Surréalisme* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1978); Paul Duchein, "Toyen...a pas feutrés," *Le Pharmacien de France*, no. 1 (1981): 61; Georges Pompidou Centre, *Paul Eluard et ses amis peintres* (Paris, 1982); G. Legrand, *Le Surrealisme dans l'Art* (Paris: Centre National de Documentation Pédagogique, 1982); Erika Billeter and José Pierre, eds., *La Femme et le Surréalisme* (Lausanne: Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, 1987).

<sup>29</sup>

work on Mukařovský and the avant-garde.<sup>30</sup> In Sweden, Ragnar von Holten has written text for one book of Toyen reproductions and one small museum catalogue.<sup>31</sup>

As the Velvet Revolution approached, scholarship on the Prague avant-garde (and thus Toyen) began to show signs of greater vitality and decreased Prague-Paris polarization. Certainly, Czechoslovak archives began to open their doors to the few foreign researchers who thought to request entry. It seems that 1987 was the year when the editors of *Umění* saw change coming; the journal devoted the first two issues to Devětsil, although largely to architecture. František Šmejkal was now joined by an entire group of Czech and foreign scholars, including two who have since become major scholars of early twentieth-century Czech art, Vojtěch Lahoda and Karel Srp. Since 1989, Lenka Bydžovská and other scholars have also worked on Czech art of the first half of the twentieth century. Separately and as co-authors, Srp and Bydžovská have become prolific investigators of Devětsil and first-generation Prague surrealism. Their books and articles have examined a wide variety of different aspects of Prague interwar art and cultural production, and without their efforts, this dissertation would be much more of a preliminary study.<sup>32</sup> Karel Srp's large Toyen catalog represents an enormous step forward from earlier

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<sup>30</sup> See: Peter Drews, *Devětsil und Poetismus: künstlerische Theorie und Praxis der tschechischen literarischen Avantgarde am Beispiel Vítězslav Nezval's, Jaroslav Seiferts und Jiří Wolkers*, Slavistische Beiträge, Bd. 89 (Munich: O. Sagner, 1975); Vladimír Müller, *Der Poetismus* (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 1978); Rita Bischof, *Toyen: Das malerische Werk* (Frankfurt am Main: Neue Kritik, 1987); Zdenek Primus, *Tschechische Avantgarde 1922–1940: Reflexe Europäischer Kunst und Fotografie in der Buchgestaltung* (Hamburg: Kunstverein, 1990); Frank Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde: Die strukturalistische Ästhetik im Kontext von Poetismus und Surrealismus* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> See Ragnar von Holten, *Toyen: en surrealistisk visionär* (Köping: Lindfors Förlag, 1984); Ragnar von Holten, *Toyen* (Stockholm: Moderna museet, 1985).

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Karel Srp, "Tvrdošíjní a Devětsil," *Umění* 35, no. 1 (1987): 54–68; Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, eds., *Aventinská mansarda. Otakar Štorch-Marien a výtvarné umění* (Prague: Galerie Hlavního Města Prahy, 1990); Karel Srp, "Artificialismus," *Ateliér* 5, no. 17 (20 August 1992): 16; Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Artificialismus: Štyrský a Toyen 1926–1931* (Prague: Středočeská galerie—Muzeum moderního umění, 1992); Karel Srp, *Erotisme et surréalisme en Tchécoslovaquie: Emil Filla, František Ketzek, Rudolf Krajc, Vaclav Masek, Antonin Pelc, Jindřich Štyrský, Toyen, Alois Wachsmann* (Paris: Galerie 1900–2000, 1993 November); Karel Srp, "Obraz a slovo. Karel Teige a ikonografie Devětsilu," *Ateliér* 6, no. 8, 9 (29 April 1993): 2, 2; Karel Srp, "Stíny a preludy: Toyen," *Ateliér* 6, no. 6 (18 March 1993): 16; Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, "On the Iconography of the

exhibition catalogs, which were usually simple pamphlets, sometimes including little more than a list of works exhibited with prices, although in its need to appeal to a wide audience, the Srp catalog does not employ the kinds of analysis he uses in journal articles on other artists. Nor does Srp give more than a nod to feminist analyses. In a subsequent generation, the most significant new voice on Czech art history of this period is that of Martina Pachmanová, apparently the first Czech art historian to employ feminist analysis. Pachmanová devoted a substantial chapter to Toyen in her recent volume, *Neznámá území: Českého moderního umění: Pod lupou genderu* (Unfamiliar Ground: Czech Modern Art under the Loupe of Gender), which examines Toyen as consciously presenting herself as unlike either male or female contemporaries.<sup>33</sup> Pachmanová points out that Toyen “played a crucial role in shaping Czech art of the 1920s and ‘30s, and her erotically charged work as well her sexual orientation certainly destabilize many gender stereotypes applied to modernism.” Pachmanová and I both stress the need to study the larger picture and show the “complexity” of the interwar Czech art world and its practices (including

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Chessboard in Devětsil,” *Umění* 41, no. 1 (1993): 41–48; Karel Srp, “Proti proudu poezie,” *Ateliér* 6, no. 3 (4 February 1993): 2; Karel Srp, “Collage as Simultaneity and Contradiction,” in *Karel Teige, Surrealist Collage* (Prague, 1994); Karel Srp, “The Anguish of Rebirth,” *Umění* 42 (1994): 74–84; Lenka Bydžovská, “Čtení v sesutých zdech (epilogue),” in *Život markýze de Sade*, by Jindřich Štyrský (Prague: KRA, 1995), 56–60; Karel Srp, ed., *Karel Teige 1900–1951* (Prague: Galerie hlavního města Prahy, 1994); Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, “The Lautréamont Case,” *Umění* 43, no. 1–2 (1995): 149–60; Karel Srp, “An Avant-Gardist’s Solitude/Samota avantgardistova,” *Umění* 43, no. 1–2 (1995): 5–8, trans. Jan Valeška; Lenka Bydžovská, “Hlas lesa,” *Bulletin Moravské galerie* 52 (1996): 88–92; Karel Srp, “The Philosophy of the Recess,” *Umění* 44, no. 1 (1996): 41–52; Karel Srp, “Vratká stabilita,” *Ateliér*, no. 21 (10 October 1996): 6–7; Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, eds., *Český Surrealismus 1929–1953* (Prague: Argo/Galerie hlavního města Prahy, 1996); Lenka Bydžovská, “‘Vidíte něco?’ zeptal se Poussin... Informe, Bataille a čeští surrealisté,” *Umění* 45, no. 5 (1997): 477–88; Karel Srp, “Teige in the Twenties,” in *Karel Teige/1900–1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, ed. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999); Lenka Bydžovská, “Úlovky bdělých snů: Rozhovor Lenky Bydžovské s Georgesem Goldfaynem,” translated from French by Jitka Hamzová, *Ateliér* 13, no. 9 (2000): 7; Karel Srp, “Toyen,” *Ateliér* 13, no. 9 (2000): 3; Karel Srp, “Strašná hrůza, přitažlivá,” *Umění* 48, no. 3 (2000): 127–35; Karel Srp, *Toyen*; Karel Srp, “Toyen: Tma a jas,” *Ateliér* 13, no. 9 (2000): 8–9; Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, trans. Derek Paton (Prague: Torst with The Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague, 2001); Karel Srp and Lenka Bydžovská, *Knihy s Toyen* (Prague: Akropolis, 2003); Karel Srp, ed., *Adolf Hoffmeister*, trans. Steven Chess, et al. (Prague: Gallery, 2004); Lenka Bydžovská, “Against the Current: The Story of the Surrealist Group of Czechoslovakia,” *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 1–10, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal3/>.

<sup>33</sup> See Martina Pachmanová, *Neznámá území: Českého moderního umění: Pod lupou genderu* (Prague: Argo, 2004).

those of non-avant-garde women artists, which I hope to address in a later project) in order to understand Czech modernism.<sup>34</sup> Pachmanová's work on Toyen, however, largely discusses the artist as an anomalous case among early twentieth-century women artists and designers, and does not examine the broader social factors that made possible both Toyen's difference and its acceptance by her peers.

Until the mid-1980s, Toyen appeared only rarely in the English-language literature. Her work was not unknown, but typically appeared in print as illustrative of the sheer diversity of surrealist visual art. This situation began to change when Whitney Chadwick gave her relative prominence in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*. Chadwick's highly readable discussion of the artist there and in her subsequent article on Toyen helped attach an artistic personality and rudimentary context to the work. This work, however, is grounded in French, not Czech, sources.<sup>35</sup> Recent English-language treatments of the Czech interwar avant-garde have focused largely on Devětsil or on interwar Czech modernism as a whole. These broad-based surveys, usually written mostly by Czech scholars, include the British catalogue *Devětsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s*, the American catalogue *Czech Modernism 1900-1945*, and the Spanish-English bilingual catalogue *The Art of the Avant-Garde in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938*.<sup>36</sup> In addition, Renée Riese Hubert has looked at the partnership

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<sup>34</sup>Martina Pachmanová, "Les Femmes Artistes d'Aujourd'hui: Czech Women Artists in the Context of International Modernism," in *Local Strategies, International Ambitions: Modern Art in Central Europe 1918-1968*, ed. Vojtěch Lahoda (Prague: Ústav Dějin Umění AV ČR, 2006), 69.

<sup>35</sup>The best-known and most widely available English-language discussion of Toyen remains that of Whitney Chadwick. See Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (New York: Thames & Hudson Inc., 1985) and Whitney Chadwick, "Toyen: Toward a Revolutionary Art in Prague and Paris," *Symposium* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 277-95. A slightly earlier but much less widely available article by Leontine Zimiles employed Czech sources (Leontine Zimiles, "In Search of Toyen," *Crosscurrents: A Yearbook of Central European Culture* [1983]: 381-88).

<sup>36</sup> See Jaroslav Anděl and Anne W. Tucker, eds., *Czech Modernism 1900-1945* (Houston; Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Bulfinch Press, 1989); Švácha, et al., *Devětsil*; Suzanne Rodriguez, *Wild Heart: A Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002);

between Toyen and Jindřich Heisler,<sup>37</sup> and Derek Sayer has included the avant-garde in his study of Czech nationalist fantasies and their formation.<sup>38</sup> Matthew Witkowsky, to be sure, critiques the tendency of most of these scholars—even Sayer—to “center” Czech avant-garde culture geographically and claim it as a syncretic model for European modernism. He suggests that the Devětsil group’s *desire* to be at the center cannot be equated with centrality as “fact.”<sup>39</sup> Toyen’s presence in the *midst* of the Czech avant-garde is, of course, a rather different issue and less of a nationalist question, but one that is central to this dissertation and is one reason I devote considerable attention to the nature, constitution, and goals of the larger Czech avant-garde.

In the early 1990s, an exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský’s pre-surrealist Artificialist work prompted several articles relating to this period in Toyen’s oeuvre.<sup>40</sup> While the Artificialist work is well worth studying, it represents a direction in Toyen’s oeuvre that is related to the interests of this dissertation primarily in terms of Artificialism’s theoretical relationship to surrealism. With her turn toward surrealism in the early 1930s, the formal explorations that appear to have been paramount for the artist during the Artificialist period give way to a more integrated combination of formal skill and discernable (if often obscure) content.

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<sup>37</sup> See Renée Riese Hubert, “Le role du couple dans la peinture surrealiste,” *Melusine*, no. 11 (1990): 249–60; Renée Riese Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Witkowsky particularly points to the work of Jaroslav Anděl, but also to remarks by Tomáš Vlček, Jan K. Čelis, and Sayer, in Matthew W. Witkowsky, “The Cage of the Center,” in *Local Strategies, International Ambitions: Modern Art in Central Europe 1918–1968*, ed. Vojtěch Lahoda (Prague: Ústav Dějin Umění AV ČR, 2006), 205–12.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Artificialismus*; Françoise Caille, “L’Artificialisme de Štyrský et Toyen: affinités et divergences,” *Histoire de l’Art*, no. 25–26 (May 1994): 79–86; Šmejkal, “Artificialismus”; Eusebio Ciccotti, “Artificialismo,” review of “Štyrský Toyen Artificialismus,” Pardubice-Prague 1992–93 at Středočeská Galerie, *Terzo Occhio* 19, no. 2 (67) (June 1993): 35–6; Vojtěch Lahoda, “Maximum imaginativnosti,” *Lidové noviny* 5, no. 267 (13 November 1992): 13; Karel Srp, “Artificialismus”. A more recent consideration of the Artificialist work was Matthew S. Witkowsky, “Štyrský and Toyen the Untourists,” paper presented at Platform to Prague: An International Conference on Czech Surrealism (University of Essex, Colchester, 30 September, 2004).

Still, most discussion of Toyen has been largely formalist in nature and has not grounded her artistic practice in her historical context, which is especially needed for readers not well versed in Czech history and culture. This is even necessary for Czech readers, who are often more familiar with postwar Czech surrealism than prewar. Josef Kroutvor, for instance, mentions Prague surrealism primarily in terms of something that developed under the Protectorate, under circumstances of great danger, with the youngest generation inspired by Breton and the first-generation surrealists.<sup>41</sup> This manner of looking at Prague surrealism is echoed in the Jan Němec film *Toyen* (2005), which focuses on Toyen's wartime life when she hid Jindřich Heisler from the Nazis, and combines factual historical material with misleading juxtapositions that imply Heisler was the love of Toyen's life and inspired her erotica of the early 1930s.

The key connections between Toyen's work and the social and cultural conditions of her time have, in fact, really only been discussed regarding the wartime works. Jan Mukařovský's address at her first postwar exhibition initiated this line of analysis and was followed by comments by Breton and others linking Toyen's wartime imagery to wartime angst.<sup>42</sup> And, with the republication of some of the Prague surrealists' erotic projects, Karel Srp has provided some useful details about Czech surrealist erotica but not placed it within a broader cultural framework.<sup>43</sup> Though Toyen's work seldom makes direct reference to external realities, I stress that it can only be understood in its complex cultural context, which is both Czech and French,

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<sup>41</sup>Josef Kroutvor, *Café fatal* (Prague: Dauphin, 1998), 162–3.

<sup>42</sup> See Jan Mukařovský, "Toyen za války," *Proměny* 18, no. 2 (1981): 15–18; Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, ADD PAGE; Šmejkal, *Surrealist Drawings*, 38; Ivšić, *Toyen*, 47; Chadwick, "Toyen," 277–95; Sidra Stich, et al., *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* (Berkeley and New York: University Art Museum and Abbeville Press, 1990), 127; Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors*, 324–42; Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 12, 152–79.

<sup>43</sup> See Vojtěch Lahoda and Karel Srp, *Karel Teige: Surrealistické koláže 1935–1951*, trans. Richard Drury (Prague: Detail, 1994); Vítězslav Nezval, *Sexuální nocturno*, with collages by Jindřich Štyrský (Prague: Torst, 2001); Toyen, *Jednadvacet*, epilog by Karel Srp, trans. Derek Paton (Prague: Torst, 2002); Marquis de Sade, *Justina: čili prokletí ctnosti*, trans. Q. P. [Quido Palička], afterword by Karel Srp, illus. Toyen (Prague: Torst, 2003); Srp and Bydžovská, *Knihy s Toyen*, Vítězslav Nezval and Jindřich Štyrský, *Edition 69*, trans. Jed Slast (Prague: Twisted Spoon, 2004), and the three volumes of the *Erotická revue*.

artistic and social. The contributions of the Czech and French traditions to Toyen's work need to be seen in relation to one another.

In other words, most work done outside the Czech Republic remains introductory, while within the Czech Republic, only Srp and Pachmanová have written in any depth about Toyen. Still, study of Toyen and the interwar Prague surrealist group has now reached a point where we can begin to move beyond stating basic facts (although these still require stating) and look at how Toyen's artistic practices engaged with those of her contemporaries and peers.

### 1.3 THE MYTH OF TOYEN

Toyen has been widely regarded as one of the most private and impenetrable of the surrealists. During her last decade, for example, the Czechoslovak art historian František Šmejkal wrote that her “work is sovereignly enigmatic and to this day the painter is careful to hide all the keys to its secrets under a cloak of reticence.”<sup>44</sup> Both her personal life and the “secrets” of her work were clearly areas she preferred to keep to herself. At the same time, Toyen's unwillingness to divulge matters that she considered private should not be confused with the kind of intense introversion that is often attributed to her. Toyen's entire adult life was spent in close contact with other highly creative people—first with Jindřich Štyrský and other members of the Devětsil group, then (also with Štyrský) with the Prague surrealists and their associates, and finally with the Paris surrealists. Just as the legend of Caspar David Friedrich's stark studio ignores the artist's richly

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<sup>44</sup>Šmejkal, *Surrealist Drawings*, 37.

convivial life outside the studio in Dresden's artistic community,<sup>45</sup> the legend of Toyen's uncommunicativeness, blushes, and even reclusiveness neglects her great need for human contact and artistic-intellectual exchange. Indeed, most of the stories of her shyness and introversion come from late in her life, when many of her friends had died and others were at odds with one another. She remained talkative in private conversations with her close friends.<sup>46</sup>

The myth of Toyen, however, goes beyond tales of reclusiveness and impenetrability. This section explores her legend from several perspectives, with the proposition that myth, which contains multiple stories with countless overt and covert meanings, is ultimately a vital aspect of her art.

### 1.3.1 The Construction of Toyen as Mysterious Other.

Toyen's origin and family background have been curiously absent from the literature. In fact, it has been suggested that there seems to be an art-historical taboo on the subject.<sup>47</sup> To some degree, this lack of biographical focus may be a characteristic of Czech art-historical methodology; in interviews with journalists, Karel Šrp reveals biographical tidbits that do not appear in his scholarly work. In one interview, for example, he remarks that although it has been proposed that Toyen came from the working-class Prague district of Žižkov, it is more likely she

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<sup>45</sup>Gretchen Holtzapple Bender, "Interior/Landscape: Placelessness and the Gendered Gaze in the Work of Caspar David Friedrich" (Ph.D. diss., Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 2001), 29–30.

<sup>46</sup>For descriptions of Toyen's reserve in later life, see Zuzana P. Krupičková, "Po stopách Toyen," *Host*, no. 4 (2003): 27–29 and Ivšić; for descriptions of her continued sociability, see Ivšić. Ivšić stresses that she was both a loyal friend and an enigma. He states that not only did she attend the daily surrealist meetings, but "Toyen almost never went directly home but went to the cinema, the theater, or to the homes of friends." (Radovan Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," *Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 559 [October 2001]: 119–21.)

<sup>47</sup>Gustav Erhart, "Tajemství slečny Toyen: Několik poznámek k životu a dílu umělkyně," *Ateliér*, no. 6 (18 March 2004): 2. Erhart, expressing disappointment that no one has examined problems related to Toyen's family background, observes that this area seems to be taboo for art historians. He also notes that Sarane Alexandrian, who was in a position to know better, published weird errors (repeated by later writers) such as listing Toyen's surname as "Germinova," stating that she belonged to Kafka's circle, and describing her as Štyrský's wife.

was of south Bohemian origin.<sup>48</sup> Elsewhere, however, Toyen is always described as having been born in Prague, and in fact her Prague police file consistently lists her as born in the Smíchov district of that city, to Václav Čermín and Marie (Jedličková) Čermínová. There is no reason to believe she came from anywhere else.<sup>49</sup> True, the poet Jaroslav Seifert's memoirs vividly describe how he used to see her in Žižkov walking home from working in a soap factory.<sup>50</sup> But Seifert also tells us that during the early 1920s Toyen lived with her sister in Smíchov and that the sister's husband worked for the railroad.<sup>51</sup> It seems likely that Toyen was of working-class origin.

Toyen is invariably described as having broken with her family at an early age, with this sister in Smíchov given as the only relative with whom she appeared to have any contact.<sup>52</sup> Certainly, she does not seem to have discussed her family with her friends in either Prague or Paris, and presumably did not have the kind of close relationship with her family that Czechs consider the desirable norm. According to the poet Nezval, despite living with her older sister in Smíchov, she asserted that she had not had and did not have any family.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, she may not have been as estranged from the family as is generally believed. In 1932, the painting

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<sup>48</sup>Peter Kováč, "Toyen miloval Breton i Éluard," *Magazin Práva*, 15 July 2000, 24.

<sup>49</sup>André Breton, Jindřich Heisler, and Benjamin Péret, who were certainly close to Toyen, state that she was born in Prague at six o'clock in the evening on Sunday, 21 September 1902 (Breton, Heisler, and Péret, *Toyen*, 31). Numerous original documents stating the artist's birthplace exist in Policejní ředitelství Praha II - všeobecná spisovna - 1941-1950, carton 1262, signatura C 824/18 Čermínová Marie (Toyen), 1902. Národní archiv.

<sup>50</sup>Jaroslav Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa* (Prague: Eminent /Knižní Klub, 1999), 152.

<sup>51</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 156. These claims are borne out by archival sources. Toyen lived with her sister Zdena and brother-in-law at the Smíchov train station (Nádražní 279) intermittently from late 1922 until the summer of 1929, when she and Zdena moved to an address on Stefaníkova. In 1933 the two were domiciled at Komenského 17 in Smíchov. In 1940, Toyen acquired her own flat on Krásova in Žižkov. Toyen's sister, Zdena Svobodová, was married to ČSD (Czechoslovak state railway) inspector Bohumil Svoboda. (Kamill Resler papers, LA PNP, Prague, and Policejní ředitelství Praha II - evidence obyvatelstva, signatura Čermínová Marie [Toyen], 1902, Národní archiv.).

<sup>52</sup>Police records show that Toyen did indeed leave home shortly after her sixteenth birthday (25 September 1918) and moved to Nerudova 44 No. 225, Praha III. She had seven separate addresses (one of them twice) between leaving her parents' home and settling with her sister at the end of October 1922 (Policejní ředitelství Praha II - evidence obyvatelstva, signatura Čermínová Marie (Toyen), 1902). Národní archiv.

<sup>53</sup>"...třebaže žila se svou starší sestrou na Smíchově, prohlašovala, že žádnou rodinu nikdy neměla a nemá." (Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života* [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1965], 130).

*Fjords* evidently belonged to this sister—Zdena Svobodová.<sup>54</sup> Toyen’s mother lived in Smíchov in the latter 1930s, and bequeathed half a house there (perhaps a duplex) to her daughters Marie (Toyen) and Zdena. Zdena subsequently bequeathed half of her share to Toyen and half to her husband Bohumil, meaning that Toyen ultimately had (at least) three-eighths ownership.<sup>55</sup> This suggests that the nuclear family was small, perhaps never with more children than the artist and Zdena, and that, unlike those avant-gardists who had moved to Prague from small towns and villages, Toyen could walk over and visit her mother whenever she wished. This is not to say that she visited frequently or happily, but if her longtime addresses of Nádražní 279 and Komenského 17 with Zdena were more than a polite fiction to cover up residence with Jindřich Štyrský (she certainly received mail at Komenského), then it seems that Toyen’s connection to her family may have been more akin to Czech norms than previously believed.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, we cannot accept the legend that Toyen appeared from nowhere. This legend has been encouraged by essentially all Toyen scholarship and memoirs relating to the artist. It is not perhaps surprising that Toyen’s French comrades knew little of her early life; however, I believe that we should consider the taboo on Toyen’s origins in terms of myth creation. Toyen was indeed, by all accounts, secretive about family, childhood, and various other aspects of her life. At the same time, treatment of Toyen’s biography has generally fit the paradigm of the

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<sup>54</sup> *Fjords*, 1928, is listed as belonging to Mrs. Zd. Svobodová (Jaroslav B. Svrček, *Katalog výstavy obrazů a kreseb Štyrského a Toyen pořádané Skupinou výtvarných umělců v Brně v galerii Vaněk, Dominikánské náměstí č. 2 od 19. března do 10. dubna 1932*, pamphlet [Brno, 1932]).

<sup>55</sup> Toyen’s mother, also named Marie Čermínová, of Poděbradova 30 in Smíchov, died 8 December 1939 leaving the half-house and garden to her daughters. When Zdena died on 10 October 1945, she was living at Poděbradova 4 and left the same property her mother had left, stipulating that Toyen was to pay the mother’s debts. (Kamill Resler papers, LA PNP, Prague).

<sup>56</sup> Karel Srp refers to Štyrský as Toyen’s “druh,” which can be translated as her partner or common-law-husband, and asserts that Toyen lived with him, although without official relationship (Kováč, “Toyen miloval Breton i Éluar,” 24, 26). The editors of František Halas’ letters also use this terminology: “malířka Marie Čermínová... družka J. Štyrského” (František Halas, *Dopisy*, ed. Jan Halas and Ludvík Kundera [Prague: Torst, 2001], 370). A contemporary reference to Štyrský as her “druh” appears in Karel Teige, “Abstraktivismus, nadrealismus, artificialismus (Šíma, Štyrský, Toyen),” *Kmen* 2, no. 6 (1928): 123. In this instance Teige translates Soupault’s “son complice.”

mysterious Other who suddenly appears, without parents or precursors, and amazes others. While this trope is familiar from the story of Giotto and various other famous males, it also fits the notion of the talented woman as alien being, a creature not like others of her gender, a figure of no heritage or antecedents.

In his memoirs, for example, Vítězslav Nezval wrote “Of Toyen’s life, I never came to know anything; she remained a human mystery and revealed nothing of her past.”<sup>57</sup> We should be cautious about accepting this assertion at face value, as Nezval knew Toyen well for fifteen years and wrote his memoirs under Communism.

More evocatively, Jaroslav Seifert told three main anecdotes about Toyen. In the first, he sees her as a mysterious stranger in his neighborhood who dresses coarsely like a workman but who has a strange appeal; the mysterious stranger later appears in a café (accompanied by Jindřich Štyrský) to announce her desire to join Devětsil. In the second, the artist—at that time known as Manka (a nickname for Marie)—expresses a desire for a suitable pseudonym and is furnished with the genderless “Toyen” by Seifert himself.<sup>58</sup> In the third, Seifert describes the artist’s rejection of conventional femininity. In these stories, and in a perfectly matter-of-fact conversational style, Seifert constructed a narrative of a strange and mysterious woman who appears almost out of nowhere and recreates herself as an artist of ambiguous gender. This is

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<sup>57</sup> “O životě Toyen jsem se nedověděl nic, zůstávala lidsky záhadná a nehlásila se k žádné své minulosti.” (Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života*, 131.)

<sup>58</sup>This story is questioned by Rita Bischof, who points out two other possible sources (Bischof, *Toyen: Das malerische Werk*, 14) Devětsil member Karel Honzík supports Seifert, stating the poet named both Toyen and Remo (Karel Honzík, *Ze života avantgardy* [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1963], 50). Teige states she received her undecidable pseudonym at the café table. (Karel Teige, “Doslov,” in *Štyrský a Toyen*, by Vítězslav Nezval [Prague: F. Borový, 1938], 190). Annie Le Brun asserts, on behalf of herself, Georges Goldfayn, and Radovan Ivšić, that Toyen told them many times that in her youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution, she was seduced by the word *citoyen* and made it her own. Le Brun rejects everything written by Srp on the subject in his French Toyen catalogue as “complètement fausses” (A. Le Brun, “Toyen ou l’insurrection lyrique,” *Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 559 [October 2001]: 132). It appears from LeBrun’s account that Toyen recalled the matter somewhat differently from her Czech comrades.

despite the fact that we get the (correct) impression that Seifert knew Toyen fairly well, indeed was even enamored of her for a time. Seifert could have told quite a few other stories about Toyen, but rather than describe her work or friendships or political views, Seifert chose these particular anecdotes.<sup>59</sup> They are augmented by his 1933 essay, ostensibly about Toyen's pictures ("Obrazy Toyen"), wherein rather than directly discuss the artist or her work, Seifert told a charming fable about a man who asked a group of children what they saw in an abstract painting and what they saw in a veristic painting and got answers clearly opposite to his expectations—the children were uninterested in the veristic painting but saw all manner of things in the abstract.<sup>60</sup> While the essay is a parable about the virtues of modernism, it is not typical of how male artists were discussed.

### 1.3.2 Toyen as Androgyne

Closely related to Seifert's and other writers' depictions of Toyen as a mysterious and unknowable Other are, not surprisingly, their representations of the artist as a person of unstable gender identity. Let me then elaborate on Seifert's descriptions of Toyen. First, she is the strangely attractive factory worker. Seifert takes great care to detail her working garb and demeanor:

In front of our house in the former Husova třída in Žižkov, usually at the time when workers from the Karlín factories were going home, I often encountered a strange but interesting girl. In my student years women didn't yet ordinarily wear trousers as they do today.

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<sup>59</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 151–61.

<sup>60</sup>Jaroslav Seifert, "Obrazy Toyen," *Volné směry* 30, no. 4 (1933–34): 78.

The girl, who was evidently going home, wore coarse cotton pants, a guy's corduroy smock, and on her head a turned-down hat, such as ditch-diggers wear. On her feet she had ugly shoes.<sup>61</sup>

Second, Seifert regales us with his start of recognition when he realizes that the femme in the cafe wanting to join Devětsil is his old friend, the mystery girl from Husova třída. But now she's not wearing coarse worker's clothes, she's a charming Twenties girl in nice shoes and stockings:

There with the painter Jindřich Štyrský sat an interesting, smiling girl, whom we didn't know. [...]

It was Manka Čermínová. When she extended her hand, I couldn't exhale for a couple of seconds and I looked in amazement. It was my acquaintance from Husova třída. And over her clean face flew a surprised smile. But we were both silent. Štyrský invariably only called her Manka. She supposedly didn't like her surname. I don't know why. In place of the unsightly shoes she wore dainty pumps on her pretty feet, although the sidewalks were covered in muddy slush. She wore silk openwork stockings, which were in style at the time.<sup>62</sup>

Third, Seifert specifies acquisition of her genderless pseudonym:<sup>63</sup>

Marie Čermínová had long requested that, with Nezval, we should come up with a suitable pseudonym for her. We came up with about a dozen names, but none of them pleased her. For that matter, we didn't like them either. Except for one. I sat with Manka at the Národní kavárna (National Café) and she had an exhibition

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<sup>61</sup> “Před naším domem v bývalé Husově třídě na Žižkově, obvykle v ten čas, kdy se vraceli domů dělníci z karlínských fabrik, potkával jsem dost často podivnou, ale zajímavou dívku. Za mých studentských let nenosily ještě ženy tak běžně kalhoty jako dnes.

“Děvče, které se zřejmě vracelo domů, mělo hrubé štrukturované kalhoty, chlapeckou manšestrovou blůzu a na hlavě sklopený klobouk, jaký nosovali kopáči. Na nohou měla nevzhledné střevíce.” (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 152.)

<sup>62</sup> “S malířem Jindřichem Štyrským seděla tam zajímavá, usměvavá dívka, kterou jsme neznali. [...]

“Byla to Manka Čermínová. Když mi podala ruku, pár vteřin jsem nemohl vydechnout a díval jsem se udiveně. Byla to má známá z Husovy ulice. I po její čisté tváři přelétl úsměv překvapení. Ale oba jsme mlčeli. Štyrský jí soustavně říkal jen Manka. Svě příjmení neměla prý ráda. Nevím proč. Místo nevyhledných střevičů měla na pěkných nohou lehké lodičky, ačkoliv na chodnících byla sněhová cáhota a marast. Měla prolamované hedvábné punčochy, které byly tenkrát v módě.” (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 154–55.)

<sup>63</sup> According to Srp, pseudonyms were fashionable at the time (Kováč, “Toyen miloval Breton i Éluard,” 24). The architect Karel Honzík recalled: “Some of the members of Devětsil used a pseudonym. Jelínek was included in lists under the name of Remo which Teige invented for him. The painter Manka Čermínová was re-christened as Toyen in the same manner.” (Honzík, *Ze života avantgardy*, 50, translated in Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 10.) Similarly, though perhaps with fraudulent intent, in the early 1930s the litterateur Otakar Žižka called himself Jiří Charvát and Zdeněk Březenský. Žižka's pseudonyms appear in his rather pathetic correspondence with the publisher Rudolf Škeřík (*Škeřík v. Žižka*, Kamill Resler papers, LA PNP, Prague).

coming up. And she didn't at all want to exhibit under her own name. When after awhile she left for some magazines, I wrote TOYEN on a napkin in big letters. When she read the name upon her return, without further thought she was satisfied and bears it to this day; no one addresses her in any other way and her correct name belongs only on her passport, which long ago became invalid.<sup>64</sup>

Finally, Seifert tells the story of how Toyen stayed out late drinking with the guys and spoke in the masculine gender:<sup>65</sup>

Just as she had no love for her own surname, neither did she care for her female gender. She spoke of herself only in the masculine gender. At first it struck us as a little unusual and grotesque, but in time we got used to it.

Lovely was one post-midnight conversation in a Prague street. We had lingered over a glass of wine and it was freezing outside. Toyen lived with her sister at the Smíchov train station. Her brother-in-law was stationmaster there. We called a taxi and we seated Manka in the car. Before the vehicle could drive away, she opened the window, threw her arms around Teige's neck, and in a mournful voice informed him:

'Farewell! I am a sad painter.' [Já jsem malíř smutnej.]

And Teige replied that Toyen should just sit nicely in the corner, we all wished from the heart, that 'he' would sleep well! And good night!

She didn't hear that, the car had already driven away and carried the sad paintress [malířka smutná] off to Smíchov. We didn't believe in her sadness, of course. Toyen was lively and merry, and when she spoke, she didn't mince words and we always had good times with her.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> "Marie Čermínová nás dlouho žádala, abychom pro ni vymysleli s Nezvalem nějaký vhodný pseudonym. Napadlo nás asi tucet jmen, žádné se jí však nelíbilo. Nám ostatně také ne. Až jednou. Seděl jsem s Mankou sám v Národní kavárně a Manka měla před výstavou. A nechtěla zanic vystavovat pod svým jménem. Když na chvíli odešla pro nějaký časopis, napsal jsem na ubrousek velkými písmeny TOYEN. Když si jméno po svém návratu přečetla, bez rozmýšlení je přijala a nosí je podnes; nikdo jí jinak neosloví a její pravé jméno je patrně jen na cestovním pase, který už je dávno neplatný." (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 155.)

<sup>65</sup> The Czech language has three grammatical genders: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Since nouns, adjectives, and past participles all reflect gender, the sentence "I was a sad painter" spoken by a woman would normally be "Já jsem malířka smutná." A man would normally say "Já jsem malíř smutnej."

<sup>66</sup> "Právě tak jako neměla v lásce své vlastní příjmení, neměla ráda ani svůj ženský rod. Hovořila jen v rodě mužském. Bylo nám to zprvu trochu nezvyklé a groteskní, ale časem jsme si na to zvykli. Krásný byl jeden popůlnoční rozhovor na pražské ulici. Zdrželi jsme se u sklenice vína a mrzlo. Toyen bydlela u své sestry na smíchovském nádraží. Její švagr tam byl přednostou. Zavolali jsme taxi a Manku jsme posadili do vozu. Ještě dřív, než se mohlo auto rozjet, otevřela okno, vzala Teigeho kolem krku a truchlivým hlasem mu sdělila: 'Sbohem! Já jsem malíř smutnej.'

A Teige na to, aby si jen pěkně sedl do koutečka, že mu všichni přejeme ze srdce, aby se hezky vyspinkal! A dobrou noc!

Seifert also notes that he wrote a few verses about Toyen, some of which were published. In addition, she asked him to translate a cycle of Verlaine's lesbian sonnets, three of which Štyrský printed in the *Erotická revue*.<sup>67</sup>

The architect Karel Honzík, who also knew Toyen from Devětsil, described her in his own memoirs of the 1920s as “wearing a man's suit, a man's shirt, and a beret on her head, her hands in her pockets most of the time and perhaps a cigarette in the corner of her mouth. Her careless, swaying gait seems to say: ‘I don't care what you all think of me.’” Honzík too observed that “[s]he spoke of herself in the masculine singular.”<sup>68</sup>

Descriptions of Toyen as a cross-dresser or androgynous figure are not restricted to her old friends from the 1920s. The writer Zuzana Krupičková, who visited the French surrealist haunt Saint-Cirque Lapopie, found that villagers today still describe Toyen as favoring rough, masculine attire.<sup>69</sup> While it is clear from these accounts and from photographs that Toyen did in fact wear both “masculine” and “feminine” garb throughout her life, what is more important is what this signifies. Many women of Toyen's generation, especially artists, mixed gender signifiers in their clothing and in other ways. Czech interest in improving and reforming

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To už asi neslyšela, auto se už rozjelo a odnášeho smutnou malířku na Smíchov. Jejímú smutku jsme ovšem nevěřili. Toyen byla živá a veselá, a když hovořila, na ústa si ubrousek nebrala a bylo s ní docela dobře.” (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 156.)

<sup>67</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 159.

<sup>68</sup> “Někteří členové Devětsilu vystupovali pod pseudonymem. Jelínek byl v seznamech uváděn pod jménem Remo, které mu vymyslel Teige. Týmž způsobem byla malířka Manka Čermínová překřtěna na Toyen.

“Remo, Štyrský a Toyen tvořili nerozlučnou a velmi nápadnou trojici. Remo, vysoké postavy, halvu hladce oholenou, s ostře řezanými rysy oceánského Maora, nějakou rudou šálu omotanou kolem šije. Štyrský v rádiovce a předlouném raglánu, se zasným úsměvem a blankytným pohledem. Toyen v kostýmu s mužským sakem, mužskou košilí, s rádiou na hlavě, zpravidla ruce v kapsách, případně i cigaretu v koutku úst. Její nedbalá, kolébavá chůze jako by říkala: Nezáleží mi na tom, co si o mně myslíte.’ Mluvila o osbě v jednotém čísle mužského rodu: ‘Byl jsem na výstavě, řekl jsem, že přijdu do kavárny.’

‘Tato trojice doplňovala v dalších letech pestrý obraz bohémského davu kolem kaváren Dôme, Coupole a de la Rotonde v Paříži. (50) Honzík, *Ze života avantgardy*.

<sup>69</sup>Krupičková, “Po stopách Toyen,” 28.

women's clothing, already in place in the 1890s, continued in the 1920s. The bilingual *Civilisovaná Žena—Zivilisierte Frau* (Brno, 1929-30) which accompanied an exhibition on the modern woman, was critical of contemporary fashion's complexity. Co-author Božena Horneková (textile designer, teacher, graduate of the Academy of Applied Arts), who believed that even plump and pregnant women looked better in pants, based her "new conception of women's garments" on wide over-the-knee pants similar to skirts. Work and maternity versions were presented as overalls or with sleeveless bodices. Reactions were mixed; the artist and writer Josef Čapek reproached women for finding inspiration in men's inadequate clothing. And, in the 1920s and '30s, especially in Central Europe, women's pants were considered merely fashionable, thus a transitory fad, rather than an enduring manner of dress.<sup>70</sup> Memoirs by male friends of Toyen typically refer to her fondness for masculine dress, suggesting that either these male avant-gardists later forgot that interwar women had worn trousers, or that Toyen's fondness for practical garb did not appear related to the trousers worn by fashionable women.

Cross-dressing, as opposed to merely wearing pants designed for women, was a more contentious issue, although perhaps less for Czech women than for Czech cross-dressing men. In the summer of 1933, the homophile journal *Nový hlas* (New Voice) observed that there had been various incidents in Prague involving men wearing women's clothes, generally resulting in a week in jail. Somewhat squeamishly, the journal observed that "We don't need such Berlin

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<sup>70</sup>Eva Uchalová, et al., *Czech Fashion, 1918–1939: Elegance of the Czechoslovak First Republic*, ed. Andreas Beckmann, trans. Štěpán Suchochleb (Prague: Olympia Publishing House in cooperation with the Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM), 1996), 33–4 The exhibition on modern women, which took place in Brno 3 August to 15 September 1929, had five sections: one on education, one on professional and public life, one on childcare, one on domesticity, and one on fashion. (See "Výstava moderní ženy v Brně," *Eva* 1, no. 7 [15 February 1929]: 24; Jane, "Život a práce žen: Výstava moderní ženy v Brně," *Eva* 1, no. 11 [15 April 1929]: 28.)

morals,” as behavior that attracted the police was distasteful and besmirched homosexuality to the general public.<sup>71</sup>

Central European women in general seem to have had relatively little trouble cross-dressing. In Vienna, it was not illegal for women to wear men’s clothes, so the only excuse for police involvement was if the women were disrupting the peace. Similarly, a cross-dresser in Budapest was not arrested despite her ex-lover starting a fight, because the police decided she had not broken any laws. In Germany, laws against cross-dressing were apparently laxly enforced, although arrest was always possible.<sup>72</sup> As one writer points out, “Cross dressing, at least with the intent to pass as a member of the opposite sex, reinforces the concept of binary gender characteristics rather than breaking them down. Individual cross-dressers, who were easily dismissed, would not have been a threat to the concept of binary gender.”<sup>73</sup>

What did Toyen’s style of dress signify, then? Actually, the photographic evidence does not suggest that Toyen routinely engaged in the classic sort of cross-dressing. Her alleged mannish self-styling does not, for example, closely resemble that of her contemporary, the lesbian writer Lida Merlinová. Most published photos of the artist show her in relatively conventional skirts, while magazines of the period display fashion sketches and photos of women in various kinds of pants. Unless Toyen was photographed in a disproportionate number of skirts, rather than, for example, the coveralls she wore to pack paintings to ship to Paris in 1947, it appears that writers such as Seifert and Honzík may have exaggerated the extent and character of her “mannish” dress.

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<sup>71</sup>“Poznámky a informace. Nová literatura,” *Nový hlas* 2, no. 5 (May 1933): 80.

<sup>72</sup>Amy Dawn Young, “‘Das Gesprengte Korsett’: Gender in Lesbian Periodicals in Berlin, 1924–1933” (Ph.D. diss., Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 71–72.

<sup>73</sup>Young, “‘Das Gesprengte Korsett,’” 73.

At the same time, Toyen is typically described as highly attractive to men, albeit a heartbreaker. The artist Alén Diviš, an early friend from art school, allegedly nursed an unhappy love for her for many years. She rebuffed the architect Bedřich Feuerstein. Seifert and Nezval both recalled being in love with her.<sup>74</sup> Later on, Paul Eluard supposedly sent her love letters with his semen.<sup>75</sup> While these stories may be true, they place her in the category of an inaccessible beloved. While Seifert mentions her claiming an attraction to women,<sup>76</sup> female friends seem to be an unknown quantity in her life until much later, when she was close to fellow-surrealists Annie Le Brun and Elisa Breton. Women were in short supply within Devětsil and the Prague surrealist group, but scholarly neglect of her earlier female friends excises from her life people who were doubtless of major personal and perhaps professional importance.

Descriptions of the artist as androgynous or of mutable gender identity thus emphasize four general characteristics: 1) cross-dressing, especially in a rough and working-class manner; 2) walking with an unusual, apparently unfeminine, gait; 3) use of the masculine gender in Czech (though not, so far as I can discover, in French); and 4) sexual interest in other women. In Toyen's legend, they function in part to explain the fact that she has become known for her erotica, not a form of art traditionally associated with female artists—not being a “feminine” woman, so the reasoning might have gone, she could produce work in an “unfeminine” genre.

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<sup>74</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 158–59.

<sup>75</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 115.

<sup>76</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 158.

### 1.3.3 Toyen in the Eyes of the Surrealists

Two Prague surrealists, Teige and Nezval, wrote extensively about Toyen for exhibition catalogs and the like. As befits a theoretician, Teige generally eschewed both biography and myth. In the afterword to their 1937–8 monograph, Teige offered no mythologizing, merely an extremely detailed account of Štyrský and Toyen’s artistic history (developmental and exhibitions) through the year 1937.<sup>77</sup> He did state that “Toyen, whom we had already seen for some years at the noisy meetings of anarchocommunist groups, acquainted us for the first time with her pictures when she debuted at the first Devětsil exhibition.”<sup>78</sup> Teige emphasized that Toyen and Štyrský took separate paths from cubism to poetism, with Štyrský pursuing photomontage and Toyen working via naive paradisaic imagery.<sup>79</sup> Teige stressed that when Toyen and Štyrský first went to Paris, surrealist painting did not exist. (He regarded the works exhibited at the first surrealist exhibition in November 1925 as instead drawing on the ideas of cubism and dadaism.)<sup>80</sup> Nor did Teige say anything personal about Toyen in his 1947 *Blok* article.<sup>81</sup>

Štyrský’s article “Inspirovaná ilustrátorka” (Inspired illustrator) devotes itself entirely to Toyen’s book illustrations. Štyrský posited two categories, that of “inspired illustration” and that of “reliable cliché,” stating:

In her decorated books, we nowhere find imbalance between the collaboration of content and form. Her drawings are thrilling to us and fill our imagination, which would be self-richer and self-reliant, never breaking free from their influences. It is as though we are scarred by her cobwebby drawings and the memory of it goes beyond the beginnings and even the ends of stories.

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<sup>77</sup>Teige, “Doslov.”

<sup>78</sup> “Toyen, již jsme před několika roky vídali na hlučných schůzkách anarchokomunistických skupin, seznámila nás teprve nyní se svými obrazy, jimiž debutovala na 1. výstavě Devětsilu.” (Teige, “Doslov,” 190.)

<sup>79</sup>Teige, “Doslov,” 191.

<sup>80</sup>Teige, “Doslov,” 191.

<sup>81</sup>Karel Teige, “Toyen,” *Blok* 2, no. 1 (September 1947).

Štyrský continued:

In her drawings, Toyen is able to fill in part of the universe of the modern person. These special and artificial, and yet so restorative illustrative formations, toward which grew the *unity* of their own development, shelter in their concise and precise expressions maximum evocative strengths. In the perpetual welding of analogies and identities of real forms, in the memories of non-possessive definitive forms and of terrible naturalistic images, eloquent description, speaking among the lines of poems and in allusive overlappings, first and foremost captures for us the poet and his tales in a place where we are not accustomed to observe.<sup>82</sup>

Teige, then, saw Toyen's work as something to be examined largely from a formalist and developmental perspective, while Štyrský focused more on Toyen's ability to combine content with form to expressive ends.

Nezval's references to Toyen were generally more poetic in nature, and more designed to intrigue the reader. A 1930 piece for the women's magazine *Eva*, for example, employs words such as "scandal" and "love."<sup>83</sup> During their friendship and collaboration, Nezval wrote "It is these creations of Toyen which, more than any other, seem to respond to André Breton's expression 'explosante-fixe,' and it is thanks to them that I have grasped the ultimate sense of the phrase *beauty will be convulsive*."<sup>84</sup> Here, Nezval situated the work of Toyen as being uniquely expressive of key surrealist concepts.

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<sup>82</sup>"V knihách jí vyzdobených nenalezneme nikdy nepoměr mezi obsahem a výtvarnou spoluprací. Její kresby nás rozechvívají a naplňují naši představivost, která, kdyby byla sebebohatější a samostatnější, nevymaní se nikdy z jejich vlivů. Jsme jakoby poznamenáni jejími pavčinovitými kresbami a vzpomínka na ně přesahuje začátky i konce příběhů." "Toyen dovedla svými kresbami zaplniti část vesmíru moderního člověka. Tyto zvláštní a umělé, a přece tak scelené útvary kresebné, k nimž dospěla *jednotnotí* svého vývoje, ukrývají ve svém stručném a precizním výrazu maximum evokační síly. Ve věčném sváření analogií a identických reálných forem, vzpomínek nemajících definitivních tvarů a strašných naturalistických představ, vybavujících se mezi řádky básní a v narážkách překrývajících výmluvná líčení, zachycuje nám především básníka a jeho příběhy z míst, odkud jsme nebyli zvyklí je pozorovati." (Jindřich Štyrský, "Inspirovaná ilustrátorka," in *Každý z nás stopuje svoji ropuchu. Texty 1923–1940*, ed. Karel Srp [Prague: Thyrus, 1996], 93–95)

<sup>83</sup>Vítězslav Nezval, "Toyen," *Eva* 2, no. 13 (1 May 1930): 26.

<sup>84</sup>"Ce sont ces créations de Toyen qui, plutôt que tout autre, paraissent répondre à l'expression d'André Breton, 'explosante-fixe' et c'est grâce à elles que j'ai saisi l'ultime sens de la dernière phrase de *La beauté sera convulsive*." (Vítězslav Nezval, "Štyrský. Toyen," *Cahiers d'Art* 10, no. 5–6 [1936]: 135.) While this probably reflects Nezval's general opinion, he wrote the piece the day after a fight between Štyrský and Toyen and indicated

André Breton preferred to characterize Toyen in a poetic rather than factual manner. Though not devoid of close observation and analysis, in his 1953 “Introduction to the Work of Toyen” (later reprinted in *Surrealism and Painting*), Breton presented the artist as a kind of last surviving representative of a romanticized Prague. In this discussion, Breton began by recapitulating the story of painting’s break with the imitation of nature following the invention of photography, then lamented “the deliberate drying-up of certain reservoirs, the premeditated muddying of certain well-springs from which man’s need for the absolute has been accustomed to draw” which was to say, specifically, “the destruction of Prague as the magical capital of Europe.” Lamenting the deaths of Štyrský, Teige, Heisler, and Zaviš Kalandra, Breton cried “What remains of all this? There remains Toyen.” Thus, to some extent, Toyen represented for Breton a survival of Prague magic.<sup>85</sup> “Toyen, who catches my heart every time I think of her: the mark of nobility that stamps her face, the deep tremor within her co-existing with a rock-hard resistance to the fiercest attacks, her eyes which are cardinal points of light.” Breton called for a study of the ways in which each country expresses its psychological character artistically, characterizing Czechoslovakia as freedom-loving yet beset by disaster. “The cry for freedom received an absolutely noble and authentic answer in the work of Toyen, work as luminous as her own heart yet streaked through by dark forebodings.” Breton connected her 1930s imagery of fissures and spectres to the rise of Nazism, for example, and her relatively monochromatic war-time print cycles to a historical moment “which urgently demanded introversion.”<sup>86</sup> Thus, Breton proposed Toyen as a kind of psychological gauge of her national history, and also named her the sole survivor of an extinct culture (he conveniently neglected to mention the apostate poet

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in his diary that the article was “stupid like an obituary.” (“Píši dopoledne článek o Štyrský a Toyen. ‘Blbí jak nekrolog.’” (Nezval diary, 17 June 1935, Vítězslav Nezval papers, LA PNP, Prague.)

<sup>85</sup>Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 207–9.

<sup>86</sup> Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 210, 213.

Nezval, who turned Stalinist, or the many surrealist-oriented artists who remained in Czechoslovakia, or the expatriate Josef Šíma whose work was so close to surrealist but with whom Toyen had broken ties in 1948).<sup>87</sup> Optimistically, Breton charted Toyen's Paris work of the 1950s as approaching "a resolution of the inner conflicts and external problems that have besieged her"—increasingly "auspicious" and progressing "towards ever more serenity and love", although he cited Rorschach's assessment that "We are once again treading the ancient gnostic paths of introversion" and concluded that this perceived global increase in introversion was sufficient to explain "the very high historical *position* and the transcendent meaning of Toyen's work."<sup>88</sup>

Titles such as "Die unheimliche Frau" and "Tajemství slečny Toyen," and the standard reiteration of Toyen as reticent and unknown, all mythologize the artist. It is not that there is no truth to the myth, but usually, in the case of other twentieth-century figures, the main facts have been ascertained. In the case of Štyrský, for instance—admittedly not a very reticent person about his origins—no major retrospective occurred until summer 2007 but in 1997 there was an exhibition focused on his earliest work and family context, and art historians are busy working out the problem of who actually made his tombstone.<sup>89</sup>

In recent literature, Toyen's personal sexuality, not surprisingly, continues to be mythologized, but is increasingly heterosexualized. Her relationships with Štyrský and Heisler have been assumed to be sexual ones, although Nezval states that she insisted she and Štyrský

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<sup>87</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 320.

<sup>88</sup>Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 213–4. Emphasis in original.

<sup>89</sup>Aleš Kuneš, "Nejstarší práce Jindřicha Štyrského," *Ateliér*, no. 7 (3 April 1997): 6\*; Radoslav Kratina, "Náhrobek malíře Jindřicha Štyrského," *Ateliér*, no. 1 (9 January 1997): 12.

were merely friends.<sup>90</sup> Various efforts have also been made to supply Toyen with mysterious possible male lovers, such as a reference to “the presence of a young man of dark complexion” encountered by Czech art historians who visited her in the early 1960s.<sup>91</sup> Zuzana Krupičková similarly notes that some inhabitants of Saint-Cirque Lapopie speculated eagerly about the handsome driver who always dropped Toyen off in the village, but Krupičková was able to learn that the driver was simply Elisa Breton’s secretary. The recent Jan Němec film *Toyen* portrays the artist as obsessed with Jindřich Heisler and implies that he was involved in the creation of heterosexual erotica made when he was in fact barely adult.<sup>92</sup>

While Toyen was indeed closest to certain members of the Prague avant-garde—for example to her artistic partners Štyrský and Heisler, and to fellow core surrealists Karel Teige and Vítězslav Nezval—during her life in Prague she was not the retiring character described many years later by associates in Paris. She was well acquainted with many of the poets of her generation, including Jaroslav Seifert, Konstantin Biebl, and František Halas, and illustrated some of their works. And we should not forget that the architect Bedřich Feuerstein proposed she be named the Muse of Devětsil.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života*, 130.

<sup>91</sup> Jan Kříž, “Toyen,” *Starožitnosti*, no. 3 (March 1996), 20, quoted in Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 88.

<sup>92</sup> In Paris, Heisler was apparently involved with the poet and playwright Drahomira Vandas, although this does not negate the possibility that he was also involved with Toyen. Little is known of Vandas other than that she was born in 1919, settled in Paris around 1951, was active in the surrealist group there until 1953, then following Heisler’s death moved to Venezuela and became a Venezuelan citizen. In the early 1960s she returned to Paris, where she wrote plays, novels, and poems (Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 263–64).

<sup>93</sup>Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 159.

### 1.3.4 Toyen Outside the Myth

Thus, as we begin to see, external evidence suggests that, whatever myth the artist and those around her chose to present, in certain respects her life and working practices were quite unsensational and for the most part fit neatly within the norms of the remarkably productive, highly sociable Czech interwar cultural elite. She had many friends among the Prague avant-gardists, she was a prolific and well-regarded book illustrator who worked on more than 500 titles between 1923 and 1950 and pursued a nine-year lawsuit against a man who plagiarized her work; and the Prague police were unable to discover anything more incriminating about her than that, like most avant-gardists of the time, she had ties to the Communist Party.<sup>94</sup>

Toyen's work and inner life, unquestionably, have been in many ways mysterious. For example, she did not, supposedly, indicate that dreams were of importance in her working process (unlike Štyrský, who is known to have recorded his dreams and used them in his art), but her fondness for titles such as *Dream* and *Sleeper*, as well as the surrealists' great interest in dreams and other gateways to the unconscious, tell us that she used dreams or the concept of the dream in some fashion. The dream often operates in a manner akin to myth and uses mythic themes and structure. Toyen also uses many images and concepts that can be related to Freud's theory of the Uncanny, especially as the idea of the Uncanny has been developed in the work of Hal Foster, who proposes that much surrealist work functions in a manner consistent with Freudian repetition of traumatic material.<sup>95</sup> Toyen's repeated use of themes of faceless women, uninhabited garments, fractured surfaces, and ghostly figures is strongly redolent of the kind of

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<sup>94</sup> On Toyen's book illustrations, see: Šrp and Bydžovská, *Knihy s Toyen*. Toyen's lawsuit can be found in the Kamill Resler fond, LA PNP. A report on her Communist connections is filed in Policejní ředitelství Praha II - všeobecná spisovna - 1941-1950, carton 1262, signatura C 824/18 Čermínová Marie (Toyen), 1902, NA.

<sup>95</sup> See Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1993).

spooky repetition typical of the psychological Uncanny. It can hardly be any surprise, then, that Toyen herself has come to be a figure of myth. This dissertation, while admitting the uses of myth, provides new ways of looking at her work that not only place her as an artist within her Czech and French socio-cultural milieux but introduce means of examining her work within the frameworks of semiotics and the evolving postwar surrealist movement.

The First Republic itself, while much better known than Toyen's intimate biography, has acquired its own mythic status over the years. Recalled as a golden age by those who knew it in their youth, fantasized about by those born after its demise, the First Republic has long seemed an Eden of democracy, tolerance, and brilliant creativity. This over-idealized domain could not, of course, escape debunking, and in recent years much scholarship has exposed its flaws, which relate primarily to failures of democracy: its privileging of Czechs over ethnic minorities (and even over Slovaks); its riots; its gender inequalities; its censorship; its hubris.<sup>96</sup> A history that was first cast as a romance of the successful quest for nationhood, then as a tragedy, emphasizing the fall of the virtuous hero (the "doomed democracy"<sup>97</sup>), has been recast as a bleaker narrative, one akin to Northrop Frye's mythos of satire and irony. And, while it has been necessary to leave behind the old improbably rosy image of the First Republic, we must not go so far in search of its flaws as to give the impression that it was a venal, autocratic entity not worth saving. A more balanced view is imperative, one which recognizes both virtues and faults. The First Republic

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<sup>96</sup> See, for example: Michael Walsh Campbell, "A Crisis of Democracy: Czechoslovakia and the Rise of Sudeten German Nationalism, 1918–1938" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2003); Caitlin Elizabeth Murdock, "The Leaky Boundaries of Man-Made States': National Identity, State Policy, and Everyday Life in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870–1938" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford: Stanford University, 2003); Tara Elizabeth Zahra, "Your Child Belongs to the Nation: Nationalization, Germanization, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1945" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2005); Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006).

<sup>97</sup> Věra Olivová, *The Doomed Democracy: Czechoslovakia in a Disrupted Europe 1914–38*, trans. George Theiner (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).

was indeed a democracy, an imperfect but functioning “multinational nation-state,”<sup>98</sup> a prosperous country with a high standard of living, nearly universal literacy, female suffrage, and generally good civil liberties. For the twenty years it lasted, it functioned as well as any other democracy. Most pertinent to this dissertation, it provided a nourishing environment for an astounding assortment of creative figures, of whom Toyen was but one.

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<sup>98</sup>Todd Huebner, “The Multinational ‘Nation-State’: The Origins and the Paradox of Czechoslovakia, 1914–1920” (Ph.D. diss., New York: Columbia University, 1993).

## 2.0 TOYEN'S EARLY INFLUENCES: FEMINISM, ŠTYRSKÝ, AND THE DEVĚTSIL GROUP

I am very happy to be speaking today in a city outside of France which yesterday was still unknown to me, but which of all the cities I had not visited, was by far the least foreign to me. Prague with its legendary charms is, in fact, one of those cities that electively pin down poetic thought, which is always more or less adrift in space. Completely apart from the geographical, historical, and economic considerations that this city and the customs of its inhabitants may lend themselves to, when viewed from a distance, with her towers that bristle like no others, it seems to be the magic capital of old Europe. By the very fact that it [Prague] carefully incubates all the delights of the past for the imagination, it seems to me that it would be less difficult for me to make myself understood in this corner of the world than any other... — André Breton, “The Surrealist Situation of the Object,” lecture given at Mánes Gallery in March 1935<sup>1</sup>

If the Czechoslovak First Republic has been remembered as Eden, what of Prague, its capital, Toyen's home for the first half of her life? Prague too has been fantasticized; a mythology of golden Prague, akin to that of Paris as city of light, has grown over the years.<sup>2</sup> When this imagery of a mystic, alchemical, and seductive city began is hard to say; every city eventually develops its own mythic persona. Prague, however, has had certain advantages in this respect, including the alchemical interests of Rudolph II, the vegetable portraits of his court artist Arcimboldo, and a multiethnic citizenry. To some extent the legend of Prague was created by

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<sup>1</sup> André Breton, “Surrealist Situation of the Object (1935),” in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 255.

<sup>2</sup> This mythology is catalogued and enlarged in Angelo Maria Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, trans. David Newton Marinelli (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

foreigners, but it has probably been most assiduously cultivated by the city's own inhabitants, especially those of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Moderní revue* editor Arnošt Procházka claimed, "Again and evermore, the old sorceress Prague enchants with her magic spells." Jewish writer Oskar Wiener wrote, "Prague, the city of eccentrics and dreamers, this restless heart of Central Europe, is my home." Moreover, numerous writers of the *fin de siècle* envisioned the city as a seductress, even as a dangerous femme fatale. Miloš Jiránek rhapsodized, "There are evenings when Prague, our filthy, gloomy, tragic Prague, transforms herself in the golden light of sunset into a marvelous flaxen-haired beauty, a miracle of light and radiance." Wiener claimed that "She has the passion of a charming, beautiful woman, who has her whims. Anyone who has looked once into her deep, timorous, mysterious eyes remains subject to the enchantress for the rest of his life... Those whose passion for Prague does not lead them to destruction, sicken with an undying longing for Prague." Decades later, Josef Hora found the city a place with "still so much to be read, to dream, to understand!"<sup>3</sup>

As Angelo Ripellino, who compiled the quotations above, has noted, much of the mythic occult city described by *fin-de-siècle* writers was the now-vanished Prague of the Jewish ghetto and other crumbling neighborhoods. Ripellino, in the 1970s, would characterize the Prague of German-language writers as

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<sup>3</sup> "Vždy znova a znova obluzuje svými čary stará čarodějka Praha." (Arnošt Procházka, "Kouzlo Prahy," in *Rozhovory s knihami, obrazy i lidmi* [Prague: Fr. Borový, 1916], 96.) "Prag, die Stadt der Sonderlinge und Phantasten, dies ruhelose Herz von Mitteleuropa, ist meine Heimat." (Oskar Wiener, ed., *Deutsche Dichter aus Prag: Ein Sammelbuch herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Oskar Wiener* [Vienna and Leipzig: Ed. Strache, 1919], 5.) "Jsou večery, kdy Praha, naše špinavá, smutná tragická Praha změní se ve zlatém světle západu v báječnou plavou krasavici, v jediný zázrak světla a jasu." ("O krásné Praze," Miloš Jiránek, *Dojmy a potulky* [Prague: SVU Mánes, 1908], 69.) "Sie gleicht der Leidenschaft zu einer berückend schönen Frau, die Launen hat. Wer ihr einmal in die tiefen, geheimnisbängen Augen sah, bleibt für sein ferneres Leben der Magierin untertan. ... Auch jene, die an ihrer Leidenschaft nicht zugrunde gingen, kranken nun an einer unsterblichen Sehnsucht zu Prag." (Wiener, *Deutsche Dichter aus Prag*, 5.) "[J]eště tolik číst, snít a pochopit!" ("Praha ve snu," in Josef Hora, *Písně hodin večerních: Proud; Život a dílo básníka aneliho; Zápisky z nemoci* [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1950], 49.

an occult, unreal metropolis enveloped in the weak, dripping gauze screen of the *Gaslaternen*, a spent, decrepit city, a tangle of vulgar inns, leprous nyctalopic nooks, diabolic *uličky* [alleyways], garrulous *pavlače* [balconies], dark courtyards, junk shops and *tandlmark* [used clothes market] booths, a city in which all phenomena undergo agonizing deformations, assume grotesque and spectral faces, a city benumbed by the torpor (*Verschlafenheit*) of a provincial town...<sup>4</sup>

While the image of an occult, mystical, and feminine Prague is best known from the writings of *fin-de-siècle* Prague Germans, it was also, as shown above, promulgated by ethnic Czech writers.

While Czech critic Arne Novák excoriated the Prague Germans for repeatedly presenting an image of the city in which noble, mystical, sybaritic Germans preyed upon sensual lower-class Czech women, many Czech writers did enthusiastically participate in the mythologization and feminization of the city.<sup>5</sup>

This Prague was to some degree the Prague of Toyen's childhood, a city where a fantasy of crooked medieval streets filled with small crumbling houses and labyrinthine tenements butted up against an extensive Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy and a passion for modernity in the form of urban renewal and electric trams. Though Toyen's birthplace of Smíchov was not incorporated into the city (Velká Praha or Greater Prague) until 1921, it was but a short walk from Smíchov to Prague proper, a journey made even shorter by tram.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ripellino, *Magic Prague*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> As Scott Spector notes, Ripellino does not provide a critical exploration of the origins or social meanings of the image of mystic Prague; Spector argues that this was a decadent Prague specifically envisioned by Prague German writers "from Meyrink to Kafka" and that this fantastic, mysterious, dangerous, and eroticized image was not shared by Czech intellectuals. It is certainly true that this was not the Czech nationalist image of the city. See Scott Spector, *Prague Territories: National Conflict and Cultural Innovation in Franz Kafka's Fin de Siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6, 177, 243, also Kafka's story "Description of a Struggle."

<sup>6</sup> The urban and architectural history of Prague is the topic of countless Czech-language texts, many focused on specific quarters of the city. Discussion in other languages is much more general and directed toward tourists, or is specifically architectural in nature. As architectural historian Rostislav Švácha notes, numerous tenements were constructed in the nineteenth century to accommodate an increasing urban population, and transport was electrified beginning in 1891. Smíchov and other then-suburbs such as Vinohrady, Žižkov, and Karlín had been independently administered (Rostislav Švácha, *The Architecture of New Prague 1895–1945*, trans. Alexandra Büchler [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995], 18–19).

The *fin-de-siècle* vision of an enchanted city or land was taken up by Apollinaire, who in 1903 made Bohemia the alleged home of a gypsy woman who called it “the marvellous land where one could pass through but not remain, under pain of remaining there bewitched, ensorcelled, enchanted.”<sup>7</sup> Later, and more notably, in “Zone,” the opening poem of his celebrated 1913 *Alcools*, Apollinaire contrasted the modern Paris of executives and stenographers with a Prague where “The hands on the clock in the Jewish Quarter run backwards /And you too go backwards in your life slowly.”

Epouvanté tu te vois dessiné dans les agates de Saint-Vit  
Tu étais triste à mourir le jour où tu t’y vis  
Tu ressembles au Lazare affolé par le jour  
Les aiguilles de l’horloge du quartier juif vont à rebours  
Et tu recules aussi dans ta vie lentement  
En montant au Hradschin et le soir en écoutant  
Dans les tavernes chanter des chansons tchèques<sup>8</sup>

Prague, like Paris, had plenty of modern office workers, but Apollinaire’s romanticizing vision would ensorcel both the French surrealists and the Czech avant-gardists. Nezval, for example, who did not grow up in Prague, repeatedly emphasized the magic aspect of the city. His surrealist, Breton- and Aragon-inspired *Pražský chodec* (Prague Walker), is filled with passages such as:

If you look at Prague from up here [Hradčany], as her lights flicker on one by one, you feel like someone who would gladly plunge headfirst into a deceitful lake in which was manifested an enchanted hundred-towered castle. This sensation, which almost always returns to me whenever the sound of the evening bells reaches me above that black lake of starry roofs, long ago fused in my mind with some notion of an absolute defenestration.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>“...le pays merveilleux où l’on doit passer mais pas séjourner, sous peine d’y demeurer envoûté, ensorcelé, incanté.” (Guillaume Apollinaire, “L’Otmika [1903],” in *Œuvres complètes de Guillaume Apollinaire*, ed. Michel Décaudin [Paris: André Balland and Jacques Lecat, 1965], 156.)

<sup>8</sup> Translated in Derek Sayer, “Surrealities,” in *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 92.

<sup>9</sup> “Dívá-li se odtud člověk na Prahu, jež rozsvěcuje, jedno po druhém, svá světla, připadá si jako někdo, kdo by se nejraději střemhlav vrhl do šálivého jezera, v němž se mu zjevil zakletý hrad o stu věžích. Tento pocit, jenž se mi

Nezval's perspective from the heights of the governing Castle (dating to medieval times, inhabited by both Rudolph II and—as updated by the eclectic Slovenian modernist architect Jože Plečnik—President Masaryk) draws on the cliché of hundred-spired Prague and refers to the city's grim history of political defenestration. Both Czech modernist writing and art, particularly but not solely among the surrealists, would make ample use of historical and mythologizing reference.

## 2.1 THE ABANDONED CORSET: CZECH FEMINISM

Co-existing with *fin-de-siècle* romanticization of the city, but decidedly distinct from male visions of a seductive city inhabited by compliant serving wenches and whores, was the world of the Czech feminist movement. Nineteenth-century Czech women had had few rights and little opportunity for education or for well-paid work outside the home. During the course of the century, however, they, like French, German, English, and Russian women, had developed a feminist movement. Initially a bourgeois movement of modest goals, with time it encompassed a wider range of social classes and became more daring in its demands.<sup>10</sup> Its close relationship

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opakuje téměř vždy, kdykoliv mne zastihne klekání nad oním černým jezerem hvězdných střeš, jsem kdysi sloučil v své mysli s představou jakési absolutní defenestrace...” (Vítězslav Nezval, *Pražský chodec* [Labyrint, 2003], 58.)

<sup>10</sup> Discussions of late Imperial Czech feminism include: Pavla Horská, *Naše prababičky feministky* (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999); Marie L. Neudorflová, *České ženy v 19. století: Úsilí a sny, úspěchy i zklamání na cestě k emancipaci* (Prague: Janua, 1999); Karen Johnson Freeze, “Medical Education for Women in Austria: A Study in the Politics of the Czech Women’s Movement in the 1890s,” in *Women, State and Party in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), 51–63; Katherine David, “Czech Feminists and Nationalism in the Late Hapsburg Monarchy: ‘The First in Austria’,” *Journal of Women’s History* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 26–45; Iveta Jusová, “Fin-de-Siècle Feminisms: The Development of Feminist Narratives Within the Discourses of British Imperialism and Czech Nationalism” (Ph.D. diss., Oxford, Ohio: Miami University, 2000); Jitka Malečková, “Nationalizing Women and Engendering the Nation: The Czech

with nationalism, however, immediately separated Czech feminists from their ethnic German and Jewish sisters in the Bohemian lands. Indeed, fin-de-siècle feminist rhetoric had often proposed that Czech men must sympathize with the cause because Czech men, too, were oppressed. As one activist stated, “The Czech man, feeling how the denial of national and political equality hurts, angers, and inflames a thinking person, certainly will not prepare the same fate for the women of his nation: his mother, wife, daughters, sisters.”<sup>11</sup>

When feminists in the Czech lands achieved many of their goals with the foundation of the First Republic in 1918, this success was due not only to the hard work of Czech feminists, but also to the ongoing support of the new president, the philosopher Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, as well as that of his American wife, Charlotte Garrigue Masaryková, who had translated John Stuart Mill’s influential *On the Subjugation of Women*.<sup>12</sup> Masaryk’s Progressive Party had cooperated with local suffragettes, and during most of the period 1905–1915 his journal *Naše doba* (Our Era) had carried a monthly column on women’s issues.<sup>13</sup> The 1918 Washington Declaration, which proclaimed the founding of Czechoslovakia, announced “Women will enjoy the same political, social, and cultural rights as men.” The new constitution followed up on this

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National Movement,” in *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann, and Catherine Hall (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), 293–310; Helene Volet-Jeannert, *La Femme bourgeoise à Prague, 1860–1895, de la philanthropie à l’émancipation* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> “Český muž, cítě sám na sobě, jak uvědomělého člověka bolí, zlobí a bouří odpírání národnostní a politické rovnoprávnosti, zajisté nebude stejný osud připravovati ženám svého národa: svým matkám, manželkám, dcerám, sestřím.” (“Ženské hnutí. Volební právo žen,” *Naše doba* 19 [April 1912]: 554, translated in David, “Czech Feminists and Nationalism,” 35.)

<sup>12</sup> See Marie Neudorfl, “Masaryk and the Women’s Question,” in *Thinker and Politician*, vol. 1 of *T. G. Masaryk (1850–1937)*, ed. Stanley B. Winters (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990), 258–82, for an overview of Masaryk’s feminism. See also David, “Czech Feminists and Nationalism,” 30. Evans points out that Mill’s 1869 essay “was the feminist bible” and was almost immediately translated into several languages, coinciding with the appearance of feminist movements in France, Germany, Finland, and possibly elsewhere. (Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women’s Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australasia, 1840–1920* [London/New York: Croom Helm/Barnes & Noble Books, 1977], 19.)

<sup>13</sup> David, “Czech Feminists and Nationalism,” 31.

promise, stating, “Privileges of race, gender, and profession are not recognized.”<sup>14</sup> It did not require nationalist fervor for Czechoslovak women to see the new state as cause for optimism. They officially gained the vote in 1920, whereas French women would not vote until 1944. The First Republic prided itself on its liberalism and attention to gender equality; some Western feminists even considered Czechoslovakia a “paradise of the modern woman.”<sup>15</sup> Divorce was eased in 1919 and new laws abolished the requirement that women employed in the civil service be unmarried, and also acknowledged their right to the same salary as men.

Masaryk’s support of feminism would continue throughout his presidency, which lasted nearly the whole of the First Republic. During this period, Czech women not only attained the vote and achieved better educational options, but they branched out occupationally, becoming not just artists but even pilots, motorcyclists, and racecar drivers. The mainstream women’s magazine *Eva* made a point of presenting photo essays of women from all over the world in unusual fields of endeavor and by providing a department on women and work in each issue.

Toyen and her urban Czech contemporaries, therefore, experienced the excitements of a feminist movement at its peak. They studied school subjects previously unknown to girls, played games and sports recently the sole province of boys and men, and heard grown-ups discussing women’s suffrage. They began to wear corsetless undergarments, and filled in for male workers during the War. In other words, their experience, while uniquely Czech, was comparable to that of British, French, German, American, and Scandinavian women. While Toyen was an exceptional woman in more ways than one, her choices about both employment and personal

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<sup>14</sup>Eva Uchalová, et al., *Czech Fashion, 1918–1939: Elegance of the Czechoslovak First Republic*, ed. Andreas Beckmann, trans. Štěpán Suchochleb (Prague: Olympia Publishing House in cooperation with the Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM), 1996), 11. The Washington Declaration was released by Masaryk in Washington, DC.

<sup>15</sup> *Europe Centrale*, 24 August 1929, quoted in XXX, “Le Féminisme en Tchécoslovaquie,” *Revue Française de Prague* 8, no. 46 (December 1929): 410.

relationships were shaped by larger societal circumstances, during the First Republic as well as under Austria-Hungary. We will see that becoming a working artist was compatible with gender expectations of the interwar period, while remaining single and avoiding setting up household with a man safeguarded her career.

Recent scholarship, however, has emphasized that First Republic Czechoslovakia was not quite the paradise recalled by its nostalgic survivors. Though it was a relatively successful democracy, not only did it struggle with the question of minority rights, but the Masaryk and Beneš governments did not succeed in creating the gender-equal state guaranteed in the constitution. Throughout the First Republic, feminists and legal scholars were preoccupied with the revision of inherited Austrian legal codes relating to family law, a project which never came to satisfactory resolution.

Active feminism worldwide, however, suffered a decline after World War I, in part due to its very gains regarding education, employment, suffrage, and political activity. Czechoslovakia was no exception. Once women had the vote, feminist organizations tended to collapse or contract. Still, interest in women's issues did not die away. In 1922, the *Ženská národní rada* (Women's National Council) was established, uniting more than 50 existing women's associations. Throughout the interwar period, however, Czech feminists continued to tie feminism to nationalism and to emphasize sexual purity, a stance that made feminism unappealing to the younger generation.<sup>16</sup> Women of Toyen's generation often perceived older feminists as outdated due to their emphasis on purity and temperance, which combined badly with jazz-age interest in Freud, contraception, sexual pleasure, and social drinking.

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<sup>16</sup> For example, see Věra Babáková, "Masaryk a mravní základ ženského hnutí," in *Masaryk a ženy* (Prague: Ženská národní rada, 1930), 260–63, and other contributors to the same volume such as Alois Hajn.

However, while interwar Czechs believed women had a right to intellectual and political equality, in practice, women's rights remained subsidiary to the rights of the family and nation, and did not take precedence over their womanhood. In other words, while legal equality was considered a desirable part of democracy, this did not mean significant changes in gender roles, which were believed to be defined by nature. Women were expected to vote and take some part in civic life, but the roles of wife and mother were deeply valued. Double-income families were regarded as taking jobs from the unemployed.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, most women worked outside the home at some point, and throughout the interwar period close to a quarter of Czech women had jobs. Professional women such as Toyen were unusual not in that they worked outside the home, but in that they had true careers.

How, then, did Toyen and other Czech women artists fit into this newly liberated, yet incompletely equal, milieu? Toyen and many other women attended the renowned UMPRŮM (School of Decorative Arts), which was founded in 1885.<sup>18</sup> But while Czech girls had had access to college-preparatory education since the 1890s, began receiving university degrees at the turn of the century, and were well represented in art and design schools, few women were particularly visible on the Prague art scene. Though the artist Zdenka Braunerová had been a well-respected personality among fin-de-siècle writers and intellectuals, mentions of female artists in First Republic journalism are relatively scarce. Toyen and the sculptor Hana Wichterlová were almost the only women artists consistently mentioned in the press, despite the existence of and occasional mention of many more working female artists.

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<sup>17</sup> See Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006). Feinberg's pioneering work provides a framework for my discussion of Czechoslovak women's political situation and adherence to feminist principles during the First Republic.

<sup>18</sup>Eva Uchalová, *Czech Fashion from the Waltz to the Tango*, trans. Capricorn Promotions (Prague: Olympia Publishing House in cooperation with the Museum of Decorative Arts (UPM), 1997), 18.

As an artist, Toyen herself was both representative and exceptional. She was representative in being something of a New Woman—she worked, wore pants, smoked—and like many women she attended UMPRŮM rather than the fine art academy. But she was also very much an exception. How? First, she was a member of the avant-garde, having joined the Devětsil group in 1923 with her male associates Jindřich Štyrský and Jiří Jelínek. The only other women known to have joined Devětsil were the dancer Mira Holzbachová and the columnist Jaroslava Václavková, while the only other woman in the original Prague surrealist group, Katy King, was more a supporter than an active poet. Toyen was the only female visual artist in either group during the interwar period.

Second, Toyen presented herself differently than most of her contemporaries. Fellow members of the Czech avant-garde often commented on her spoken use of the masculine gender, which struck them as bizarre. We have seen that Jaroslav Seifert recalled how one night she exclaimed “Já jsem malíř smutnej”— I am an unhappy male painter—rather than the gender-appropriate “Já jsem malířka smutná.” Fellow Devětsil member Adolf Hoffmeister captured her most tellingly as “Ten-Ta-To-yen” in his 1930 caricature for the cover of the Prague arts paper *Rozpravy Aventina*. In this brilliantly perceptive sketch, Hoffmeister presents Toyen wearing trousers but casting a skirted shadow with fish in her bosom, a bird for a head, and a drafting triangle for an arm. Via the title “Ten-Ta-To-yen” he gives us a witty grammar lesson of that male, that female, that neuter creature whose gender and nature cannot be pinned down. Toyen did not adopt the kind of stereotypical lesbian persona visible in photos of the writer Lida Merlínová. She attracted male admirers within and beyond the Devětsil group, although she spurned both the architect Bedřich Feuerstein and her school friend Alen Diviš and claimed that

her partnership with Štyrský was platonic. Thus, her persona was complex and intriguing in its gender ambiguity.

Toyen's difference from her female contemporaries was hardly limited to her public persona, however. Many women in the early avant-garde, if not so many in Prague, presented themselves as lesbian, bisexual, or simply opposed to old codes of femininity. Few, however, were as bold in their artistic representations of gender and sexuality. Very few took on these themes in art at an early age. Toyen's oeuvre includes a significant body of erotica, both in the form of book illustrations and as personal sketches and oil paintings. These date back to at least 1922, or in other words to the very beginning of her career. While works such as *Pillow* and *Paradise of the Blacks* do not seem to have been publicly shown, Toyen quickly became a well-known illustrator and even her anonymous erotic drawings in Štyrský's *Erotická revue* were probably easily recognizable to readers who knew her mainstream illustrations or bought her signed erotic titles. The luxury edition of Marguerite de Navarre's classic *Heptameron*, which she illustrated for the modernist house DP in 1932, was advertised as erotic, although none of these illustrations were explicit.

What sort of work, then, were other Czech women artists creating? Many, of course, worked in design, such as Emilie Paličková, credited with the revival of Czech lace and embroidery, and Helena Johnová and Ludvika Smrčková. Indeed, Toyen and many of the male art stars worked in both design and fine art, as design was a respected but less publicized means of making a living in the Czech art world. Czech women artists had presented painted glass in the first "ladies" exhibition in Prague in 1909, but the 1911 Souborná výstava českých malířek (Collective Exhibition of Czech Women Artists) in Turnova had a broader focus. In 1918 the Kruh výtvarných umělkyně (KVU, Circle of Women Visual Artists) became an independent

group.<sup>19</sup> Active throughout the First Republic, it included women not just from Bohemia but also from Moravia and even from Ruthenia, the impoverished easternmost region of Czechoslovakia. The KVV's members belonged to non-gendered artists' groups as well, such as Mánes, Umělecká beseda (Artistic Forum), the Prager Secession, Hollar, the brněnský Kruh výtvarný umělců Aleš (Aleš Circle of Brno Visual Artists), and so forth.<sup>20</sup> These women certainly exhibited actively both within and outside of the KVV—some also internationally—but for the most part their exhibitions were best publicized in periodicals directed toward women, such as *Eva* and *Ženský svět* (Women's World). It appears that they were best known in Czech feminist circles, and that due to their feminist ties, interest in themes relating to women's lives, and tendency to exhibit in all-woman shows, overall their work was categorized as “feminine” art. Furthermore, the collective and cooperative nature of the women's exhibitions made it difficult for individuals to stand out in the crowd. While the modern woman was seen by many artists and intellectuals of both sexes as a symbol of First Republic progress, this did not translate to a wide interest in the work of Czech women artists, whether traditionalists such as Jožka Kratochová and Helena Emingerová or modernists like Linka Procházková, Zdenka Burghauserová, Vlasta Vostřebalová-Fischerová, Milada Marešová, or Marie Stachová, who prepared a series of collages satirizing the Czech surrealists for an April Fool's Day issue of the mainstream magazine *Světobzor*.

Thus, the Czech feminist movement had created an atmosphere encouraging to women's artistic ambitions, but we will see that it was the camaraderie, relative openness, and political radicality of the interwar Czech avant-garde that provided a space for Toyen's development as an

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<sup>19</sup> The KVV became independent from a larger women's group (Martina Pachmanová, *Neznámá území: Českého moderního umění: Pod lupou genderu* [Prague: Argo, 2004], 98–99).

<sup>20</sup> On these groups of women artists, see Martina Pachmanová, *Neznámá území: Českého moderního umění: Pod lupou genderu* (Prague: Argo, 2004).

avant-gardist with an erotic turn of mind. Other women artists, meanwhile, lacked the benefit of such established male peer groups, and formed something of a female art ghetto.

## 2.2 *THIS IS INEVITABLE: TOYEN'S PARTNERSHIP WITH ŠTYRSKÝ*

Toyen's partnership with fellow-artist Jindřich Štyrský predated the pair's membership in the Devětsil group and continued until Štyrský's premature death in 1942. They first met in the summer of 1922 on the Dalmatian island of Korčula, a popular destination for vacationing Czechs.<sup>21</sup> Surrealist Annie Le Brun, whose information came from Toyen, describes the partnership specifically in terms of shared existential revolt against family, society, religion, and conceptions of art. She describes Toyen and Štyrský as bound in life and death, "as in stories of pirates where the gold of friendship can sometimes dim the most fabulous riches."<sup>22</sup>

By 1923, Toyen and Štyrský were presenting themselves as artists who wished to join the avant-garde group Devětsil. Initially, Toyen was probably perceived as just another young artist eager to ally herself with the relatively new movement. She did not yet have a strong public identity of her own, and initially she was seen as the inseparable partner of Štyrský and his friend Remo (Jiří Jelínek). The architect Honzík described the three as forming

an inseparable and highly distinctive trio. Remo with his tall figure, smoothly shaven head, the chiselled features of the oceanic Maori and a red scarf wrapped round his neck. Štyrský in a beret and long overcoat, a dreamy smile and azure gaze. Toyen wearing a man's suit with a man's shirt, and with a beret on her head,

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<sup>21</sup>Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1965), 131.

<sup>22</sup> "comme dans les histoires de pirates où l'or de l'amitié fait parfois ternir les plus fabuleuses richesses." (A. Le Brun, "Toyen ou l'insurrection lyrique," *Nouvelle Revue Française*, no. 559 [October 2001]: 133–4)

her hands in her pockets most of the time and perhaps a cigarette in the corner of her mouth.<sup>23</sup> Nezval too noted that the three made a “remarkable human and artistic trio.”<sup>24</sup> He quickly became close friends with all three, and recalled that Toyen was brave and that legend had it she had once torn up and eaten a Communist document rather than be caught with it. Nezval also remembered that Toyen had a special sort of tenderness which she guarded with “a barrier of prickly coolness, as ever she guarded her feelings rigorously.”<sup>25</sup>

Remo dropped out of the picture fairly early, and had a relatively obscure career that was cut short under the Nazis.<sup>26</sup> During most of Toyen’s life in Prague, she and Štyrský were regarded as twins, an indivisible duo like the Čapek brothers or the performers Voskovec and Werich. Certainly, Toyen and Štyrský formed one of those close partnerships often seen among twentieth-century artists: like Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, Hans Arp and Sophie Täuber-Arp, and Sonia and Robert Delaunay, they worked in tight integration and produced much closely related work—as their Artificialist paintings of the late 1920s show. Unlike such couples

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<sup>23</sup> “Remo, Štyrský a Toyen tvořili nerozlučnou a velmi nápadnou trojici. Remo, vysoké postavy, hlavu hladce oholenou, s ostře řezanými rysy oceánského Maora, nějakou rudou šálu omotanou kolem šije. Štyrský v rádiovce a předlouhém raglánu, se zasněným úsměvem a blankytným pohledem. Toyen v kostýmu s mužským sakem, mužskou košilí, s rádioukou na hlavě, zpravidla ruce v kapsách, případně i cigaretu v koutku úst.” (Karel Honzík, *Ze života avantgardy* [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1963], 50.)

<sup>24</sup> “Byla to podivuhodná lidská i umělecká trojice.” (Nezval, *Z mého života*, 130.)

<sup>25</sup> “Měla zvláštní druh něžnosti, kterou střežila hradbou naježené chladnokrevnosti, jako vůbec přísně střežila své city..” (Nezval, *Z mého života*, 130–31.)

<sup>26</sup> Jelínek, who had Communist sympathies, died in the Mauthausen concentration camp at the end of 1941 (Augustin Ságner, “In Memoriam: Jiří Jelínek,” *Kvart* 4, no. 1 [1945]: 20). The exact relationship between and among the three is unknown, particularly since Toyen was reserved about her romantic interests. It may be that there was a triangular component to the friendship, and that eventually this resolved into the simpler dyad of Štyrský and Toyen (For a discussion of love triangles and their overt or submerged bisexuality, see Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* [New York: Touchstone, 1995], 423–37). Nezval states that “Jelínek was more robust, and it was clear to me that Štyrský had the stronger position in the friendship of the two painters. Thus I came in contact with the two artists, and one morning, when I visited Jelínek’s apartment, I made the acquaintance of their friend Marie Čermínová, who later signed her pictures with the name Toyen.” (“Jelínek byl robustnější a bylo mi jasno, že v přátelství těchto dvou malířů má Štyrský silnější pozici. Tak jsem přišel do styku s těmito dvěma umělci a jednou ráno, když jsem je navštívil v Jelínkově bytě, seznámil jsem se s jejich přítelkyní Marií Čermínovou, která později podpisovala své obrázky jménem Toyen.” Nezval, *Z mého života*, 130–1). Srp states that Jelínek was influenced by Štyrský and Toyen’s art during 1923–4 and during the latter part of the 1920s when he stayed briefly with them in Paris (Karel Srp, *Toyen*, trans. Karolina Vočadlo [Prague: City Gallery Prague and Argo, 2000], 11)..

as Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo or Max Ernst and Leonora Carrington, there was not a significant age difference between the two, and unlike Raoul Hausman and Hannah Höch or Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner, there has not been a glaring gender difference in the way the art world valued their creations. Although Toyen was almost the only woman in either Devěsíl or the Prague surrealist group, it appears that she was welcomed without regard to her gender. Furthermore, while she and Štyrský were considered to be a pair, she was not generally seen as Štyrský's follower or property. Seifert later recalled: "[I]t appeared that the young painter painted somewhat in the shadow of her older friend. It soon became evident, however, that this was not at all the case."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, the high status Toyen came to have in the Prague avant-garde and within surrealism appears more akin to that of Natalia Goncharova and other women in the early twentieth-century Russian avant-garde than to that of most of the women artists who struggled to make their way in Paris or New York.

Who, then, was Jindřich Štyrský? The son of a teacher, he too initially taught school, but after his mother's death in 1920, he inherited land, which he sold, and this made it possible for him to leave behind teaching and the past.<sup>28</sup> Breaking definitively with his father, Štyrský began his studies at the academy in Prague. His first student works were exhibited in 1921 and received favorable notice, but he was already writing friends of his discontent with his studies.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "[Z]dalo se, že mladá malířka maluje poněkud ve stínu svého staršího přítele. Jak se však záhy ukázalo, nebylo tomu tak docela." (Jaroslav Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa* [Prague: Eminent /Knižní Klub, 1999], 155.)

<sup>28</sup> Štyrský sold his portion of meadow for 7000 Kč, which was a considerable sum. (Karel Michl, "Setkání s Jindřichem Štyrským," in *Chvilé setkání věčnost vzpomínky: Medailóny F. Halase, J. Johna a J. Štyrského* [Hrádec Kralové: Kruh, 1976], 149)

<sup>29</sup> Aleš Kuneš, "Nejstarší práce Jindřicha Štyrského," *Ateliér*, no. 7 (3 April 1997): 6.

Though it was not immediately evident in his early art practice, Štyrský drew strongly from the Czech Decadents. In 1921 he wrote his school friend Karel Michl that he had often visited Decadent poet Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic and found the latter's idealization of the pathological and the unhealthy did him "a lot of good."<sup>30</sup> In addition to Karásek, he became acquainted with Emanuel z Lešehrad, some of whose books he would later design.<sup>31</sup> Lešehrad, who was interested in the occult, recorded his dreams, and it is possible that this, rather than surrealist interest in dreams, first inspired Štyrský to do the same.<sup>32</sup> This Decadent influence would become more marked in Štyrský's work as time went on, but was never pronounced in Toyen's oeuvre.

Following the death of his father in 1924, Štyrský inherited money that funded his and Toyen's sojourn in Paris; they departed in the fall of 1925.<sup>33</sup> During their stay in Paris, the two showed their work at exhibitions and founded their own two-person Artificialist movement, but they also designed books for publishers back in Prague, which was probably their main means of support beyond Štyrský's inheritance. At this stage, the two were collaborating on collage covers of a type similar to those done by other European modernists, and which were also akin to the

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<sup>30</sup> "Vojákoval jsem v Nymburce, jezdil jsem často do Prahy ke Karáskovi ze Lvovic /jeho včelý idealismus umělecký, byt chorobný a nezdravý mi tenkrat mno prospěl. Šel jsem už potom cílevědonězi. /" (Štyrský to Karel Michl, 18 January 1921, Michl fond, LA PNP.) Fárová also notes Štyrský's ties to Karásek (Annette Moussu [Anna Fárová], *Jindřich Štyrský: Fotografické dílo* [Jazzpetit, 1982], n.p). Pynsent observes of Karásek and the Czech Decadents, "A model autostylisation is sickness, usually consumptiveness, where the self's sickness represents both a rejection of the sick society and infection with that sickness." (Robert B. Pynsent, "Conclusory Essay: Decadence, Decay and Innovation," in *Decadence and Innovation: Austro-Hungarian Life and Art at the Turn of the Century*, ed. Robert B. Pynsent [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989], 143.)

<sup>31</sup> These books are at the LA PNP, as are Štyrský's surviving cards to Lešehrad. Lešehrad, described as "[t]he most thorough exponent of occultism in Czech *fin-de-siècle* literature," translated Péladan. (See Pynsent, "Decadence, Decay and Innovation," 219 and A. M. Píša, "Referáty: Sar Mérodack J. Péladan: Umění státi se magem," *Červen* 4, no. 4 [28 April 1921]: 62–63.)

<sup>32</sup> Luboš Merhaut, "A Summit and Abyss in One: Transformations of Decadent Coordinates in Czech Literature at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," in *Morbid Colours: Art and the Idea of Decadence in the Bohemian Lands 1880–1914*, ed. Otto M. Urban, trans. Barbara Day (Prague: Municipal House/Arbor Vitae/Moravian Gallery in Brno, 2006), 52.

<sup>33</sup> The elder Štyrský, having succumbed to alcoholism, died of burns after falling on a red-hot stove in an alcoholic delirium. (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 155; Michl, "Setkání s Jindřichem Štyrským," 161–2).

picture poems that Štyrský and other Devětsil members, such as Karel Teige and Jiří Voskovec, were creating. Though not surrealist in theory, some of these covers drew from Dadaist modes of juxtaposition and certainly looked toward surrealism in their associative construction.

As Karel Srp points out, while Štyrský belonged to the avant-garde, he remained independent from its programs. He rejected not only state-supported culture, but any indication of conformity or mediocrity among his friends, as he would prove in 1929 when he launched a fierce attack on many of them.<sup>34</sup> The avant-garde, however, was vital to his growth. Like many of his peers, he had experimented with cubism, expressionism, primitivism, and purism, but his work changed considerably after meeting Toyen, Teige, and Nezval. Teige inspired him to temporarily give up oil painting in favor of mixed media,<sup>35</sup> but for the most part his oeuvre was worked out in consultation with Toyen.

Still, while much of Toyen and Štyrský's work was closely related in style and content, each pursued specific directions that the other did not share. For example, Toyen went through a primitivist stage, while Štyrský only dabbled in primitivism. Toyen's Artificialist palette would tend toward deep and intense colors, while Štyrský preferred pastel hues. Štyrský also developed a strong interest in photography, an area Toyen did not pursue.<sup>36</sup> Štyrský also devoted a significant amount of time to writing and editing, sometimes to the exclusion of painting; he

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<sup>34</sup>Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský* (Prague: Argo, 2007), 6.

<sup>35</sup>Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 8–11.

<sup>36</sup>On Štyrský's photography, see: Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, trans. Derek Paton (Prague: Torst with The Museum of Decorative Arts, Prague, 2001); see also P. V. Sojka, "Čtenáři píší: Surrealism a fotografie," *Magazin DP* 2, no. 10 (1935): 315–6; P.A., "Surrealisté se představují," *Světovzor* 35, no. 4 (24 January 1935): 52–3; Karel Srp, "The Philosophy of the Recess," *Umění* 44, no. 1 (1996): 41–52; Anna Fárová, "Poznámky, k jednomu nákupu," *Ateliér* 13, no. 9 (2000): 3; Jan Suk, "I tady na stole leží růže: Jindřich Štyrský," *Nové knihy* 41, no. 34–5 (29 August 2001): 32–3; Radim Kopáč, "Výloha, ze které se svět odehrává: Nad monografií Štyrského-fotografa," *Tvar*, no. 17 (18 October 2001): 9; Jan H. Vitvar, "Subjektivní Tmej, bizarní Štyrský," *Mladá fronta dnes*, 30 July 2001, B6; Josef Moucha, "Poetická projekce," *Ateliér*, no. 14–15 (11 July 2002): 2; Jan Zima, "Klasik naší fotografie," *Hálo noviny* 12, no. 111 (14 May 2002): 7; Ian Walker, "On the Needles of These Days: Czech Surrealism and Documentary Photography," *Third Text* 18, no. 2 (March 2004): 103–18; Ian Walker, "Between Photograph and Poem: A Study of Štyrský and Heisler's On the Needles of These Days," *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 3 (Spring 2005): 103–18.

wrote the first Czech monograph on Rimbaud in the late 1920s and then embarked on a similar study of the Marquis de Sade.<sup>37</sup> Toyen, on the other hand, avoided written expression of her thoughts. Nonetheless, congruence between their works was notable, even to the point of pendants like Toyen's *Magnetic Woman* and Štyrský's *Squid Man*. They also developed some of their imagery together, as during the early 1930s, when both artists developed an imagery of fragmentation and cracking, which they applied to both bodies and inanimate objects. It is even believed that Toyen painted works designed by Štyrský that he was too ill and weak to carry out.

The two continued to work together throughout the rest of Štyrský's life, always exhibiting together and making related though individual artistic choices as they moved through Artificialism and gradually into surrealism. Štyrský's work increasingly showed its ties to the Decadents and to Bataille concepts of the base and formless, emphasizing pain, decay, voyeurism, and death, a direction not strongly evident in most of Toyen's work. The two shared a strong interest in the erotic, and while Štyrský's friend Karel Michl recalled that Štyrský did purvey pornographic photos to interested parties, possibly in part because he needed the money,<sup>38</sup> both Štyrský and Toyen regarded the erotic as an important realm of human life that required thorough study and full investigation.

Ultimately, as Štyrský's wartime obituary would guardedly state:

He and the painter Toyen formed a pair that appeared programmatically during the last fifteen years and was the most characteristic exponent of the young generation, which endeavored to guide further developments in contemporary western visual art after the World War, as formed in a complex manner at the

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<sup>37</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 12. See Jindřich Štyrský, "Rodný kraj J. A. Rimbauda," *Rozpravy Aventina* 5, no. 6 (31 October 1929): 67; Jindřich Štyrský, "Rimbaud a jeho dílo," *Panorama* 7 (1929): 279–83; Jean Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud: srdce pod klerikou, intimity seminaristovy*, ed. Jindřich Štyrský, trans. Svata Pírková (Prague: Edice surrealismu, 1934); and Jindřich Štyrský, "Markýz de Sade," *Světová Literatura* 14, no. 5–6 (1969): 435–63, with an afterword by František Šmejkal.

<sup>38</sup>Michl, "Setkání s Jindřichem Štyrským," 166–7.

beginning of this century. In this case individual and subjective character was taken to the very limits of the possible.”<sup>39</sup>

### 2.2.1 Toyen and Štyrský as Working Artists

During the first half of her career—from about 1925 to 1950—Toyen appears to have earned money for a remarkable variety of types of artistic endeavor—not just oil paintings, but book design and illustration, fabric design, bookplates for individuals, and drawings for magazines.<sup>40</sup> She appears to have gone about her work in a business-like manner, informing potential clients of costs of commissioning specific types of work, and so on.<sup>41</sup> When she found, in 1933, that her work had been used without permission, she was diligent about suing the perpetrator.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Spolu s malířkou Toyen tvořil dvojici, která vystupovala programově v posledních patnácti letech a byl nejtypičtějším představitelem mladé generace, jež se po světové válce snažila dovésti dále výboje současného západního výtvarného umění, jak se komplikovaně utvářely na počátku tohoto století. Individuální a subjektivní charakter byl zde doveden až za samé hranice možností.” (Z.W. [Z. Wirth], “Poznámky: Jindřich Štyrský [Nekrolog.],” *Umění* 14 [1942–43]: 121.) The convoluted and obscure style of this obituary, which does not specify the nature of Štyrský’s experiments, suggests that it was written to be understood by the cognoscenti and not bring Nazi attention onto Toyen. *Umění* did not, at that period, cover contemporary art.

<sup>40</sup> Toyen’s considerable labors in the area of book design are detailed in Karel Srp and Lenka Bydžovská, *Knihy s Toyen* (Prague: Akropolis, 2003); in the late 1920s, Toyen and Štyrský were involved in an endeavor relating to Deka fabric dyes; examples of her curtain designs are on view at the UPM and were advertised in the respectable mainstream newspaper *Lidové noviny* on September 19, 1937 (Gustav Erhart, “Tajemství slečny Toyen: Několik poznámek k životu a dílu umělkyně,” *Ateliér*, no. 6 [18 March 2004]: 2); correspondence in various LA PNP fonds refers to her designs for bookplates; the popular women’s magazine *Eva* vol. 5 no. 12 (15 April 1933) has an inner cover by Toyen while another of her drawings for *Eva* was the subject of the plagiarism case against Otakar Žižka.

<sup>41</sup> Extant correspondence relating to some of Toyen’s commissions includes a 1934 letter to Josef Portman relates to book illustration, including a frontispiece; later, in 1940, she wrote Portman discussing illustrating the *Lysistrata*—a rather surprising choice during the Nazi occupation. Likewise, in the mid 1940s Toyen wrote to Karel Josef Beneš regarding illustrating his tales; and in 1946 Vladimír Nop requested and received a bookplate, for which Toyen charged him 1000 Kč. Some of this correspondence went through her lawyer, Kamill Resler, who was well known among Prague artists and writers (Toyen to Josef Portman, 1934, Portman fond, LA PNP; Toyen to Josef Portman, 1940, Portman fond, LA PNP; Toyen to Karel Josef Beneš, 1946, Beneš fond LA PNP; Toyen to Vladimír Nop, 1946, Kamill Resler fond, LA PNP).

<sup>42</sup> The PNP holds a voluminous and interesting file on this case, in which the aspiring Moravian writer and bibliophile Otakar Žižka reprinted a drawing that originally illustrated a story by the Comtesse de Noailles and made it into the frontispiece of a collection of Shelley’s poems. This lawsuit dragged on from 1933–1942, (Čermínová vs. Žižka, prosecuting attorney JUDr. Kamill Resler, defense attorney JUDr. Jan Hlavenka, Krajskému soudu v Brně, 1933–42, Resler fond, LA PNP). Curiously, the collected letters of the poet František Halas, who was a witness for the prosecution, do not refer to the lawsuit. Rather, Halas first discussed a 1929 encounter with Žižka (letter 51 to Jiří Mahen, Prague, 1929), then in 1932 asked irritably who Žižka was (“Kdo je to Žižka? Neznam!” letter 90 to Jan

As an avant-garde artist working mainly in Prague, Toyen could not expect to support herself solely by selling paintings, although she and Štyrský held joint exhibitions with reasonable frequency and contemporary catalogs indicate that some of the works exhibited had already been sold at the time of exhibition. Rather, she and Štyrský used their talents—and perhaps especially Toyen’s design training, as she had gone to the design school UMPRŮM rather than the academy like Štyrský—to make money in art-related fields.

In 1929, for instance, after their return from Paris, Toyen and Štyrský became briefly involved in a fabric design business. At the end of the theater season, when Štyrský, who was now scenic designer for the Osvobozené divadlo (Liberated Theater), had no plays to design, Háša, the theater manager, bought an airbrush so that the artists could manufacture fashionable goods in the style of their paintings.<sup>43</sup> They had publicity photos taken of themselves in goggles and overalls, one of which was published in *Rozpravy Aventina* (Aventinum Discourses) as well as several in *Domov a svět* (Home and World). The pair soon tired of this endeavor, however. While Štyrský received a monthly income of 1000Kč during his tenure as scenic designer, book design and illustration appear to have been the pair’s most reliable source of income, and one in which they were already active by 1925. It is likely that they found this to be a very suitable and profitable means of support, as many of their associates were writers, they already had contacts in the publishing industry, and their publishing work involved ordinary pens and brushes rather than exotic machinery like airbrushes.

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Jelínek, Prague, 15 January 1932) (František Halas, *Dopisy*, ed. Jan Halas and Ludvík Kundera [Prague: Torst, 2001], 68, 84, 88).

<sup>43</sup> “...našel Háša pro Štyrského a Toyen náhradní povolání: koupil stroj na stříkání barev a Štyrský s Toyen vyráběli módní zboží, jemuž dávali styl některých svých obrazů. Tato práce, při níž musili vcechovat rozprašovanou barvu, je po nějaký čas bavila, nedělali ji však dlouho. Ztratili trpělivost...” Nezval, *Z mého života*, 189.

While Toyen proved quite capable of handling her own business affairs, Štyrský sometimes handled business correspondence not just for work undertaken by the two as partners, but in some cases for Toyen's individual work. Early in their careers, this was not surprising, as Štyrský was slightly older and may have had more contacts. In 1925 and 1926, for example, he wrote author Jan Bartoš regarding book covers that he and Toyen were designing jointly.<sup>44</sup> In 1931, he wrote Karel Michl about his and Toyen's upcoming exhibition, offering works for sale and a 50 percent discount on his literary publications.<sup>45</sup> In November 1933, he wrote Michl that he had spoken with Toyen and she would be happy to prepare illustrations for Michl's book. Štyrský then went into considerable technical detail about what Toyen would do and how much it would cost. However, he closed by directing Michl to contact Toyen directly at her Komenského 17 address in Smíchov.<sup>46</sup> As Michl was an old friend of Štyrský's, he may simply have preferred to contact Štyrský first about the work he wished to commission from Toyen.<sup>47</sup> In any case, the fact that she worked on over 500 books for Czech publishers between 1925 and 1949 indicates that Toyen was a highly successful illustrator and that book production brought in a significant part of her income.

Toyen's work for book publishers falls in four major areas: serious literature; children's books; erotica; and covers for thrillers and mysteries. For the most part, her style tended to be more ethereal for poetry and literary novels, more like that of a coloring book for children's books; and more playful for erotica; while for thrillers and mysteries she generally designed photographic or photo-like covers that bear relatively little resemblance to the rest of her oeuvre.

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<sup>44</sup> Štyrský to Jan Bartoš, 1925-1926, Jan Bartoš fond, LA PNP.

<sup>45</sup> Štyrský to Karel Michl, 21 December 1931, Michl fond, LA PNP. Michl also discusses this and Toyen's book illustrations, especially for children's books (Michl, "Setkání s Jindřichem Štyrským," 163).

<sup>46</sup> Štyrský to Karel Michl, 27 November 1933, Karel Michl fond, LA PNP.

<sup>47</sup> Štyrský to Karel Michl, 9 May 1933, Karel Michl fond, LA PNP.

There was, naturally, some overlap in these categories; her cover for the Czech translation of Kafka's *The Castle* was in the same mode as her thriller covers, her illustrations for Nezval's children's book *Anička skřítek a Slaměný Hubert* (Anička the Pixie and Strawman Hubert) found a middle ground between her more literary, surrealist drawing style and her more stolidly naturalistic children's style, and her illustrations for the Marquis de Sade's *Justine* have a sensitive seriousness utterly unlike the witty but straightforward manner of most of her erotica. Štyrský's work on books, on the other hand, fell primarily in the areas of typography, cover design, and layout, although he too did some illustration.

Contemporary accounts discussed the two artists' work in mostly equal terms. Karel Teige avoided distinguishing between their work, preferring to write of them as a unit, and this was true of most non-Devětsil writers as well.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, contemporary publications, such as *Rozpravy Aventina*, normally reproduced their work with equal emphasis. For example, *ReD* almost unfailingly reproduced paired works, sometimes even paired by theme (such as Štyrský's *Flood* and Toyen's *Shipwreck* in the sixth issue). Nor did gender usually surface in contemporary reviews of their work. One unusually gendered assessment of their work did, however, appear in 1931: "The man is more intellectual: his pictures resemble, as before, the precise depictions of a nature researcher; the woman is more lyrical, more decorative. Štyrský's colors are light and clear, Toyen's dark, deep in tone, soft. Štyrský's pictures are the results of research, Toyen's pictures are still lifes."<sup>49</sup> While this gendering of Toyen's work as lyrical, decorative, soft, and less intellectual was unusual, such descriptions were not unheard of in Czech art criticism; the

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<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Karel Teige, "Ultrafialové obrazy, čili artificialismus (Poznámka k obrazům Štyrského a Toyen)," *ReD* 1, no. 9 (June 1928): 315–17.

<sup>49</sup> "Der Mann ist wissenschaftlicher, seine Bilder ähneln, wie schon früher, genauen Schilderungen eines Naturforschers; die Frau ist gefühlvoller, dekorativer. Die Farben bei Štyrský sind hell und scharf, bei Toyen dunkel, tieftönend, weich. Die Bilder von Štyrský sind Forschungsergebnisse, die Bilder von Toyen sind Stilleben." (Jaromír Pečírka, "Bilder-Ausstellung von Jindřich Štyrský und Toyen in der 'Umělecká Beseda,'" *Prager Presse* 11, no. 328 [4 December 1931]: 8)

abstract sculptor Hana Wichterlová's modelling was described a few years later as having a feminine delicacy.<sup>50</sup> This difference in treatment suggests that most art writers did not regard

Toyen as partaking of feminine traits. A typical later assessment by Nezval was:

Thus, if we observe the existing meandering evolutionary development of Štyrský and Toyen's art, we may see in their developments ever more fully and ever more systematically, always the strongly experimentally tinged attempt to use, in a nontraditional and authentic manner, their own subjective world from infantile memories and sensory experiences all the way up to dreams and unconscious constructions, and the journey from intuitive automatism to automatism ever more conscious, the more remote the more precisely we aim at the capture and expression of concrete irrationality.

Using musical terminology, Nezval wrote of their harmonies and quarter-tone palette, which linked their ideas with those of the experimental composer Alois Hába.<sup>51</sup> Apart from its musicality (the multitalented Nezval had originally trained as a musician), this type of discussion was not unlike that of reviews by other writers.

Generally speaking, then, Toyen and Štyrský seem to have been regarded as approximate equals. Their 1928 show at Aventina Mansard, however, shows Štyrský as the slightly higher priced painter. His lowest asking price was 1,200 Kč, his highest 3,000 Kč, whereas Toyen's lowest was 1,100 Kč and her highest was 2,400 Kč. Only two of Toyen's paintings were priced at over 1,800, while five of Štyrský's were over 1,800.<sup>52</sup> By the late 1930s, however, their prices were about the same.

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<sup>50</sup>Vojtěch Volavka, "Členská výstava S.V.U. Mánes," *Magazin DP* 1, no. 6 (1933–34): 165–7.

<sup>51</sup>"Tak, pozorujeme-li průběh dosavadní vývojové křivky umění Štyrského a Toyen, můžeme viděti v jejich vývoji stále větší a stále systematictější, vždy silně experimentálně zabarvenou snahu uplatnit netradičním a autentickým způsobem svůj subjektivní svět od infantilních vzpomínek a pocitových zážitků až ke snům a nevědomým konstrukcím, a to cestou od intuitivního automatismu k automatismu stále uvědomělejším, čím dál tím přesněji zaměřenému k zachycení a vyjádření konkrétní iracionality." (Vítězslav Nezval, "Úvodní slovo," in *Štyrský a Toyen*, by Karel Teige [Prague: F. Borový, 1938], 9)

<sup>52</sup>Karel Teige, *Výstava nových obrazů Štyrského a Toyen* (Prague: Aventinská Mansarda, 1928) Other catalogs listing their asking prices include: *Výstava Jindřicha Štyrského a Toyen* (1930); Jaroslav B. Svrček, *Katalog výstavy obrazů a kreseb Štyrského a Toyen pořádané Skupinou výtvarných umělců v Brně v galerii Vaněk, Dominikánské*

### 2.2.2 Gender Exchange

To some extent, Toyen and Štyrský were perceived as exchanging gender attributes. Nezval, for example, wrote: “Štyrský was her soul and her female element, because Toyen, who dressed herself after a certain time as a boy, refused, when she spoke of herself, to use the feminine endings, in order to demonstrate her human and artistic equality.”<sup>53</sup> Nezval specifically considered the gender presentation of each artist; in addition to noting Toyen’s use of the masculine gender in speech and other masculine-coded traits, he observed of Štyrský: “There were always two entities in him: the one blue-eyed, seemingly meek and somewhat bucolically feminine, grateful to that side of himself for his gentler inspirations”<sup>54</sup> The critic Václav Nebeský also considered Štyrský as representing a more feminine element while Toyen was the more virile.<sup>55</sup>

František Šmejkal elaborated on Nezval’s and Nebeský’s assessments, stating that feminine elements in Štyrský’s personality manifested themselves markedly, although in equilibrium with typically masculine attributes.

His androgynous complex, however, experienced its most pronounced fulfillment in intimate cohabitation and creative cooperation with Toyen, in that remarkable and inseparable union, in which Štyrský represented the feminine element on both the human and artistic side.<sup>56</sup>

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*náměstí č. 2 od 19. března do 10. dubna 1932*, pamphlet (Brno, 1932); and *Kresby Jindřicha Štyrského a Toyen*, handout (Prague, 1933).

<sup>53</sup> “Štyrský byl její duší a jejím ženským prvkem, neboť Toyen, která se šatila po jistý čas jako kluk, odmítala, když mluvila o sobě, používat ženskou koncovku, aby tak manifestovala svou lidskou i uměleckou rovnoprávnost.” (Nezval, *Z mého života*, 130.)

<sup>54</sup> “Byly v něm stále dvě bytosti: jedna modrooká, zdánlivě pokorná a jaksi venkovsky ženská, té vděčil za svou přejemnou inspiraci.” (Nezval, *Z mého života*, 133.)

<sup>55</sup> “[C]hez Štyrský, l’air un peu efféminé, tandis que chez Toyen elle prend des accent plus virils.” (Václav Nebeský, *L’Art Moderne Tchécoslovaque 1905–1933* [Paris: Felix Alcan, 1937], 181.)

<sup>56</sup> “zvláštní strukturou Štyrského osobnosti, v níž se výrazně projevovala řada ženských prvků, vyvažovaných ovšem za určitých okolností typicky mužskými vlastnostmi. [...] Nejzřetelnějšího naplnění však doznal jeho androgynní komplex v důvěrném soužití a v tvůrčí spolupráci s Toyen, v tomto podivuhodném a nerozlučném svazku, v němž

In 1967, Věra Linhartová observed:

It was a meeting of two personalities, whose attributes were in many senses opposite and complementary, and which mutually fulfilled and inspired one other. It was as if each of them found the possibility of full personal expression only in this mutual encounter; and as if together they formed a single bipolar entity. — The theme of the Hermaphrodite is, after all, one of the constants in Štyrský's Dreams, and hence of his drawings and paintings as well. — This essential union is not at all external to the work of Štyrský and Toyen: if we consider the roots and sources of their work, then it is obvious how much the experience of such a creative unity must pervade them. Nor was the complementarity and transitivity of the masculine and feminine principle an insignificant issue in surrealist inquiry; and it was by no means by chance that the first surrealist play (or more precisely: the play, whose subtitle later became the name of the whole movement) was the drama of the mythical Tiresias, who was a man as well as a woman and thus a complete, perfect being.<sup>57</sup>

Although Karel Srp describes Toyen as a staunch radical leftist, he also calls her an introvert who apparently signed rather than co-wrote Štyrský's polemics and position statements and who, unlike Štyrský, was not publicly active in movements. While it is clear that Toyen was less extroverted and combative than Štyrský, Srp seems eager to place her in the role of a “constant force,” a wife-like partner to Štyrský and Heisler.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Srp suggests that “[t]he idea of swapping the male and female roles took hold early on” and allowed the two artists to coexist as individual personalities. Srp characterizes Toyen's expression as “forceful” and

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Štyrský představoval po lidské a umělecké stránce ženský prvek.” (Quoted in Moussu [Anna Fárová], *Jindřich Štyrský: Fotografické dílo*, n.p.)

<sup>57</sup> “Je to setkání dvou osobností, jejichž vlastnosti byly v mnohém smyslu opačné a komplementární, a jež se vzájemně doplňovaly a inspirovaly. Jakoby teprve tímto vzájemným setkáním našel každý z nich možnost plného osobního vyslovení; a jakoby společně utvořili jednu jedinou dvojpolární bytost. — Téma Hermafrodita je ostatně jednou z konstant Štyrského Snů, a odtud i jeho kreseb a obrazů. — Toto bytostné spojení naprosto není v díle Štyrského a Toyen vnější: uvážíme-li kořeny a zdroje jejich tvorby, pak je zřejmé jak velice s nimi zkušenost takové tvůrčí pospolitosti musela postupovat. Komplementarita a tranzitivnost mužského a ženského principu byla také jedním z ne nevýznamných předmětů surrealistického průzkumu; a nikoli náhodou je první surrealistické drama (nebo přesněji: drama, jehož podtitul se později stal názvem celého hnutí) dramatem o mýtickém Tiresiovi, který byl mužem i ženou a tedy úplnou dokonalou bytostí.” (Quoted in Moussu [Anna Fárová], *Jindřich Štyrský: Fotografické dílo*, n.p.)

<sup>58</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 12.

“raw,” Štyrský’s as subtle, and their dialogue as a “stimulating” one not fully understood by contemporaries who tended to see them as linked and perhaps even interchangeable. Srp himself characterizes them primarily in terms of Štyrský’s positive differences (experimentation, greater variety of formal choices, literary/critical projects) versus Toyen’s limits (refusal to stray from the visual arts, alleged distance from Štyrský’s fetishism and narcissicism), although he notes that their works were frequently extremely similar and that both tended toward themes of anxiety and melancholy.<sup>59</sup> Srp suggests that the two were able to coexist by swapping male and female roles.<sup>60</sup> He also proposes that Teige’s concept of the mental object, “a generalising expression which would embrace all the depicted objects, whatever character or form they assumed,” allowed Štyrský and Toyen to share themes while preserving their individual approaches, and cites examples of Toyen’s use of themes found in Štyrský’s photographs, such as broken dolls, heads on poles, swings, and fairground shooting galleries.<sup>61</sup>

Czech writers, then, taking their cue from Nezval, have developed this theme of complementarity and gender exchange between the two artists, a formulation which has certain merits and reflects Czech concepts of male and female characteristics that were as current during the First Republic as they are today, but which nonetheless may not be quite how Toyen and Štyrský themselves saw their gender and partnership.

Annie Le Brun, meanwhile, stresses that Štyrský gave Toyen an extraordinary liberty to transgress. She points to the early orgy scene *Pillow* (1922) as evidence that Toyen’s freedom of composition, movement, and color were nothing compared to her freedom of subject. As Le

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<sup>59</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> “...jako by spolu mohli koexistovat díky vzájemné výměně mužské a ženské role.” (Karel Srp, “Artificialismus,” *Ateliér* 5, no. 17 [20 August 1992]: 16.)

<sup>61</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 143.

Brun says, “I don’t know if today one can measure the incredible audacity that it took for a young woman twenty years of age to realize this tableau.” She observes that in 1919 it was entitled *Secluded Place*, suggesting that the 1922 version is simply the definitive version. Le Brun states “She, so secret about her private life, took pride in having ended her own virginity. But, in the visual arts, I know of no other woman who has made something approaching this canvas.”<sup>62</sup>

While it is unlikely that Toyen felt any need for Štyrský’s permission to pursue erotic themes, she must surely have welcomed his encouragement, especially at the start of her career. It was, indeed, with Štyrský’s support that Toyen could develop her own unique means of expression, both in visual art that was akin to yet distinct from his, and in her development of an ambiguous gender presentation. While her relationship with Štyrský, with whom she would work closely for twenty years and with whose name her own has always been inseparably connected by the Czechs, can never be fully explained or understood, it was vital to her development as an artist confident in her own ideas and their visual expression.

### 2.3 OUR WORLD: DEVĚTSIL

Indeed: today’s era is purely *romantic*. That which is strong in it is unfaltering *mysticism*, assuming ever newer and newer forms. It is at once a *mysticism* of the decline of the world, of western culture; a *mysticism* of the resurgence of Europe; a *mysticism* of social belief in a rich wellspring of cultural strengths in the depths of the proletarian class; a pansexual *mysticism* spread by Freud, which rages directly, *epidemicallly*, in the young generations of all Europe; and this

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<sup>62</sup>“Elle, si secrète sur sa vie privée, se faisait une gloire d’avoir elle-même mis fin à sa virginité. Mais, dans le domaine plastique, je ne connais aucune femme à avoir fait quelque chose d’approchant à cette toile.” (Le Brun, “Toyen ou l’insurrection lyrique,” 135)

fashionable realism also has in its foundation mystical roots, just as it also has not a little fashionable Weltschmerz. — František Götz, 1926<sup>63</sup>

First Republic culture was varied in its opinions, intensely literate, boundlessly creative, and ceaseless in its analyses of itself and the larger world. There can be few cultures of comparable size that have produced such an outpouring of texts on so many topics in so short a time. The interwar generation, born between about 1890 and 1905, coalesced in the avant-garde group Devětsil, a large and active association of artists, writers, architects, composers, theater people, and dancers, that was founded in late 1920 by Karel Teige, Vladislav Vančura, Adolf Hoffmeister, Artuš Černík, and others. The energy of this group is suggested by the fact that within just three months it held its first exhibition, which was rapidly followed by its first poetry reading and thereafter by a cavalcade of exhibitions, lectures, and publications.<sup>64</sup> Devětsil was more broadly conceived and more interdisciplinary than most avant-garde groups of its time, and its members valued collaboration highly. Members showed a strong interest in French and Soviet artistic developments, and the group also hosted lectures and exhibitions involving the Hungarian group MA, the Russians Archipenko, Ehrenburg, and Mayakovsky, Dutch theoretician Theo van Doesburg, Bauhaus members Moholy-Nagy, Meyer, and Albers, Dadaists Hans Richter and Kurt Schwitters; and the architect Le Corbusier.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>“Vůbec: dnešní doba je výlučně r o m a n t i c k á. To, co v ní je pevného, je jistý m y s t i c i s m u s, nabývající stále nových a nových forem. Je to hned m y s t i c i s m u s zániku světa, západní kultury; hned zase mysticismus obrody Evropy; hned mysticismus sociální víry v bohaté zdroje kulturotvorné síly v hlubinách proletářské třídy; hned zase mysticismus pansexualistický, šířený Freudem, jenž zuří přímo e p i d e m i c k y v mladých generacích celé Evropy; a ten modní realismus má také v podstatě mystické kořeny, stejně jako neméně módní světobol.” (Fr. Götz, “Nová prosa a sensibilita dnešní mládeže,” *Nová svoboda* 3, no. 19 [13 May 1926]: 264.)

<sup>64</sup>For an overview of Devětsil history and development, see Rostislav Švácha, et al., *Devětsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s* (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 110.

<sup>65</sup>Rostislav Švácha, et al., *Devětsil*, 110–1; František Šmejkal, “Surrealismus a české umění,” *Umění* 37, no. 5 (1989): 378. Šmejkal dates the beginning of this international contact to 1922 and gives three directions: the Soviet and Russian émigré; that of the Bauhaus, de Stijl, *MA*, *Blok*, and *Zenit*; and diverse Parisians.

While only a few of its members would later become surrealists, Devětsil and its world comprised the primary matrix in which Toyen grew to artistic maturity. It was Toyen's Czech artistic context until the mid-1930s, and its personalities remained significant in her life until her emigration to France after World War II. Thus, to understand Toyen's development, some understanding of Devětsil is necessary.

But what exactly was Devětsil? While relatively stable as an organization, the Devětsil group shifted its theoretical direction repeatedly. An initial rejection of "technical civilization" and the machine aesthetic was soon succeeded by an embrace of these as characteristic of modern life.<sup>66</sup> By 1921-22, Devětsil was decidedly Proletarian (characterized by the poetry of Jiří Wolker), with Communist preferences.<sup>67</sup> In the first half of 1921, its theorist, the future surrealist Karel Teige, wrote in favor of art engaged in life, which included "primitive" art of various kinds; Teige was against formalist "art for art's sake."<sup>68</sup> His stance was that the Devětsil generation wanted to bring about a new world, not a new kind of art.<sup>69</sup> Then, in the summer of 1922, Teige visited Paris for a month, where he became acquainted with Ozenfant, Le Corbusier, Man Ray, Léger, Brancusi, and other avant-gardists. This trip moved him to favor Purism. Around the same time, he was embracing Constructivism, at least in the sense that he knew of

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<sup>66</sup>Devětsil's somewhat overlapping phases included Proletarian art, Constructivism, and Poetism, and were increasingly represented by the theoretical writings of Karel Teige. Thomas Ort, "Men Without Qualities: Karel Čapek and His Generation, 1911–1938" (Ph.D. diss., New York: New York University, 2005), 228–9 See also Jan Rambousek, "II. výstava 'Devětsilu,' Rudolfinum, Praha," *České slovo* 15, no. 286 (6 December 1923): 5, for a discussion of Teige's move from primitivism to purism.

<sup>67</sup>Alfred French, *The Poets of Prague: Czech Poetry Between the Wars* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 21 The early Proletarian phase or strand could be said to have ended with Jiří Wolker's death in 1924, although the end of Proletarian poetry by no means meant an end of interest in the proletariat.

<sup>68</sup> See Karel Teige, "Novým směrem," *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (24 February 1921): 569–571 and Karel Teige, "Nové umění a lidová tvorba," *Červen* 4, no. 12 (23 June 1921): 175–177, in which Teige goes into rare ecstasies about folk art and costume in relation to their connection to modernism.

<sup>69</sup> See Karel Teige, "Novým směrem," *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (24 February 1921): 569–571 and Karel Teige, "Obrazy a předobrazy," *Musaion* 2 (Spring 1921): 52–58, discussed in Ort, "Men Without Qualities," 260.

it.<sup>70</sup> This change of direction caused a hemorrhage of members, followed by an influx of new ones, who included the future surrealists Nezval, Biebl, Štyrský, and Toyen. Poetism followed in 1923–4, foreshadowed by the late-1922 publication *Život II* (Life II).<sup>71</sup> At this juncture Toyen’s primitivist painting style fit with what several other members, such as Adolf Hoffmeister, were painting, and related to Teige’s emphasis on a joyful, accessible art. These primitivist works were also akin to the Social Civilist art produced around the same time by non-Devětsilers such as Otto Gutfreund, but Devětsil primitivism emphasized play and fantasy over the themes of modern-day life typical of the Social Civilists.

How did Devětsil members, however, conceive the group in relation to the Czech nation? While prior to the 1890s generation, Czech artists and intellectuals had been largely concerned with national-ethnic self-definition and competition with ethnic Germans, David-Fox suggests that by the 1890s, avant-gardists already saw Prague as a node in a larger European network rather than emphasizing its position as the Czech center. This internationalist tendency among Czech intellectuals and creators had begun in the late nineteenth century in response to the highly provincial aspects of the National Awakening.<sup>72</sup> Matthew S. Witkovsky notes the “mix of loathing and longing with regard to communal identity” often found in central Europe in the

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<sup>70</sup> Teige’s constructivist writings include Karel Teige, “Umění dnes a zítra,” in *Avantgarda známá a neznámá*, vol. 1: Od proletářského umění k poetismu, 1919–1924, ed. Štěpán Vlašín (Prague: Svoboda, 1971), 365–81, Karel Teige, “Konstruktivismus a likvidace ‘umění’,” in *Svět stavby a básně: Studie z dvacátých let*, vol. 1 of *Výbor z díla*, ed. Jiří Brabec, et al. (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966), 129–43.

<sup>71</sup> Devětsil was allowed full sway over this issue of the magazine *Život*, and rendered it so alarmingly modernist that no other modernist group was let design it again. Peter Zusi notes the significant shift between the appearance of the proletarian *Revoluční sborník Devětsil* and the constructivist, nearly poetist *Život II*, both of which appeared in 1922 (Peter A. Zusi, “The Present ‘As It Really Is:’ Historicism and the Theory of the Avant-Garde” [Ph.D. diss., Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001], 85).

<sup>72</sup> For discussion of the excesses of national self-definition among the National Awakeners, and the beginnings of skepticism and dissent by educated Czechs, see Katherine David-Fox, “Prague-Vienna, Prague-Berlin: The Hidden Geography of Czech Modernism,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 736 and Katherine David-Fox, “The 1890s Generation: Modernism and National Identity in Czech Culture, 1890–1900” (Ph.D. diss., New Haven: Yale University, 1996), 78–9. David-Fox specifically argues that as late as the 1880s the Czechs lacked “a tradition of critical scholarship,” which resulted in wild manipulation of history, art, and literature to fit the nation-building agenda. Subsequent generations strongly opposed the trappings as well as the ideology of nationalism.

early twentieth century, and suggests that the “strident internationalism espoused by Devětsil” cloaked ambivalence about Czechness.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Witkovsky suggests that although in recent years Devětsil has been represented as “a uniquely Czech sensibility,” such a characterization harkens back to nineteenth-century Czech nationalist thought and would have distressed its members.<sup>74</sup> Witkovsky argues that Teige and other Devětsil members wished to engage internationally, without regard for nationality, but that as they primarily spoke to a Czech audience within Czechoslovakia, this desire was problematic. They were in the position of representing their country whether they wished to or not.<sup>75</sup> Witkovsky concludes that “representatives of official ideology” tended to emphasize continuity in Czech culture whereas the avant-garde (as elsewhere in Europe) saw the Great War as an impetus to reorganize society. He sees Devětsil members’ intense interest in things international as “a claim of affinity with those elements of European avant-gardism that seem most likely to effect a fresh start for humanity”.<sup>76</sup>

In sum, interwar Czech avant-gardists were relatively uninterested in national self-definition, having grown up with a nationalist movement whose artistic excesses were already being poked fun at by the turn of the century. While for many of them this would change after World War II, when Czechoslovakia redefined itself as a Slavic, Eastern-bloc nation, during the First Republic, avant-gardists emphasized ties to other avant-gardists and leftists worldwide. The ongoing internationalism of the Czech avant-garde during the first three decades of the twentieth century also made it easy to espouse a non-national movement such as surrealism.

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<sup>73</sup>Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center: Devětsil and Czech Culture, 1918–1938” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, History of Art, 2002), 4–5.

<sup>74</sup>Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center,” 10.

<sup>75</sup>Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center,” 36.

<sup>76</sup>Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center,” 492–3.

Thus, on the nationalist-internationalist continuum the Devětsil group belonged securely with the Czech modernists who began to replace the National Awakeners around 1890.<sup>77</sup> Like the 1890s generation, Devětsil was more concerned with its relationship to other modernists than with nationalist identity. Between the 1890s generation and Devětsil, however, came the Čapek or “cubist” generation, against which the Devětsil generation explicitly defined itself. The Čapek generation has been characterized as pragmatic and skeptical, while the 1890s generation and the Devětsil generation shared a desire for some form of collective universal truth.<sup>78</sup> The relationship among these three generations was a topic of hot debate during the 1920s.

Another, less frequently noted 1890s connection was with the Decadent *Moderní revue*. On the surface, this might seem an unlikely link, given the optimistic, future-directed thrust of Devětsil.<sup>79</sup> After all, in an 1896 essay, Arnošt Procházka, one of the magazine’s editors, had gone against the standard nationalist rhetoric of the Czechs as a vigorous young people, and instead characterized them as inherently decadent. Procházka regarded the Czech lands as especially suited to decadence due to their supposedly poor social, political, national, and cultural situation under Austria-Hungary. Procházka also claimed that most art was based not on

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<sup>77</sup> Members both of the 1890s generation, such as Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, and Devětsil, such as Teige, saw the 1890s as a turning point. See David-Fox, “The 1890s Generation,” 87.

<sup>78</sup> See Ort, “Men Without Qualities,” 222, with reference to Karel Teige, “Novým směrem,” *Kmen* 4, no. 48 (24 February 1921): 569–571. Karl Mannheim’s theory of generations recognizes that although ideas and beliefs are affected by factors such as class and geography, and not all members of a generation know one another personally, the (geographically limited) generational unit has “as its nucleus, a concrete group which has developed the most essential new conceptions which are subsequently developed by the unit.” (Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations,” in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1972], 307.)

<sup>79</sup> Discussion of Czech avant-garde directions grows increasingly nuanced. Alfred French usefully characterized the 1890s generation as aloof and inclined to shun the vulgar herd while the twenties generation was more crowd-identified (French, *Poets of Prague*, 5). More recently, Katherine David-Fox reminds us that the 1890s generation included both decadents and the socially conscious (David-Fox, “Prague-Vienna, Prague-Berlin”) and Alfred Thomas points out that “Just as the decadent poets of the 1890s did not totally repudiate Czech national identity but reinvented it to reflect their inner, subjective world, so the avant-garde artists of the interwar period found it impossible to distinguish between their private and public selves.” (Alfred Thomas, “Between Paris and Moscow: Sexuality and Politics in Interwar Czech Poetry and Film,” *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 3 [Spring 2005]: 3, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal3/>.)

empirical experience, but arose from internal mental sources.<sup>80</sup> He regarded the Symbolists and Decadents as explorers of the psyche.<sup>81</sup>

While the Decadents preferred the individual to the crowd, they envisioned the necessity for “barbarians” to ravage existing civilization, and often cast the working class in the role of these feared yet longed-for barbarians. Attacks on the bourgeoisie contrasted with sympathy for the suffering, if alien, proletariat.<sup>82</sup> This combination of internal creative sources and, perhaps to a lesser degree, belief in working-class ability to renew civilization, made Czech Decadence attractive to certain members of Devětsil, particularly Štyrský, who admired Procházka’s co-editor Jiří Karásek. Czech Decadence, though never a large movement, was extremely significant in Czech literature but also manifested strongly in the visual arts. Themes of transformation, the subconscious, the dream, the spiritual, eroticism and orgies, the surmounting of taboo, evil, death, the supernatural, illness, and decay were repeatedly made the subject of poetry and visual art. Such writers as Procházka, Karásek, Hlaváček, Neumann, Březina, and Lešehrad wrote of eroticism, sexuality, the occult, and satanism, while such artists as Hlaváček, Panuška, and Koblíha, as well as many others only briefly tinged with decadence, such as Kupka, Váchal, Filla, Zrzavý, and Kubišta, explored themes of eroticism and death, in ways that were clearly precursors to Štyrský.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Procházka, Afterword to S. K. Neumann’s *Almanach Secesse*, 1896, cited in Kirsten Lodge, “The Peak of Civilization on the Brink of Collapse: The ‘Roman Paradigm’ in Czech and Russian Decadence” (Ph.D. diss., New York: Columbia University, 2006), 63–64.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Lodge, “The Peak of Civilization,” 66.

<sup>82</sup> See Robert B. Pynsent, “The Decadent Nation: The Politics of Arnošt Procházka and Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic,” in *Intellectuals and the Future in the Habsburg Monarchy 1890–1914*, ed. Laszlo Peter and Robert B. Pynsent (London, 1988), 72–74 and Lodge, “The Peak of Civilization,” 178. Pynsent emphasizes Procházka and Karásek’s elitism.

<sup>83</sup> See Otto M. Urban, *In Morbid Colours: Art and the Idea of Decadence in the Bohemian Lands 1880–1914*, trans. Barbara Day (Prague: Municipal House/Arbor Vitae/Moravian Gallery in Brno, 2006).

### 2.3.1 Poetism and Picture Poetry

Poetism emerged as a psychological need of the time of bourgeois culture's undeniably final flare-up. [...] This artistic blossom, refined and pure, recalls the decadents of the end of the century. —*Čin*, 1930<sup>84</sup>

[R]ather than philosophers and pedagogues, it is clowns, dancers, acrobats and tourists who are the modern poets. —Karel Teige, "Poetismus," 1924<sup>85</sup>

Although Devětsil was in part defined by modernist internationalism and a pro-Communist orientation, another of its defining features grew from the postwar situation and mood. As in the United States, the 1920s were a rather dizzy time for the urban young. Devětsil, along with some artists and writers not specifically aligned with that group, emphasized playfulness. Poetism, then, became Teige and Nezval's plan for the lighter-hearted side of life, in contrast with workaday constructivism.<sup>86</sup> "If the new art, and that which we shall call POETISM," Teige proclaimed, "is an art of life, an art of living and enjoying, it must become, eventually, a natural part of everyday life, as delightful and accessible as sport, love, wine, and all manner of other delectations."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "Poetismus vznikl jako psychologická potřeba doby nepopíratelně posledního vzplanutí měšťácké kultury. ... Tento umělecký květ, rafinovaně čistý, připomíná dekadenci z konce století." (F. L., "Vít Nezval: Snídaně v trávě," *Čin* 1, no. 27 [1 May 1930]: 651.)

<sup>85</sup> "...spíše než filosofové a pedagogové jsou clowni, tanečnice, akrobati a turisté moderními básníky." (Karel Teige, "Poetismus," *Host* 3, no. 9–10 [July 1924]: 201.)

<sup>86</sup> In this mixture of high art and mass culture, Devětsil belongs with what has been theorized as the historical avant-garde, distinct from (pure-art) modernism. See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986). On the constructivist-poetist mix, see, for example, František Šmejkal, "Poznámky ke Karlu Teigemu," *Umění* 42, no. 1 (1994): 50–62; Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder, "Radical Constructivism in the Late 1920s: Karel Teige, Naum Gabo and Their Milieu," *Umění* 43, no. 1–2 (1995 1995): 85–88; Jaroslav Anděl, "Sen o Devětsilu," *Umění* 35, no. 1 (1987): 50–3; Claude Leclanche-Bouléová, "Šíření purismu ve střední a východní Evropě," trans. Jitka Hamzová, *Umění* 35, no. 1 (1987): 16–29; Esther Levinger, "Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses," *Art Bulletin* 81, no. 3 (September 1999): 513–32.

<sup>87</sup> "Je-li nové umění, a to, co nazveme POETISMEM, uměním života, uměním žiti a užívání, musí být posléze tak samozřejmé, rozkošné a dostupné jako sport, láska, víno a všechny lahůdky." (Karel Teige, "Poetismus," *Host* 3, no. 9–10 [July 1924]: 198, partially translated in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930* [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002], 579.) Teige also says "Poetismus je především modus vivendi. Je funkcí života, a zároveň naplněním jeho smyslu. Je strůjcem obecného

While members of Devětsil had some familiarity with Dada, neither the group as a whole nor its poetist members shared that movement's rebelliously anarchist, destructive attitudes. When Devětsil did use Dada-like ideas, it gave these a completely new valence, as when the Devětsil group exhibited found objects at its 1923 Bazaar of Modern Arts, displaying work by Devětsil members alongside objects from everyday life such as posters, a hairdresser's dummy, a life belt, and a ball bearing. These found objects were meant less to shock viewers as non-art in a fine-art context than to represent topics and concepts relating to Devětsil interests.<sup>88</sup> Poetist art, while often employing collage, usually sought harmony, even a kind of placid stability, rather than the jarring disruptions of Dada.

Teige repeatedly emphasized the importance of multisensory creation. For example, in "Ultrafialové obrazy..." (Ultraviolet Pictures), which emphasizes Artificialist painting's contemporary identification of painter with poet, Teige stated, "Artificialism does not make the same esthetic error as orphism or colored music, translating musical compositions into color or vice versa." Rather, Teige saw Štyrský and Toyen "as poets of color and line."<sup>89</sup> Teige also, along with other avant-gardists, sought a synthesis between science and art. While in the 1920s this was expressed in such forms as the notion of "the birth of a new aesthetics supported by the research of exact science," this interest in uniting science and art foreshadowed surrealist interest in Freud.<sup>90</sup>

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lidského štěstí a krásné pohody, beznáročně pacifický." (Karel Teige, "Poetismus," *Host* 3, no. 9–10 [July 1924]: 202.)

<sup>88</sup>František Šmejkal, "Devětsil: An Introduction," in *Devětsil: Czech Avant-Garde Art, Architecture and Design of the 1920s and 30s*, ed. Rostislav Švácha, et al. (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1990), 14–15.

<sup>89</sup>"Není transposicí veršů do řeči linií a barev, není pleonastický 'Gesamtkunst//werk'. Artificielismus nedopouští se obdobného estetického omylu jako orfismus nebo barevná hudba, překládající kompozice hudební do barevných nebo naopak." and "Toyen a Štyrský básní barvami a liniemi..." (Teige, "Ultrafialové Obrazy," 315–16.)

<sup>90</sup>"Rodí se tu nová slovesná estetika, opírající se o výzkumy exaktní vědy." (Karel Teige, "Slova, slova, slova," in *Svět, který voní*, vol. 2 of *O humoru, clownech a dadaistech*, commentary by Jiří Brabec, reprint, 1930 [Prague: Akropolis, 2004], 110, translated in Jindřich Toman, "A Marvellous Chemical Laboratory... and Its Deeper

The picture poetry of the mid-1920s, then, was a logical step for Devětsil: the creation of visual rather than verbal poems, generally composed via a highly orderly collage technique. Picture poems were created by most Devětsil members, but few survive.<sup>91</sup> Teige theorized pictorial poetry as

a language devoid of grammar; its vocabulary is more like signals than a conversation. [...] A word of this poetry is far from being a word of a spoken language or of a literary language. It is an optical symbol or reality, similar to a flag that symbolizes its country. Here poetry abandons not only music, it abandons linguistics as well. Its vocabulary rises to the level of modern pictography.<sup>92</sup>

Clearly, then, by the mid-1920s Teige was presenting picture poetry in terms of semiotics, a means of working that we will later see relates to Toyen's surrealist imagery. Similarly, in "Slova, slova, slova" (Words, words, words), Teige, using some of Roman Jakobson's ideas about poetic language, described picture poems as "poems without words, optical, sonorous, olfactory, and tactile," and stated that "a word is not an exact sign of an object but only its universal envelope."<sup>93</sup>

At the same time, Vítězslav Nezval was writing proto-surrealist verbal poetry. Nezval's epic "The Amazing Magician," written shortly before he joined Devětsil, and first published in 1922, was a fantastical work that embodied both Devětsil's politically revolutionary ideas and its

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Meaning: Notes on Roman Jakobson and the Czech Avant-Garde Between the Two Wars," in *Language, Poetry and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska, et al. [Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987], 324–25.

<sup>91</sup> On picture poetry, see Tomáš Vlček, "Art Between Social Crisis and Utopia: The Czech Contribution to the Development of the Avant-Garde Movement in East-Central Europe, 1910–30," *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 31–2; Marina Vanci-Perahim, "Poétisme et Pictopoésie: pour une étude comparative des avant-gardes," *Umění* 43, no. 1–2 (1995): 48–51; Stanisław Czekalski, "The Postcards from Utopia," *Umění* 43, no. 1–2 (1995): 40–44; Levinger, "Czech Avant-Garde Art"; Karel Srp, *Karel Teige 1900–1951*.

<sup>92</sup> Karel Teige, "Poesie pro všech pět smyslů," quoted in Vlček, "Art Between Social Crisis and Utopia," 31.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Levinger, "Czech Avant-Garde Art," 514.

new emphasis on forms and fantasies that would appeal to rather than lecture at readers.<sup>94</sup>

Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, Nezval's surrealist-like approach to language replaced logic with association. As he later explained:

When words were new, they shone next to one another in their unremitting unceasing, inherent intensity. Gradually, through their frequent use, phraseology was created. When using an everyday greeting, no one imagines lips on the white hand of a woman. It was necessary to uncouple this phrase if I were to evoke its original sense.

Logic is precisely that which makes shining words into phrases. Logically, the glass belongs to the table, the star to the skies, and the door to the stairs. Therefore we do not see them. It is necessary to place the star on the table, the glass near the piano and the angels, the door next to the ocean. Our aim was to unveil reality, to give reality the shining form it had on the first day of existence. If I did this at the expense of logic, it was an attempt at heightened realism.<sup>95</sup>

Thus, it was not surprising that in 1926, František Götz, noting the nearness of Apollinaire, Birot, Cendrars, Reverdy, Jakob, the Dadaists, and the surrealists to Symbolism, described future surrealists Biebl and Nezval as typical Czech neo-symbolist poets.<sup>96</sup> Likewise, Marxist critic Bedřich Václavek was already describing Nezval as close to surrealist in 1927.<sup>97</sup>

This surrealist-like manner of working appears to have come naturally to Nezval, and perhaps to Biebl as well, but it did not develop in a void. In part, it developed from the Czech modernist love of Apollinaire, and in part from Czech mystical authors such as Brežina and

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<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of this poem's position within Devětsil and its innovative combination of traditional and modernist form and content, see Alfred French, "Nezval's *Amazing Magician*: A Czech Shamanist Epic," *Slavic Review* 32, no. 2 (June 1973): 358–69.

<sup>95</sup> "Když byla slova nová, svítila vedle sebe ve své neustálé, rodné intenzitě. Ponenáhlu jejich častým užíváním se vytvořila fraseologie. Nikdo si nepředstaví při každodenním pozdravu rty na bílé ruce ženy. Bylo třeba, abych tuto frázi rozpojil, mám-li evokovat původní její smysl.

"Logika je právě to, co dělá ze svítivých slov fráze. Logicky patří sklenice stolu, hvězda nebi, dveře schodům. Proto jich nevidíme. Bylo třeba položit hvězdu na stůl, sklenici v blízkost pianina a andělů, dveře v sousedství oceánu. Šlo o to, odhaliti skutečnost, dát jí její svítivý tvar jako v první den. Činil-li jsem to za cenu logiky, byla to snaha nadměru realistická." (Vítězslav Nezval, "Kapka inkoustu," *ReD* 1, no. 9 [June 1928]: 314.)

<sup>96</sup> Fr. Götz, "Obroda symbolismu," *Nová svoboda* 3, no. 33 (19 August 1926): 440–41.

<sup>97</sup> Bedřich Václavek, "Akrobat se stává mistrem," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 14.

Deml. Furthermore, the young linguist Roman Jakobson, who had associated with the Russian Futurist poets prior to settling in Czechoslovakia and joining the Devětsil group, encouraged Nezval and the other Devětsil poets, remarking in 1925 that “Those bold innovators in Czech poetry, the poets of Devětsil, have set out on the path of purposeful elaboration of the language of poetry, an elaboration not obscured by any irrelevant considerations.”<sup>98</sup> Certainly, shared membership in Devětsil as well as personal friendship between Nezval and Jakobson meant that the two exchanged ideas regularly during the Devětsil incubation of the Prague surrealist group.

Did Czech surrealism, then, actually begin with Poetism, rather than with French surrealism? Several authors have suggested this lineage, prompted by retrospective evaluations by Nezval and Teige.<sup>99</sup> True, Teige’s 1928 Poetist Manifesto, in general agreement with French surrealist thought, proclaimed Romanticism as the point of departure for liberated poetry and emphasized the importance of Poe and particularly Baudelaire.<sup>100</sup> And when Teige stated: “The fate of poetism as a school and as an -ism will not concern us here, because it lies outside the real sphere of interest of poetism as a new aesthetics and philosophy,”<sup>101</sup> we can see a similarity in attitude to the French surrealists in his refusal to create a school or “-ism.” These attitudes were not necessarily taken from the French surrealists, however, but came from similar sources. They

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<sup>98</sup> “Nové básnictví je polychromní, je mu cizí klasické rozhraničování slohů. Pružné a dynamické prvky obecné češtiny a spodní hantýrky jsou pokladem pro básníka. Bylo by lákavé pokusit se o simultánní prolínání čisté lyriky bez jakéhokoli naturalistického oprávnění nejrozmanitějšími prvky lexikálními češtiny obecné, pepické hantýrky, řeči venkovské a archaické; barbarismy a konečně novotvary. Slova dají se vyhmátati, když skřípají v násilném sousedství.” Jakobson, Roman [sic], “Konec básnického umprumáctví a živnostnictví,” *Pásmo* 1, no. 14 (1925): 2.

<sup>99</sup> Norbert Fried, “Genese českého surrealismu: Od konce Světové války do vydání letáku ‘Surrealismus v Č.S.R.’ r. 1934,” thesis or dissertation (Prague: Archiv AV ČR, c. 1939) ; Endre Bojtár, “The Avant-Garde in Central and Eastern European Literature,” *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 60; Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, “Years of Long Days: Surrealism in Czechoslovakia,” *Third Text*, no. 36 (Autumn 1996): 15.

<sup>100</sup> Karel Teige, “Manifest Poetismu,” *ReD* 1, no. 9 (June 1928): 321.

<sup>101</sup> “Osudy poetismu jako školy a jako ismu nás zde nebudou zaměstnávat, protože leží mimo vlastní oblast zájmu poetismu jako nové estetiky a filosofie.” (Teige, “Manifest Poetismu,” 318.)

were also a result of Teige's evolving theoretical stance as his perspective grew closer to that of the surrealists.

Certainly, although Teige was later rather proud that the original Poetist manifesto (summer 1924) predated the First Surrealist Manifesto, during the heyday of Poetism he regarded the movements as two separate ventures, and said so repeatedly, calling Surrealism "infrared" and Poetism "ultraviolet."<sup>102</sup> Nezval, who came to regard Czech surrealism as gestating but incomplete during this period, stated,

French surrealism, of course, developed in a different fashion than the Czech. It was preceded in France by a destructive dadaism and in its origins was imbued with a deep anarchism, while the latent surrealism in Czechoslovakia, which was called poetism, was from the very first already interested in a positive relationship with the revolutionary workers' movement.<sup>103</sup>

In this 1934 statement, Nezval, like Teige, retrospectively made Poetism into "latent surrealism." But was this characterization really accurate, or did Poetism simply contain a few surrealist-like strands which grew in importance toward the end of the 1920s for a small number of Devětsil members, primarily those who later became surrealists?<sup>104</sup> Teige's theorization of Poetism as Constructivism's playful alter ego, along with his emphasis on poetry for the five senses, neither sounds like surrealism nor at the same time conflicts with it. During the latter 1920s, as Devětsil grew less and less unified and its members pursued increasingly different paths, a surrealist-like outlook is only visible in the work of certain members, some but not all of whom ultimately

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<sup>102</sup>Teige, "Slova, slova, slova," 122.

<sup>103</sup> "Francouzský nadrealismus vznikl ovšem jiným způsobem než český. Předcházela mu ve Francii destruktivní dadaismus a ve svém vzniku byl proniknut ještě dosti hluboce anarchismem, zatím co latentní nadrealismus v Československu, který se nazýval poetismem, již od prvopočátku zaujímal kladný vztah k revolučnímu dělnickému hnutí." (J. Chaloupecký, "Vítězslav Nezval o surrealismu," *Světlozor* 34, no. 25 [21 June 1934]: 1).

<sup>104</sup> As Šmejkal points out, Devětsil's broader conceptual base, particularly its inclusion of constructivist ideas, prevented a rapprochement with surrealism during the 1920s, despite the two groups' similar poetic approaches (František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors to Symbols of Fate: Czech Surrealism of the 1930s," in *Czech Modernism 1900–1945* [Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1989], 66).

became surrealists.<sup>105</sup> Not surprisingly, surrealist tendencies were perhaps most notable in the work of Toyen, Štyrský, Nezval, and Biebl, and to a lesser extent the theater director Jindřich Honzl. Poetism was *one* of the precursors to Czech surrealism, not its sole parent.

An important area in which Devětsil artists looked toward surrealism in the mid-1920s was, intriguingly, Toyen and Štyrský's work in non-picture-poem collage. Their collaborative cover for Honzl's *Roztočené jeviště* (The Whirling Stage, 1925) combines the precision and geometry of Bauhaus collage with Dada-like surprise, so that a kind of prancing robot encounters a jolly showgirl. In 1926, their cover for Karel Schulz's *Dama u vodotrysku* (Lady at the Fountain) employs the Dada technique of placing a tiny head on a larger body, backgrounded by a wheel and threatened by large stiff fingers that could snap shut like scissors and shear off that oblivious smiling head. Also somewhat akin to Dada collage, but thoroughly surrealist in spirit, Toyen's *Lady Hamilton* (1926, named for a poem by Tzara) operates with a mysterious, even sexually charged, associative structure. In *Lady Hamilton*, Toyen constructed a version of a dressmaker's dummy from diverse pieces: the stand may have come from a lamp, the torso appears to have originated as a lacy glove, the bust from a round-collared dicky, and the circular head from a hair dryer. This dummy, however, is almost pornographically androgynous; the blower end of the hair dryer is inserted into the collar opening in a manner that reads simultaneously as an act of sexual penetration (the collar as labia) or as an erect penis jutting up (the collar as scrotum). Two eyes lurking in the opened suitcase at the dummy's base covertly observe this androgynous autoeroticism, while a calendar suggests, perhaps, the female cycle.<sup>106</sup> Štyrský's corresponding *L'Ange Heurtebise*, named for Cocteau's angel, is created in a style

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<sup>105</sup> See František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors," 66.

<sup>106</sup> The calendar is of somewhat mystifying origin; it may be a piece of an almanac, as it refers to the sun, but its other details are difficult to read and generally baffling.

reminiscent of cubist and Bauhaus collage but combines sensuous, “feminine” patterns with a crucifix-phallus.

### 2.3.2 Devětsil and the Surrealism of Ivan Goll

With their keen interest in artistic and literary movements beyond Czechoslovakia, Devětsil members were well aware of the developing surrealist movement. Perhaps the most important form of early surrealism to 1920s Czech avant-gardists was that of modernist writer Ivan Goll. When Seifert and Teige met Goll in July 1922 in Paris; they were already familiar with his illustrated poem “Paris is Burning,” which had first appeared in the Yugoslav journal *Zenit* in 1921 and shortly after that in Czech in the Devětsil-friendly publication *Červen*.<sup>107</sup> Subsequent Devětsil picture poetry shows a marked similarity in theme and visual style to “Paris is Burning,” and indeed Seifert tells us that Teige regarded the poem as “the new ‘Zone’,” referring to the much-admired work by Apollinaire.<sup>108</sup>

Unlike Breton, then, by 1922 Teige the Devětsil theorist was already associating surrealism (as he envisioned it via Goll) with the visual arts.<sup>109</sup> Goll, who visited Prague in

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<sup>107</sup>Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Surrealist in the Plural: Guillaume Apollinaire, Ivan Goll and Devětsil in the 1920s,” *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 7, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal1/> See Ivan Goll, “Paříž hoří,” *Červen* 4, no. 26 (8 December 1921): 357–61, trans. Jaroslav Seifert. Goll had earlier written about Communist art for *Červen* (Ivan Goll, “Komunistické umění,” *Červen* 4, no. 14 [7 July 1921]: 204–5, trans. P. J. L).

<sup>108</sup>Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Surrealist in the Plural,” 7; Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 203. See Ivan Goll, “Paříž hoří”. Goll had earlier written about Communist art for *Červen* (Ivan Goll, “Komunistické umění”). Goll was also to give a lecture in Prague under Devětsil’s auspices (Karel Teige to Artuš Černík, 22 March 1922, Černík fond, PNP). Apollinaire’s “Zone” was highly significant for Czech literature, perhaps more so than for French. And although Devětsil picture poems sound akin to the early surrealist tableau-poèmes, they were a completely different animal. (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 203.) Jiří Karásek, who strongly linked Goll with Devětsil, observed, “Ivan Goll is perhaps a German, certainly a Jew, but his poems could just as easily be written by a Frenchman or a Czech.” (“Ivan Goll je snad Němec, jistě Žid, ale jeho básně mohl psátí Francouz stejně jako Čech.” Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, “Glosy k psychologii nejmladší poesie,” in *Tvůrcové a epigoni: Kritické studie* [Prague: Aventinum, 1927], 202.)

<sup>109</sup>Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Surrealist in the Plural,” 10.

1922, was also made the Paris editor for the Devětsil magazine *Disk* (rather than Devětsil member Josef Šíma, who covered Paris for several other periodicals).<sup>110</sup>

However, Goll was not to become the leader of world surrealism, nor was his vision of surrealism the one to prevail. Goll and Breton clashed in 1924, with Breton winning the rights to surrealism, omitting Goll from the First Surrealist Manifesto, and downplaying their common predecessor Apollinaire.<sup>111</sup> This dispute did not go unnoticed among the Czechs; František Götze, writing in the literary journal *Host* (Guest), soon prepared an article analyzing the two groups' competing manifestoes. In this piece, Götze first considered Goll's version of surrealism, which he saw as growing directly from Apollinaire and emphasizing a shift from auditory to visual poetry. He then noted Breton's ties to Dada and emphasis on freedom, but concluded that for Breton, the poet was only a kind of medium, who must strive to be as passive and receptive as possible. Götze observed that at first glance, Bretonian surrealism appeared to be merely a free transcription of Freud. However, the incorporation of Dadaist elements, such as its anarchistic spirit, took the movement in a different direction. Götze concluded that Breton's surrealism "flows into a nearly religious mysticism." Götze argued that while strong art and poetry must grow from the whole person, including from the irrational, it must also be given form and clarity. An art passively received from the irrational could only be chaotic.<sup>112</sup>

To be sure, observed Götze, Breton didn't address himself to the requirements of concrete forms. "One can't just say that the picture is the core, the heat, the spirit of poetry, when we don't clarify its new forms." Though admitting that manifestos are written to serve a specific

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<sup>110</sup> Goll is often mentioned in Teige's 1922-23 correspondence to Devětsil member Artuš Černík. (Černík fond, PNP)

<sup>111</sup> Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Surrealist in the Plural," 13; Gérard Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, trans. Alison Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 65-66.

<sup>112</sup> "ústí do mysticismu skoro náboženského" (Fr. Götze, "Nadrealismus," *Host* 4 [1924]: 82-85. )

developmental and proclamatory purpose, Götz stressed that for Goll's group, surrealism was an intensive realism, a desire for synthesis, which would provide a raw materiality and an atmosphere of the spirit, while Breton called for a new mysticism of romantic origins. Though Götz hesitated to condemn Bretonian surrealism, it is clear he favored Goll's.<sup>113</sup>

Goll continued to be significant for the Czechs despite his trouncing by Breton, and a subsequent issue of *Host* published an article in which he called for sur-drama (*naddrama*).<sup>114</sup> The Brno Devětsil journal *Pásmo* (*Zone*) also promoted Goll and his group; in its December 1925 issue, Claire and Ivan Goll's *Poèmes d'amour* was noted, as well as Goll's journal *Surréalisme*. In the same issue, the journal *Les feuilles libres*, edited by Goll's associates Reverdy, Soupault, and Ribemont-Dessaignes, was praised as "one of the most agreeable modern revues." And, in 1927, the Osvobozené divadlo presented Goll's plays *Pojištění proti sebevraždě* (Insurance Against Suicide, directed by Jiří Frejka) and *Methusalem* (directed by future surrealist Jindřich Honzl).<sup>115</sup>

In 1928, Teige wrote that Apollinaire's surrealism (for which he used the Czech term "*nadrealismus*") had nothing in common with either Symbolism, "which provides reality in metaphors" or with later Bretonian surrealism, "which wants to provide a direct account of

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<sup>113</sup> "Nestačí říci, že obraz je jádro, teplo, duše poesie, když neobjasníme novou jeho formaci." (Fr. Götz, "Nadrealismus," 85.) Götz was not alone in voicing such concerns about early Bretonian surrealism. The Romanian poet Ilarie Voronca concluded around the same time that artists have always used the subconscious, that surrealist artistic accomplishments were a mere duplication of Dadaist experiments, and that surrealism was "feminine" and didn't respond to the rhythm of the times (Ilie Voronca, "Surrealism and Integralism," in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, trans. Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002], 556).

<sup>114</sup> Ivan Goll, "Naddrama," *Host* 4 (1925): 210–1, trans. Meth. Kovář.

<sup>115</sup> *ReD* issue 7, devoted to the Osvobozené divadlo, includes two pages of photos on the production. The Osvobozené divadlo (Liberated Theater), best known for the work of Voskovec and Werich, was originally the theater wing of Devětsil. Frejka and Honzl were its directors during the early years. *Methusalem*, which was written in 1922 as *Methusalem oder der ewige Bürger* and costumed by George Grosz, suited Honzl's desire both for a surrealist theater and for class struggle.

higher realities, surreal dreams, the subconscious, hallucinations.” Apollinaire’s surrealism, stated Teige, was “synonymous with cubism.” Teige here referred to Goll’s

ephemeral journal ‘Surréalisme’, whose poetry, illumined with Apollinaire’s light, is the organic continuation of cubism and orphism. They define surrealism wholly in the Apollinairean sense as the transposition of reality to the sphere of poetry, the direct suspension of reality without ideology and abstract logic, without parasitic naturalism.<sup>116</sup>

Goll’s poetry continued to appear in Czech translation throughout the interwar period.<sup>117</sup> His importance to the interwar Czech avant-garde was significant and enduring.

### 2.3.3 Devětsil between Moscow and Paris

Prague’s position between Paris and Moscow has become something of a geographic cliché. The concept, however, was accepted by the Czech interwar avant-gardists themselves.<sup>118</sup> Devětsil members were mainly from the middle class and were drawn to Communism for ethical reasons. While they desired revolution, they were simultaneously enraptured by the hedonistic side of capitalism.<sup>119</sup> Modern consumer goods and technologies were as exciting to Devětsil as circuses and amusement parks. The Soviet Union, nonetheless, was of enduring interest to Devětsil, and the second issue of *ReD* was devoted to Soviet cultural work.

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<sup>116</sup> “jenž podává realitu v metafoře” “jenž chce podati přímé záznamy vyšších skutečností, nadreality snu, podvědomí, halucinace.” “...efemérního časopisu ‘Surréalisme’, jejichž poesie, osvícená apollinaireovským světlem, je organickým pokračováním kubismu a orfismu. Surréalismus definují zcela ve smyslu Apollinaireové jako transposici reality do sféry poesie, direktní visi reality bez ideologie a abstraktní logiky, bez parazitního naturalismu.” (Karel Teige, “Guillaume Apollinaire a jeho doba,” *ReD* 2, no. 3 [November 1928]: 93–94.)

<sup>117</sup> See for example “Rotterdamští námořníci,” *Listy pro umění a kritiku* 1, no. 14 (12 October 1933), 435.

<sup>118</sup> See: Fijalkowski and Richardson, “Years of Long Days,” 16; Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West: Czech Surrealism’s Interwar Experiment” (Ph.D. diss., Austin: University of Texas, 2003); Thomas, “Between Paris and Moscow”. A contemporary example is “Už se přiznávají,” *Levá fronta* 1, no. 17 (25 March 1931), 4.

<sup>119</sup> Thomas, “Between Paris and Moscow,” 19.

Devětsil's interest in jazz, film, and other aspects of popular western culture brought little prestige within the Czechoslovak Communist Party, which found this bourgeois.<sup>120</sup> Although the Poetist manifesto was written in 1924, it remained a bone of contention in 1931. "What worker doesn't grasp the through-and-through bourgeois-reactionary character of poetism?" sneered one hard-line Communist.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, outside the avant-garde itself, the politics of artists and writers were not always taken very seriously. There were those who figured that Communist intellectuals spent all their time in cafés and had no acquaintance with factories. "Their opinion is: the worker is radical, thus we must also be radical, even more than radical. *Hyperradical*."<sup>122</sup>

Teige and other Devětsil members were serious about their politics, but their other interests were hard for ideologues to stomach. This was less problematic during the 1920s, when Czechoslovak Communism was relatively diverse and not always very far removed from the positions taken by the Social Democrats. In comparison to 1920s French surrealism, Devětsil had a fairly calm relationship to Communism. Yet this relationship ran into trouble when the Czechoslovak Communist Party "bolshevized" under Klement Gottwald in 1929. Two Devětsil members, with other leftist writers, signed a petition protesting the change and were denounced in turn by Teige and other Devětsil members. The writers' proclamation, published in the Social Democratic newspaper *Právo lidu* (The People's Truth) on 26 March 1929, demanded improvement of Communist activity among workers and intellectuals, which challenged

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<sup>120</sup> For details of Devětsil's political ups and downs, alliances and ruptures, see Ladislav Cabada, *Komunismus, levicová kultura a česká politika 1890–1938* (Plzeň: Aleš Čeněk, 2005), 68–141.

<sup>121</sup> "Který dělník nechápe nyní skrz naskrz měšťácko-reakční charakter poetismu?" Pavel Reimann, "Umění bez obsahu a jeho kritika: pro nebo proti hnutí proletářské literatury," *Tvorba* 6, no. 14, 15, 17, 20, 22 (9 April, 21 May, 4 June 1931): 234.

<sup>122</sup> "Jejich názor jest: dělník jest radikální, proto i musíme býti radikální, ba více než radikální. *Hyperradikální*." ("Chvála Proletkultu," *Nová svoboda* 4, no. 40 [6 October 1927]: 625.)

Gottwald's new leadership.<sup>123</sup> On 30 March 1929, Nezval, Teige, Biebl, Halas, Václavek, Fučík, and others defended the party in *Tvorba*. Still, despite so many Devětsil members supporting the Communist Party line, Poetism remained unpopular with Party leadership. Illing lists Nezval, Teige, Fučík, Václavek, Štyrský, and Toyen as being in solidarity with the new Party leadership, although Toyen and Štyrský did not as far as I know sign any statements and I have not seen documentary evidence that Toyen explicitly aligned herself with specific Party stances.<sup>124</sup>

When not looking toward Moscow and the Soviet Union, however, Prague and Czechoslovakia looked to Paris and France. France was Czechoslovakia's principal ally, while French culture was much admired and studied. The Alliance Française, for example, was active not just in Prague but in many other towns. Collector Vincenc Kramář took special interest in the work of modernist French artists (his collection later becoming the basis of the Národní galerie's French holdings, now housed at the Veletřní palác), while French authors were read both in translation and in the original.

The *Revue française de Prague*, published by the Alliance Française, noted visits by a variety of French scholars and cultural luminaries during the 1920s and 1930s. Early surrealist Philippe Soupault was perhaps the first of the younger French avant-gardists to come to Prague, however, arriving shortly after his November 1926 expulsion from the Paris surrealist group. Soupault and the critic Léon Pierre-Quint visited Prague in May 1927 under the auspices of the Alliance Française. Both men shared a Czech connection in their acquaintance with the Paris-based Devětsil painter Josef Šíma; Soupault and Šíma became acquainted around 1925–26, and

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<sup>123</sup> See Ort, "Men Without Qualities," 247–8; Ivan Pfaff, *Česká levice proti Moskvě, 1936–38* [Prague: Naše vojsko, 1993]; Cabada, *Komunismus, levicová kultura*, 124–29; French, *Poets of Prague*, 84–5; Konstantin Biebl, et al., "Panorama: Ke krisi komunistické strany Československé," *ReD* 2, no. 8 [April 1929]: 264–65.) The authors of the *ReD* piece condemn the protesting writers for joining the right rather than supporting the bolshevized party.

<sup>124</sup> Josef Normon Rostinsky, "Jakub Deml's Proximity to the Czech Avant-Garde" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1981), 102–3; Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde*, 90.

Pierre-Quint was a supporter of the surrealist-like group Le Grand Jeu, to which Šíma belonged and whose relationship to surrealism and the Czech avant-garde will be discussed in the next chapter.

Pierre-Quint lectured on Proust on 20 May 1927, while on 21 May Soupault spoke about the modern French novel. Soupault received considerable attention from the Czechs. Teige wrote admiringly of his work in *Kmen*, without reference to Soupault's recent breach with the surrealists, while a photo of an affectionate Soupault and Nezval appeared in *Rozpravy Aventina*.<sup>125</sup>

The ties created between Soupault and the Czechs were both literary and emotional. In his 1927 poem "Do Prahy" (To Prague), printed in the first issue of *ReD*, Soupault saluted that earlier Franco-Czech link, Apollinaire's "Zone," in his references to the "agates de St. Vít" and the backward-running clock in the Jewish quarter:

Maintenant  
dans le nuage des jours  
je ne cherche pas seulement à revoir  
la petite rue de l'Or  
et les chères agates de St. Vít  
ou encore le cimetière juif  
et l'horloge du souvenir  
Maintenant je vois vos mains  
qui sont plus grandes que moi  
et qui tournent comme les étoiles  
comme les hélices

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<sup>125</sup> See Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, "The Lautréamont Case," 149, Karel Teige, "Hosté v Praze: Léon Pierre-Quint a Philippe Soupault," *Kmen* 1, no. 8 (May 1927): 196–7, Jarmila Fastrová, "Hosté v Praze X: Phillippe Soupault," *Rozpravy Aventina* 2, no. 20 (1926–27): 213, 215, Jeanne Letty, "Philippe Soupault a Leon Quint: dva francouzští hosté v Praze," *Rozpravy Aventina* 2, no. 20 (1926–27): 218, Philippe Soupault, "Přátelství Prahy (Psáno pro Rozpravy Aventina)," *Rozpravy Aventina* 4, no. 4 (1928): 31–2, Philippe Soupault, "Pozdrav z Paříže," *Kmen* 1, no. 9 (July 1927): 209–11.

Soupault, unlike Apollinaire, emphasized the friendship he had found in Prague, perhaps with a slight dig at the lost world of Ernst's surrealist *Rendez-vous des amis*:

C'est le rendez-vous des amis  
le rendez-vous des tramways lents et rouges  
et le chant multicolore  
de toute l'amitié triomphante

Soupault's correspondance with Nezval indicates that, depressed after his return to Paris, he looked upon his time in Prague as one of great warmth and friendship. This is also suggested by the lines:

Je ne sais pas oublier  
le goût doux de bílá káva [café au lait]  
et le son bleu comme l'alcool  
de tout vos voix<sup>126</sup>

"Do Prahy" was directly followed in *ReD* by Nezval's "Poème pour Philippe Soupault."<sup>127</sup> Two years later, in 1929, Soupault's support was noted when Teige and Hořejší's Czech translation of Lautréamont's *Maldoror* was censored.<sup>128</sup>

Adolf Hoffmeister, who like Šíma and Soupault became a conduit between French and Czech culture, called Soupault "our first world friendship," one which "opened the doors of world repute to the Czech avant-garde. [...] Overnight we became the best-informed avant-garde

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<sup>126</sup>Philippe Soupault, "Do Prahy," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 3-4 The original manuscript, preserved in Karel Teige's papers, gives "du bila cava".

<sup>127</sup> See Soupault, "Do Prahy", and Vítězslav Nezval, "Poème pour Philippe Soupault," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927), 5-7. Soupault's "Westwego" appeared in *ReD* two months later.

<sup>128</sup> "Les renseignements sur la censure en Tchécoslovaquie sont extrêmement intéressants et m'ont beaucoup indigné. Je vais signaler cette ridicule sévérité. Notamment le système de la censure me parait tout à fait révoltant lorsqu'on se vante de défendre la liberté." (Philippe Soupault, "Hlasy tisku o konfiskaci Lautréamonta v. č. s. r.," *ReD* 3, no. 1 (October 1929), 5.

in Europe.”<sup>129</sup> Soupault would visit Czechoslovakia three times, and recalled his friends there with warmth: “All these young people were interested in surrealism, but also in politics ... A very friendly and enthusiastic group who sought to establish contact with young French writers, but also with Soviet writers.”<sup>130</sup>

This, then, was the world in which Toyen formed her artistic personality and in which she first exhibited her work.

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<sup>129</sup> “Bylo to naše první světové přátelství. Otevřelo české avantgardě dveře světovosti. [...] Stali jsme se přes noc nejinformovanější avantgardou Evropy.” (Adolf Hoffmeister, *Čas se nevrací* [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1965], 15.)

<sup>130</sup> “Tous ces jeunes s’intéressaient au surréalisme, mais aussi à la politique ... Un groupe très sympathique et enthousiaste qui cherchait à établir des contacts avec les jeunes écrivains français, mais aussi avec les écrivains soviétiques.” (Philippe Soupault, *Vingt mille et un jours [Entretiens avec Serge Fauchereau]* [Paris: P. Belfond, 1980], 207.)

### 3.0 TOYEN IN PARIS 1925-1928

In common with his compatriots, the handsome Prince Vibescu dreamed of Paris, City of Light, where all the women are beautiful and every one of them is willing to part her thighs.— Guillaume Apollinaire, 1906<sup>1</sup>

Toyen and Štyrský, like many Czech artists and writers, settled temporarily in Paris during the 1920s. “Bohemian” Paris was thus part of Toyen’s formative milieu. But what constituted Toyen’s specific, personal Paris experience? How did it resemble the Paris we encounter in descriptions by or of French artists or in those given by Left Bank litterateurs? What was specific to the Czech expatriate community in Paris? What might Toyen’s ties have been to members of Parisian sexual subcultures, especially lesbian circles? How did early surrealism relate to the Czech avant-garde, and why did Toyen and Štyrský reject surrealism in the late 1920s in favor of creating their own Artificialist movement?

While Toyen has not left us a written account of her explorations and adventures, she did sketch scenes she encountered, while other observers, both Czech and non-Czech, have left detailed and multifaceted descriptions of places and persons with whom we can connect her either directly or with some reasonable degree of likelihood. Furthermore, in 1927, Toyen was co-author, with Štyrský and their friend Vincenc Nečas, of a lengthy guide to Paris. Its pages, while of no remarkable originality, reveal what the two avant-gardists and their journalist friend

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<sup>1</sup>Guillaume Apollinaire, *Les Onze Mille Verges or The Amorous Adventures of Prince Mony Vibescu*, trans. Nina Rootes (London and Chester Springs: Peter Owen, 2001), 23.

regarded as necessary to tell their compatriots about visiting the city.<sup>2</sup> From these diverse sources, it is possible to limn an outline of what definitely was, and what perhaps was, important in Toyen's early Parisian experience as regards the shaping of her ideas on gender, eroticism, and artistic practice.

### 3.1 CIGARETTE SMOKE: CZECHS IN PARIS

At night, when the skies there light up with silver stars,  
on the boulevards stroll crowds among numerous cars,  
there are cafes, cinemas, restaurants, and modern bars,  
life there is jolly, it boils, swirls, and carries away,  
there are famous painters, poets, killers, and Apaches,  
there new and uncommon things occur,  
there are famous detectives and beautiful actresses,  
naked danseuses dance in a suburban *varieté*,  
and the perfume of their lace with love addles your brain,  
for Paris is seductive and people cannot withstand.—Jaroslav Seifert, 1922<sup>3</sup>

While in the early poem “Paris,” Toyen’s friend Jaroslav Seifert complained of *Prague* as a place where “life never derails in its trace” and “all emotion must wither before it even inflames,” he

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<sup>2</sup> Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas summarized the history and haunts of the Czechoslovak presence in France in Jindřich Štyrský, Toyen, and Vincenc Nečas, *Průvodce Paříží a okolím* (Prague: Odeon, 1927), 774–78. This volume received a relatively detailed review in Josef Hoch, “Cestovní literatura,” *Kmen* 1, no. 9 (July 1927): 224–5. Advertised as the largest and most comprehensive Czech guide to Paris, it boasted 802 pages, 25 photographs, 14 plans, and 2 maps, all for just 60 Kč. It offered special sections on Czech Paris, nighttime Paris, addresses of artists and poets, details on the artistic life there, and listed French, Czech, and exotic restaurants. Since Toyen, unlike Štyrský and Nečas, was not normally a writer, she may have contributed by gathering and helping to organize the information.

<sup>3</sup> Seifert, “Paris,” in Jaroslav Seifert, *The Early Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, trans. Dana Loewy (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1997), 59. This poem is dedicated to Ivan Goll. Its first publication appears to have been in *Revoluční sborník Devětsil*, 1922. It also appeared in the catalog for Toyen and Štyrský’s second exhibition in Paris.

asserted that “[t]here in the west on the Seine is Paris” for “Paris is at least one step closer to heavenly spheres.”<sup>4</sup>

Czechs were by no means immune to the lure of early twentieth-century Paris. A hundred years earlier, Vienna had been the most likely city for a Czech artist to train in or move to, but as time went by, Paris became the locale of choice for the Czechs. Alfons Mucha in the late nineteenth century and František Kupka in the early twentieth, both of whom are perhaps better known for their French work than their Czech, were followed by such figures as Emil Filla, Otakar Kubín/Othon Coubine, Bohumil Kubišta, Josef Čapek, Jan Zrzavý, and the sculptor Otto Gutfreund, some of whom made repeated visits and others of whom lived in Paris for a year or more.<sup>5</sup> Toyen herself visited Paris in early 1925 and saw Zrzavý’s studio, which she sketched.

Initially, Toyen and Štyrský were merely a pair of young artists within the large Devětsil circle. They had exhibited little when, in late 1925, flush with money Štyrský had just inherited, they departed for Paris, where several of their works were about to go on display as part of the exhibition *L’Art d’aujourd’hui*.<sup>6</sup> And Paris was especially welcoming to Czech avant-gardists in the 1920s.<sup>7</sup> Not only was the city a legendary cultural oasis, but France was Czechoslovakia’s strongest political ally. After the war, the Czech presence in France numbered about 80,000, with its members attending Czech schools, taking French courses, publishing the journal *Pařížský*

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<sup>4</sup> Seifert, “Paris,” in Seifert, *The Early Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, 58–60.

<sup>5</sup> An informal survey of wall text at the Veletřní palác suggests that Vienna was most important for Czech artists during the Biedermeier period and mid-century, although naturally Czech artists and architects continued to go there later as well. In the mid-century, Munich and Paris became important locales for Czech artists (a few also went to Düsseldorf or Rome). The Paris obsession seems to have begun with Pinkas, Javůrek, Purkyně, and Čermák in the 1850s and did not cease until the city became almost unattainable under Communism. David-Fox suggests that it was Munich, however, that provided the prototype for Prague’s Mánes Society (David-Fox, “The 1890s Generation,” 84–5).

<sup>6</sup> The exact date of their departure is unknown, but they appear to have gone in November 1925. *L’Art d’aujourd’hui* was held at the Salle de la rue de La Ville-l’Evêque from November 30–December 21. Two paintings by Toyen were included, *Harbor* and *Circus* (both 1925) (Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 298).

<sup>7</sup> On the 1920s rush to Paris, see Vanda Skálová and Tomáš Pospiszył, *Alén Diviš 1900–1956* (Ars Fontes, 2005), 27–9; Anna Pravdová, “Pout’ do Mekky umění: Čeští malíři v Paříži dvacátých let,” *Umění* 48, no. 1–2 (1999): 121–30.

*Čechoslovák* (Paris Czechoslovak), establishing a Franco-Czechoslovak chamber of commerce, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while in Paris, Toyen and Štyrský could rely on the presence of many other Czechs, whether those residing there or those who came visiting. Devětsil member Josef Šíma, for instance, had settled in the city permanently and became an important link between Prague and Paris. Similarly, the composer Bohuslav Martinů moved to Montparnasse in 1923 and decorated his quarters with pictures of such modern icons as a skyscraper, a football match, a Bugatti, and the pilot Eliška Junková.<sup>9</sup> The poet František Halas and the journalist Vincenc Nečas were also among the visitors.

During the early years of the First Republic, Czechs wishing to work or study in Paris were the beneficiaries of the alliance between France and Czechoslovakia. Kupka began teaching in Paris in fall 1922, and took all the Czech and Slovak artists under his wing, whether or not they had academic stipendia.<sup>10</sup> Kupka took the view that study in Paris “would be more beneficial to our young talents perhaps than several years spent at school in Prague, where the traditional framework cannot create anything but craftsmen and plagiarists.”<sup>11</sup> Kupka’s records list neither Toyen nor Štyrský in attendance, but Josef Šíma, Jan Zrzavý, František Muzika, Zdeněk Rykr, Alén Diviš, Vincenc Makovský, Hana Wichterlová, Jiří Jelínek, and the composer Bohuslav Martinů (to name a few of the better known visitors) did go.<sup>12</sup> Considering Kupka’s significance as an abstract artist, his conception of a “spiritual studio” in which images were

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<sup>8</sup>Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas, *Průvodce*, 775.

<sup>9</sup>Erik Anthony Entwistle, “Martinů in Paris: A Synthesis of Music Styles and Symbols” (Ph.D. diss., Santa Barbara: University of California, 2002), 9.

<sup>10</sup>Luděk Jirásko, “Kupka’s Czech Students in Paris, 1923–1930,” in *Kupka—Waldes: The Artist and His Collector*, ed. Anna Pachovská, trans. Gita Zbavitelová and Linda Paukertová (Prague: Petr Meissner - Antikvariat Meissner, 1999), 427–9; Skálová and Pospiszyl, *Alén Diviš 1900–1956*, 28. See also Anna Pravdova, “František Kupka and His Czech Fine Arts Students in France,” *Centropa* 6, no. 2 (May 2006) and František Kupka, “Naší mladí umělci v Paříži,” *Rozpravy Aventina* 4, no. 5 (1928): 45.

<sup>11</sup> Kupka to Jindřich Waldes, 18 April 1920, Archives of the National Gallery in Prague, quoted in Pravdova, “František Kupka and His Czech Fine Arts Students,” 115.

<sup>12</sup>Jirásko, “Kupka’s Czech Students in Paris,” 427–9; Skálová and Pospiszyl, *Alén Diviš 1900–1956*, 28.

transformed, his strong interest in self-analysis, and his 1927 lecture on “Dada, the Surrealists and New Possibilities,” it is puzzling that Toyen and Štyrský are so pointedly absent from his records. It is likely, however, that they became familiar with his ideas through Šíma, Jiří Jelínek, and Makovský.

Czech periodicals of the 1920s, especially those that might be considered arts or lifestyle publications, made a point of their Paris coverage. *Rozpravy Aventina*, *Gentleman*, *Eva*, *Světazor* (World View), and others all kept an eye on Paris. Periodicals often boasted a Paris correspondent.<sup>13</sup> Coverage was sometimes cliché and romanticized, but often included detailed reportage about the city, its artistic and literary personalities, and its Czechs. This coverage typically glamorized and exoticized Paris, often with an emphasis on its sexuality.<sup>14</sup>

The character of neighborhoods shifted over time, sometimes gradually, sometimes swiftly. While Montmartre had been a center of artistic life during the late nineteenth century, it had largely given way to Montparnasse by the time Toyen and Štyrský arrived. Though Montmartre of the mid-1920s had not altogether lost its artists and writers, a French chronicler of the neighborhood felt obliged to delineate its most-frequented sector as the Montmartre of Commerce rather than art and literature, which burst into life at night with foreigner-oriented cabarets, beauty contests, and “wrestling matches between women.” Jazz, in his view, had “played a large part in this degradation of the old Montmartre. ...Young girls, wearing their skirts just below the knee, ... dance to the furious rhythm of the jazz band.” One could also find “sellers of cocaine and other drugs, prostitutes and dealers in cast-off clothing” while the after-theater supper crowd “cannot avoid questionable resorts put where convenient for the abnormal night

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<sup>13</sup> For example, in 1922-5, Josef Šíma was Paris correspondent for *Elegantní Praha*, covering Czech art, culture, and industry. Šíma also wrote for other publications, such as *Rozpravy Aventina*, and Richard Weiner for *Lidové noviny*. (Eva Uchalová, et al., *Czech Fashion, 1918–1939*, 45)

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Jan Rösler, “Moje nalétnutí v Paříži,” *Gentleman* 3, no. 4 (May 1926): 104.

visitors.”<sup>15</sup> This view was corroborated by Czech accounts. One Czech noted that “Night life in Paris is strictly a foreigners’ industry.”<sup>16</sup>

The daily *Tribuna* observed that at the Elysée Montmartre, dance “often just turns into an orgy.” It went on to say:

The ‘red mill’ Moulin Rouge, where until recently there was nonstop temptation for foreigners, has a more cabaret character. Indeed, today not a few elegant variety shows are put on in the once-elegant dance hall, where revues perform, at which the most beautiful women were usually only scenery. Of course something very interesting remains here even today—the so-called *promenoir*, which is also called the promenade of ladies. For the price of admission, one can either watch the performance in the hall, or do studies from the nude on the promenade...<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, the magazine *Moderní dívka* (Modern Girl) raved about Parisian revues and venues for social dance.<sup>18</sup> One can readily imagine Toyen and Štyrský delighting in their explorations of the fabled Montmartre; in their guidebook, they wrote:

A person who hasn’t spent at least one evening in Montmartre doesn’t know the Paris that enjoys itself.

Montmartre is the center of attraction, where a new Paris was created from the hill—the familiar, bohemian, carefree, irreverent Paris. The Paris of restaurants, dance-halls, pubs, cabarets and concerts, where the foreigner must get lost several times, in order to know the intimate life of Montmartre and to enjoy the scene of the so-called inviting Montmartre habits.

They continued,

In the Montmartre cabarets one will find a mix of types, each of which constitutes its own genre, from the “paper”—that is the practicing painters and models—to

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<sup>15</sup>Jean Émile-Bayard, *Montmartre Past and Present*, trans. Ralph Anningson and Tudor Davis (New York: Brentano’s, c 1925), 132–35.

<sup>16</sup>“Poslední metro jede krátce po dvanácté. ... Noční život v Paříži je pouze cizinecký průmysl.” (Rösler, “Moje nalétnutí v Paříži,” 104.)

<sup>17</sup>“Tance přecházejí tu často až v orgie.” “Více kabaretního charakteru mival ‘cervený mlýn’ ‘Moulin Rouge’, který do nedávna nepřestal být lákadlem cizinců. Ovšem dnes jest z kdysi elegantního tanečního sálu zřízeno neméně elegantní variéte, kde se hrají ‘revues’, na nichž nejkrásnější bývá obyčejně jen scénování. Ovšem něco velmi zajímavého zbylo tu podnes—t. zv. Promenoir který se nazývá také korsem dam. Za vstupné možno se buď divati na představení v sále, anebo na ‘korse’ konati studie k aktům...” (“Pařížské kabarety,” *Tribuna* 3, no. 70 [24 March 1921]: 2)

<sup>18</sup>“Společenský život v cizině (z Taneční Revue),” *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 9 (July-August 1925): 18–19.

the demimonde. Apart from that, everyone encounters actresses and cocottes, who create the magic of the Moulin Rouge or the Moulin de la Galette, just as with the world, which reduces to two categories: the *micheton* (person who pays for everything) and the *maquereaumec* (the shepherding pimp whom the little sheep pay).<sup>19</sup>

Toyen and Štyrský listed no fewer than 34 night-spots in Montmartre.<sup>20</sup>

By the mid-1920s, the Paris cabaret, one Czech writer felt, had given way to the revue: “only the revue has guaranteed success, even when it is without jokes and without thoughts (which for us is the rule), since half-naked girls will always find enough of a public...”<sup>21</sup> These revues were much admired by Czech visitors.<sup>22</sup>

Sketches from 1925 show that Toyen certainly went to French revues and clubs. One of these depicts a scene from “La Légende du Nil” at the Folies Bergère, and another shows the Gertrude Hoffman Girls, probably at the Moulin Rouge.<sup>23</sup> The two paintings entitled *Three Dancers* also attest to the artist’s interest in this form of entertainment. Similarly, the sketch 32 *Poulet* depicts a strip show, in which five white women of various body types parade onstage while a large nude black woman dallies offstage with a man. Given that this colored drawing seems to belong with sketches of places Toyen visited, which included the Sorbonne, Jan

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<sup>19</sup>“Kdo neztrávil alespoň jeden večer na Montmartru nezná Paříže, která se baví.

Montmartre tot’ centrum atrakcí, které vytvořily z návrší novou Paříž—Paříž familiérní, bohémskou bezstarostnou a ze všeho si utahující. Paříž restaurací, dancingů, hospůdek, kabaretů a koncertů, kam cizinec několikrát musí zajít, aby poznal intimní život Montmartru a aby se pobavil scénami tak zvaných montmart[r]ských zvyků.”

“V montmartrských kabaretech najde se směs typů jednotlivých ve svém genu, od papíru—to jest zaučujících se malířů a modelek—až do polosvět. Mimo to setká se zde každý s herečkami a kokotami, které tvoří kouzlo Moulin-Rouge nebo Moulin de la Galette, stejně jako se světem, který se zjednodušuje ve dvou kategoriích: micheton (člověk, který platí všem) a maquereaumec (pasák, kterého platí ovečky).” (Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas, *Průvodce*, 760.)

<sup>20</sup>Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas, *Průvodce*, 761.

<sup>21</sup> “...jen revue má zaručený úspěch i když je bez vtípu a bez myšlenky (což je u nás pravidlem), neboť polonahé girls najdou vždycky dosti publika...” (Jan Kvičala, “Girl a cowboy,” *Nová svoboda* 3, no. 46 [18 November 1926]: 596.)

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, J. B. Svrček, “Divadlo, kabaret, cirkus: Glosy,” *Pásmo* 2, no. 3 (December 1925): 46 and G. Bael, “Krise evropské zábavy,” *Gentleman* 3, no. 5 (June 1926): 128.

<sup>23</sup> “La Légende du Nil,” designed by Georges Barbier and danced by the Tiller Girls, was a sequence from the 1924 production *Coeurs en Folie* (Charles Castle, *The Folies Bergère* [London: Methuen, 1982], 169).

Zrzavý's studio, and the Père Lachaise cemetery, we can take it as documentation of an observed performance. Hannah Höch, too, attended and took careful notes on a Folies Bergère show during a 1924 trip, calling it "fabelhaft gut" and making many references to the performers' nudity.<sup>24</sup> Though Höch enjoyed at least some revues, she later described being offended by the manner in which women were portrayed in a Berlin revue.<sup>25</sup> There is no indication, however, that Toyen found any revue objectionable.

As for Montparnasse, by 1927 it had become highly international and an artist mecca.<sup>26</sup>

According to an American writer,

The Montparnassians sleep in the morning and in the afternoon and spend the evening and the neo-evening, up to the rising hour for ashmen and concierges, upon the terrace of The Dôme, The Rotonde, The Sélect, and other neighboring cafés. They have dark circles under their eyes, have read parts of *Ulysses*, and are likely to be self-made Freudians.<sup>27</sup>

Cafés, of course, were a staple of artistic life in both Prague and Paris. Paris cafés particularly popular among the Czechs were Café de la Rotonde, Café du Dôme, and Café des Deux Magots.<sup>28</sup> Karel Honzík recalled that Toyen, Štyrský, and Remo frequented the Rotonde, Dôme, and Coupole.<sup>29</sup> As a 1925 piece on Montparnasse in *Gentleman* observed,

First was the Dome [sic]. There 500 stout people had sat for summers immemorial. Then, however, they multiplied, because they were various sexes,

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<sup>24</sup>Ralf Burmeister and Eckhard Furlus, comps., *Hannah Höch: Eine Lebenscollage*, vol. 2 part 2: 1921–1945, Dokumente (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1995), 187–89.

<sup>25</sup>"Eine der Kitschdarstellungen, die mit brutalen Mitteln nur auf Sex-Wirkung engestellt waren." Höch, "Die Anti-Revue. Eine Reise mit Kurt Schwitters," 1958, reprinted in Berlinische Galerie, *Hannah Höch*, 215, quoted in Susan Laikin Funkenstein, "Figurations of Women Dancers in Weimar Germany (1918–1933): Hannah Höch, Otto Dix, and Paul Klee" (Ph.D. diss., Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2001), 75.

<sup>26</sup>Matthew Josephson, "Foreword," in *The Left Bank Revisited: Selections from the Paris Tribune, 1917–1934*, ed. Hugh Ford (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), xxiv.

<sup>27</sup>Elliot H. Paul, "From a Litterateur's Notebook, 29 August 1926," in *The Left Bank Revisited: Selections from the Paris Tribune, 1917–1934*, ed. Hugh Ford (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), 21.

<sup>28</sup>Skálová and Pospiszyl, *Alén Diviš 1900–1956*, 48.

<sup>29</sup>"Tato trojice doplňovala v dalších letech pestrý obraz bohémského davu kolem kaváren Dôme, Coupole a de la Rotonde v Paříži." (Honzík, *Ze života avantgardy*, 50.)

men and women, and even those who weren't one or the other. Some thus moved across to the Café Rotonde.<sup>30</sup>

Toyen and Štyrský themselves noted of the Rotonde that “Like the Dôme, opposite, it is a cosmopolitan café where every language can be heard except French.”<sup>31</sup>

The Devětsil poet František Halas wrote that he and the architect Bedřich Feuerstein had come across Toyen and Štyrský and might go to the seaside with them, although Toyen had snubbed the enamored Feuerstein “gorgeously.” He added, “We sit in the Rotonde. We talked here with Loos, who is also here, and now we speak broken German with Ehrenburg, we’ll speak with him more often.”<sup>32</sup> Ehrenburg would be on friendly terms with the Czech avant-gardists until the mid-1930s, when he attacked surrealism.

Another Czech wrote of observing young Czech women at the Rotonde, with “boyishly cut hair, who, more lying than sitting, leaned both elbows on the table with their cheeks in their palms.” These smoking, “loutish” girls, appearing to the rather conservative writer like a pair of drunks, sound much like the caricatures drawn of Toyen around the same time by Hoffmeister and Muzika.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “Nejdříve to byl ‘Dome’. Tam sedělo pět set zmužilců léta letoucí. Potom se však rozmnožili, poněvadž byli různého pohlaví, muži i ženy, ač také i takoví, kteří nebyli jedno ani druhé. Někteří tedy přesídlili naproti do ‘Café Rotonde’.” (“Montparnasse,” *Gentleman* 2, no. 1 [1925]: 29.)

<sup>31</sup> “Spolu s Dômem naproti je to kosmopolitická kavárna, kde lze slyšeti všechny řeči mimo francouzské.” (Štyrský, Toyen, and Nečas, *Průvodce*, 305.) For an earlier (1914) Czech description of the Rotonde, see Richard Weiner, “Kavárna a la Rotonde,” in *O umění a lidech: Z novinářské činnosti*, vol. 4 of *Spisy*, afterword by Antonín Klimek (Prague: Torst, 2002), 557–63.

<sup>32</sup> “Sedíme v Rotondě. Mluvili jsme tu s Loosem, který tu též je, a teď jsme lámali němčinu s Erenburgem, budeme s ním mluvit častěji.” (To Bedřich and Jaroslava Václavek in Brno, from Paris 12 March 1925. František Halas, *Dopisy*, 15–6.)

<sup>33</sup> “...klukovsky ostříhané hlavy, která, více ležíc než sedíc, opírala se oběma lokty o stůl, s tvářemi ve dlaních.” Pe., “Z Fronty čtenářů: Česka z ‘Rotondy’,” *Fronta* 1, no. 14 (1 September 1927): 217–18. The author noted further exemplars of such characters at the Metro, where they danced the Charleston.

Toyen and Štyrský worked hard while in Paris. Following their debut at the Art d'aujourd'hui show, their work would appear in several other Paris exhibitions. In October 1926, they held a show of their new Artificialist paintings in their studio in Paris-Montrouge, which was followed a month later by one at the Galerie d'art contemporain. At the end of 1927, they opened a show at the Galerie Vavin, with a catalog introduction by Philippe Soupault.<sup>34</sup> The connection with Soupault may have come through Šíma, who had become acquainted with Éluard and Soupault around 1925–1926.<sup>35</sup>

We get a personal glimpse of their life in Paris from a humorous late-night postcard which Štyrský and Toyen, along with Nečas and Hoffmeister, sent to Seifert in April 1926. While the scribbled and crossed-out French text has faded badly, we can still read that the party wrote it at four in the morning. Superimposed on the romantic stock photo of sunset over the Seine, Hoffmeister added caricatures of Jaromír Krejcar, Vítězslav Nezval, and Karel Teige in which Krejcar has a coin (German: *Kreutzer*; Czech: *krejcar*) for a head and runs off, Nezval drinks wine, Teige sits with his pipe (Hoffmeister's favorite prop for Teige), and an arm labeled Devětsil rises from the waves with a cry of "Pomóc" ("He-e-lp").<sup>36</sup>

A few months later, in an article on La Rotonde published shortly before the opening of the show at Galerie d'art contemporain, Hoffmeister wrote:

And finally this heavy fog of peripheral inhabitants, who live in a mad tempo of self-sufficiency on the rollercoaster of success and fiasco. Elegant Manka, or Toyen, who buys herself clothes fashionable and ultra fashionable and dines on smoked mackerel at 'Au rendezvous des chauffeurs' with Jindřich Štyrský, a painter quiet and artificial. Artificialism invites you to an exhibition. We celebrate

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<sup>34</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 298–300.

<sup>35</sup>Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Český Surrealismus 1929–1953*, 14.

<sup>36</sup>This card is at the LA PNP.

it with heavy boozing. Nečas's fists will protect us. We won't go home until six in the morning.<sup>37</sup>

Hoffmeister caricatured the two artists seated at the Dôme. Soupault, meanwhile, would characterize them as follows:

[...] Toyen respects neither charm, nor tenderness, nor this species of affectation which fades like the smiles of older women. She attacks wrinkles which are the simplest lines of life. Behind these characteristics and nuances, a weighty gravity like that of prayers stays the clasped hands.

Toyen remains a painter who does not torture, who does not charm. She seeks in painting a reality more obvious than that of sad or merry eyes according to the hours.

Her confederate Štyrský wants to discover boundaries. He paints with a needle. He fixes more precise limits. [...]<sup>38</sup>

Were the other surrealists aware of Toyen and Štyrský at this time? Possibly. Karel Srp regards Georges Malkine's work of around 1926 as akin to the Czech artists' work of the same period.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "A konečně ta těžká pára periferních obyvatel, žijících na horské dráze u\*spěchů i fiask v šíleném tempu soběstačnosti. Elegantní Manka anebo Toyen, která si kupuje šaty modní a nejmodnější a obědvá v „Au rendez vous des chauffeurs" uzenou makrelu s Jindřichem Štyrským, malířem tichým a umělým. Artificillismus [sic] zve vás na výstavu. Oslavíme ji těžkým flámem. Nečasovy pěsti nás ochrání. Nepůjdeme domů až ráno v šest." (Adolf Hoffmeister, "La Rotonde: S kresbami autorovými," *Rozpravy Aventina* 2, no. 5 [1926–27]: 50.)

<sup>38</sup> "[...] Toyen ne respecte ni le charme, ni la tendresse, ni cette espèce de mièvrerie qui s'efface comme les sourires des dames mûres. Elle attaque les rides qui sont les plus simples lignes de la vie. Derrière ces traits et ces nuances une gravité lourde comme des prie\*res demeure les mains jointes.

"Toyen reste un peintre qui ne torture pas, qui ne charme pas.

"Elle cherche dans la peinture une réalité plus évidente que celle des yeux tristes ou gais selon les heures.

"Son complice Styrsky veut trouver des bornes. Il peint avec une aiguille. Il fixe des limites plus précises."

Philippe Soupault, *Styrsky et Toyen*, Galerie Vavin, Paris, 1927, quoted in Enrico Crispolti, comp., *Alternative attuali 3: Rassegna internazionale d'arte contemporanea*. (Florence: Centro di Firenze, 1968), 1. 291.

<sup>39</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 46.

### 3.2 SEX IN PARIS

Nearly all of the early erotic imagery we know of by Toyen dates to this first Paris period, although she was creating erotic works well before then. The painting *Pillow or Cushion* (1922), which depicts an orgy scene, predates the Paris works, but it appears that Toyen either found Paris especially conducive to the creation of erotica or that most earlier erotic works have been lost or destroyed. Since Toyen was in her early twenties when she ventured to Paris, it seems plausible that, like other Czechs and like foreign visitors in general, she to some extent saw the city as a place of sexual tolerance and even libertinage. While Prague had an erotic underbelly (which will be explored in Chapter 4), it did not have the same cachet as Paris.

In 1925, Toyen thoroughly explored the sexuality that she appears to have associated with Parisian liberty. Sketch after sketch from that year testifies to her thoroughness. Though her move to the city with Štyrský is recalled by their friends as occurring in the fall, she had gone on an earlier French trip in December 1924, and dated sketches show that she was in Paris at least between mid-January and March of 1925.<sup>40</sup> In her early French sketchbooks, Toyen experimented with a wide variety of sexual imagery, including lesbian activities, sailors spraying nude women with semen, men masturbating in the company of women, and even bestiality. An intriguing parallel to some of her sketches of sailors and prostitutes can be found in Kiki de Montparnasse (Alice Prin)'s sketches of a February 1925 trip to Villefranche. Villefranche, a port reserved for foreign military ships, was full of American sailors from the S.S. *Pittsburgh* and their prostitute camp-followers, and the irrepressible Kiki acquainted herself with both

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<sup>40</sup> Toyen's itinerary took her to Strasbourg, Côte d'Azur, Marseille, Sanary, Bando, Le Ciotat, Toulon, Nice, Monaco, Monte Carlo, and finally Paris. She appears to have travelled alone. Her sketch of the Hoffmann Girls, from March 1925, includes a small picture of a windmill, so was probably done at the Moulin Rouge (Karel Šrp, *Toyen*, 297).

sailors and prostitutes, whom she apparently recorded in a sketch diary much like Toyen's. Kiki's published sketches are dated 1929 rather than 1925, so may have been refined from a sketchbook or may even have been inspired by works by Toyen seen during the 1920s.<sup>41</sup> In any case, Toyen could hardly have missed hearing about the celebrated Kiki's Villefranche adventure, which must have been the talk of the Montparnasse cafés during Toyen's early 1925 visit.

By the end of the nineteenth century, if not well before then, Paris had acquired an international reputation as a kind of sex mecca, where prostitution, eroticized entertainment, enticing lingerie, relatively explicit marriage manuals, nude models, hysterics in wild abandon, and crossdressers could readily be found.<sup>42</sup> It was also a city where sexual difference was to some degree tolerated. Although Rosa Bonheur had been obliged to obtain a permit to wear trousers, cross-dressing was not uncommon for women of subsequent generations, and by the end of the nineteenth century there is considerable evidence of open lesbian groups and venues.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Kiki was arrested when she ventured into an English bar in Villefranche in search of some of her sailor friends, but received a suspended sentence after Man Ray, Robert Desnos, Louis Aragon, Fraenkel, and Georges Malkine intervened (Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900–1930* [New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989], 143).

<sup>42</sup> The literature on Paris as sexual mecca is vast. It has been suggested that the sexualization of France in the popular imagination began as a result of the French Revolution, when “France became synonymous with social and sexual disorder, and the French novel with pornography.” (Gert Hekma, “Same-Sex Relations Among Men in Europe, 1700–1990,” in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*, ed. Franz X. Eder, Lesley A. Hall, and Gert Hekma [Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999], 84.) On prostitution, see Alain Corbin, *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), Jill Harsin, *Policing Prostitution in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), and Hollis Clayson, *Painted Love: Prostitution in French Art of the Impressionist Era* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1991). On pornography, see Lynn Hunt, ed., *The Invention of Pornography* (New York: Zone Books, 1993); Fernand Drujon, *Catalogue des ouvrages, écrits, et dessins de toute nature poursuivis, supprimés, ou condamnés depuis le 21 octobre 1814 jusqu'au 31 juillet 1877* (Paris: Rouveyre, 1879). On the sexualized view of hysteria, see Jann Matlock, *Scenes of Seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria, and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). For an example of an extremely popular marriage manual, see Auguste Debay, *Hygiène et physiologie du mariage*, 17th ed. (Paris: Dentu, 1859).

<sup>43</sup> Details of the fin-de-siècle Paris lesbian scene, both bohemian and literary (along with scare-tactic early nineteenth-century accounts) can be found in Catherine van Casselaer, *Lot's Wife: Lesbian Paris, 1890–1914* (Liverpool: The Janus Press, 1986).

If Toyen was seeking a lesbian-friendly milieu, Paris was decidedly a locale with a recent history of toleration and even fashionability. Male nineteenth-century writers such as Baudelaire, Gautier, and Louÿs, as well as Remy de Gourmont, Zola, and others, featured lesbian themes prominently, as had female authors including Rachilde, Jane de la Vaudère, Colette, and Renée Vivien.<sup>44</sup>

The American (but Francophone) poet Natalie Barney provided a meeting place for a highly international and primarily lesbian collection of writers and artists. Active for sixty years, her salon was extremely popular among the literary, and an invitation to it “bestowed immediate cachet.”<sup>45</sup> Barney herself visited the Bureau of Surrealist Research during the 1920s, although she does not seem to have had other ties to surrealism.<sup>46</sup> Still, although Barney’s salon was thriving in the 1920s and 1930s, it may have seemed old-fashioned and politically conservative to Toyen, even if she was able to get an invitation.

Indeed, by the 1920s many names of notable Paris lesbian couples come to mind, among them Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Djuna Barnes and Thelma Wood, Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) and Bryher (Winifred Ellerman), Janet Flanner and Solita Solano, Sylvia Beach and Adrienne Monnier, and Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap. *Well of Loneliness* author Radclyffe Hall and Una Troubridge, while not resident in Paris, spent extended periods there.<sup>47</sup> The bisexual painter Tamara de Lempicka moved to Montparnasse in 1920.<sup>48</sup> The Danish artist Gerda Wegener, now best known for her marriage to early male-to-female sex-change recipient

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<sup>44</sup>van Casselaer, *Lot’s Wife*, 39–61.

<sup>45</sup> Flanner, interviewed in George Wickes, *The Amazon of Letters: The Life and Loves of Natalie Barney* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1976), 266.

<sup>46</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 10.

<sup>47</sup>Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 158. For discussion of Left-Bank women, especially expatriate Americans, see Shari Benstock, *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986).

<sup>48</sup>Laura Claridge, *Tamara de Lempicka: A Life of Deco and Decadence* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1999), 76.

Einar Wegener and for her mostly lesbian-themed erotic illustrations, also lived in Paris during the 1920s.<sup>49</sup> And, though it is unknown whether Toyen became acquainted with any of the major lights of the literary Left Bank lesbian scene, she could have acquired a copy of Djuna Barnes' scandalous *Ladies Almanack*, privately published in 1928 and available at Shakespeare and Company or on the street.<sup>50</sup> One thing is clear from this list: expatriates made up a visible part of the larger scene, although the writings of Colette make clear that French women had their own, perhaps separate, venues.<sup>51</sup> Claude Cahun and her lover Suzanne Malherbe/Marcel Moore had settled in Montparnasse in the early 1920s.<sup>52</sup>

A 1931 Czech article on gay-friendly locales in Paris noted that next to Montmartre's Moulin Rouge was the café Graff, described as one of the most popular Paris cafés with a predominantly male clientele. Here the dancing was "boys with boys and girls with girls, twirling in a circle to the music of the accordion and saxophone." One could meet Czechoslovaks, French, Germans, and Arabs in a friendly manner without political overtones.<sup>53</sup> Hoffmeister,

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<sup>49</sup> Wegener, who was well enough known in her day, is sometimes mistakenly considered a male artist called Gerda-Wegener, as in Kenneth Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Even a recent study of lesbian Paris presents her work (a cartoon of a female *ménage à trois*) as if it represented a mainstream straight male perspective, and misspells her name. See Tirza True Latimer, *Women Together, Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), 12–13.

<sup>50</sup> Andrea Weiss, *Paris Was a Woman: Portraits from the Left Bank* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 148. Barnes and friends sold copies in the streets in plain, hand-colored, and signed versions (Rodriguez, *Wild Heart: A Life*, 285). Barnes and Thelma Wood also lived in Montparnasse. They were acquainted with Monnier and Beach, and shared "a common salon, rue de l'Odéon group" with Cahun (Sharla Hutchison, "Women and the Avant-Garde: Sexual Difference in Discourse and Art 1900–1950" [Ph.D. diss., Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2002], 124).

<sup>51</sup> Colette refers to the Semiramis Bar, among her many mentions of lesbian and bisexual practice; see *The Pure and the Impure*. For discussion of working-class French lesbian culture of this period, see Francesca Canadé Sautman, "Invisible Women: Lesbian Working-Class Culture in France, 1880–1930," in *Homosexuality in Modern France*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Bryant T. Ragan Jr. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 177–201. Artist Hélène Azénor recalled *boîtes* called Fétiche (later Monocle) and Chez Elle et Lui, probably in operation during the 1930s (Gilles Barbedette and Michel Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925* [Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 1981], 71).

<sup>52</sup> Hutchison, "Women and the Avant-Garde," 124.

<sup>53</sup> "Tančí nejen s okolo zevlujícími prodejními ženštinami, ale i hoch s hochem a děvče s děvčetem otáčejí se v kole při hudbě tahací harmoniky a saxofonu." (Pavel Forman, "Cestovní dojmy," *Nový hlas* 1, no. 2 [June 1932]: 15.) Azénor, too, refers to the Graff (Barbedette and Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925*, 73).

meanwhile, wrote of “lesbian beauties in men’s clothes” and “of paramours of the most delectable tribade.”<sup>54</sup>

Still, despite the apparent tolerance of Parisian society for sexual minorities, the first French gay magazine, *Inversions*—which included surrealist Claude Cahun as an editorialist—was shut down by police in 1924 as an “outrage to good morals.” Revived as *L’Amitié*, its founders were charged with publishing “propaganda liable to compromise the future of the race.”<sup>55</sup> One lesbian painter of the 1920s, Hélène Azénor, felt that she escaped insult because artists were allowed more latitude in their behavior, but that only elite lesbians could expect this because the French public generally found lesbians “disgusting.”<sup>56</sup> Postwar France was obsessed with natalism and the desire for women to be wives and mothers, so the openness of Parisians to gay and lesbian behavior cannot be taken as representative of French society as a whole.

Parisian lesbian life was relatively acceptable among the artistic. But more dangerous sexual adventures could be found by women who chose to seek them. The artist Tamara de Lempicka often went out to parties and clubs until midnight, where she took cocaine and flirted heavily with dance partners of both sexes, and then, giving the impression that she was going home to her husband and daughter, made “forays to the hastily constructed dirt-floored lean-tos that dotted the Seine’s bank.” Here, in “shabby clubs” that attracted a mix of sailors, male and female students, and the occasional society woman, she participated in group sex with sailors and young women.<sup>57</sup> The fact that some of Toyen’s erotic sketches of this period depict sailors

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<sup>54</sup> “lesbické krasavice v mužském obleku” and “milostnic nejrozkošnější tribadie,” Hoffmeister, “La Rotonde,” 49–50.

<sup>55</sup> Miller, *Out of the Past*, 166; Carolyn J. Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 231.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Hélène Azénor (1980) in Barbedette and Carassou, *Paris Gay 1925*, 72.

<sup>57</sup> Claridge, *Tamara de Lempicka*, 94, 96–97, 108–9.

suggests that she too may have ventured into these haunts.<sup>58</sup> She may also, like Anaïs Nin, have explored Paris brothels, either alone or with Štyrský.

In addition to her sketches, in 1925 Toyen painted *Paradise of the Blacks*, as well as the less extreme *Three Dancers*, *Bound-Unbound*, *Harem*, and the irreverent *Three Kings* (which flanks the baby Jesus with angels clad only in hats and striped socks, and who play banjos and clarinets). *Paradise of the Blacks*, even today one of the artist's most startling works, functions on a variety of levels. This orgy scene of jungle Africans can be seen, for example, as a parody of Renaissance paintings of the Golden Age; instead of pale blonde northern Europeans behaving almost decorously (there was, of course, an erotic subtext), coal-black caricatures of Africans indulge in several kinds of hetero- and homosexual activity. In Toyen's Africa, evidently, we have the real Golden Age, where no one hesitated to perform any erotic act.

At the same time, issues of race as well as sexuality arise in *Paradise of the Blacks*. Even among educated Europeans, the notion of Africans as primitive was still strong.<sup>59</sup> There were, certainly, many more blacks in Paris than there had been in Prague, both of African and African-American origin. Teige had noted: "You dance to the rhythm of the negro Jazz-Band and the wild music of the big orchestra. FANTASTIC PROGRAM!!"<sup>60</sup> Josephine Baker, of course, was the most famous of the black dancers. She arrived in 1925 with *La Revue Nègre*, the first black

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<sup>58</sup> Though their personalities and artistic choices were dissimilar, their shared seriousness about their work and intense interest in sex may well have resulted in some level of acquaintance.

<sup>59</sup> For example, an article on the sexual instincts of primeval man in the homosexual journal *Hlas* unselfconsciously linked the sexual expression of blacks with that of animals: "We see the same thing among various until-now primitive tribes, as among animals. [...] Regarding the blacks, Zöllner states: 'The Negro loves just as he eats and drinks.'" ("Vidíme tak u různých dosud žijících kmenů primitivních, jakož i u zvířat. ...O černoších praví Zöllner: 'Negr miluje tak, jako jí a pije.'" Elaf, "Pud pohlavní a láska pračlověka," *Hlas* 2, no. 4 [15 February 1932]: 52.) See also Petrine Archer-Straw, *Negrophilia: Avant-Garde Paris and Black Culture in the 1920s* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000).

<sup>60</sup> "Vous danser au rythme des Jazz-Band nègres et de la musique endiablée du grand orchestre. FORMIDABLE PROGRAMME!!" Undated letter of 1922, Karel Teige, to Artuš Černík, Artuš Černík fond (Prague: PNP, 1922), LA 75/1971/00779.

American stage company to reach Europe.<sup>61</sup> Toyen and Štyrský almost certainly would have seen Baker perform, and perhaps *Paradise of the Blacks* is in part a tribute to Baker's unquestionably erotic persona. Overall, perhaps we can set aside the racial insensitivity and see this as a work that both satirizes the western tradition and celebrates what Toyen probably hoped was a more sexually liberated culture.

Still, while the Paris of 1925 provided the milieu and impetus for Toyen's first known group of erotic works, we should consider it more a spur than a starting point. Toyen's visual exploration of sexual practices dates to at least as early as the *Pillow* of 1922.

### 3.3 *PROMETHEUS: EARLY PARIS SURREALISM*

Common sense tells us that the things of the earth exist only a little, and that true reality is only in dreams.—Charles Baudelaire, *Les Paradis artificiels*, dedication, 1860

1. We have nothing to do with literature; but we are quite capable, when necessary, of making use of it like anyone else.
2. *Surrealism* is not a new or an easier means of expression nor even a metaphysics of poetry. It is a means of total liberation of the mind *and of all that resembles it*.
3. We are determined to make a revolution.
4. We have coupled the word *surrealist* and the word *revolution* only to show the disinterested, detached, and even totally desperate character of this revolution.—André Breton et al., 1925<sup>62</sup>

Seemingly far removed from the playful world of revues and cabarets was that of surrealist revolution. Was this in any way a part of Toyen's life in 1920s Paris?

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<sup>61</sup>Morrill Cody, with Hugh Ford, *The Women of Montparnasse* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1984), 33–35.

<sup>62</sup>“Declaration of 27 January 1925,” in André Breton, *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 317.

It has been suggested that the most important period in the development of the Prague surrealist group was not the four years from its founding in 1934 to Nezval's attempt to end it in 1938, but the ten years between the First Surrealist Manifesto and the Prague group's founding.<sup>63</sup> As Nezval remarked in 1934, "Surrealism has long been latent here, but it hasn't yet been able to mature to its entirely pure expression."<sup>64</sup> Although Toyen was certainly aware of Bretonian surrealism during her first Paris period, she and Štyrský did not espouse it at that time. Not only were numerous modernist groups simultaneously active, but in the early and mid-1920s, it was unclear who would win title to the term "surrealism." While the Breton group ultimately won, Toyen and other Czechs were decidedly skeptical of its project during the 1920s. Czechs were familiar with early surrealism well before it settled into a Breton-led movement, and their understanding of what was meant by *surrealismus* or *nadrealismus* during the 1920s varied.<sup>65</sup> For example, one of the earliest Czech references to surrealism appeared in Teige's 1922 "Foto kino film," wherein he introduced the work of the then-dadaist Man Ray as surrealist.<sup>66</sup> And, though Apollinaire was generally understood to be the progenitor of surrealism, in 1927 K. H. Hilar called Marcel Schwob its father.<sup>67</sup> As Matthew Witkovsky has noted, it is time scholars of Czech surrealism determined "what Devětsilers and other Czechs themselves understood surrealism to be, and when they understood it."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 5–6; see also Fried, "Genese Českého Surrealismu" ..

<sup>64</sup>"U nás žije nadrealismus už dlouho latentně, ale nemohl dosud dospět k naprosto čistému výrazu." J. Chaloupecký, "Vítězslav Nezval o surrealismu," 1.

<sup>65</sup>Early on, *nadrealismus* and *surrealismus* were used interchangeably to refer to surrealism. *Nad* like *sur* means above. The term *nadrealismus* was gradually abandoned by the Czechs, although adopted by the Slovaks.

<sup>66</sup>"Fotografie nemůže nikdy, ani zde, opustiti skutečnost, ale může se státi *nadrealistickou*. Surréalisme je vlastností fotografií Man Raye. je vlastností moderního výtvarnictví." (Karel Teige, "Foto kino film," *Život* 2 [1922]: 160; Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Surrealist in the Plural," 9.)

<sup>67</sup>K.H. Hilar, "Marcel Schwob, otec nadrealismu," *Kmen* 1, no. 6 (February 1927): 149–51.

<sup>68</sup>Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Surrealist in the Plural," 2.

One reason Toyen and other Devětsil members resisted allying with the Breton group until the mid-1930s was surely the Paris group's early attitude toward visual art. As has been abundantly documented, during this early period Breton and other Paris surrealists did not believe that visual art could achieve the truly surreal, but could only be footnoted as occasionally approaching it.<sup>69</sup> Though Breton began publishing installments of "Surrealism and Painting," he was still not willing to give visual art a place equal to poetry. "In order to respond to the necessity, upon which all serious minds now agree, for a total revision of real values, the plastic work of art will either refer to a *purely inner model* or will cease to exist."<sup>70</sup> Around the same time, Breton noted, "I persist in believing that a picture or sculpture can be envisaged only secondarily with regard to taste and stands up only so far as it is liable to make our abstract knowledge, properly so called, take a step forward."<sup>71</sup> Nonetheless, early surrealist thought—even when willing to grant that surrealist art could exist—tended to reject any non-automatic work as only appearing surrealist.<sup>72</sup> Breton himself wrote, ambivalently:

...I hold the verbal inspirations to be infinitely richer visually, infinitely more resistant to the eye, than actual visual images. ... I continue to believe blindly... in the triumph, *by auditory means*, of the unverifiable visual.

It goes without saying that these propositions having been stated, contradictorily or not, the final word belongs to the painters.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See, for example, André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 27.

<sup>70</sup> Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 4. Breton admitted, in describing his hallucinatory experience of a visualized phrase "*knocking at the window*" just before he fell asleep: "Were I a painter, this visual depiction would doubtless have become more important to me than the other. It was most certainly my previous predispositions which decided the matter." (Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism [1924]," 21.)

<sup>71</sup> "Je persiste à croire qu'un tableau ou une sculpture ne se peut envisager que secondairement sous le rapport du goût et ne se défend qu'autant qu'il ou qu'elle est susceptible de faire faire un pas à notre connaissance abstraite proprement dite." ("Distances," in André Breton, *Les Pas perdus* [Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1924], 174, translated in J. H. Matthews, *Languages of Surrealism* [Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986], 6–7.)

<sup>72</sup> Max Morise, "Les yeux enchantés," *La Révolution Surréaliste*, no. 1 (1 December 1924): 26; André Masson, *Vagabond du Surréalisme* (Paris: Editions Saint-Germain-des-Près, 1975), 79–81.

<sup>73</sup> André Breton, "The Automatic Message," in *The Surrealists Look at Art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*, ed. Pontus Hulten (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 151.

At the end of the 1920s, Bretonian surrealism took an additional step when Dalí developed his “paranoiac-critical method” from the work of Kraepelin and Bleuler, who had defined paranoia as lending itself to coherent development of specific errors to which the subject expressed a passionate attachment. Dalí’s prescription that the mind look at one thing and see another moved surrealist art away from a passive recording of the interior vision to reinterpreting the world via perception itself.<sup>74</sup>

In 1928, Karel Teige discussed the contradiction between Naville’s pronouncement that surrealist painting did not exist, and Breton’s subsequent “Le Surréalisme et la peinture.”<sup>75</sup> After the publication of the Second Manifesto, and with Dalí’s new input, the Czechs began to show a greater interest in the ideas of the Breton group. While for Czech artists, the rejection of visual art was significant, more important was overall Czech skepticism regarding the value of pure psychic automatism, which neither Teige nor František Götze regarded as more than raw material. As Götze’s assessment shows, Bretonian surrealism quickly became known for its ties to Freudian thought, yet Freudian ideas were only gradually disseminated and accepted in France.<sup>76</sup> This situation contrasted with that in Czechoslovakia, where German was widely understood and Freud—known to be from Moravia—was familiar. Why, then, was pure psychic automatism of little interest to the Czechs? The answer seems to lie in the Breton group’s early versions and uses of it.

While the 1914 edition of Régis and Hesnard’s text on psychoanalysis summarized Freud’s theories, French doctors favored their own psychiatric tradition, represented by the work

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<sup>74</sup>Robert Short, *Dada and Surrealism* (London: Octopus Books, 1980), 110.

<sup>75</sup>Karel Teige, “Surréalistické malířství,” *ReD* 2, no. 1 (September 1928): 26–27.

<sup>76</sup>See Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud’s French Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

of Pierre Janet.<sup>77</sup> However, Régis' brevity and lack of quotation from Freud's actual writings caused him to misrepresent Freudian psychoanalysis, and in one passage copied by Breton, Régis explicitly represented sublimation as voluntary and brought about by the analyst's appeal to the analysand's reason. Freud did not say that the matter was this easy. Breton, however, may have assumed that the conscious mind could easily control the unconscious and harness it toward constructive ends.<sup>78</sup>

As we will see in Chapter 4, Czech avant-gardists of the 1920s were familiar with Freudian thought, but perhaps not with the ideas of Janet and other French psychiatrists. Götz's skepticism about surrealist use of Freud was shared by many Czech intellectuals, particularly Teige. This feeling that the Breton group was merely coasting behind Freud rather than creating art took some time to dispell, particularly among future surrealists Teige, Štyrský, and Toyen. And, while the Prague surrealists later experimented with automatic drawing, it was not central to the original group's work.

While the work of Janet was probably the main inspiration for surrealist automatic writing, dream exploration proceeded from Freud.<sup>79</sup> In the First Manifesto, Breton observed that "Freud very rightly brought his critical faculties to bear upon the dream," because dreaming had been "grossly neglected." Breton inquired, "Can't the dream also be used in solving the

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<sup>77</sup> See Gibson, "Surrealism's Early Maps of the Unconscious," 32–6 and Carolyn J. Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 11–12.

<sup>78</sup> Breton to Fraenkel, 31 August 1916, quoted and discussed in Marguerite Bonnet, *André Breton: Naissance de l'aventure surréaliste* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1975), 103; Gibson, "Surrealism's Early Maps of the Unconscious," 76–80.

<sup>79</sup> See André Breton, *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Paragon House, 1993), 60–71 and Matthew Josephson, *Life Among the Surrealists: A Memoir* (New York: Holt, 1962), 216–17.

fundamental questions of life?”<sup>80</sup> Although Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* did not appear in French until 1926, the main ideas were summarized in *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910, in French by 1923). Here Freud stated that while interpretation of free associations and of errors and haphazard actions was useful, “The interpretation of dreams is in fact the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious; it is the securest foundation of psycho-analysis and the field in which every worker must acquire his convictions and seek his training.”<sup>81</sup>

Freud concluded that dreams “think predominantly in visual images—but not exclusively. They make use of auditory images as well, and, to a lesser extent, of impressions belonging to the other senses.” In a predominantly visual dream, the dreamer must translate a primarily visual memory into a verbal one, which contributes to the elusive quality of the dream.<sup>82</sup> Since abstract concepts generally lack visual correlatives, Freud hypothesized that dreams function as a language with undeveloped semiotic and grammatical functions. Words and images, then, have multiple potential meanings and interpretations. A space or object that initially suggests one thing may also resemble something quite different. Likewise, a symbol can represent itself, its opposite, or both.<sup>83</sup> The need to translate from image to word in transcribing the dream was problematic for surrealist poetry as it meant the imposition of the conscious mind between unconscious and written result. Visual artists, of course, did not encounter the same

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<sup>80</sup>Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 10–12.

<sup>81</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis; Leonardo da Vinci; and Other Works*, vol. 11 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1957), 33.

<sup>82</sup>Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, vol. 4 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 49–50.

<sup>83</sup>Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Parts I and II)*, vol. 15 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1963), 173–79.

problem, although the shifting nature of the image and the effort to recall it precisely may have been an issue for some, just as the difficulty of clarifying the narrative of a dream is problematic in transcribing dream events.<sup>84</sup>

In Freud's symbolic and even rather semiotic approach to the dream, we begin to see something of what eventually attracted Toyen, Štyrský, Teige, and Nezval to Bretonian surrealism. In particular, Štyrský's interest in dreams is well documented and began around 1925, when he began to record his own dreams and create sketches based on them. Toyen's interest in them is clear through her many dream-related titles, although she did not reveal whether any of her works were directly inspired by dreams.

In addition to its scuffles with Ivan Goll's rival surrealist group, Bretonian surrealism also tangled with Le Grand Jeu, a literary and artistic group with strong Czech ties that included the expatriate Devětsil painter Josef Šíma and the writer Richard Weiner.<sup>85</sup> It has even been suggested that the real birth of Le Grand Jeu came about when Josef Šíma joined the Simplistes (original members of Le Grand Jeu).<sup>86</sup> In many ways Le Grand Jeu had close affinities to surrealism; the critic Léon Pierre-Quint even envisioned the group as a successor to surrealism.<sup>87</sup> Certainly, members of Le Grand Jeu initially saw themselves as akin to the surrealists.<sup>88</sup> The two groups never, however, quite came together. Weiner, for instance, had first encountered some of the surrealists but had not become close to them, whereas he and the "Simplistes" formed a

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<sup>84</sup> See "The Mediums Enter," in André Breton, *The Lost Steps*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 92.

<sup>85</sup> Daumal and Vailland became acquainted with Šíma through Weiner, whom Daumal knew by early 1927 (René Daumal, *1915–1928*, vol. 1 of *Correspondance*, ed. H. J. Maxwell [Paris: Gallimard, 1992], 157).

<sup>86</sup> Alain Virmaux and Odette Virmaux, *Roger Gilbert-Lecomte et Le Grand Jeu* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1981), 46.

<sup>87</sup> Daumal, *1915–1928*, 11. Pierre-Quint is generally considered the patron of Le Grand Jeu, as he financed the group's magazine and paid for various trips and so forth (Virmaux and Virmaux, *Roger Gilbert-Lecomte et Le Grand Jeu*, 26).

<sup>88</sup> Daumal to Maurice Henry, 12 August 1926, in Daumal, *1915–1928*, 126.

strong immediate attachment.<sup>89</sup> In 1926 Breton invited Daumal and Lecomte to join the surrealists, but they declined. Daumal wrote Maurice Henry,

Surrealistic automatic writing furnishes the material of chaos: in order not to let oneself get smothered in this sludge (it penetrates the eyes, the ears, it rouges itself and goes and turns and returns and turns again like a demented ladybug), you need the Word (or: divine will or the unconscious, inspiration, revelation, etc.).<sup>90</sup>

This critique is akin to Czech reservations about automatic writing, although from a different perspective. Specifically, Daumal felt that for the surrealists, automatic writing and related techniques had rapidly become a mere mechanical means of thought.<sup>91</sup>

All the same, Breton sought both to undermine *Grand Jeu* and to win over specific members of the group. Daumal and his associates were not slow to respond. Daumal published an Open Letter to André Breton in *Grand Jeu* III, which described surrealist activities as trickery and confusion, claiming that they were politically weak, lacked original research, and lacked understanding of Baudelaire, Swedenborg, and Hegel. He invited the surrealists to join *Le Grand Jeu*. As if to stress *Grand Jeu*'s superiority, the Open Letter pointed out, in a footnote, that all the members of the group had signed a manifesto, published in Prague in *ReD*, protesting the Czechoslovak government's censorship of Teige and Hořejší's translation of Lautréamont's

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<sup>89</sup>Virmaux and Virmaux, *Roger Gilbert-Lecomte et Le Grand Jeu*, 46.

<sup>90</sup>“L'automatisme surréaliste fournit la matière du Chaos: il y faut, pour ne pas se laisser étouffer sous cette boueuse gangue (elle pénètre par les yeux, par les oreilles, elle se teinte de rouge et s'en va et tourne et revient et tourne encore comme une coccinelle malade), il y faut le Verbe, (ou: volonté divine ou inconsciente, inspiration, révélation, etc.)—” Daumal to Maurice Henry, 8 June 1926, in Daumal, *1915–1928*, 117.

<sup>91</sup>René Daumal, “Le Surréalisme et Le Grand Jeu,” *Le Grand Jeu*, no. 4 (Fall 1932): 11–12.

*Maldoror*.<sup>92</sup> Significantly, in *ReD*, Teige noted the strife between the surrealists and Le Grand Jeu, but devoted far more space to the goals of Le Grand Jeu than to mainstream surrealism.<sup>93</sup>

The group's Czech ties were unusually strong for a French movement, and its connection with the Czech avant-garde was by no means limited to Šíma and Weiner. In late 1928, *ReD* published a thoughtful consideration of the group written by Jiří Voskovec, a close friend of Šíma's.<sup>94</sup> Even more notably, *ReD* 3, no. 8 (1930) was a theme issue devoted to Le Grand Jeu. This issue included the group's manifesto and introduced its eponymous journal (which had already been mentioned in previous issues of *ReD*). Somewhat later, the journal *Kvart* published work by Grand Jeu member Renéville as well as by Toyen, Štyrský, and members (and former members) of the Breton and Bataille groups. *Kvart* was founded by the Devětsil architect Vít Obrtel as a result of his ostracization from the avant-garde by Teige, with whom he disagreed regarding the function of architecture. Though Obrtel did not become a surrealist, he was strongly interested in the intuitive, spiritual, non-rational aspects of human needs.<sup>95</sup>

There was, in fact, a significant exchange of ideas between Grand Jeu and the Czechs. Although more work by members of Le Grand Jeu was translated for Czech journals than the reverse, nevertheless, poetry by Seifert appeared in *Le Grand Jeu* I, by Nezval in *Le Grand Jeu* II, and discussion of the Czech government's censorship of *Maldoror* in *Le Grand Jeu* III. The Paris café Deux-Magots, popular with Czechs, was also a favorite place for Daumal, Lecomte,

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<sup>92</sup>René Daumal, "Lettre ouverte à André Breton," *Le Grand Jeu*, no. 3 (Fall 1930): 79–81, translated in Kathleen Ferrick Rosenblatt, "Rene Daumal: From Surrealist States of the Unconscious to Conscious States of Being" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 2003), 61–62.

<sup>93</sup>Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Collier Books, 1965), 144; Rosenblatt, "Rene Daumal: From Surrealist States," 64; Karel Teige, "Panorama: Z Paříže," *ReD* 2, no. 10 (June 1929): 322–23.

<sup>94</sup>Jiří Voskovec, "Svoboda bez nadějí," *ReD* 2, no. 2 (October 1928): 50–53. Voskovec, shortly to become a star of the Prague stage in the duo Voskovec and Werich, had been acquainted with Šíma since childhood and regarded the painter as something of a mentor.

<sup>95</sup>Rostislav Švácha, "Surrealism and Czech Functionalism," *Umění* 55 (2007): 320.

and Weiner.<sup>96</sup> Ribemont-Dessaignes, whose work was much admired by the Czech avant-garde, collaborated on *Le Grand Jeu* and was a staunch friend of Daumal and the group as a whole.<sup>97</sup> And, during Roger Vailland's trip to Czechoslovakia in 1927, he met with Teige, whom he liked and described (prophetically) as the head of the Czechoslovak surrealists.<sup>98</sup>

Teige himself seems to have regarded *Le Grand Jeu* as a variant form of surrealism as late as mid-1929.<sup>99</sup> While Devětsil and *Grand Jeu* clearly had a relationship (primarily through Šíma, who belonged to both, and less through Weiner, who was not a participant in Devětsil), their directions and interests were ultimately quite different.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.4 *FINIS TERRAE: ARTIFICIALISM*

The creations of the Surrealist painters that seem to be most free can naturally come into being only through their return to 'visual residues' stemming from perception of the outside world.<sup>101</sup> — André Breton in Prague, 1935

By the late 1920s, then, Toyen and Štyrský were well aware of but not yet convinced by surrealism. They were certainly closer to the ex-surrealist Soupault, who wrote the catalog essay for their 1927–28 exhibition at Galerie Vavin, than to Breton. Perhaps in response to the multiple

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<sup>96</sup> Daumal to Richard Weiner, letter and pneumatic message, 16 July 1927, in Daumal, *1915–1928*, 159 and passim.

<sup>97</sup> Daumal, *1915–1928*, 184.

<sup>98</sup> Undated letter from Vailland to Roger Gilbert-Lecomte and René Daumal, placed under 1926, in Roger Vailland, *Écrits intimes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 38. Vailland accompanied Weiner to Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1927, staying into the fall. References to this trip occur in Roger Vailland to his sister Ginette, 24 February 1927, and note 2 to Daumal to Gilbert-LeComte, 30 August 1927, in Daumal, *1915–1928*, 144, 171 and Roger Vailland, *Lettres à sa famille* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 84–105. Weiner broke with the group at the end of 1927. (Virmaux and Virmaux, *Roger Gilbert-Lecomte et Le Grand Jeu*, 76.)

<sup>99</sup> Teige, "Panorama: Z Paříže," 322.

<sup>100</sup> See Virmaux and Virmaux, *Roger Gilbert-Lecomte et Le Grand Jeu*, 80, for an attempt to figure out this relationship.

<sup>101</sup> Breton, "Surrealist Situation of the Object (1935)," 273.

flavors of surrealist and surrealist-like groups, during their stay in Paris, they decided to form their own two-person movement, Artificialism. For both artists, this was a shift from figural work to abstraction. Their Artificialist work was strong on heavily abstracted landscapes, especially with watery themes, in which paint was sometimes sprayed, sometimes mixed with grit, sometimes dripped.

Every early twentieth-century art movement, of course, must have its manifesto. While the wording of the 1927 Artificialist manifesto is perhaps that of Štyrský, the content was certainly determined by both artists, as Toyen was always deeply involved in any movement she espoused. In the manifesto, the two proclaimed that Cubism merely abstracted reality whereas Artificialism favored imagination over reality. Like Teige in regard to Poetism, they identified the poet and painter as one, but they explicitly separated their own aims from those they attributed to surrealism, such as “historicizing form.”<sup>102</sup> From their manifesto, we can see that the two espoused some ideas akin to surrealism, yet clearly they were going in a different direction:

To the latent poetry of the interiors of real forms, [Artificialism] reacts with positive continuity. The exterior is determined by poetic perception of memories (negative continuity). By the remembrance of memories. The imagination loses its real connection. Deducing remembrances without joining memory and experience prepares the concept for painting, the essence and condensation of which immediately exclude any reflections, and places the memories in imaginary spaces.

A memory is a prolonged perception. If perceptions are transfigured at the outset, they become abstract remembrances. They are the result of a conscious choice

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<sup>102</sup> Cubism versus artificialism: “Analýza reality vedla k jejímu zrcadlení a duplikátu. ...Nechávaje realitu v klidu, *usiluje o maximum imaginativnosti.*” Rejection of historicizing form: “Neguje malířství formově historizující (surrealismus).” (Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, “Artificielisme,” *ReD* 1, no. 1 [October 1927]: 28.) Srp notes that while Teige explicitly connected Artificialism with Poetism, “Štyrský never expressed a sense of the similarity between Artificialism and Poetism.” (Karel Srp, “Prague/Paris,” in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, trans. Andrée Collier Záleská [Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002], 577.)

that denies fantasy, and they pass through consciousness, neither leaving an imprint nor disappearing.<sup>103</sup>

This section draws upon Freud, who stated:

Many things, too, occur in dreams (just as they normally do in waking life) simply as thoughts or ideas—probably, that is to say, in the form of residues of verbal presentations. Nevertheless, what are truly characteristic of dreams are only those elements of their content which behave like images, which are more like perceptions, that is, than they are like mnemonic presentations. ... [D]reams ... replace thoughts by hallucinations.<sup>104</sup>

The Artificialist manifesto continues:

New formations are the result of abstract visual memories at the stage of permeation, and these have no connection with either reality or simulated nature. This stage does not correspond with the receptive and passive stages of artificial paradises, nor with the random logic of abnormal individuals.<sup>105</sup>

While the term “artificial paradises” originates in Baudelaire’s *Les Paradis artificiels* (1860) and was frequently used in 1920s avant-garde texts, surely its use here refers at least in part to the first surrealist manifesto, in which Breton remarks that surrealism “is, if you like, an artificial paradise...”<sup>106</sup> Emotion became key in Artificialism, yet distanced from the final artistic product:

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<sup>103</sup> “Na latentní poezii interiérů reálných forem reaguje kontinuitou pozitivní. Exteriér je určen poetickými percepcemi vzpomínek (kontinuita negativní). Vzpomínkami na vzpomínky. Imaginace ztrácí reálnou spojitost. Dedukování vzpomínek bez připojení paměti a zkušenosti připravuje obrazu koncepci, jejíž výtažek a zhuštění vylučuje už samo jakékoli zrcadlení a umísťuje vzpomínky do imaginárních prostů. “Vzpomínka je prodloužením vjemu. Jestliže se vjemy při svém vzniku transfigurují, stávají se vzpomínky abstraktními. Jsou výsledkem vědomého výběru popírajícího fantazii a procházejí vědomím, aniž se otisknou a aniž zmizí.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Artificielisme,” 28–29.)

<sup>104</sup>Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 149–50.

<sup>105</sup> “Výslednicí abstraktních vizuálních vzpomínek ve stadiu prolínání jsou nové útvary, nemající nic společného s realitou ani s umělou přírodou. Toto stadium neshoduje se s receptivním a pasívním stavem umělých rájů ani s náhodnou logikou abnormálních jedinců.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Artificielisme,” 29.)

<sup>106</sup>Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 36. Baudelaire’s work discusses the use of opium and hashish and relies on Thomas de Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Aragon states categorically that “all paradises are artificial” and that for drug addicts “*artificial paradise* is a chicken coop” (Louis Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, trans. Alyson Waters [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991], 54–55).

The artificialist picture is not bound to reality within the conditions of time, place, and space, and thus provides no associative image. The reality and form of a picture act upon one another through the force of disjunction. The greater the ratio of their distance, the more visually dramatic the emotivity. Analogies of emotions arise, and their joined waves, their reverberations, become ever more remote and complex, so that when one attempts to confront reality with the picture, the two seem utterly estranged.

The artificialist picture provides poetic emotions which are not merely optical, and it excites a sensibility that is not solely visual.<sup>107</sup>

In other words, like surrealism, Artificialism drew upon internal states as source material, but while its use of memory and emotion was similar to surrealist reliance on the unconscious, Štyrský and Toyen emphasized the distance of the final work from its source, whereas surrealism of this period emphasized unmediated “pure psychic automatism.” In this part of the Artificialist manifesto, the two drew heavily upon Reverdy, whose words from 1918 Breton quoted in the first surrealist manifesto:

The image is a pure creation of the mind.

It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities.

The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be—the greater its emotional power and poetic reality...<sup>108</sup>

Breton’s own comment on Reverdy was: “These words, however sibylline for the uninitiated, were extremely revealing, and I pondered them for a long time. But the image eluded me. Reverdy’s aesthetic, a completely a posteriori aesthetic, led me to mistake the effects for the

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<sup>107</sup> “Artifcielní obraz není vázán na realitu v podmínkách času, místa a prostoru, proto nedává asociativních představ. Realita a formy obrazu působí na sebe silou odtaživou. Čím větší je poměr jejich vzdáleností, tím vizuálně dramatictější stává se emotivnost, vznikají analogie emocí, jich spojitě vlnění, ozvěny vždy vzdálenější a složitější, takže při pokusu konfrontace reality s obrazem připadají si obě naprosto cizí.

“Artifcielní obraz dává poetické emoce nejen optické a vzrušuje senzibilitu nejen vizuální.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Artifcielnisme,” 29.)

<sup>108</sup> Pierre Reverdy in *Nord-Sud*, March 1918, quoted in Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 20.

causes.”<sup>109</sup> Štyrský and Toyen thus aligned themselves more closely with Reverdy rather than with Breton, as Breton proceeded to state that “it does not seem possible to bring together, voluntarily, what [Reverdy] calls ‘two distant realities.’ The juxtaposition is made or not made....” The Artificialist version substitutes the picture’s “reality” and “form” for Reverdy’s juxtaposed realities, but Breton suspected that the distant realities either come together or not. He considered the “spark” between sufficiently distant realities the result of surrealist activity and posited that automatic writing was “especially conducive to the production of the most beautiful images.”<sup>110</sup> As Balakian states of Reverdy and Breton, “The more obvious the association and the less deciphering necessary, as in the case of correspondences and similes, the less luminous is the truth or beauty it uncovers...”<sup>111</sup> Both Breton and the Artificialists clearly proceeded from Reverdy. The Artificialists, however, denied producing an associative image, yet were convinced that reality and form relate through their very disjunction.

In a related statement of position from 1928, the two artists indicated a disdain for surrealism while repeatedly emphasizing the importance of the dream and chronological distance for the (visual) poet.<sup>112</sup> They expressly stated “Artificialism rejects literary, formally historicizing or deforming gimmickry, that is surrealism. [...] The subconscious is a gag many people shove in their mouths so as not to think any further.”<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 20–21.

<sup>110</sup>Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 36–37.

<sup>111</sup>Anna Balakian, *André Breton, Magus of Surrealism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 93.

<sup>112</sup>Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, “Básník (Přednáška proslovená při vernisáži výstavy v Aventinské mansardě),” *Rozpravy Aventina* 3, no. 20 (1928): 242. Translated in Jindřich Štyrský and Toyen, “The Poet (Lecture Given on the Occasion of an Exhibition Opening),” in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 591.

<sup>113</sup>“Artificielism odmítá literární, formově historisující nebo deformující taškárství, to jest surrealism. [...] Podvědomí je roubík, který si mnozí strkají do úst, aby dále nemysleli.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Básník,” 241.) Lenka Bydžovská stresses the artists’ radical distancing of themselves from surrealism, noting this definition of surrealism as “literary, formally historicizing... gimmickry” and that artificialism lacked the shadow of literariness. (Lenka Bydžovská, “Aventinská mansarda,” in *Aventinská mansarda. Otakar Štorch-Marien a výtvarné umění*, ed. Lenka

Dreams, however, were treated in a somewhat equivocal manner in this text. “Dreams confirm the experiences of our habits. We behold faces that scandalize by their feigned holding of breath. [...] Many arrive, multiplying vantage points, exchanging them, until multiple chaos arises in similitude.”<sup>114</sup>

In a passage that suggests reservations about surrealist use of dreams, Štyrský and Toyen stated:

The false poet is getting ready to plunder himself. Sleep reproduces the causes of his treacherousness. Cruel consciousness does not play with humility. The eyes staring from the subconscious have lowered lids. Mirrors read eyes. The victim is weeping, no longer able to speak with the eyes. The gardener grows ribbons for the future bier. Many people produce critical fleas. For the poet, it was enough to watch how those who build on sleep, simultaneously violating it, who build on the subconscious, are making their nest, but he is not going to sit on the eggs with them. Building on the subconscious means to take pride in losses.

Sleep is a bee gathering honey for a recollection to enjoy its taste. We have no memories, but we are trying to manufacture them. There is only one way to rid oneself of memories. To be abandoned by them.<sup>115</sup>

Štyrský and Toyen are the Poets in this passage, observing the False Poet and rejecting his methods by manufacturing memories rather than plundering their own selves. Yet Štyrský had begun keeping an illustrated dream journal in 1925, and considerable evidence supports the importance of the dream throughout his mature oeuvre. Štyrský also explicitly employed

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Bydžovská and Karel Srp [Prague: Galerie Hlavního Města Prahy, 1990], 63.) The Artificialists’ claim that surrealism was “historicizing” connects to Teige’s increasing rejection of history and historicism.

<sup>114</sup> Sen dává za pravdu zkušenostem našich zvyků. Zříme tváře pohoršující líčeným zatajením dechu. [...] Mnozí přicházejí a zmnožují pozorovací body a vyměňují si je, až vzniká mnohonásobný chaos v podobě.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Básník,” 242.)

<sup>115</sup> “Falešný básník připravuje se na plnění sama sebe. Spánek reprodukuje příčiny jeho zrádnosti. Kruté vědomí nehraje si s pokorou. Oči zirájící z podvědomí mají sklopená víčka. Zrcadla čtou z očí. Oběť pláče. Nemůže již mluvití zrakem. Zahradník pěstuje stuhly pro budoucí máry. Mnozí vyrábějí kritické blešky. Básniku stačilo pozorovati, jak si stavějí hnízdo ti, kteří budují na spánku a současně ho przní, kteří budují na podvědomí, ale nebude s nimi seděti na vejcích. Stavěti na podvědomí je zakládati si na ztrátách.

“Spánek je včela, která nahromad'uje med, aby si vzpomínka na něm pochutnávala. Nemáme žádných vzpomínek, ale snažíme se je vybudovati. Jest jen jediný způsob, jake se zbaviti vzpomínek. Býti jimi opuštěn.” (Štyrský and Toyen, “Básník,” 242.)

childhood memories in his writing and visual art, although not in their original state. Thus, certain of the ideas expressed in this passage may rather be Toyen's contribution to Artificialist theory. Judging from her self-presentation, Toyen was the one who wanted to rid herself of memories. The following passage reads like a description of a quintessential Toyen work:

Dream landscapes are strange sets with colors waiting to fade, light waiting to be lit, and forms waiting for future gigantic ruins. Life hands out and returns expired pledges. Only the child is a viewer, chained to the grass, unable to leave if the game becomes terrible. The secret of magicians lies in the fact that they endure pain, not that they don't feel it.<sup>116</sup>

Teige's response to Artificialism drew heavily from the two artists' own writings, but emphasized their break with traditional painting and linked Artificialist work to Poetism. Writing at length in praise of what he considered to be their formal innovation, he nonetheless insisted that form was not (unlike in abstract painting) an end in itself;

it is merely a precondition for the emotion elicited in the viewer. Štyrský's and Toyen's paintings do not tell the viewer any stories, but by the witchcraft and magic of their lines and colors they awaken in the viewer merely a dialogue between his conscious and subconscious. Between the self and memories. And yet these are not images of dreams and hallucinations. Inspired probably by the subconscious, they are realized in the full light of consciousness [...] they create an *ultraviolet superconscious world*...

Teige further stressed that "it is not a passive record of the subconscious, nor is it astrology or an interpretation of dreams. It is creation, invention, a poem: a work, fact, fruit of poetic superconsciousness." As if their distance from surrealism could not be signaled too many times (perhaps because they were in fact so close to it), he continued that they are not subjected to the forces of the subconscious.

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<sup>116</sup> "Krajiny snů jsou kulisami, kde barvy čekají na vyblednutí, světlo na rozžehnutí a formy očekávají příští gigantické ruiny. Život vydává a vrací uhaslé zástavy. Pouze dítě je divákem, přivázaným řetězy k trávě, které nemůže odejít, stává-li se hra strašnou. Tajemství kouzelníků záleží v tom, že bolest snášejí a ne v tom, že ji necítí." (Štyrský and Toyen, "Básník," 242.)

The title Artificialism makes clear that it is distinct from Surrealist painting, which owes too much to Böcklin and Expressionism, is unable to make use of the limitless possibilities which are the legacy of cubism, and has degenerated into literary and formal historicism.<sup>117</sup>

Teige's reference to "formal historicism" was typical of his writings of the late 1920s. Peter Zusi points out that Teige's use of the term "formalism" during this period does not relate to the distinction between form and content, nor did he use it as his antagonists would shortly in debating realism. Rather, Teige meant that form should suit the individual work, not derive from a system ("*a priori* aesthetics").<sup>118</sup> While surrealism's rejection of a specific artistic style in favor of pure psychic automatism, along with the individual artist's choice of form to express content, would seem to preclude any accusation of *a priori* aesthetics, the representational and narrative tendency of some surrealist painters evidently contributed to Teige, Toyen, and Štyrský's continued suspicion of the whole movement. In the same year, 1928, in discussing abstraction, surrealism, and Artificialism, Teige rejected surrealism on the grounds that relying on subconscious inspiration limited the movement to a "passive recording of opinions, storms, the ebb and flow of the subconscious oceans."<sup>119</sup> He was not entirely opposed to the movement, however, having praised the Dadaists and surrealists in late 1927 as lovers of freedom and the

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<sup>117</sup> "...je toliko předpokladem emoce, vzbuzené v divákovi. Obrazy Toyena a Štyrského nevypravují divákovi ničeho: čarováním a kouzly svých linií a barev probouzejí v něm toliko dialog vědomí s podvědomím, osoby se vzpomínkami. A přece nejsou to obrazy snů a halucinací. Snad podvědomě inspirovány, jsou v plném jasu vědomí realizovány, básní nové skutečností, nové květy, nová světla, dirigují film vyrušení a dojetí, vytvářejí ultrafialový, nadvědomý svět..." "...není pasivním záznamem podvědomí, není hvězdopravectvím ani vzkládáním snů. Je tvorbou, je invencí, je básní: dílem, faktem, plodem básnického nadvědomí.

"...naprostou nezávislost vůči přírodopisnému světu i naprostou nepodrobenost mocnostem podvědomí. Název 'artificielismus' manifestuje také zároveň odlišení od malířství surrealistického, které je tak tuze poplatné Böcklinovi a expresionismu, neschopné zužití oněch neomezených možností, jež jsou odkazem kubismu, a degenerované v literární a formální historismus." (Teige, "Ultrafialové Obrazy," 317.)

<sup>118</sup>Zusi, "The Present 'As It Really Is'," 100–101.

<sup>119</sup>"Surréalismus, dav všechna práva podvědomé inspiraci a subjektivní fantasii, omezil se na pasivní zaznamenávání názorů, bouří, přívilů a odlivů podvědomých oceánů." Karel Teige, "Abstraktivismus, nadrealismus, artificielismus (Šíma, Štyrský, Toyen)," *Kmen* 2, no. 6 (1928): 122.

fantastic.<sup>120</sup> This ambivalence about surrealism would continue among the future Prague surrealists for the next few years.

In the 1950s, Toyen would reflect on her Artificialist period:

In nonfigurative art a tendency that was close to surrealism developed at the same time as surrealism itself and ran parallel to it. If it has attained its refined and mature form today, it is thanks to the very important influence exerted by surrealist theory.

To pursue a venture in common with a nonsurrealist painter is entirely possible if it is founded on the same basis as a common venture with a surrealist painter: the *moral* basis. I am convinced of this all the more resolutely as the term ‘lyrical abstraction’ accurately describes the painting that Štyrský and I started doing in 1926. When the majority of the Czechoslovak group *Devětsil*, whose aesthetic conceptions were growing closer to those of the Surrealist Movement, joined it in 1933, it was precisely because they shared a community of ethical views.<sup>121</sup>

By the latter 1920s, then, Toyen and Štyrský’s work and ideas were growing closer to surrealism, but were visualized abstractly, for the most part as imaginary landscapes. Toyen’s return to figuration and discernable erotic content in the early 1930s came as she and Štyrský, along with Nezval and other members of *Devětsil*, developed a theoretical substructure that was increasingly Freudian and increasingly akin to that of Bretonian surrealism.

Not surprisingly, Toyen and Štyrský and Artificialism were by no means in the forefront of the Prague cultural world during their years in Paris, although it is clear that they kept in touch with friends and clients. We can track their increasing visibility in the Prague artistic community via coverage of their endeavors in the arts weekly *Rozpravy Aventina*. At first, Toyen and

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<sup>120</sup>Karel Teige, “Hyperdada,” *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 38.

<sup>121</sup> Quoted in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 81. Bédouin cites this as “l’une des rares à mettre l’accent sur l’aspect éthique du problème...” (of surrealist painting and painting in some way near to surrealism, emphasis in original. Jean-Louis Bédouin, *Vingt ans de surréalisme, 1939–1959* [Paris: Denoël, 1961], 267) The majority of *Devětsil* members did *not* become surrealists.

Štyrský appeared only occasionally in *Rozpravy Aventina*. The two were apparently thought to be of only mild interest to the paper's readership during the mid-1920s, presumably because they lived in Paris and had not yet really made a name for themselves. This changed in the late 1920s when they returned to Prague and developed a closer relationship with its publisher, Otakar Štorch-Marien. First came a detailed review of their exhibition at Galerie Vavin, which was followed almost immediately by ads for the guide to Paris they had written with Vincenc Nečas. Before long, their new relationship with Štorch-Marien became evident when a *Rozpravy Aventina* cover story announced their 1928 exhibition at Aventinská Mansarda.<sup>122</sup> A long article under their joint signatures was illustrated with caricatures of the artists by František Muzika. A full page of photographs of the artists and their paintings was printed a few pages further on. From here on, Toyen and Štyrský were visibly established in the eyes of Prague readers and gallery-goers. No longer just a pair of Devětsil members off in Paris, they were now an identifiable commodity at home, that produced delicately moody abstractions, had written a travel book (and in Štyrský's case much other material), and were the subject of poetry and caricature. Ads for the guide to Paris they had written with Vincenc Nečas appeared regularly in *Rozpravy Aventina* for weeks, reappearing later and in other publications.

By 1931, Štyrský and Toyen were cultural fixtures. They would return to France from time to time after their return to Prague, but only Toyen was to live in Paris again.

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<sup>122</sup> Štyrský and Toyen wrote to Štorch-Marien on March 8, 1928, requesting an exhibition, and were offered a June show (Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Artificialismus*, 45).

### 3.5 MELUSINE: SURREALIST APPROACHES TO WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

How did French surrealist ideas about women relate to the Prague surrealist approach? Recent scholarship has suggested that most women associated with surrealism operated somewhere on its fringes, as friends and lovers of male surrealists; Toyen, however, took a more central position. How did surrealist attitudes toward women and sexuality change, especially as increasing numbers of women became active in the movement, and how did Toyen respond to or help shape these attitudes in her work? What made her different? How do her work and status relate to that of such surrealist artists as Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, Dorothea Tanning, and Valentine Hugo?

Another important question is the degree to which the surrealists were misogynists or encouraging to women. Scholars have repeatedly grappled with this issue during recent decades, and are gradually concluding that it has no simple answer.<sup>123</sup> Certainly, aspects of surrealist thought and details of behavior by individual surrealists are misogynistic by today's standards. Still, one writer suggests that "Surrealism combined two of the principal liberation struggles of this century: that of desire and that of woman."<sup>124</sup> We should avoid judging surrealist ideas of the early twentieth century outside their historical context. What, then, was that context? How do surrealist ideas about women, sex, and gender fit into the larger cultural picture, and how does Toyen's work and position complicate and clarify our understanding of surrealism?

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<sup>123</sup> See, for example: Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*; Megan Colleen McShane, "Exquisite Corpse: The Surrealist Practice of Collective Drawing, 1925–1941" (Ph.D. diss., Atlanta: Emory University, 2004); Mary Ann Caws, "Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 381–95; Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, eds., *Surrealism and Women* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); Robert J. Belton, *The Beribboned Bomb* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1995); Whitney Chadwick, ed., *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); and the work of Susan Rubin Suleiman.

<sup>124</sup>Short, *Dada and Surrealism*, 156. Less directly, surrealism was anticolonialist and, of course, anticapitalist.

During and after the First World War, France was the site of an intense enforcement of gender roles in the service of the state, a social circumstance against which the surrealist approach should be viewed. Mary Louise Roberts has shown that after the war, gender was in many ways central to how the French dealt with cultural crisis. She notes that as gender relations were an important means of conceptualizing identity and power in French civilization, reworking these relations was “central to any project of cultural and social reconstruction.”<sup>125</sup> The early surrealists reacted strongly against wartime governmental promotion of men as soldiers and women as mothers, and their celebration of disruptive women can in part be traced to their rejection of wartime gender stereotypes at a time when non-maternal women were represented as a moral threat to men and France.<sup>126</sup>

Interwar French feminism, meanwhile, was weak and conservative in comparison to its earlier incarnations. Timidly respectable, by World War I it had largely parted company with socialism, and the French Left believed that granting women the vote would merely play into the hands of ultraconservatives.<sup>127</sup> This fostered an atmosphere in which French surrealist women took less interest in achieving the vote than did their counterparts elsewhere. In Czechoslovakia, there had also been concern that women would vote conservative, but it had not impeded suffrage, which was achieved in 1920.

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<sup>125</sup>Mary Louise Roberts, “‘This Civilization No Longer Has Sexes’: *La Garçonne* and Cultural Crisis in France After World War One,” *Gender and History* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 52. For a more extensive work on interwar French gender debates, see Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See also, regarding gender relations and political power/hierarchies, Joan Wallach Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” in *Gender and the Politics of History*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 46–50.

<sup>126</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 169. Penelope Rosemont, too, stresses that in a misogynist postwar climate, the early surrealists were surprisingly free of misogynist sentiment and continually attacked “the apparatus of patriarchal oppression” (Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlv-xlv).

<sup>127</sup>Communists, revolutionary syndicalists, and the Socialist Party argued that votes for uneducated peasant Frenchwomen would result in victories for Catholic, Royalist, and Fascist parties. Protection of the Republic against clericalism was a major argument opposing votes for women in 1922. See, for example, James F. McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society, 1870–1940* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1981), 84–96, 178–88.

The rise of natalism, too, was an issue. With the perceived near-extirpation of French manhood on the battlefield, French feminists, especially Christian feminists, took a natalist stance after the war,<sup>128</sup> and even the French Communist Party eventually moved in this direction.<sup>129</sup> Anti-Catholic and anti-natalist, the surrealists rejected contemporary pressures upon women to marry, procreate, and stay out of the workplace.<sup>130</sup>

In the surrealist moral code, values of mad love, anti-nationalism, and anti-clericalism opposed what Breton termed “the cult of that abject trinity: family, country, and religion.”<sup>131</sup> The surrealists, by emphasizing desire and disruptive sexuality, challenged widespread interwar fears for the integrity of what Carolyn J. Dean terms “the social body’s metaphorical masculinity.”<sup>132</sup> The Surrealists apparently believed that gender politics had a detrimental effect on both men’s and women’s identities, and even that women’s emancipation movements were insufficiently radical for surrealist tastes.<sup>133</sup>

As the Surrealists opposed both conservative Catholicism and Enlightenment-driven Republican patriotism, they allied with the French Communist Party against these, but the alliance ultimately failed because the surrealists would not give up their own political culture in favor of that of Communism.<sup>134</sup> In this respect, the French situation corresponds in many respects to the Czech. Those members of Devětsil who turned to surrealism also largely rejected

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<sup>128</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 170.

<sup>129</sup>Eric D. Weitz, “The Heroic Man and the Ever-Changing Woman: Gender and Politics in European Communism, 1917–1950,” in *Gender and Class in Modern Europe*, ed. Laura Frader and Sonya Rose (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 316, 340–44.

<sup>130</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 171.

<sup>131</sup>André Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 117.

<sup>132</sup>Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 228.

<sup>133</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 166, note 315. French feminist organizations did not, for example, ally with with gay rights groups in the way that Stöcker and the Bund für Mutterschutz allied with Magnus Hirschfeld’s Scientific Humanitarian Committee (Antony Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France, 1780–1980: New Ideas on the Family, Divorce, and Homosexuality* [London and New York: Routledge, 1989], 154).

<sup>134</sup>Kirsten J. Strom, “Making History: Surrealism and the Invention of a Political Culture” (Ph.D. diss., Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1999), 91.

family, country, and religion (especially the latter two). The Devětsil group had also attempted to form its own leftist political culture, which among the surrealists developed into one akin to though not identical with that of the Paris group.

During the 1920s, the Paris surrealists lauded women who broke with gender stereotypes and thereby threatened the established social order. In opposition to official propaganda of heroism, Surrealists celebrated “anti-heroes and anti-heroines,” seeing disruptive, threatening women as “natural allies” to their own social and political struggles.<sup>135</sup> As time went on, surrealist publications began to mention revolutionary women such as the marxist Rosa Luxemburg, the bolshevik Nadezhda Krupskaya, and the anarchist-Communard Louise Michel.<sup>136</sup> Criminally disruptive women excited particular interest during the 1920s and early 1930s. The surrealists regarded the violent crimes of Germaine Berton, the Papin sisters, and Violette Nozière as revolutionary acts against both conservative morals and standard bourgeois female roles.<sup>137</sup> The Papin sisters did not go unnoticed in Czechoslovakia, where the homophile journal *Nový hlas* (New Voice) described their crime in detail, noting that “sexual perversity” and the sisters’ “lesbian inclinations” were alleged to be factors.<sup>138</sup> Neither the Papins, who had been abused by their employers, nor Nozière, molested by her father, received any sympathy in the French press or from French leftist groups other than the surrealists, who saw these women as rebelling in Maldororian fashion and exposing the corruption hidden in the bourgeois family.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 172.

<sup>136</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlii.

<sup>137</sup> See Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlii, and José Pierre, ed., *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives I, 1922–1939* (Paris, 1980), 246–62.

<sup>138</sup> “Poznámky a informace: Příšerné historie vražd zaměstnávají nejenom Prahu, nýbrž i Paříž,” *Nový hlas* 2, no. 11 (November 1933), 167.

<sup>139</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 42–44.

The surrealists also admired hysterics for upsetting bourgeois social expectations, as well as for their supposed closer connection to the unconscious. Since hysteria as a medical diagnosis was in some disrepute by the 1920s, surrealist embrace of the concept was probably more for its poetic symbolism than its actuality, but surrealism employed Freud's theory of hysteria as the result of conflict between desire and repression.<sup>140</sup> Pierre Janet's own study of hysteria had termed the ecstatic states of female patients "*l'amour fou*," and gave the surrealists both a name for surrealist passion and "a model for the sexual basis of ecstatic discourse."<sup>141</sup> This idea of simultaneously erotic and irrational ecstasy underlay surrealist belief in the transformative power of hysteria, and the female orgasm. As Whitney Chadwick suggests, this identification of woman with convulsive reality has woman "absorbing into herself those qualities that man recognizes as important but does not wish to possess himself."<sup>142</sup>

Though the Czech surrealists, like the French, sought a restructuring of society and envisioned this as occurring via desire, they did not celebrate the disruptive woman—either criminal or hysterical—in the manner of the French. The very different status of urban women in Czechoslovakia—educated, voting, a symbol of desired rather than alarming modernity—meant that there was less need to imagine them breaking free from social shackles through crime and hysteria.

### 3.5.1 Convulsive Beauty, Mad Love, and Desire

[W]e must not let the paths of desire become overgrown.— André Breton<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>David Lomas, "The Omnipotence of Desire: Surrealism, Psychoanalysis and Hysteria," in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 63.

<sup>141</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 35.

<sup>142</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 35.

<sup>143</sup>Breton, *Mad Love*, 25. Emphasis in original.

Breton's vision of the 'free and adored woman' didn't always prove a practical help for women, especially painters. — Ithell Colquhoun<sup>144</sup>

At the end of the autobiographical novel *Nadja*, Breton introduced the idea of convulsive beauty, and in *L'Amour fou*, he listed three conditions necessary for it to come into being. First was the necessity for it to be "érotique-voilée," creating for the spectator a sensation akin to erotic pleasure. Second, it must be "explosante-fixe," expressing both action and rest. Third, it must be "magique-circonstancielle," bringing about a solution that could not come into being by ordinary logic. In short, "Convulsive beauty will be veiled-erotic, fixed-explosive, magic-circumstantial, or it will not be."<sup>145</sup>

Closely related to convulsive beauty was the idea of *amour fou* (mad love), an overmastering emotional connection. Surrealist mad love was, of course, a form of romantic love. With romantic love, sexuality became a vehicle for deep and complex emotion and thus for reflection and self-understanding. This increasingly psychologized personal sexuality took on a greater significance in the overall scheme of human life.<sup>146</sup> Thus, when Breton cited Engels and Freud in defence of monogamy, he was not praising bourgeois or socio-economically based marriage:

Engels, in *The Origin of the Family*, does not hesitate to make of *individual sexual love*, born of this *superior form of sexual relations that monogamy is, the greatest moral progress* accomplished by humans in modern times. ...Once private property has been abolished, 'we can reasonably affirm,' declares Engels, 'that *far from disappearing, monogamy will be realized for the first time.*' ...This view about what might be thought the most exciting topic related to human becoming is nowhere more clearly corroborated than by the view of Freud, for whom sexual love, even such as it is already presented, *breaks the collective links*

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<sup>144</sup>Quoted in Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 66.

<sup>145</sup>Breton, *Mad Love*, 8–19.

<sup>146</sup>Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity* (Chicago: University of University, 2000), 234–35.

*created by race, rises above national differences and social hierarchies, and, in so doing, contributes in large measure to the progress of culture.*<sup>147</sup>

Breton's belief in longterm monogamous devotion grew out of belief in love and sexuality as means of expanding human development and understanding. He saw monogamous "mad love" as "the surest means of liberating desire and imagination" because he regarded female intuition and access to states of non-ordinary consciousness as a conduit for the use of the male creator. Indeed, by the publication of *L'Amour fou*, Breton had largely given up political revolution in favor of love as a means of transforming the world, and his interest in the irrational had become an "exaltation of the intuitive feminine" in opposition to masculine "reason," which he deemed responsible for the world's ills.<sup>148</sup> The surrealists' emphasis on the power of love and desire was a trouble spot in their relations with the Communist Party, which considered love and sexuality to be distractions from the struggle for social equality.<sup>149</sup>

But mad love was largely Breton's concept, and his stress on monogamy was not shared by most other surrealists, male or female. Though surrealism as a whole sought to transform human consciousness via desire, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret, and others stressed desire, not monogamy.<sup>150</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, while granting that for Breton "woman has no vocation other than love; this does not make her inferior, since man's vocation is also love," went on to say "But one would like to know if for her also love is key to the world and revelation of beauty."<sup>151</sup> Leonora Carrington responded by saying, "In *l'amour-passion*, it is the loved one,

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<sup>147</sup>Breton, *Mad Love*, 77. Emphasis in original.

<sup>148</sup>Clifford Browder, *André Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967), 114–15.

<sup>149</sup>Dawn Ades, "Surrealism, Male-Female," in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 172.

<sup>150</sup>Chadwick points out that Surrealist defense of Charlie Chaplin's sexual practices, the celebration of hysteria's fiftieth anniversary, and the publication of the surrealist sex inquiries were all signs of the movement's increasing interest in desire as a means to transform human consciousness. (Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 36)

<sup>151</sup>Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1974), 268.

the other who gives the key. Now the question is: Who can the loved one be? It can be a man or a horse or another woman.”<sup>152</sup> This emphasis on desire over monogamy was shared by Czech surrealists Štyrský, Toyen, Teige, and Nezval. Desire was not, perhaps, as important to other members of the Prague group as were the unconscious or the dream. Desire was not a topic to stress when lecturing to other leftists, as Nezval made clear in his 1934 *Levá fronta* talk on surrealism, which discussed the dream and the unconscious in relation to dialectics and revolution but made no mention of desire.<sup>153</sup>

### 3.5.2 Versions of the Muse

From the surrealist point of view, childhood is not a demeaning category.—  
Penelope Rosemont, 1998<sup>154</sup>

I didn't have time to be anyone's muse... I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist. — Leonora Carrington, 1983<sup>155</sup>

If woman were to be the male creator's conduit to a transformed consciousness and to poetic creation, then in effect she would function as his muse. While the lovelorn Bedřich Feuerstein had proposed Toyen for the role of muse of Devětsil, the artist did not function as a traditional muse either in the 1920s or later, although it is clear others (Nezval, Štyrský, and Heisler, at a minimum) found her inspiring. How did her inspirational qualities relate to those of surrealist versions of the muse?

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<sup>152</sup> Interview with Leonora Carrington, 1983, quoted in Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 105.

<sup>153</sup> This talk was given in May 1934 at a *Levá fronta*-sponsored public discussion of surrealism. Vítězslav Nezval, “O surrealismu,” in *Surrealismus v diskusi*, ed. Ladislav Štoll and Karel Teige (Prague: Knihovna Levé fronty, 1934), 77–83.

<sup>154</sup> Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlvii; Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Women in Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 123.

<sup>155</sup> Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 66.

The childlike woman, or *femme-enfant*, is the form of muse that has attracted the most attention in recent scholarship, because it has generally been taken as an indicator of surrealism's infantilizing view of women. There is certainly truth in this interpretation, as Péret's words show:

The *femme-enfant* arouses the love of the totally virile man because she completes him trait for trait. This love reveals her to herself while projecting her into a marvelous world. [...] She waited for love like the blossoming of the sun and she welcomes it in the present, but more sumptuous than she had dreamed it. She wears sublime love in strength, but it is necessary that it be revealed to her.<sup>156</sup>

However, the mythic function of the *femme-enfant* differs from its prescriptive use. Throughout his work, Breton emphasized the importance of childhood and a childlike state of mind without reference to gender. In the First Manifesto, he wrote "It is perhaps childhood that comes closest to one's 'real life,'" and "The mind which plunges into Surrealism relives with glowing excitement the best part of its childhood."<sup>157</sup> The extremely young women who joined surrealism in the 1930s—Meret Oppenheim, Gisèle Prassinos, Dora Maar, Leonora Carrington—were real-life models for the *femme-enfant*. As Penelope Rosemont suggests, rather than being an infantilized, helpless creature, the *femme-enfant* "refuses to surrender the child's boldness, curiosity, and spirit of adventure." Perhaps, since the surrealists embraced many other models of the uncommon woman, Rosemont is correct that the *femme-enfant* need not be a restrictive or sexist category.<sup>158</sup> All the same, Toyen herself does not seem to have been regarded as a *femme-enfant*.

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<sup>156</sup> "La femme-enfant suscite l'amour de l'homme totalement viril car elle le complète trait pour trait. Cet amour la révèle à elle-même en la projetant dans un monde merveilleux, aussi s'y abandonne-t-elle entièrement. [...] Elle attendait l'amour comme le bourgeon le soleil et elle l'accueille en présent inespéré, mais plus somptueux qu'elle ne l'avait rêvé. Elle porte l'amour sublime en puissance, mais il faut qu'il lui soit révélé." Benjamin Péret, *Anthologie de l'Amour Sublime* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1956), 27.

<sup>157</sup> Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," 39–40.

<sup>158</sup> Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xlviii; Conley, *Automatic Woman*, 123.

The image of Melusine, meanwhile, had been significant for Breton as early as his encounter with Nadja, but in his 1944 work *Arcane 17*, he began to develop a larger vision of male-female spheres, in which he postulated a more equal, non-patriarchal society. Though he regarded male and female as representing different aspects of human nature, he stressed the need to shift to “feminine” values.

Who will give the living scepter back to the child-woman? [...] For a long time he'll have to study her as she looks in the mirror and to begin with, he'll have to reject all the types of reasoning which men are so shabbily proud of, which they're so miserably duped by, make a clean slate of the principles which man's psychology has so egotistically been built on, *which have absolutely no validity for woman*, in order to advise women's psychology in its trials with its predecessor, with the ultimate responsibility of reconciling them. I choose the child-woman not in order to oppose her to other women, but because it seems to me that in her and in her alone exists in a state of absolute transparency the *other* prism of vision which they obstinately refuse to take into account, because it obeys very different laws whose disclosure male despotism must try to prevent at all costs.<sup>159</sup>

Breton stressed that “the time has come to value the ideas of woman at the expense of those of man, whose bankruptcy is coming to pass fairly tumultuously today.” He placed primary responsibility on artists to protest the masculine and “to maximize the importance of everything that stands out in the feminine world view in contrast to the masculine...” The (male) artist was to build “on woman's resources,” and to “exalt” and adopt everything distinguishing her from man.<sup>160</sup>

It was in Breton's identification of the “feminine” aspect of life with actual women that he differed from more recent thinkers, not in his valuing of yin as necessary complement to yang. The surrealist feminine was less biologically based than symbolic, in opposition to traditional,

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<sup>159</sup> André Breton, *Arcanum 17 with Apertures Grafted to the End*, trans. Zack Rogow (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1994), 65. Emphasis in original.

<sup>160</sup> Breton, *Arcanum 17*, 61.

masculine characteristics and ideals.<sup>161</sup> Breton saw male and female as polarities which the male artist would synthesize.

Thus, over time, Bretonian surrealism gradually grew more gender-balanced. In 1984, former *femme-enfant* Meret Oppenheim stated that surrealist “male-centeredness” reflected inheritance of nineteenth-century attitudes and that the surrealists nonetheless accepted creative women without prejudice:

Concerning the theme of the ‘Muse’ I want to say: the ‘Muse’ is an allegorical representation of the *spiritual* female part in the creative male, the ‘genius.’ And the ‘genius’ represents the *spiritual* male part in the creative female, the ‘Muse.’<sup>162</sup>

Romantic surrealist conceptions were not in close alignment with leftist ideals of gender equality, especially as promoted in the Communist and Czechoslovak Social Democrat press. However, Nezval and Štyrský both gravitated toward a more romantic than Communist vision of women, one which for Nezval took on a livelier, more playful aspect (which prompted caricatures of the poet as eternal wooer), and which for Štyrský became an exploration of woman as a decadent image of death, decay, and loss. Toyen herself does not seem to have fit standard surrealist personifications of the muse such as the *femme-enfant*, Melusine, or Gradiva, but her inspirational role for other surrealists suggests that she represented a non-specific, non-theorized, non-gendered form of muse.

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<sup>161</sup> Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968* (New York: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2005), 19.

<sup>162</sup> Letter from Meret Oppenheim to Thames and Hudson, 1984, quoted in Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 12 (emphasis in original). Oppenheim’s view also draws on her study of Jung, a theorist not typically cited in mainstream surrealism.

### 3.5.3 Surrealism and the Marquis de Sade

This man, who seems to have counted for nothing during the whole nineteenth century, might become the dominant figure of the twentieth. —Guillaume Apollinaire, 1909<sup>163</sup>

Surrealists in both Paris and Prague were fascinated by the Marquis de Sade. The Paris surrealists made a number of pilgrimages to his ancestral home, the Château la Coste, and Štyrský, who was exploring Sade by the early 1930s (in 1932 he published a Czech translation of *Justine* illustrated by Toyen, discussed in Chapter 4), visited the chateau and took atmospheric photographs of the ruins.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, Czech intellectuals had earlier access to Sade's important text *120 Days of Sodom*, which Bataille described as “the first expression of the full horror of liberty.”<sup>165</sup> The manuscript had been lost during Sade's lifetime and was first printed in 1904, in German. It was not published in French until 1931.<sup>166</sup> The Czech surrealists-to-be were at least somewhat familiar with the writings of the Marquis de Sade by early 1929, when the selection “O přírodě” (On Nature) from *La Nouvelle Justine* appeared in *ReD*. Toyen herself planned to illustrate Sade's *Historiettes et fablieux* in the late 1940s, a project that apparently did not come to fruition.<sup>167</sup>

The reasons for surrealist adulation of the Marquis de Sade become clearer when seen in the larger context of early twentieth-century interest in Sade. During the early twentieth century, Sade's image underwent a shift from that of an evil and depraved pervert to that of a

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<sup>163</sup>Guillaume Apollinaire, “Introduction,” in *L'Oeuvre du Marquis de Sade* (Paris: Bibliothèque des curieux, 1909), 17, translated and discussed in Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures*, 159.

<sup>164</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 116.

<sup>165</sup>Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. Alastair Hamilton (London: Calder & Boyars Ltd, 1973), 88.

<sup>166</sup>Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 34. Sexologist Iwan Bloch was responsible for the German edition of *120 Days of Sodom*.

<sup>167</sup>Jindřich Heisler to Frederick Kiesler, undated letter from 1947, in František Šmejkal, ed., *Jindřich Heisler/Z kasemat spánku* (Prague: Torst, 1999), 320.

misunderstood, martyred, even sanctified prophet of the psyche and human sexuality. While the surrealists played a major role in this transformation, they did not begin the process, which had begun in the late nineteenth century.<sup>168</sup>

Apollinaire, significantly, envisioned Sade not as the incarnation of sin, but as a modern spirit who expressed important aspects of human nature and who espoused radical political ideas and the liberation of women.<sup>169</sup> The surrealists followed Apollinaire in perceiving Sade in these terms and as a victimized visionary who affirmed the strength of the libido and was a precursor to Freud. Breton, for example, described him in the First Manifesto as “surrealist in sadism” because for the most part his excesses were written (imagined) rather than performed.<sup>170</sup> Robert Desnos wrote in 1923, “In essence, all our current aspirations were formulated by Sade. He was the first to posit the integrity of one’s sexual being as indispensable to the life both of the sense and of the intellect.”<sup>171</sup>

How did the surrealists justify this enthusiasm for a writer who visited unspeakable torments upon many of his female characters and who described gruesome rapes and murders? A partial answer lies in theorization of Sade as a moralist and social satirist. Sade did not assume sadism to be a male prerogative, nor victimization a female duty. Instead, he argued that the individual must seize control of his or her own sexuality.<sup>172</sup> On its surface, for example, Sade’s *Justine* details the degradations thrust upon one of his most blameless victims. But, as Angela

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<sup>168</sup>See Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures*, 123–69.

<sup>169</sup>Guillaume Apollinaire, “Introduction,” 17–18. See discussion in Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures*, 159.

<sup>170</sup> Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 26. Breton also stated that Sade’s oeuvre “can be considered the most authentic precursor of Freud’s work and all of modern psychopathology.” (André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humor*, trans. Mark Polizzotti [San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997], 18.) All are discussed in Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures*, 162–63.

<sup>171</sup> Quoted in Annie Le Brun, “Desire—A Surrealist ‘Invention’,” in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 305.

<sup>172</sup> Jane Gallop proposes that Sade created his cruel characters to be identified by readers as “the image of their own unspeakable, aggressive desires.” (Jane Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1988], 3.)

Carter suggests, it can also be read as the story of a woman who adheres rigidly to conventional notions of female virtue. Because Justine equates her honor with virginity and frigidity, she consistently invites her own victimization and allows her friends to be killed as a result of her spineless obedience to evil men. Apollinaire judged that

It is not by chance that the Marquis chose heroines instead of heroes. Justine is the woman of former times: subjugated, miserable, and less than human. Juliette, on the contrary, represents the new woman that he foresaw, a being of whom we still have no idea—a woman who, breaking away from humanity, will take wing and renew the universe.<sup>173</sup>

Few would want the rapacious Juliette to be a model for the modern woman, yet at least she makes her own choices and is no man's victim. Sade's monstrous "philosophers" can be either male or female but are invariably opposed to motherhood.<sup>174</sup> Though the ways they express this opposition are brutal, this represents acceptance of women as other than reproductive.

At times, Sade expressed proto-feminist sentiments: "no one sex can ever be granted a legitimate right to take exclusive possession of the other. [...] We must unquestionably recompense these women that we have so cruelly enslaved. [...] O enchanting sex! You will be free. Like men you will enjoy all the pleasures that nature has created your duty. There will be no restrictions on any of them for you. Why should the most divine half of humanity be chained up by the other? Break your chains, nature wishes it."<sup>175</sup> He was not consistent, however, and may even have written such words ironically. He pursued a double standard in marital relations and

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<sup>173</sup> "Ce n'est pas au hasard que le marquis a choisi des héroïnes et non pas des héros. Justine, c'est l'ancienne femme, asservie, misérable et moins qu'humaine; Juliette, au contraire, représente la femme nouvelle qu'il entrevoyait, un être dont on n'a pas encore idée, qui se dégage de l'humanité, qui aura des ailes et qui renouvellera l'univers." (Guillaume Apollinaire, "Introduction," 18. See discussion in Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* [London: Virago, 1979], 79.) Alternately, Justine can be seen as virtuous but refusing to learn from experience, while Juliette successfully adopts the world's worst values and becomes rich and powerful (Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 35).

<sup>174</sup> Gallop, *Thinking Through the Body*, 3.

<sup>175</sup> Sade, *La Philosophie dans le Boudoir*, in Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, *Selected Writings of de Sade*, ed. and trans. Leonard de Saint-Yves (New York: Castle Books, 1954), 108–9.

defended prostitution.<sup>176</sup> Thus, Sade's attitudes about women were not unreservedly egalitarian, but his proto-feminist remarks were there for the surrealists to use.

As Carolyn J. Dean observes, the idea of Sade as martyr "was rooted in the surrealist contention that texts were not necessarily mirrors of reality, that Sade's crimes were the stuff of fiction." Thus, as Dean suggests, "Writers in the 1930s [...] considered Sade significant less for his sadism than for having written about it."<sup>177</sup> Thus, when we look at how the surrealists saw Sade, we must recognize their vision of him and not overlay a later assessment onto their version. Both the Paris and Prague surrealists celebrated Sade as a revolutionary philosopher of human liberty. Breton regarded Sade, Fourier, and Freud to be the "three great emancipators of desire,"<sup>178</sup> and Toyen evidently shared this view. The fact that she not only illustrated *Justine* in 1932, prior to becoming a surrealist, but planned to illustrate *Historiettes et fablieux* in the late 1940s and gave paintings the titles *Château La Coste* (1946) and *At Silling Castle* (1969), when she had had ample time to consider the author's significance, shows her acceptance of the surrealist position on Sade. Both *Château La Coste* and *At Silling Castle*, incidentally, depict predatory beasts.

### 3.5.4 Fetishization and the Phallic Woman

Toyen's work during the 1930s, especially her phallic erotica, made repeated use of discrete bodily parts. How does this relate to other surrealist imagery of the time and what might it

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<sup>176</sup> He told his wife, "The mere idea that a woman could think of any other man when in my arms has always revolted me, and I have always refused to see again any woman whom I suspected of deceiving me." Marquis de Sade, *Selected Letters*, ed. Margaret Crosland, trans. W.J. Strachan (London: Peter Owen Ltd, 1965), 96. See also Jacob Stockinger, "Homosexuality and the French Enlightenment," in *Homosexualities and French Literature*, ed. George Stambolian and Elaine Marks (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 183.

<sup>177</sup> Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures*, 166.

<sup>178</sup> Breton, *Conversations*, 222.

signify for Toyen's work specifically? Interest in the surrealist body, especially in a fetishized form, has grown rapidly since the successful *L'Amour Fou* exhibition of 1985, with numerous scholars employing the concept of figurative dismemberment as a catch-all psychoanalytic rubric for surrealist visual art, not just photography.<sup>179</sup> Emerging from ideas of fragmentation and fetishization is that of the phallic woman made visible, a concept briefly sketched by Rosalind Krauss in 1985 in the *L'Amour Fou* catalog and which has since become widely accepted. Krauss theorizes that the phallic (powerful) woman of psychoanalytic theory (the mother whom the small boy imagines to have a penis, or subsequently the powerful "castration anxiety"-inducing woman), is represented in surrealist art by a female body made to look phallic. In her exploration of the Bataillean *informe* and its relationship to surrealist photography, Krauss called Bellmer's Doll phallic, "erectile," "the very figure of tumescence" and considered Brassai's untitled nude to be a "collapse of sexual difference [...] in which the female body and the male organ have each become the sign for the other."<sup>180</sup> Hal Foster then elaborated on this idea, showing that in Surrealist photography, the female nude is often fetishistically cropped and distorted to become a phallic image. Both Krauss and Foster see such photos as representations of "masculine fear and desire" regarding castration.<sup>181</sup> Foster notes that Surrealist photographers repeatedly phallicized the female body, but that ultimately this strategy could not work if the

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<sup>179</sup>McShane, "Exquisite Corpse," 154.

<sup>180</sup>Rosalind Krauss, "Corpus Delicti," in *L'Amour fou: Photography and Surrealism*, by Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingston, essay by Dawn Ades (Washington and New York: The Corcoran Gallery of Art and Abbeville Press, 1985), 86, 95. See also Paul Foss, "Eyes, Fetishism, and the Gaze," *Art + Text* 20 (February-April 1986): 41 ("women parading as the male organ") and Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000), 166.

<sup>181</sup>Freud had hypothesized that the female body (lacking a penis) causes a fear of castration in the male voyeur, which is then allayed by fetishizing the female body. Hal Foster, "L'Amour faux," *Art in America* 74, no. 1 (January 1986): 120. See also Hal Foster, "Violation and Veiling in Surrealist Photography: Woman as Fetish, as Shattered Object, as Phallus," in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, Vincent Gille, and Dawn Ades (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 203–25.

image became too obviously phallic. If we follow Lacan, the phallic image must be a veiled signifier; if it is too identifiable, it remains castratable.<sup>182</sup>

Yet if the image is so obviously phallic (as it is in certain of these photographs), the suspicion arises that something other than classic castration-fear fetishization is going on, especially in works by women. While Foster includes Lee Miller and Dora Maar in his discussion of the phallicized female image, their perhaps all-too-obvious phallicization may rather be black humor. Toyen's own 1930s pictures of disembodied penises sometimes look like straightforward signifiers for the male, sometimes like fantastical items that bring to mind the phallic objects found in Pompeii. Foster suggests, in his analysis of Lacan's statement that "the phallus can only play its role as veiled," that the phallus (the symbol, not the human organ) "can maintain its dominant position in our symbolic order only if it remains a signifier—that is, only if it remains not only veiled and hidden as a thing but inflated and elevated as a signifier." Otherwise, "it might be unveiled as a mere penis in disguise."<sup>183</sup> Toyen usually rendered the male genitalia as human, purely sexual, organs; while they signify desire, their signification is human and almost always a bit comic, not that of a mystic, all-powerful, unattainable, Lacanian "primary signifier of all desire."<sup>184</sup> The role of "signifier of all desire" in Toyen's work goes more plausibly to the image of the vaginal opening, which takes on a greater and greater role over the years, appearing as countless more and less veiled openings. These begin, perhaps, with the ambiguous but possibly vaginal form in *Desire* (1934), the curious openings on the owl-like figures in the *Voice of the Forest* series, and include all the obvious or not-so-obvious openings and vaginal forms of the next forty years. Thus, though Toyen fragmented the body, and to some

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<sup>182</sup> "Jacques Lacan and the *école freudienne*," Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., *Feminine Sexuality* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982), 82, and Foster, "L'Amour faux," 121–22.

<sup>183</sup>Foster, "Violation and Veiling," 221.

<sup>184</sup>Foster, "Violation and Veiling," 220.

extent fetishized both male and female, if the male surrealists imposed a fetishized phallus onto the female form, Toyen located the source of desire very differently than the male surrealists.

### 3.5.5 Czechs and the *Informe*

For academics to be satisfied, it would be necessary, in effect, for the universe to take on a form. The whole of philosophy has no other aim; it is a question of fitting what exists into a frock-coat, a mathematical frock-coat. To affirm on the contrary that the universe resembles nothing at all and is only *formless*, amounts to saying that the universe is something akin to a spider or a gob of spittle. — Georges Bataille, 1929<sup>185</sup>

Toyen's use of the Bataillean *informe* was also rather different than that of other surrealists, including Štyrský. Recent scholarship has emphasized the divide between Breton's more ethereal and idealistic surrealism and the "dissident" group around Georges Bataille.<sup>186</sup> While this distinction was at times important to specific members of the Paris group, the Prague surrealists preferred to explore the ideas of both groups. As Lenka Bydžovská suggests, Czech avant-gardists of the late 1920s and early 1930s had two modernist options: on the one hand, they could pursue a formalist approach directed toward optical phenomena, as promoted in some of Teige's poetist writings. On the other hand, they could follow Surrealism in emphasizing content over form. Bydžovská proposes that this combination of choices actually opened the door to a third possibility, the creation of "unclassifiable" works that partake of the Bataillean *informe* as

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<sup>185</sup> Georges Bataille, "Formless," Alastair Brotchie, ed., *Encyclopædia Acephalica, Comprising the Critical Dictionary & Related Texts edited by Georges Bataille and the Encyclopædia Da Costa edited by Robert Lebel & Isabelle Waldberg*, Atlas Arkhive: Documents of the Avant-Garde (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 52.

<sup>186</sup> On the Bataille group, see, for example: Denis Hollier, ed., *The College of Sociology (1937–39)*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, 1988); Alastair Brotchie, *Encyclopædia Acephalica*, Yve Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997); and Dawn Ades and Simon Baker, eds., *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and Documents* (London and Cambridge, MA: Hayward Gallery and MIT Press, 2006).

theorized by Krauss and Bois.<sup>187</sup> The Czechs were certainly familiar with the ideas of Bataille and his associates; references to the Bataillean periodical *Documents* appeared in both *ReD* and Nezval's *Zvěrokruh* (Zodiac), while Vít Obrtel's *Kvart* (Quarto) published translations of Bataille's "Le bas matérialisme et la gnose" and Leiris's "L'homme et son intérieur," among other essays from *Documents*. Not only was Obrtel a friend of Štyrský's, but Toyen and Štyrský were featured in the same issue of *Kvart* as Bataille and Leiris, and had had work reproduced in the first issue of the journal. Subsequently, the Prague surrealists, especially visual artists Toyen, Štyrský, and Makovský, took from both Breton and Bataille's positions. Nezval too showed an openness to such topics as death, darkness, decomposition, and dirt, all Bataillean matters that Breton preferred to avoid.<sup>188</sup> In addition, Honzl's analysis of ritual and theater relates to Bataille's interest in ritual and sacrifice.<sup>189</sup>

While Toyen's mid-1930s use of paint is often visually related to the Bataillean *informe*, it was Štyrský who was probably the closest of the Czechs to Bataille in his embrace of ideas relating to the *informe*.<sup>190</sup> Upon becoming a surrealist in 1934, he emphasized not only the subconscious, but the disintegration of the human body, and scatology.<sup>191</sup> He began working with body parts in the late 1920s, but developed this more intensely as time went on. From 1936 until his death, he worked on the series Omnipresent Eye.<sup>192</sup> Certain of Štyrský's surrealist

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<sup>187</sup> See Bydžovská, "Vidíte něco?," 477–88 and Bois and Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*.

<sup>188</sup> See *ReD* 3, no. 4 (January 1930), 107; Charles Bataille [sic], "Hrubý materialismus a gnóse," *Kvart* 1, no. 3 (1931): 173–77, trans. J. Tříška; Michel Leiris, "Člověk a jeho vnitro," *Kvart* 1, no. 3 (1931): 238–40, trans. J. Žantovský. The first year of *Kvart* could be considered a proto-surrealist venture, as it included work by Nezval, Toyen, Štyrský, Brouk, Honzl, and the French surrealists along with various Devětsil members and other Czech and international authors. See Bydžovská, "Vidíte něco?"

<sup>189</sup> See Jindřich Honzl, "Ritual and Theater," in *The Prague School: Selected Writings, 1929–1946*, ed. Peter Steiner, trans. John Burbank (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 135–73, and Georges Bataille, "La mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Vincent Van Gogh," in *Œuvres Complètes I, Premiers Écrits 1922–1940* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 258–70.

<sup>190</sup> Bydžovská, "Vidíte něco?," 483.

<sup>191</sup> Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 32–33.

<sup>192</sup> Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 37.

works, such as his scatological dream series and *Squid-Man*, are akin to Dalí's Bataillean work; Štyrský also frequently made use of bodily parts and imagery of diseased bodies, especially in his collage series *Traveling valise*. For example, in a little-known collage displayed at the 2006 Freud exhibition in Prague, a group of seated men have heads that appear to be medical text illustrations of abnormal cervixes. Many of these *Traveling valise* collages include images of people who appear to be suffering from chancres or other loathsome skin ailments, and were created from colored medical illustrations, whether of figures suffering from skin eruptions, or of internal organs. Though to some extent this was a surrealist ploy to shock the viewer with unexpected juxtapositions, it also grew from nineteenth-century fascination with illness and abnormal growths, something that is suggested by Štyrský's early reference to being helped by Karásek's decadent emphasis on sickliness.<sup>193</sup> Štyrský's emphasis on body parts quickly became so pronounced that caricaturists delighted in sketching him with bones and internal organs. Toyen, however, was usually more subtle in her imagery of bodily dissolution, though early surrealist works such as *Larva I* and *II* (1934) show an interest in gleaming polyp objects, and the paintings *Night Residue* (1934) and *Object-Phantom* (1937) depict disembodied eyeballs.

Toyen's fragmented body parts of the 1930s also relate to Bataille's ideas of heterogeneity, decay, and sacrifice. Eyes, ears, and other parts become *résidu hétérogène*.<sup>194</sup>

And, unlike the sublime union imagined in Bretonian mad love, Bataillean eroticism suffers loss

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<sup>193</sup> Štyrský to Karel Michl, 18 January 1921, in LA PNP. See Alison Mairi Syme, "Hedgewhores, Wagtails, Cockatrices, Whipsters: John Singer Sargent and His Coterie of Nature's Artful Dodgers" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge: Harvard, 2005), chapter 3, on polyps, cysts, and other abnormalities in the nineteenth-century imaginary. While obsession with syphilis was a phenomenon more notable in the nineteenth century, it continued to be a force in the popular imagination, perhaps especially for those who read such authors as Baudelaire. Even Freud apparently believed that syphilis had some effect on inheritance and could be a cause of perverse or degenerate behavior (Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. and ed. James Strachey [New York: Basic Books, 2000], 102).

<sup>194</sup> See for example Georges Bataille, "La mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Vincent Van Gogh", discussed in Pamela Natasha Leof, "Sublime Configurations: Breton, Bataille and the Surreal" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1996), 171.

of individual identity in orgasm.<sup>195</sup> Where it appears that Bataille and the Czech surrealists part company is in Bataille's belief that it is the big toe itself, its reality, that seduces, not the toe as fetish, replacement, metaphor, or metonymy. While Štyrský, at least, was attracted to the base, Czech surrealist interest in Freud and semiotics indicates that fetishization, substitution, metaphor, and metonymy were vital to the Czech approach, and that while an attraction to the reality of a base object could come into play, it would never be founded solely in the object's reality but also in its substitutive, metaphoric role.

The Czech group's interest in Bataillean ideas parallels its earlier independent stance regarding Goll's surrealism and *Le Grand Jeu*. While Czech acquaintance with *Documents* predated official alignment with the Bretonian surrealists, both Toyen and Štyrský's work of the 1930s continued to be thematically and visually preoccupied with the base, the abject, and the formless. And Breton did not object to the Bataillean qualities of the Prague surrealists' work. True, he was not intimately familiar with the full range of their visual art and writings, but, pleased to find a strong surrealist group forming far from Paris, he was not about to undermine it.

### 3.6 *NEITHER SWAN NOR MOON: WOMEN ON THE VERGE OF ATTRACTION TO SURREALISM*

The thoroughgoing, exalting, unique spirit of Breton and his friends, their whole approach to life and the world, and the tone of certainty and supreme defiance that accompanied it: all this fulfilled me, liberated me, and instilled in me a joy such as I suspect young people today can scarcely grasp...—Jacqueline Lamba, 1974<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup>Leof, "Sublime Configurations," 172.

<sup>196</sup>Jacqueline Lamba, "A Revolutionary Approach to Life and the World," in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 77.

The history of women in surrealism has been difficult to evaluate, because while women joined the surrealists in large numbers and were active in surrealist exhibitions after 1929, they were often better known as muses than for their own creative efforts. Until recently, women surrealists were discussed mainly by other surrealists; indeed, Penelope Rosemont lays the blame for popular ignorance of the women of surrealism on the shoulders of critics and scholars who have failed to write about them.<sup>197</sup>

For the most part, however, it appears that women were not strongly drawn to surrealism until the 1930s. There are several reasons for this. In part, Paris surrealism of the 1920s was something of a men's club. Women's function was often that of muse (Gala, Nadja) or assistant (Simone Kahn, first wife of André Breton). Penelope Rosemont, it is true, provides evidence that women were much more active in early surrealism than is generally credited. She shows that Simone Kahn Breton and her cousin Denise Lévy (later the wife of Pierre Naville) were both vigorous proponents of the movement, while Nancy Cunard, Valentine Penrose, Renée Gauthier, and Suzanne Muzard also participated regularly. Nonetheless, Rosemont concedes that women's role in surrealism during the 1920s was far smaller than the men's, and is poorly documented.<sup>198</sup>

McShane, meanwhile, observes that critical and art-historical emphasis on paintings and sculptures by individual artists obscures the degree of women's activity within the movement. Analysis of collaborative practices such as the exquisite corpse, and of surrealist objects (often made by women) provides a more realistic understanding of women's participation.<sup>199</sup> In her study of the exquisite corpse, McShane counts women as one-third of the total participants in the

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<sup>197</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xxx.

<sup>198</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 3–10.

<sup>199</sup>McShane, "Exquisite Corpse," 160–61.

game, with the number of works whose creators include women being much greater than that of works without female input.<sup>200</sup>

It is true, however, that during the 1920s women published less within surrealism, did not usually sign collective statements, and were typically mentioned only as anonymous wives and girlfriends who attended meetings. Nor were women artists yet a significant contingent.<sup>201</sup> Whitney Chadwick concludes that such women as Gala, Nusch Eluard, Dora Maar, and Jacqueline Lamba “were beloved for the quality of their imaginations rather than for their artistic goals.”<sup>202</sup>

What do we know of these early surrealist women of the 1920s? Rosemont describes them as intelligent and, above all, rebellious. Short-haired, short-skirted, inclined toward rouge and eye shadow, they “tended to smoke, to consume considerable quantities of alcohol, to experiment at least occasionally with hashish and perhaps cocaine and other drugs.” They were fond of movies, new dances, fast cars, and jazz. Above all, she believes, their rebellion was sexual, because sexuality was the area “most subject to societal and parental control and censure.”<sup>203</sup> These early surrealist women thus had much in common with Toyen. Yet it appears that they differed in a crucial way: these early surrealist women were deferential and did not compete with the men or attempt to take on leading roles.<sup>204</sup> While it is possible that Toyen, too, deferred to male friends in the 1920s, by the 1930s she had become an important figure within

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<sup>200</sup>McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 178.

<sup>201</sup>Rosemont lists ten women as active in surrealism during the 1920s: Simone Kahn Breton, Denise Lévy, Renée Gauthier, Nadja, Fanny Beznos, Suzanne Muzard, Valentine Penrose, Gala Eluard, “Suzanne,” and Nancy Cunard. Seven of them appeared in *La Révolution surréaliste*. Rosemont notes that almost two dozen other women also participated, but to a much lesser degree. Toyen is among the many other women mentioned as having “at least some involvement” with surrealism during the 1920s. (Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 3–13.)

<sup>202</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 50.

<sup>203</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 4.

<sup>204</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 9.

her circle. Unlike most women active in early Paris surrealism, she and her oeuvre became better known as she matured.

By the 1930s, the increasing visibility of the movement and perhaps a growing emotional maturity among the men began to attract a large contingent of women, most but not all of whom also became sexually involved with male surrealists.<sup>205</sup> These women were not mere muses, but artists and writers themselves, who generally sought out surrealism rather than being “picked up” by surrealist men. While many were extremely young (Oppenheim, Carrington, Varo), others were not. With few options open in interwar France to unconventional women—no radical feminist movement and a Left focused on labor issues, not gender—surrealism was appealing.<sup>206</sup> By Rosemont’s count, at least fifty-three women participated in surrealist activities during the 1930s. During that decade, at least nineteen women among the surrealists published texts, including ten who published books. Toyen and others illustrated books, and thirty-two women participated in international surrealist exhibitions (Toyen and five other women exhibited in five or more shows during the decade). Nor was Toyen the only founding member of a surrealist group; Rosemont notes that Eileen Agar, Sheila Legge, and Grace Pailthorpe helped found the British surrealist group and women were also involved in founding groups in other countries.<sup>207</sup>

In the 1940s, women’s prominence within surrealism became even more significant. As Robert Short observes, “No comparable movement outside specifically feminist organizations has had such a high proportion of active women participants.”<sup>208</sup> This participation was

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<sup>205</sup> For discussion of women and surrealism, see: Gloria Orenstein, “Women of Surrealism,” *Feminist Art Journal* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1973): 1, 15–21; Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*; Billeter and Pierre, *La Femme et le Surréalisme*; Caws, Kuenzli, and Raaberg, *Surrealism and Women*; Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors*; and Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*.

<sup>206</sup> Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 44. Maar, Carrington, Varo, Lamba, and Oppenheim, to name but five, had studied art prior to encountering the surrealists.

<sup>207</sup> Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 45–46.

<sup>208</sup> Short, *Dada and Surrealism*, 156.

encouraged by male surrealists. For example, in 1943 semi-surrealist Marcel Duchamp persuaded Peggy Guggenheim to hold an all-woman exhibition at her gallery, with Breton and Ernst as two of the judges. Thirty-one women were chosen, many of them surrealists. The timing of the exhibition precluded Toyen from inclusion, but Leonora Carrington, Frida Kahlo, Valentine Hugo, Jacqueline Lamba, Meret Oppenheim, Kay Sage, and Dorothea Tanning were among those shown.<sup>209</sup>

### 3.6.1 Women's Imagery

Many women associated with surrealism explored themes related to personal identity, often via development of a personal mythology and iconography. A significant number of Toyen's contemporaries among the women artists associated with surrealism practiced self-portraiture, in contrast with its rarity among the men.<sup>210</sup> Fini, Carrington, Varo, Kahlo, Hugo, and Tanning all frequently painted or included self-portraits; self-portraits also occasionally appeared in the work of Eileen Agar and Rita Kernn-Larsen. Oppenheim, Sage, and Toyen avoided overt self-portraiture. What made this a major theme for some and a nonexistent one for others?

Self-portraiture is usually an introspective practice, one in which the artist probes his or her own identity through representation of the physical surface. This has been particularly true of

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<sup>209</sup>Critical response was sexist and insulting. The issue of whether creating exhibitions and anthologies focused on women has ghettoized women artists (surrealist or otherwise) is not new. While feminist curators and art historians presumably never intended their efforts to have such a result, it is well known that many women of Toyen's generation refused to have their work included in exhibitions or books that they perceived as separatist. Rosemont lists Toyen as among those women "who never renounced their youthful commitment to surrealist egalitarianism" and who, opposing gender segregation, "expressly refused to take part in books or exhibitions that sanction it." Rosemont separates her project from those that exclude men on the grounds that her goal is to "restore balance by emphasizing what so many others have denied." This is for the most part the same goal as has motivated most other works focused on women, but Rosemont's compilation particularly strives to present surrealist women's voices in a surrealist context. (Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xxx-xxxii, 120.)

<sup>210</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 66.

self-portraiture from the Romantics on (the Czech Decadents and cubists made good use of introspective self-portraiture). For women, the identifiable face was a strong assertion of self, an emphasis on the personal nature of the subject matter. Whitney Chadwick suggests that the burden of the *femme-enfant*, always immature, always in touch with the unconscious, never far from madness, prompted women to explore internal personal reality as a means of artistic development and maturation.<sup>211</sup> The work of Carrington, Fini, Varo, and Tanning, indeed, takes the personal inward journey to a mythic realm of childhood experiences and feelings, archetypal, legendary, and shamanic references, and often hermetic symbolism. Similar work by Frida Kahlo was very explicitly linked by the artist to her biography and politics. Most male surrealist artists apparently found little need to incorporate their physical features into works meant to convey material from deep within. For some of the women, however, the face of the artist remained a personally and historically necessary self-assertion. Toyen's avoidance of it does not negate the possibility of self-referential imagery in her work, but indicates that she did not care to represent herself in an obvious way or as the kind of wild and beautiful woman found in the work of Carrington, Varo, Kahlo, Tanning, and even Hugo.

Chadwick suggests that these women, not fully sharing male surrealist ideology, confronted their own realities and employed surprisingly similar iconography. In common with these other women, for example, Toyen sometimes used hair as an image of "femininity and sexual or creative energy, and vegetation or the lack thereof as a metaphor for psychic reality,"<sup>212</sup> but her use of hair partakes more of the fetishistic and base than is the case for the others, whether in early surrealist works such as *Loner* (1937) or, particularly, in late works like *Midi/Minuit* (1966). As a central member of the Prague group, once she had decided in favor of

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<sup>211</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 74.

<sup>212</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 95.

surrealism, Toyen espoused its theories and practices perhaps even more firmly than most male surrealists. This meant her imagery partook more of surrealist ideas than did that of women who were nourished by but not fully accepting of the movement.

Toyen also differed from most of her female peers in her depiction of erotic themes. Male surrealist exploration of the erotic is one of the most striking features of both surrealist art and writing, and given the vital role that the sexual and erotic were theorized to play in the liberation of the human spirit, this is hardly surprising. Certainly, the women in and close to the movement gave the erotic an important role and were more willing to present explicit sexual imagery than were most women outside surrealism. At the same time, women's art was hardly a mirror image of the men's; women associated with surrealism never eroticized the image of the male to the degree that male surrealists did the female. For example, while Valentine Hugo created a few erotic works employing the male body, this was never a major theme for her. Likewise, Leonor Fini's depictions of sleeping or quiescent males relate more to myth than to eros as a transformative force. Toyen's phallic imagery is thus perhaps the only work by a surrealist woman that uses the body of the opposite sex to explore sexuality in a manner at all similar to the men's use of the female body.

Again, while the female nude sometimes appears in the work of surrealist women, it was not their main way of exploring their sexuality.<sup>213</sup> The female nude occasionally appears in the work of Frida Kahlo, while the female nudes that appear so frequently in Fini's work are typically more expressive of self-discovery than transformative eroticism, although Fini's imagery repays further study. But as Chadwick observes, the contrast within surrealism between persistent male exploration of the erotic and female hesitance is striking, perhaps even

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<sup>213</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 123.

suggesting that Freudian ideas were of little interest to most of the women.<sup>214</sup> Toyen's own use of the female nude was sometimes erotic, sometimes not, but it was never hesitant. Her interest in the erotic signification of the female body may relate to her proclaimed erotic interest in women; it certainly predated her interest in surrealism.

Ambivalence as to how to create a new and unconventional version of womanhood was not unique to surrealist women, but may have troubled them to an unusual degree. Motherhood and family life, for instance, were not valued in surrealist thought, yet surrealist men were more willing to marry and produce children than were the women. Most women connected with the movement either created conflicted, painful images of maternity (Tanning and Kahlo) or stated that they had no interest in biological reproduction (Agar, Fini, Oppenheim).<sup>215</sup> Like some of her female peers, Toyen rejected marriage and reproduction more strenuously than did most of her male comrades; Teige did not marry but lived in a quasi-marital relationship, while Honzl and Biebl married early on, and Nezval, Ježek, and even Brouk each married eventually.

Thus, as Chadwick suggests, most women connected with surrealism, unwilling to adopt either conventional feminine roles or the roles envisioned by Breton and other male surrealists, and lacking a tradition of a specifically female erotic pictorial language, were hard pressed to participate fully in surrealist pursuit of revolutionary transformation of consciousness based in sexuality.<sup>216</sup> Toyen's preoccupation with the erotic, on the contrary, was unwavering throughout her life. Her determination to explore multiple forms of sexuality suggests that she sought to unearth a deep understanding of eroticism and desire.

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<sup>214</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 126.

<sup>215</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 129–31.

<sup>216</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 140.

### 3.6.2 True Surrealists?

Women drawn to surrealism struggled to define themselves as independent, whole human beings in ways that, while sometimes supported by their friends and lovers, were certainly alien to social norms. That they were attracted to Surrealism is no surprise given their highly imaginative and rebellious natures; these were not artists who could be happy as social or socialist realists. Surrealism's emphasis on revolution and the exploration of irrational states was enticing. At the same time, Breton's theorization of the *femme-enfant* as muse to the male creator had little to offer adult women artists and writers. Women associated with Surrealism had to decide whether they were simply interested in the movement's social, intellectual, and creative milieu; they had to decide to what degree they found Surrealism supportive and to what degree it was constrictive.

Several women associated with surrealism noted a double standard, although usually in retrospect. Eileen Agar deemed that “[a]mongst the European Surrealists double-standards seem to have proliferated, and the women came off worst.” She recalled that “the men were expected to be very free sexually, but when a woman like Lee Miller adopted the same attitude whilst living with Man Ray, the hypocritical upset was tremendous.”<sup>217</sup>

Dorothea Tanning stated that although she admired Breton “enormously,” he probably thought she was dependent on Ernst. “I had noted with some consternation that the place of women among the Surrealists was not different from what it was among the population in

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<sup>217</sup>Eileen Agar, *A Look at My Life* (London: Methuen, 1988), 120–21. She hypothesized that the English were more discreet and avoided confrontation over sexual matters, although elsewhere in her memoir she admitted that there was considerable tension between her husband and her long-time lover Paul Nash.

general, including the bourgeoisie.”<sup>218</sup> Jacqueline Lamba, recalling Frida Kahlo’s first Paris show, commented: “Women were still undervalued. It was very hard to be a woman painter.”<sup>219</sup>

And Remedios Varo, in 1957, said:

Yes, I attended those meetings where they talked a lot and one learned various things; sometimes I participated with works in their exhibitions; my position was one of a timid and humble listener; I was not old enough nor did I have the aplomb to face up to them, to a Paul Eluard, a Benjamin Peret, or an André Breton. I was with an open mouth within this group of brilliant and gifted people. I was together with them because I felt a certain affinity....<sup>220</sup>

Agar recalled that Lamba “was expected to behave as the great man’s muse, not to have an active creative existence of her own.”<sup>221</sup>

While in many ways, as Chadwick concludes, surrealism provided women artists a supportive environment during the 1930s, it did not necessarily give them shared artistic goals, which resulted in some not feeling themselves to be true surrealists.<sup>222</sup> Toyen stands out as one of the only women to join surrealism during the 1930s who gave her undivided support to the movement. In part, this was the result of her slow and considered acceptance of surrealist goals, and in part it was the result of her existing equal status among the founding Prague members. Toyen was never peripheral to Prague surrealism. With her comrades, she internalized surrealist ideas and goals, and though Prague surrealism was not identical to Paris surrealism, the two groups aligned closely enough that when she moved to Paris in 1947, she was able to build on the ties she had previously built with Breton, Eluard, and Péret.

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<sup>218</sup>Alain Jouffroy, “Interview with Dorothea Tanning,” in *Dorothea Tanning*, ed. Sund Nordgren, et al. (Malmö: Malmö Konsthall, 1993), 61.

<sup>219</sup>Hayden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 250.

<sup>220</sup>Quoted in Janet Kaplan, “Remedios Varo: Voyages and Visions,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 1, no. 2 (Autumn-Winter 1980–81): 17.

<sup>221</sup>Agar, *A Look at My Life*, 120–21.

<sup>222</sup>Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists*, 95.

#### 4.0 SEX IN THE CZECH CONTEXT

If sexologists and psychoanalysts, feminists and inverters, all sought earnestly to define or redefine sex and gender on a theoretical and human rights basis, how did their ideas intersect with and come to mingle with Czech culture, whether mass culture or the avant-gardism of first the decadents and then the surrealists? How, then, is Toyen's work situated in this context?

The body was, in early interwar Czechoslovakia, much as in Germany, a locus of both anxiety and optimism. As elsewhere in Europe and North America, fears were rampant that industrialization and modern life were bringing about a decline in vitality, and neurasthenia and hypochondria were the "psychoses" of the day.<sup>1</sup> Such ideas went back to late-nineteenth-century fears of degeneration, which blamed industrialization for physical and mental unhealthiness, immorality, and loss of ethical feeling. Devětsil members, with their interest in popular entertainment and their desire to improve the world, tended to be assertive about the importance of exercise. They and the Czech public at large valued health and sport as desirable aspects of modernity.<sup>2</sup> Health and exercise were a constant for *Eva*, and the men's magazine *Gentleman*

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<sup>1</sup>R. Husák, "Muž bez boje," *Gentleman* 3, no. 1 (February 1926): 8.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, E. Markalous, "Sport," *Pásmo* 2, no. 2 (November 1925): 35–36; E. Markalous, "Sport," *Pásmo* 2, no. 3 (December 1925): 49–50.

also published on health, especially in its column “Žijeme zdravě?” (Are We Living Healthily?).<sup>3</sup>

Interest in sexuality was an important part of this overall desire for health, vigor, and sanity. Free love, under various names, continued to be a major topic during the early twentieth century as theorists and progressives sought to define a non-economically based model for sexual partnership. Yet, as Atina Grossman observes, “An open and unsentimental approach to sexual activity and discourse was a crucial marker of modern identity” during the interwar period, but the relationship of this openness to pleasure, desire, and more complicated understandings of gender and sexuality remains “very much open to question.”<sup>4</sup> As we will see, parallel to the development of sexology and psychoanalysis was a rapidly growing popular interest in sex education and sex reform. This health-focused interest in sex had, as its naughty shadow, the exploration of sexuality via the erotic and the pornographic, an exploration which Toyen and other Czech avant-gardists pursued with zeal.

#### 4.1 SEXOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

I had examined the various conceptions of sexuality as expounded by Forel, Moll, Bloch, Freud, and Jung. It was striking just how differently these scientists regarded sexuality. With the exception of Freud, they all believed that sexuality seized man at the age of puberty... No one was able to say where it had been before this time. —Wilhelm Reich<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding women’s sports, see such periodicals as *Eva*, *Moderní dívka*, *Ženský svět*, *Ženské noviny*, and *Žena a její reforma*. On health as a modernist preoccupation, see Christopher Wilk, “The Healthy Body Culture,” in *Modernism: Designing a New World 1914–1939*, ed. Christopher Wilk (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 249–95.

<sup>4</sup> Atina Grossman, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform 1920–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), x.

<sup>5</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm: Sex-Economic Problems of Biological Energy*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 27.

Toyen's and other Surrealists' ideas of sex, gender, and the role of women did not, of course, grow only from a kind of neo-Romantic literary rebellion and an inchoate desire to revolutionize society. Many of the roots of surrealist thinking came from Freud, but Freud was only the most obvious source when it came to psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and sexology. These closely intertwined specialties provided a rich lode of ideas, some elements of which were of particular interest to the French surrealists, but most of which were more familiar to the Czechs due to German and Austrian prominence in these fields. What, then, were the ideas about sex and gender that pervaded educated Czech society during the early twentieth century and contributed to Czech development of surrealist ideas and especially to Toyen's artistic choices?

Western society began to formulate its present concepts of gender and sexual identity in the nineteenth century. Not only did sexual modernism react against Victorian prohibitions, but it individualized and psychologized sexuality, while sexual identity became central to modern sexuality."<sup>6</sup> Foucault has theorized that the beginnings of scientific interest in sex coincided with bourgeois attempts to hide, obscure, and silence it; this social construction of sex as hidden, however, paradoxically resulted in discourse on it, particularly in a confessionally descriptive form.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, within the discourse sex began to be disconnected from reproduction, so that even those who wrote about the inseparability of sex and reproduction wrote separately about prostitution and other non-reproductive sex.<sup>8</sup>

Gender as well as sexuality was an important topic by the turn of the century. Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903), which focused on gender difference, was enormously

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<sup>6</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> See Michel Foucault, *An Introduction*, vol. 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

<sup>8</sup>David Seelow, *Radical Modernism and Sexuality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 17.

successful and was taken very seriously in the early twentieth century, although it is now usually dismissed as a misogynist tract.<sup>9</sup> Weininger posited that mind and body were interconnected in a manner that made it impossible to emancipate women, whom he saw as utterly sexualized. Weininger argued, however, that each person possessed a specific ratio of maleness and femaleness and could only be satisfactorily joined to a person possessing the precise opposite ratio (creating a perfect whole); he also stressed that male lust degraded and enslaved women. Though Weininger's ideas were challenged as early as 1904 by the young feminist author and sex reformer Grete Meisel-Hess,<sup>10</sup> they were still seriously discussed in the 1930s.<sup>11</sup>

Both *fin-de-siècle* sexology and psychoanalysis were used by various social reform groups in the early twentieth century. Psychiatry of the period held diverse, contradictory views relating to gender and sexuality, and was subject to national variation—French psychiatry concerned itself with sexuality largely because of French concern about decreasing fertility, male and female gender roles, the family, and so on; while the work of German, Austrian, and British psychiatrists and sexologists was more closely connected to liberalization of homosexuality laws.<sup>12</sup> Vienna, imperial capital to the Bohemian lands until 1918 (thus until Toyen was sixteen years old), was an important site of sex research and theory.

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<sup>9</sup>See Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character*, reprint, 1906 (New York: AMS Press, 1975).

<sup>10</sup> Meisel-Hess rejected Weininger's theory that individuals were attracted to persons of complementary proportions (3/4 male, 1/4 female seeks 3/4 female, 1/4 male), which she saw as a restatement of "opposites attract." (Ellinor Melander, "Toward the Sexual and Economic Emancipation of Women: The Philosophy of Grete Meisel-Hess," *History of European Ideas* 14, no. 5: 697)

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Jetřich Lipanský, "Otto Weininger," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 5 (May 1933): 65–8. This author (a cousin of Karásek), while making some attempt to place Weininger in his historical context, largely took his ideas as fact. Weininger also arose in the context of discussion of homosexual versus heterosexual desire in Karel Egon Gundhart, "Hranice kriminalistiky v životě stejnopohlavních," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 7–8 (July-August 1933): 98, trans. V.V. [Vladimír Vávra]. Weininger is also casually quoted in Alfred Fuchs, "Trochu učený feuilleton o gentlemanovi, taktu, vkusu a chicu," *Gentleman* 2, no. 11 (1925), 275.

<sup>12</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 57–58.

Though fears of degeneration were strong in much *fin-de-siècle* sexology, it received less emphasis in the early twentieth century. Sexologist Iwan Bloch, for example, believed that regeneration and “progress towards perfection” neutralized the effects of degeneration and poor heredity.<sup>13</sup> In accordance with new, sex-reformist ideas, Bloch opposed coercive, economically based marriage, and favored free love (which, like most of its proponents, he asserted bore no relation to extra-marital sex).<sup>14</sup> Like many other sexologists, Bloch asserted that when homosexuality was “a congenital state, or one spontaneously appearing in very early childhood” unprovoked by circumstance, it could be considered “natural,” “healthy,” and inalterable. Bloch considered most female homosexuality, however, to be pseudo-homosexuality, which was to say circumstantial rather than innate.<sup>15</sup> Bloch worried that the women’s movement would promote “the diffusion of pseudo-homosexuality.” And, in common with most theorists of the period, he stressed the importance of sex differentiation between male and female, stating “Sexual differentiation stands and falls with civilization. The former is the indispensable preliminary of the latter.”<sup>16</sup>

Emphasis on sex differentiation was countered, however, by researchers who focused on what could be considered intermediate situations such as hermaphroditism and homosexuality. In this realm, the major younger sexologist was the German researcher Magnus Hirschfeld. Homosexual himself, it was natural that he should direct most of his research toward a better

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<sup>13</sup>Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time In Its Relations to Modern Civilization*, trans. M. Eden Paul (New York: Allied Book Company, 1928), x.

<sup>14</sup>Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, 236–39.

<sup>15</sup>Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, 489–90, 525–28. (Emphasis in original.) The concept of pseudohomosexuality may also relate to fears of the so-called false homosexual, whose homosexual practices were for money rather than from preference. Male prostitute blackmailers were sometimes cast in this role (See David James Prickett, “Body Crisis, Identity Crisis: Homosexuality and Aesthetics in Wilhelmine- and Weimar Germany” [Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2003], 214).

<sup>16</sup>While Bloch regarded congenital homosexuality as contrary to the advancement of civilization (degeneracy), he did not consider it much of a threat as homosexuals (supposedly) did not reproduce. Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, 59, 529, 534, 539.

understanding of what would now be termed the varieties of queerness. Hirschfeld accepted Krafft-Ebing's theorization of homosexuality as congenital, and argued that people should not be persecuted for a biological condition beyond their control. Hirschfeld focused attention on "sex reform" (including "abortion, contraception, venereal diseases, marriage counseling, divorce laws, and the rights of unwed mothers and their children" as well as specifically working toward the overturn of the anti-homosexual Paragraph 175 of Germany's criminal code. Hirschfeld worked with lay sex reform groups and with the Communist party to deal with the full spectrum of sex-related issues. His programs were supported by Communist officials, socialist doctors, and many feminists.<sup>17</sup> In 1921, his institute hosted the World League for Sex Reform, an organization that subsequently met in several different countries including, in 1932, Czechoslovakia.<sup>18</sup>

Hirschfeld, whose ideas were widely disseminated, was well known to educated Czechoslovaks, especially but not solely in the homosexual community.<sup>19</sup> In 1934, the leftist writer S. K. Neumann asked to order Hirschfeld's *Weltreise eines Sexualforschers*, saying "It would be the first major work of this distinguished sexologist in Czech."<sup>20</sup>

At a more popular level, the Dutch gynecologist Theodor H. Van de Velde, whose work was rapidly translated into Czech, insisted that man and woman were "of equal worth [...]"

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<sup>17</sup>Glenn Barkley Ramsey, "Erotic Friendship, Gender Inversion, and Human Rights in the German Movement for Homosexual Reform, 1897–1933" (Ph.D. diss., Binghamton: State University of New York, 2004), 237; Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 16.

<sup>18</sup>Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 16.

<sup>19</sup>Magnus Hirschfeld, "Problém homosexuality a bisexuality," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 3 and 4 (March and April 1933): 51, trans. Vladimír Vávra.

<sup>20</sup>"Bylo by to první větší dílo tohoto znamenitého sexuologa v češtině." (Neumann to Fr. Borový, 7 August 1934, typed copy in Štoll fond, AV ČR.) Neumann, who referred to the book as *Cesta kolem světa*, may have considered translating it into Czech, but no Czech translation appears to have been done. The Swiss edition he requested was published in 1933.

although their respective value is of a different kind.”<sup>21</sup> While in many respects extremely progressive about female sexuality, Van de Velde thought that “generally speaking, the woman must be aroused from her passive attitude (apparent frigidity) to active participation in the sexual act by the man’s skillful wooing...”<sup>22</sup> Strong European interest in books such as Van de Velde’s, while reflecting a healthy interest in mutually satisfying sexuality, can also be interpreted as a part of the postwar desire to raise birth rates by sweetening marriage.<sup>23</sup>

Czech interest in sexology led to the establishment of an institute of sexology by Charles University in 1921.<sup>24</sup> As we will see, this complemented strong popular interest in sex education and sex-reformism, although the homophile magazine *Nový hlas* would complain in 1934 that Czechoslovak sexologists were few and lacked interest in questions relating to homosexuality.<sup>25</sup>

During the 1890s, sexologists moved away from insistence on the primacy of the reproductive instinct and increasingly emphasized desire, detaching sexuality from reproduction.<sup>26</sup> Psychiatric sexology, epitomized by Krafft-Ebing, led relatively straightforwardly to the development of Freudian psychoanalysis, as Freud was himself a psychiatrist and worked with Krafft-Ebing.<sup>27</sup> While Krafft-Ebing believed strongly in degeneration theory and organic causes for psychological problems, his clinical method emphasized the detailed case study.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Th. H. Van de Velde, *Sex Hostility in Marriage*, trans. Hamilton Marr (New York: Covici, Friede, 1931), 9.

<sup>22</sup>Van de Velde, *Sex Hostility in Marriage*, 37.

<sup>23</sup>Richard McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity: Film, Literature, and ‘New Objectivity’* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 121.

<sup>24</sup>Timothy McCajor Hall, “Social Change, Mental Health, and the Evolution of Gay Male Identities: A Clinical Ethnography of Post-Communist Prague” (Ph.D. diss., San Diego: University of California at San Diego, 2003), 98. Actual historiography of sexuality and gender relations has developed rather slowly in the Czech lands, however.

<sup>25</sup>Jiří Vítek, “Naše lékařská věda a homosexualita,” *Nový hlas* 3, no. 3 (March 1934): 38–39.

<sup>26</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 69–70.

<sup>27</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 88–89.

<sup>28</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 116–17.

### 4.1.1 Freud

Would you open the door to Freud?

Toyen: Yes, to make him psychoanalyze me.<sup>29</sup>

Freud, of course, was the psychoanalytic thinker most discussed by the surrealists. As we have seen, the Paris group became increasingly familiar with his work as this was gradually translated into French, although Max Ernst, as a German deeply steeped in Freud, doubtless gave previews of untranslated work. The Paris surrealists regarded Freud as a resource from whom they could selectively develop their own ideas, as Freud's emphasis on adjusting the neurotic to society was in opposition to the surrealist desire for societal change.<sup>30</sup>

Freud was, however, a much less exotic figure to the Czech surrealists, all of whom understood at least rudimentary German, and for whom Vienna was nearby and the former imperial capital. Freud's basic theories are widely known, but their reception in the Czech lands is less so. Freud began to be translated into Czech during the First Republic. Contemporary periodicals show, however, that Czech intellectuals were reading Freud well before the Czech translations appeared. In 1920, for example, *Kmen* ran a piece by Josef Váňa discussing Freud and Rank in relation to Oedipus and the incest motif.<sup>31</sup> An article by Aurel Kolnai on psychoanalysis and sociology appeared in *Červen* in 1921, arguing that the uses of psychoanalysis were not purely psychiatric.<sup>32</sup> Discussions of Freudian approaches to literature

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<sup>29</sup> "Surrealist Inquiry: Would You Open the Door?" *Médium: Communication surréaliste* (1953), translated by Franklin Rosemont, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 251.

<sup>30</sup> André Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, trans. Mary Ann Caws and Geoffrey T. Harris (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 152.

<sup>31</sup> Josef Váňa, "K psychologii mythu," *Kmen* 4, no. 33 (28 October 1920): 388–92.

<sup>32</sup> See Aurel Kolnai, "Psychoanalýza a sociologie," *Červen* 4, no. 6 (12 May 1921): 89–90. Such uses, to be sure, were not universally accepted. A review Lalo's *Kráska a láska* by J.W. (Jiří Weil?) was skeptical of the application

were underway by 1925.<sup>33</sup> German as well as Czech-language publications by Freud were noted in the Czech press, at times with detailed discussion.<sup>34</sup> When Bohuslav Brouk's *Psychoanalýsa* appeared in 1932, a review in *Levá fronta* stated (incorrectly) that only two short psychoanalytic works had appeared in Czech, one by Freud and one by Adler, so Brouk's work was expected to have a wide audience.<sup>35</sup> Around the same time, Czech doctors, students, and followers of Freud brought out a volume in honor of his 75th birthday.<sup>36</sup>

By 1933, disputes were occurring over the use of psychoanalytic or other psychological approaches in analyzing literature and how one might employ Freud, Jung, or Adler.<sup>37</sup> There was

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of Freudian theories to aesthetics and art, although he seemed to think the book was good (J.W., "Literatura: Charles Lalo: 'Krása a láska'," *Avantgarda* 2 [1926]: 67).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example: Otakar Fischer, "Psychoanalýsa a literatura," *Tvorba* 1, no. 4 (1 December 1925): 75–79 (with a postscript noting that Fischer had read the study "La psychanalyse et la critique littéraire" in *Revue de littérature comparée*, which discussed French and English Freudian approaches to literature); Jar. Snopek, "Několik poznámek k psychoanalytickému chápání literatury," *Nová svoboda* 4, no. 22 (2 June 1927): 347–49; Pavel Fraenkl, "Dostojevskij a psychoanalýsa," *Čin* 1, no. 23 (3 April 1930): 545–50; and René Wellek, "Rádlovy dějiny filosofie," *Listy pro umění a kritiku* 2 (1934), 160–161. Václav Černý examined Proust with the premise that he was more Bergsonian than Freudian (Václav Černý, "Několik bergsonských aspektů díla Proustova," *Host* 7 (1927–1928), 74–77).

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, bh., "Poznámky. Novinky z psychoanalýsy," *Čin* 1, no. 30 (22 May 1930): 719–20, Břetislav Hůla, "Psychoanalýsa v obraně a útoku," *Čin* 1, no. 33 (12 June 1930): 781–84, and Břetislav Hůla, "Stísněnost v kultuře," *Čin* 1, no. 35 (26 June 1930): 826–31. A general discussion of Freud and to a lesser extent Adler appears in E. A. Saudek, "Psychoanalýsa a individuální psychologie," *Nová svoboda* 3, no. 22, 23 (3 and 10 June 1926): 308–10, 320–21.

<sup>35</sup> Dr. J., "Knihy: Bohuslav Brouk: Psychoanalýsa," *Levá fronta* 2, no. 9 (May 1932): 279. Čin was more reserved about the book, referring to Brouk's provocative tone, misogyny, and desire to join psychoanalysis to marxist revolution. (Ktk, "Psychoanalýsa," *Čin* 4, no. 35 [27 April 1933]: 830–31.)

<sup>36</sup> Dr. J., "Knihy: Sborník psychoanalytických prací," *Levá fronta* 2, no. 9 (May 1932): 279. *Index* noted both Brouk's book and the festschrift in the same article (Ferdinand Kratina, "Z české literatury o Freudovi," *Index* 4, no. 9–10 [1932]: 88–90).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, B.H., "Ano a ne: Psychoanalýsa v pojetí dvou kritiků," *Listy pro umění a kritiku* 1, no. 14 (12 October 1933): 447–8, and B.H., "Ano a ne: Fr. Götz se odhalil úplně," *Listy pro umění a kritiku* 1, no. 15 (26 October 1933): 479. Charles Baudouin's book on psychoanalysis and art, and Freud's work on Leonardo, are discussed in Květa Milcová, "Umění a psychoanalýsa," *Čin* 5, no. 5 (10 August 1933): 112–15. Freud's work on Leonardo was also mentioned in *Národní listy* by J.R. Marek and was published by Orbis in translation by J. Kratochvíl, and further discussed in *Nový hlas* ("Poznámky a informace," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 6 (June 1933), 95–6.). Psychoanalysis is also the subject of Václav Černý, "Psychoanalýsa nepolepšitelná a kající se," *Čin* 4, no. 39 (25 May 1933): 917–20, and Václav Černý, "Psychoanalytické extempore," *Kvart*, no. 4 (Spring 1935): 36–46. Černý refers to Freud, Bedouin/Baudouin, Adler, Rank, Stekel, Jones, Ferenczi, and Bonaparte in his exploration of psychoanalysis as a tool for art and literature. A psychoanalytic reading of a character's devotion to virginity in Marie Majerová's first novel is given in Bohuslav Koutník, "K novému vydání Panenství," *Čin* 4, no. 40 (1 June 1933), 938–942 (elsewhere Majerová is described as lesbian, suggesting the character could be, but as Majerová was the editor of *Čin*, evidently the psychoanalytic reading did not annoy her). Černý at some point concluded, however,

also discussion of psychoanalytic approaches to “the problem of inversion.”<sup>38</sup> Freudian questionnaires appeared in popular magazines as the key to happiness, and even fashion was considered fair game for psychoanalysis, as was, of course, fear of marriage.<sup>39</sup> Freudian theories regarding sublimation and inversion could be referred to without much explanation, beyond that the borders between normal and abnormal were not clear.<sup>40</sup> For example, a 1935 discussion of Nezval’s surrealist work could parenthetically relate the poet to Freud without having to explain psychoanalysis.<sup>41</sup> By 1936, an article in *Tvorba* observed, “We can say that without Professor Freud, the structure of our art and literature today would be altogether different.”<sup>42</sup> However, not everyone took the conjunction of psychoanalysis and marxism as being desirable, despite repeated attempts by surrealist Bohuslav Brouk to bring them together.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.1.2 Rank

In *The Trauma of Birth*, that great and remarkable canvas, which Štyrský painted when he had, practically by a miracle, saved himself from the brutal danger of physical death, I see the first decisive signal of his definitive break with allusion. At the same time, I see his first decisive and solemn entrance into the world of objective super-reality.

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that psychoanalysis was not a valid approach to creative work. (Václav Černý, *Paměti I: 1921–1938* [Brno: Atlantis, 1992], 254.) F. Kratina provided a detailed discussion of psychoanalytic approaches to the arts, ethnography, and aesthetics, referring to Freud, Rank, and others (Ferdinand Kratina, “Psychoanalýza a umění,” *Index* 5, no. 9, 11 [18 September and 10 November 1933]: 88–90, 111–12).

<sup>38</sup> Discussion in *Nový hlas* referred to Hans Blüher’s “Die Rolle der Erotik in der männlicher Gesellschaft,” but focused on issues of childhood and youth, sublimation, and the importance of both body and spirit in eros, more than on actual psychoanalytic practice (Albin Linderer, “Eros vychovatel,” *Nový hlas* 2, no. 6 [June 1933]: 87–8, trans. V. V. [Vladimír Vávra]). Earlier, Adler’s ideas regarding homosexuality were discussed in Saudek, “Psychoanalýza a individuální psychologie,” 320–21.

<sup>39</sup> “Psychoanalytický dotazník, čili klíč ke štěstí,” *Světovzor* 36, no. 21 (21 May 1936): 352–53; Simonne Ratel, “Psychoanalýza módy,” *Světovzor* 34, no. 3 (18 January 1934): 13; Gef., “Strach z manželství,” *Gentleman* 4, no. 5 (1927): 95.

<sup>40</sup> Gundhart, “Hranice Kriminalistiky,” 98.

<sup>41</sup> Bedřich Václavěk, “Surrealistova zpověď,” *Magazin DP* 3, no. 2 (June 1935): 38.

<sup>42</sup> “Můžeme říci, že bez prof. Freuda by byla struktura našeho umění a naší literatury docela jiná než dnes.” (Andor Leon, “U prof. Freuda, otce moderní psychoanalýzy,” *Tvorba* 11, no. 19 [8 May 1936]: 301, trans. J. S.)

<sup>43</sup> Ludvík Svoboda, “K problému psychoanalýzy,” *Index* 6, no. 8 (29 September 1934): 90–91.

Set against a panel that heightens the illustrative quality of this painting, objects play out an irrational drama, placed as if the psychic automatism of their creator bound them together. They are expressed with an absolute plastic objectivity, released from the recollections of their author and from reality, from which they are eliminated, becoming symbols in both the Hegelian and Freudian sense. Spiritually they denote the absolute materialization of unconscious forces, which are compelled by the automatic process; in terms of painting, they denote a supremely objective use of the laws of optics and space, and of light and colour, which bring into full light the achievements of so-called absolute painting. — Vítězslav Nezval, 1938<sup>44</sup>

Toyen and Štyrský appear to have had rather different responses to the work of Otto Rank, another important psychoanalytic theorist for the Prague group.<sup>45</sup> Rank's *Das Trauma der Geburt* (1924) hypothesized the experience of birth as a primary trauma, prior to the Oedipal stage. Nezval included a selection from this work in his proto-surrealist journal *Zvěrokruh*, and Štyrský named a major painting after it in 1936.

Rank had found that patients in analysis often repeated the process of life in the womb and, at the end of analysis, re-experienced their own births. In Rank's words, the analysis was “*a belated accomplishment of the incompleted mastery of the birth trauma.*”<sup>46</sup> Rank distinguished this process from so-called typical primal fantasies and considered this kind of manifestation the result of a repetition compulsion. As patients of both sexes identified the analyst with the mother,

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<sup>44</sup> “V ‘Traumatu zrození’, v tom velikém podivuhodném plátně, které maluje Štyrský, když se byl takřka zázrakem zachránil z brutálního nebezpečí fyzické smrti, vidím první jeho rozhodující signál definitivní rozluky s náznakem a současně první jeho rozhodující slavnostní vstup do světa objektivní nadreality.

“Na pozadí tabule, jež zvyšuje manifestační ráz tohoto obrazu, seřaděny tak, jak je spolu spoutal psychický automatismus jejich tvůrce, vyjádřeny s absolutní plastickou věcností, sehrávají objekty iracionální drama, odpoutané od vzpomínek svého autora i od reality, z níž jsou eliminovány, stavše se symboly stejně tak v hegelovském, jako ve freudovském slova smyslu. Duchovně znamenají naprostou materialisaci nevědomých sil, které si je vynutily automatickým procesem, malířsky znamenají svrchovaně objektivní využití opticko-prostorových a světelně barevných zákonů, které uvedly do plného světla vymoženosti tak zvaného absolutního malířství.” (Vítězslav Nezval, *Štyrský a Toyen*, afterword by Karel Teige [Prague: F. Borový, 1938], 16.)

<sup>45</sup> Rank does not appear to have been translated into Czech prior to World War II, nor Jung, but they were certainly read, judging by references in the Czech press.

<sup>46</sup>Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 5. Emphasis in original.

Rank believed that the real transference-libido to be resolved was prenatal.<sup>47</sup> The analyst's task was to end the patient's mother-fixation and enable the patient's libido to transfer to an opposite-sex parent image.<sup>48</sup> Rank hypothesized that the trauma of birth was long-lasting for many people, and he concluded that "every pleasure has as its final aim the re-establishment of the intrauterine primal pleasure."<sup>49</sup> This meant that the sex act corresponded, to some degree, to a return to the womb, a concept that some of the other psychoanalytic authors, notably Reich, disputed.

Štyrský's intense interest in Freud and Rank tells us that their work spoke to something deep within his psyche. Šmejkal astutely connects Štyrský's dreams of enclosed places with the womb. While for a less psychoanalytically oriented artist this might be an unwarrantable stretch, in Štyrský's case it is reasonable to propose that he recognized the relationship between the enclosed space of his dreams and his prenatal life in the womb, the paradise that he always sought to regain. Šmejkal suggests that this desire to return to the womb was a manifestation of the death instinct, and that here we find the fundamental Eros-Thanatos polarity that operates in Štyrský's oeuvre.<sup>50</sup> There is no question that Štyrský consciously worked out themes of sex, death, and the womb in his art from the late 1920s until his death.

Toyen's work, however, does not connect so neatly with Rank's theories. In contrast to Štyrský, her scenes from the 1930s almost obsessively avoid enclosed spaces, stressing flat ground and sometimes an extremely low horizon. Indoor spaces suddenly return to her work postwar with works such as *Safes* (1946). This stress on open spaces could indicate an almost claustrophobic avoidance of womb-imagery, and could represent a very different response than

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<sup>47</sup>Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, 6.

<sup>48</sup>Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, 9.

<sup>49</sup>Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, 11–17. Emphasis in original.

<sup>50</sup> See František Šmejkal, "Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos", in particular page 167.

Štyrský's to Rank's theory. The desolation of many of these open spaces may express a sense of postnatal abandonment and loss, exposure rather than secure enclosure, especially as these works followed the richly filled, often watery spaces of her Artificialist landscapes. Certainly, Toyen's avoidance of indoor and enclosed spaces during the 1930s contrasts with her postwar fascination with interiors, windows, doors, and profuse patterning (leaves, vines, chessboards).

### 4.1.3 Reich

1. [Sexual repression] is a powerful prop of the church, which, with the assistance of sexual anxiety and guilt feelings, is deeply anchored in the exploited masses.
2. It is a prop of the institutions of family and marriage, which require a stunting of sexuality for their existence.
3. It requires children to obey their parents, and prepares for the later obedience of the adults to the authority of the state and capital by producing fear of authority in all individuals in society.
4. It lames the critical intellectual powers of the oppressed masses. Sexual repression consumes a great deal of psychic energy that otherwise would be utilized in intellectual activity.
5. It damages the psychic ability of an immense number of people. It creates inhibition and cripples the power to rebel in materially oppressed individuals.

In sum, this represents nothing less than the ideological mooring of the dominant economic system in the psychic structure of the members of the oppressed class; in this manner political reaction is served. —Wilhelm Reich<sup>51</sup>

Another psychoanalytic author whose work relates to the Prague group was Wilhelm Reich. A student of Freud's, Reich emphasized character structure rather than neurotic symptoms, and centered much of his work on sexuality. In 1922, Reich followed Freud in positing a minimum of four forms of sexuality—procreation, perversions, infantile sexuality, and neurotic symptoms,

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<sup>51</sup>Wilhelm Reich, "The Imposition of Sexual Morality," in *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929–1934*, ed. Lee Baxandall, trans. Anna Bostock, Tom DuBose, and Lee Baxandall (New York: Random House, 1972), 245–46. I use this translation, from the 1935 second edition, because it is the more marxist version that would have been available to the surrealists. The postwar third edition is somewhat different in both language and anecdotes.

but stressed that for most modern people, the procreative had been replaced by a goal of sexual pleasure.<sup>52</sup> Reich soon began to develop the idea that sexuality and orgasm are not solely located in the genitals; he proposed: “The libido of the entire body flows outward through the genitals. The orgasm may not be considered completely successful if it is experienced only in the genitals...”<sup>53</sup>

In contrast to Freud, Reich continued to stress the mind-body sexual connection. During the 1920s, Reich’s theories grew increasingly distinct from those of Freud as he rejected the death drive and focused ever more on the need to liberate the libido from repression and neurosis. In 1927, Reich wrote that sexual disturbance was always the primary cause of neurotic conflict, that no neurosis or psychosis existed without genital sexual disturbance, and that therefore this disturbance must be rooted out in order to treat the neurosis.<sup>54</sup> In writings such as *The Function of the Orgasm* (1927), he argued that psychic health depends on the individual’s ability to experience orgasm, and that six thousand years of patriarchal authoritarian culture have led to an armoring against the individual’s inner nature and against external social misery. Such armoring, then,

is the basis of isolation, indigence, craving for authority, fear of responsibility, mystic longing, sexual misery, and neurotically impotent rebelliousness, as well as pathological tolerance. [...]This alienation is not of a biological but of a socio-economic origin. It is not found [...] prior to the development of patriarchy.

Reich’s desire to liberate humankind from this walled-off state, to regain “the natural ability to love” and achieve “genuine democracy and freedom founded on consciousness and

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<sup>52</sup> See Wilhelm Reich, “Drive and Libido Concepts from Forel to Jung,” in *Early Writings*, trans. Philip Schmitz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 86–124.

<sup>53</sup> Wilhelm Reich, “The Therapeutic Significance of Genital Libido,” in *Early Writings*, trans. Philip Schmitz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 216–17.

<sup>54</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *Genitality in the Theory and Therapy of Neurosis*, vol. 2 of *Early Writings*, ed. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael, trans. Philip Schmitz (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980), 38–39. This volume is the English translation of the 1927 version of *The Function of the Orgasm*.

responsibility” was close kin to surrealist goals.<sup>55</sup> Reich concluded, “Satisfied genital object love is thus the most powerful opponent of the destructive drive, of pregenital masochism, of yearning for the womb, and of the punitive super-ego.”<sup>56</sup>

Reich posited that all neuroses were curable through genuine, loving, sexual satisfaction (in men, mere ejaculation was insufficient). Upon breaking with Freud in 1929, Reich founded the Socialist Society for Sexual Advice and Sexual Research, which operated several sex counseling clinics in Vienna. He and his colleagues taught that abstinence, prohibition of masturbation, and compulsion to marry were a means for parents and the state to create a submissive populace.

Although Reich’s early German-language texts were accessible to Czech readers during the 1920s, his work became more widely known in the 1930s. Reich’s *Über Marxismus und Psychoanalyse (Marxismus a Freudismus)* appeared in Czech in 1933 and was surely have been of interest to the nascent Prague surrealists, given Bohuslav Brouk’s stress on combining the two.<sup>57</sup> Reich’s marxist work applied the theory of alienation to the sexual realm, supporting Marx’s analysis of human alienation, which emphasized that people are prisoners both of their conditions and of themselves as formed by those conditions.<sup>58</sup> Reich firmly rejected the patriarchal Judaeo-Christian tradition for its suppression of genital sexual impulses and what he saw as its consequent “sado-masochistic” acting out of the blocked libido.<sup>59</sup> In all of this, he was aligned with Prague surrealist ideas.

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<sup>55</sup>Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, 6–8.

<sup>56</sup>Reich, *Genitality in the Theory and Therapy of Neurosis*, 216.

<sup>57</sup> A relatively detailed review of *Marxismus a freudismus* appears in Jiří Pilař, “Literatura: Marxismus a freudismus,” *Tvorba* 9, no. 1 (17 May 1934): 15.

<sup>58</sup>Bertell Ollman, “Introduction,” in *Sex-Pol: Essays 1929–1934*, ed. Lee Baxandall, by Wilhelm Reich, trans. Anna Bostock, et al. (New York: Random House, 1972), xiv-xv.

<sup>59</sup>Reich, *Genitality in the Theory and Therapy of Neurosis*, 178–79.

Reich's thinking was also compatible with Breton's growing emphasis on the need to return to a "feminine" worldview, as he theorized that sexual suppression and gender inequity were rooted in an ancient transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, in which the emergence of property rights occurred through the degradation of women via marriage. This change from the hypothetical sex-affirming matriarchy to sex-negating and -controlling patriarchy made women into commodities and resulted in universal sexual dysfunction and ultimately a longing for an authoritarian state.<sup>60</sup> Thus, Reich posited that under capitalism, the sexually starved seek material goods in place of genital satisfaction.<sup>61</sup> In *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933), Reich expanded his social analysis, stating:

*The interlacing of the socio-economic structure with the sexual structure of society and the structural reproduction of society takes place in the first four or five years and in the authoritarian family. [...] Thus, the authoritarian state gains an enormous interest in the authoritarian family. It becomes the factory in which the state's structure and ideology are molded.*<sup>62</sup>

He stressed that "Everything that is genuinely revolutionary, every genuine art and science, stems from man's natural biologic core."<sup>63</sup> Again, this was very close to surrealist thought, although couched in biological language.

The main point upon which Reich took a stance in opposition to Prague surrealist thought was in his rejection of Rank's theory of the birth trauma. Reich asserted, in regard to the idea of

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<sup>60</sup> Following Engels on primitive Communistic society and Malinowski on the Trobrianders, who were hypothesized to be in the throes of transition, Reich posited that in the matriarchal Trobriand society, children were not bound to a nuclear family and therefore had no reason to develop the classic Freudian anxieties and complexes, while under fully developed patriarchies, women were denied sexual pleasure and thus lost all but their economic motivation for marriage. Among transitional Trobrianders, the wife's family was obliged to provide vegetables to the husband's family, which linked the male with wealth and the female with expense. (Robert S. Corrington, *Wilhelm Reich: Psychoanalyst and Radical Naturalist* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003], 99–103)

<sup>61</sup> Reich, "The Imposition of Sexual Morality," 230.

<sup>62</sup> Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1970), 30. Emphasis in original.

<sup>63</sup> Preface to the Third Edition (1942), Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, xiii.

the sex act as an attempt to regain the uterine pleasure-state, that “it was fundamentally incorrect to try to give the experience in the sexual act a psychological interpretation, to seek a psychic meaning in it as one would seek a psychic meaning in a neurotic symptom.” Instead, “every psychic idea during the sexual act can only hinder one’s immersion in the excitation.” Reich hypothesized the sex act as a biological experience whose psychic benefits were impeded by the existence of fantasies and other (conscious or subconscious) distractions.<sup>64</sup> In this, Reich could not have endeared himself to the fetishistic, fantasy-prone Štyrský, but in other respects his early work pursued directions highly compatible with surrealist interest in the liberation of desire and breakdown of repressive social structures.

## 4.2 CZECH GENDER IDENTITY

When the modern woman [...] strives fanatically toward equality with the man and uses the means of fashion to demonstrate her masculinization by suppressing the female and imitating the male secondary sexual characteristics, the sexual instinct is bound to be irritated and enter the dangerous field of perversion. —Curt Moreck, 1925<sup>65</sup>

Popular Czech ideas about men and women or maleness and femaleness were not, to be sure, revolutionized by scholarly theories, despite the relative success of the early Czech feminist movement in obtaining educational opportunities and greater legal equality. Though Czechs

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<sup>64</sup>Reich, *The Function of the Orgasm*, 131–32.

<sup>65</sup> “Wenn das moderne Weib aus dem Impuls einer inneren Zwanglosigkeit heraus fanatisch nach einer Gleichberechtigung mit dem Manne strebt und sich der Hilfsmittel der Mode bedient, um seine Vermännlichung auch äußerlich zu bekunden, indem es durch Unterdrückung der sekundären Geschlechtsinstinkt und gerät in das gefährvolle Gebiet der perversion.” (Curt Moreck, *Das Weibliche Schönheits-Ideal im Wandel der Zeiten* [Munich: Franz Hanfstaengl, 1925], 282, translated in Sabine Hake, “In the Mirror of Fashion,” in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997], 195.

generally have long recognized women's intellectual abilities as equal to men's, sociologist Ladislav Holý describes present-day Czechs as taking biological gender as a given, with child-bearing as an experience that signifies the difference in experience between men and women. He hypothesizes that most Czechs assume that because of this biological difference, men and women must think differently and have different approaches to life, which are largely envisioned in familiar stereotypes (assertive versus submissive, rational versus intuitive, innovative versus traditional, egotistical versus empathetic, sexual initiator versus sexual object).<sup>66</sup> Though these ideas of gender roles as largely biological are at odds with present-day hypotheses of socially constructed gender, they remained standard in Western culture during most of the twentieth century even among many staunch feminists. Certainly, they were common among interwar Czechs. How, then, did ideas of gender and sex roles play out in interwar Czechoslovakia, and how were concepts of normal and deviant sexuality articulated outside the medical field? Both women and sexual minorities invested considerable effort in defining themselves, their place in society, and their goals during the interwar period, building upon the foundations prepared by the activists of the *fin de siècle*.

#### 4.2.1 The New Woman

By the early 1920s, Toyen had bobbed her hair, gone to art school, taken to speaking in the masculine gender, and painted an orgy scene. She often wore mannish clothes and assured her

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<sup>66</sup>Ladislav Holý, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 175. My impression is that Holý is correct; however, Czech women present themselves confidently and assertively in public, and clearly regard themselves as equal to men. It is their idea of how that equality plays out which is different from American and British feminist thought. For a discussion of recent Czech attitudes, see Rebecca J. Nash, "Exhaustion from Explanation: Reading Czech Gender Studies in the 1990s," *The European Journal of Women's Studies* 9, no. 3 (2002): 291–309.

male friends that, like them, she was attracted to women. While Toyen was unusual, she was very much an accepted member of the Prague avant-garde, and her choices and self-fashioning can be seen within the context of the New Woman.

The European New Woman has mainly been a subject of inquiry in her French and German manifestations. In Germany, for example, gender concepts associated with the “American Woman” and “American Girl” were sometimes perceived as a feminizing threat by those who regarded their *Kultur* as “manly” and print-based.<sup>67</sup> In France, similarly, the *garçonne* was widely regarded as a threat to the nation. The New Woman’s Czechoslovak incarnation, however, has not yet been the subject of scholarly investigation. Czechoslovakia was neither a defeated nor a devastated land, but a brand-new country that had not suffered extreme losses during the war and whose identity was forming.<sup>68</sup> Though the country was multi-ethnic, Czechs formed its dominant cultural group and to a large extent saw Czech culture as contrasting with German culture. While the Czechs do share many aspects of their culture with the Germans, their much-vaunted differences were often genuine ones.<sup>69</sup> We have seen that Czech feminists achieved higher education, broader employment opportunities, and the vote without the bitter opposition often seen elsewhere. Certain aspects of New Womanhood were therefore neatly in

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<sup>67</sup> Abstract, Manuela Andrea Thurner, “Girlkulture and Kulturfeminismus: Gender and Americanism in Weimar Germany, 1918–1933” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1999), unpaginated.

<sup>68</sup> As Petr Král notes, there existed “un ‘optimisme historique’ difficile à imaginer, en 1918, chez les jeune Allemands, Belges ou Français.” (Petr Král, “Un romantisme du possible,” in *Le surréalisme en Tchécoslovaquie. Choix de Textes 1934–1968* [Paris: Gallimard, 1983], 15.) One of the only scholars to discuss the Czech New Woman describes her as “[e]ducated, independent and confident, [...] as much the product of American and European feminist traditions as of new scientific hygiene and eugenic discourses [...] this New Woman was also determinedly and manifestly Czech...” (Teresa J. Balkenende, “Protecting the National Inheritance: Nation-State Formation and the Transformation of Birth Culture in the Czech Lands, 1880–1938” [Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 2004], 135.)

<sup>69</sup> Discussion of Czech and Czechoslovak identity and its formation/expression is extensive. Some English-language sources include Huebner, “The Multinational ‘Nation-State’”; Holy, *The Little Czech and the Great Czech Nation*; David-Fox, “The 1890s Generation”; Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*; Andrea Orzoff, “Battle for the Castle: The Friday Men and the Czechoslovak Republic, 1918–1938” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford: Stanford University, 2000); Jeremy King, *Budweisers Into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); and a host of very recent dissertations.

place by the early 1920s. Czechs did not usually see so-called American culture as a threat to Czech culture, and while the Girl was to some extent considered an American phenomenon, she was not seen as solely American nor was the Czech image of America created primarily through its women, as has been argued regarding the Germans.<sup>70</sup>

One source of Czech ideas about the New Woman was the French novel *La Garçonne*, by Victor Margueritte. One of the most notorious descriptions of New Womanhood, it was well known in First Republic Czechoslovakia. Originally published on 12 July 1922, the same day as the French senate denied women the right to vote, it sold over a million copies and was a *success de scandale* due to its subject of a young woman with bobbed hair who dresses as a boy, smokes cigarettes, uses drugs, and takes female lovers.<sup>71</sup> *La Garçonne* appeared in Czech translation (*Garsonka*) in 1923. Reactions varied, but it was clearly not the hot potato it had been in France. The leftist *Studentská revue* (Student Review) observed that the novel “[s]hows in full brutality the morals of French capitalist and upper-bourgeois society and their salons...”<sup>72</sup> In 1929, Margueritte could be found in the pages of *Eva* expounding on such topics as the revolution in fashion, women in economic life, modern love, and the marriage problem; in 1932, his views on the liberated, honorable woman of the future appeared in *Ženské noviny* (Women’s News).<sup>73</sup> Of course, Margueritte’s work was not unanimously well received in Czechoslovakia any more than

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<sup>70</sup>Thurner, “Girlkulture and Kulturfeminismus: Gender and Americanism in Weimar Germany, 1918–1933,” 20. Interest in American culture was indeed significant among Czechs (František Götze linked the 1920s exoticization of American culture to the exoticism of Romanticism), but should be considered alongside the related enthusiasms for French, British, and Soviet culture that are also highly visible in the publications of the time (František Götze, “Umělecké teorie ‘Devětsilu’,” *Host* 2, no. 6–7 [1923]: 218).

<sup>71</sup> “Expositions and Collections: La Garçonne,” *Koninklijke Bibliotheek--National Library of the Netherlands*, <http://www.kb.nl/bc/koopman/1919-1925/c17-en.html>, seen 25 May 2006; Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes*, 46–48; Roberts, ““This Civilization No Longer Has Sexes”: *La Garçonne* and Cultural Crisis in France After World War One,” 56.

<sup>72</sup> “Ukazuje v plné brutálnosti mravy francouzské kapitalistické a vyšší buržoasní společnosti a jejích salonů...” (aja, “Poznámky: Plkrytectví,” *Studentská Revue* 3, no. 2 [February 1924]: 48.) The somewhat later New Woman-related novels of Vicki Baum were also translated into Czech.

<sup>73</sup>Victor Margueritte, “Problém moderní ženy,” *Eva* 1, no. 9 (15 March 1929): 11; Lili, “Jaká bude žena zítřka?” *Ženské noviny: List žen sociálně demokratických* 14, no. 37 (15 September 1932): 1.

in France. Feminist Míla Grimmichová observed that some readers saw this type of modern woman as an example of bourgeois degeneracy.<sup>74</sup> Less concerned about modern womanhood, the editor of the nationalist journal *Fronta* simply described *Garsonka* as “through and through” pornography.<sup>75</sup>

Indeed, *Fronta*, which favored the older generation of feminists, was at best skeptical of the New Woman.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, *Eva*, hardly a radical feminist or libertine periodical, consistently presented strong images of short-haired, active young women. *Eva* doubtless counted among its readers many young women who aspired to some degree of New Womanhood. The New Woman as promoted by *Eva*'s staff and advertisers was up-to-date in that she was stylish and physically active, and probably held a job, but she also found small children adorable and never drank to excess.<sup>77</sup> In fact, though to today's eye *Eva* appears very traditional indeed, with its ongoing coverage of such traditional “women's magazine” topics as children, fashion, textile crafts, and domestic arts, the magazine gave strong support for basic feminist goals.

The men's magazine *Gentleman* also periodically contemplated the young urban woman. Writer Jan Wenig suggested that though the “Prague flapper” might seem to be “Made in France, England, USA,” she was really Central European.<sup>78</sup> By 1929, *Gentleman* felt obliged to ponder

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<sup>74</sup> Grimmichová herself characterized *Garsonka* as documenting aspects of the generation that had grown up during the war (Míla Grimmichová, “Boj muže proti nové ženě,” *Nová svoboda* 3, no. 49 [9 December 1926]: 629).

<sup>75</sup> Karel Horký, “Stíny kultury,” *Fronta* 6, no. 26 (7 December 1933): 411. Margueritte's pacifist views, on the other hand, received approval in *Levá fronta* (“Další dva spisovatelé proti válce,” *Levá fronta* 2, no. 9 (May 1932), 257).

<sup>76</sup> Karl Schück, “Americké děvče,” *Fronta* 2, no. 11 (6 September 1928): 170–71, trans. E. H. More complex was a description, by *Fronta*'s editor, of a café encounter with a cigarette-smoking widow (Karel Horký, “Feuilleton: Dáma ve smutku,” *Fronta* 3, no. 17 [6 February 1930]: 267–69).

<sup>77</sup> *Eva* was much more feminist and socially conscious than *Moderní dívka*, which focused heavily on preparing young women for love and marriage, but *Eva*'s emphasis on fashion earned it a critique from *Fronta*'s editor, who suggested that the National Socialist publishing house of Melantrich was using it to promote snobbery and teach Czechoslovak women how to mix cocktails (Karel Horký, “‘Eva’,” *Fronta* 4, no. 4 [25 December 1930]: 56–58).

<sup>78</sup> Jan Wenig, “Prague Flapper,” *Gentleman* 4, no. 9 (1927): 199.

two separate varieties of Czech New Woman.<sup>79</sup> The first, the international “girl,” was a slender, modishly dressed person. The second, the specifically Czech *trampka*, on the other hand, was a new type who was known for her tan, her wool stockings, and her fondness for woods, water, and hiking.<sup>80</sup> Her short hair was thought to be the only thing she had in common with the “girl,” who preferred urban amusements. As in other industrialized countries, urban areas were home to an ideal of the slim, tan, athletic, shorthaired woman who did Sokol gymnastics or studied modern dance, sunbathed, and partied.<sup>81</sup>

By the 1920s, indeed, Czech women pursued numerous physical leisure-time activities, and *Eva* devoted its eleventh issue to women’s sports and exercise.<sup>82</sup> Even the Catholic women’s press showed an interest in women’s sports.<sup>83</sup> Sport was, however, not always seen as offering the same benefits as noncompetitive exercise, and sport and physical culture were not always seen as having anything in common. Sport was sometimes regarded as focused on success and fame, whereas physical culture was regarded as offering strength, health, self-knowledge, and

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<sup>79</sup>En., “Girl a trampka: Dva nové typy dívek,” *Gentleman* 5, no. 6 (October 1928): 128–29.

<sup>80</sup>The “trampka” was a part of the larger Czech “tramp” culture of the Twenties, The “Tramp” movement of the Twenties and early Thirties, in which young Czechs lived in tents and on houseboats pretending to be cowboys and hoboos, was extremely popular (Svatava Pírková-Jakobson, “Prague and the Purple Sage,” *Harvard Slavic Studies* 3 [1957]: 272).

<sup>81</sup>Like the Germans, the Czechs have taken a great interest in sport and physical activity since at least the nineteenth century. The Czech Sokol (Falcon) movement, founded in 1862, combined gymnastics and rhythmic movement with nationalism. A women’s branch of Sokol was in place by the end of the century and was extremely popular (On Sokol, see Claire Nolte, *The Sokol in the Czech Lands to 1914: Training for the Nation* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002]). Czech interest in women’s sports appears to have been far greater than that in France. Regarding sport and its lack of acceptance among Frenchwomen of the 1920s, see McMillan, *Housewife or Harlot: The Place of Women in French Society, 1870–1940*, 170–71.

<sup>82</sup>Eva Uchalová, et al., *Czech Fashion, 1918–1939*, 14. See also Běla Fridlándrová, “10 let Českého plaveckého klubu,” *Eva* 1, no. 7 (15 February 1929), 10 and H. Slípka, “Žena a šermířský sport,” *Eva* 1, no. 9 (15 March 1929), 12. (Women’s fencing was celebrated in the feminist press as early as 1905, as can be seen in *Vesna* 1.) Golf and lacrosse, as well as cross-country, were also featured in *Eva*. Golf was apparently not yet popular among Czech women. (H.S., “Golf mezi našimi ženami?” *Eva* 2, no. 13 (1 May 1930), 18.) “Hry koženým míčem,” *Eva* 2, no.12 (15 April 1930), 24, encouraged women to take up volleyball and basketball. In the mid-1930s, see also the Plzeň periodical *Žena a její reforma*.

<sup>83</sup>See for example “Výhledy: Ženské sporty u nás,” *Orlice* (Olomouc) 2, no. 1 (January 1923), 3–4. This periodical appears to have been a sports supplement to the Catholic women teachers’ *Ženský časopis Eva*.

spiritual benefits, and as holding within itself the roots of a new sexual ethic.<sup>84</sup> The relatively conservative *Moderní dívka* initially preferred gentle movement to highly vigorous sports and recommended Sokol exercise as the best option, but within a few months was claiming that movement and physical exercise were the best protection against women's illnesses. Tennis was its ideal sport.<sup>85</sup> Exercise and physical fitness were, however, still viewed with suspicion by many.<sup>86</sup> And, not surprisingly, some viewed "today's literature, visual and dramatic art, films, [and] dancehalls" as hazardous to women in their demoralizing desire for sexual sensation.<sup>87</sup>

Thus, the Czech New Woman simultaneously represented modernity, internationalism, mass culture, and sexual freedom. As journalist Milena Jesenská felt obliged to point out, those who complained that modern women lacked any trace of femininity were the same people who complained that the modern era was bad, that modern dance was ugly, and that modern art was laughable. Rather, the hard-working modern woman was doing just fine and did not necessarily forfeit her femininity, but became a deeper person.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Sexual Minorities

Toyen's insistence that she was attracted to women does not in itself tell us how she conceptualized sexual preference. We do not know whether she considered herself lesbian,

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<sup>84</sup>Lili, "Sport nebo tělesná kultura?" *Ženské noviny: List žen sociálně demokratických* 14, no. 25 (23 June 1932): 1.

<sup>85</sup>"Moderní dívka a sport," *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 1 (October 1924): 24 and "Tělesná kultura—půvab ženství," *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 7 (April 1925): 14.

<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Fringilla, "My a naše báby," *Fronta* 1, no. 12 (11 August 1927): 186–87, which gives the example of a young woman who spends all of her time playing tennis and swimming while her children "swim in grime." The author, who also wrote for the feminist magazine *Ženský obzor*, appeared to fear that modern women would end up like the German dancer Anita Berber.

<sup>87</sup>J. M., "Z Fronty čtenářů: A ještě něco k 'My a naše báby'," *Fronta* 1, no. 15 (8 September 1927): 236.

<sup>88</sup>Milena Jesenská, "Dáma a moderní žena," in *Cesta k jednoduchosti* (Prague, 1926), 23–24.

bisexual, or simply refused to be categorized. Her sketches, however, make clear that she was interested in the topic of sexual encounters between women.

Information about the lives and concerns of “sexual minorities” in interwar Czechoslovakia is most easily found in two magazines, *Hlas sexuální menšiny* (The Voice of the Sexual Minority) and its successor *Nový hlas* (New Voice), which covered homosexual (primarily male) social life in interwar Czechoslovakia. *Hlas* began fortnightly publication in 1931 but lacked sufficient readership to continue; it was replaced in 1932 by the monthly *Nový hlas: List pro sexuální reformu*, which lasted until 1934. The editors were Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, Eda Weingart, František Čerovský, and Vladimír Vávra. The primary lesbian contributor was Lída Merlínová. In part, *Hlas* and *Nový hlas* provided news on legal and social events and developments relating to the homosexual community, and in part they emphasized acquainting readers with homoerotic literature and drama, as well as lectures relating to such work.<sup>89</sup>

While *Nový hlas* printed regular lists of “homoerotic literature”<sup>90</sup> available in Czech and other languages, its listing of French titles was perhaps the most likely to be of interest to Toyen, and included a wide variety of authors, such as Colette, Liane de Pougy, Rachilde, Renée Vivien, and various male authors writing on lesbian themes.<sup>91</sup>

Beginning in its September 1933 issue, *Nový hlas* advertised founding surrealist Bohuslav Brouk’s *Psychoanalytická sexuologie*. Contents were described as including “sexual cohabitation, platonic love, forms of sexual intercourse, homosexuality, sapphic love,

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<sup>89</sup> For example, Vl. Vávra, “Umělecká tvorba V. Kršky,” *Nový hlas* 1, no. 1 (May 1932): 13–6; the departments Kulturní hlídka, Redakční zprávy, and Spolková hlídka.

<sup>90</sup> During this period the term “homoerotic” (often used in *Nový hlas*) was often used in contradistinction to “homosexual” to refer to a more sublimated attraction without overt sexual contact. (Mark Cornwall, “Heinrich Rutha and the Unraveling of a Homosexual Scandal in 1930s Czechoslovakia,” *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* 8, no. 3 [2002]: 326)

<sup>91</sup> See, for example, “Soupis homoerotické literatury: III. Francouzská,” *Nový hlas* 3, no. 11 (November 1934): 153–54.

perversions, sodomy and more.” The following month, *Nový hlas* listed it as one of “our books,” along with Thomas Mann’s “most beautiful work” *Death in Venice*. Little mention was made of *Hlas* and *Nový hlas* in the non-homosexual press, although Hugo Hecht of *Levá fronta* greeted the advent of *Hlas* with an essay arguing that while all minorities would be free in the Communist state, the social revolution must come first.<sup>92</sup>

While *Hlas* and *Nový hlas* gave some space to lesbian and bisexual topics, these were not well covered and it may be that such women’s sexual difference was not seen as remarkably “deviant” in Czechoslovak society. Access to German-language lesbian publications such as *Ledige Frauen*, *Frauenliebe*, *Blätter für Ideale Frauenfreundschaft*, *Garçonne*, and above all *Die Freundin*<sup>93</sup> would not have been an issue for Toyen, with her publishing-industry connections and passport applications that listed Germany as a destination for professional study. Lesbian options within Czechoslovakia were less public than those in Germany, but existed. The O.S.S.P. (Osvětové a společenské sdružení Přátelství—the Enlightened and Social Association ‘Friendship’) noted in July 1932 that it would be establishing a women’s group, and by September, the group was meeting at Batex on Revoluční in Prague.<sup>94</sup> Author Lída Merlínová

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<sup>92</sup> See Hugo Hecht, “Časopisy: Hlas,” *Levá fronta* 2, no. 6 (February 1932): 180–81, Hugo Hecht, “Levá fronta o našem problému,” *Nový hlas* 1, no. 1 (May 1932): 16–7, and Pavel Skalník, “K recenzi v časopise Levá fronta (číslo 6, strana 180),” *Nový hlas* 1, no. 1 (May 1932): 17–8. Hecht reviewed *Hlas*, after which his comments appeared and were discussed in its successor *Nový hlas*. See also “Dílo Soudr. Dr. Huga Hechta a Československá Republika,” *Reflektor* 1, no. 6 (1925): 3–6. Hecht, a docent on the Prague German medical faculty, specialized in sexual problems. Hecht published *Biologické základy pohlavního života* in 1926, *Naturwissenschaftliche Grundlagen der Erziehung zu gesunden Geschlechtsleben* in 1927, *Pohlavní choroby a alkohol* in 1937, and *Stíny lásky* (originally in German) in 1937. Hecht also translated the “sensational story of a Leningrad doctor of venereal diseases”, L. Friedland’s *Za zavřenými dveřmi: Zápisky venerologa* (1928), which was advertised in *Reflektor* 4, no. 3.

<sup>93</sup> See Claudia Schoppmann, *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians During the Third Reich*, trans. Allison Brown (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 4, Katharina Vogel, “Zum Selbstverständnis Lesbischer Frauen in der Weimarer Republik,” in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850–1950*, ed. Michael Bollé (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 162–68, Petra Schlierkamp, “Die Garçonne,” in *Eldorado: Homosexuelle Frauen und Männer in Berlin 1850–1950*, ed. Michael Bollé (Berlin: Frölich & Kaufmann, 1984), 169–79.

<sup>94</sup> “Spolková hlídka,” *Nový hlas* 1, no. 4 (July 1932), 16 and “Spolkové zprávy: Ženská hlídka,” *Nový hlas* 1, no. 5 (September 1932), 15.

addressed lesbian issues from time to time in *Nový hlas*, and published at least one article on the matter of male and female crossdressing.<sup>95</sup> A Czech translation of Christa Winsloë's play *Mädchen in Uniform* (*Děvčata v uniformě*) premiered at the Švandové divadlo in Prague on 3 October 1933.<sup>96</sup>

### 4.3 HYGIENE AND SEX-REFORMISM

In our time, now that religious values find themselves on the decline, religions, to save themselves, are increasingly tending to merge with hygiene. The Salvation Army, temperance societies, the leagues against public immorality, the benevolent societies, so many organisations of a religious origin whose real aim is to create a mystique of hygiene. That's how the fast-one gets pulled: the workers' sole ambition is now to have a bathroom; those who are clean can go on believing they are the pure in heart, and the world goes on turning. — Michel Leiris, 1930<sup>97</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, scientific and medical beliefs, as well as shifts in popular culture, prompted pedagogical and parenting discussion regarding sex education, with sexologists suggesting that such education could be a significant force in improving the overall health and hygiene of modern citizens. Indeed, the growth of Central European interest in hygiene and sex education between Toyen's birth in 1902 and the German occupation in 1938 would provide an environment that nurtured and validated her personal fascination with sexuality.

Sex education for children was addressed in the German-language press during the late Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and thus was available to the Czechs. Even among Catholics, the

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<sup>95</sup> Lída Merlínová, "Omyly a nevkusy 'našich' mužů a žen," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 7–8 (July-August 1933): 111–2.

<sup>96</sup> A detailed description of the play itself is given in Vladimír Vávra, "Děvčata v uniformě," *Nový hlas* 2, no. 11 (November 1933): 163–5.

<sup>97</sup> Michel Leiris, "Hygiene," in Alastair Brotchie, *Encyclopædia Acephalica*, 53.

idea of so-called *Aufklärung* was promoted as a desirable feature in school curricula.<sup>98</sup> This discussion, which prior to World War I was mainly targeted at boys, emphasized home-based sex education that drew from natural history and was intended to occur as appropriate for the interests and maturity of the individual child. Such texts combined emphasis on the naturalness of sexual feelings with warnings of illness and disability that could follow improper sexual behavior such as visits to prostitutes.<sup>99</sup> Following the war, such education was also directed toward girls and women.

Prewar texts providing sex education for adults had often stressed stories of abnormality over information of immediate use to the average person, but following the war, popular sex education texts shifted toward discussion of heterosexual partnership, with increased information for women.<sup>100</sup> To some extent, this growing desire for and public acceptance of sex education came from belief that nineteenth-century anti-pornography and obscenity laws had repressed and damaged healthy sexuality, causing rather than preventing degeneration.<sup>101</sup> In Germany, a strong popular movement for birth control and sex education came into existence, involving lay leagues with over 150,000 members by 1932.<sup>102</sup> In fact, as Atina Grossman points out, while political groups took every opportunity to show their differences from one another, sex reform blurred political categories and “constantly intermeshed” their “themes of commerce, hygiene, pornography, marriage reform, and sexual pleasure.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Brita McEwen, “Viennese Sexual Knowledge as Science and Social Reform Movement, 1900–1934” (Ph.D. diss., Los Angeles: University of California, 2003), 77–78; Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, “Sex Education in Germany from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century,” in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*, ed. Franz X. Eder, Lesley A. Hall, and Gert Hekma (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 12–26..

<sup>99</sup> McEwen, “Viennese Sexual Knowledge,” 77–84.

<sup>100</sup> McEwen, “Viennese Sexual Knowledge,” 137.

<sup>101</sup> Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 230.

<sup>102</sup> Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 14.

<sup>103</sup> Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 28–31.

The wartime and postwar spread of VD required attention from municipal public health agencies and encouraged public discussion of sexual responsibility and hygiene.<sup>104</sup> In Czechoslovakia, returning soldiers were blamed for venereal disease problems, and in May 1921 a physician was put in charge of a campaign against venereal disease in Czechoslovakia. A Venereal Diseases Bill was passed on 11 July 1922, and a fourteen-member Permanent Advisory Council for the Campaign against Venereal Diseases and Prostitution was appointed. This law made treatment compulsory for syphilis, gonorrhoea, and chancroid, and instituted sex education for young people “in a way suitable to their age, on sexual-life matters, the danger of venereal diseases and prophylaxis, the danger of prostitution”; and also required distribution of information on such disease via the press. Persons who endangered others or intentionally spread venereal diseases were subject to fines or imprisonment.<sup>105</sup>

Certainly, advertisements by doctors who dealt with venereal problems leap to the eye in Czech mass-market interwar periodicals. *Gentleman*, for example, included ads for specialists in venereal diseases (“nemoci pohlavní” and “choroby pohlavní”) some of whom advertised that they gave blood tests and a few of whom even bluntly stated they treated syphilis. In 1928, the Communist paper *Reflektor* began an ongoing column called “Lékářský rádce” (Medical Mentor), in which readers wrote in about their illnesses. While these illnesses were not solely venereal, this column helped publicize L. Friedland’s book *Za zavřenými dveřmi—zápisky lékaře pohlavních chorob* (Behind Closed Doors: Notes of a VD Doctor), which the magazine promoted. The topic remained of interest throughout the interwar period.

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<sup>104</sup> McEwen refers specifically to the Viennese experience, but conditions in Prague were similar. McEwen, “Viennese Sexual Knowledge,” 57.

<sup>105</sup> Hynek J. Pelc, *Organisation of the Public Health Services in Czechoslovakia* (Geneva: League of Nations Health Organisation, 1925), 47–48, 54–55, 71–76.

As in Germany and the US, during the 1920s Prague theaters showed “educational” films about sex, prostitution, and disease, often accompanied by lectures. Such films, which were often more titillating than educational, sometimes provided melodramatic tales of death by syphilis and sometimes unintentionally made prostitution look glamorous.<sup>106</sup>

### 4.3.1 Interwar Czech Sex Reform in Print

By 1918, texts for adolescents on sex and parenting were available in Czech. In 1918, Zdeněk Záhoř published a text for girls ages 14 and up (Toyen was 16 at the time) and one for boys ages 15 and up. These were reprinted in subsequent years.<sup>107</sup> Discussion of children’s sexuality appeared occasionally in First Republic periodicals. In 1931, for example, the Communist paper *Tvorba* considered the question of children’s sex education at camp and observed (through the eyes of participant Marie N.) that “[i]n our capitalistic circumstances we only hear that children are brought by the stork, but that’s not true.”<sup>108</sup> *Tvorba* recommended *Přináší nás čáp?* (Does the Stork Bring Us?) by the German sex educator Max Hodann.<sup>109</sup> In late 1934, *Fronta*

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<sup>106</sup>For discussion of German-language films of this type, some of which would have been shown in Prague, see Jill Suzanne Smith, “Reading the Red Light: Literary Cultural, and Social Discourses on Prostitution in Berlin, 1880–1933” (Ph.D. diss., Bloomington: Indiana University, 2004), 171–75, and Richard Dyer, “Less and More Than Women and Men: Lesbian and Gay Cinema in Weimar Germany,” *New German Critique*, no. 51 (Autumn 1990): 5–60.

<sup>107</sup> These were *Pohlaví - láska - mateřství: Pro dívčí dorost od 14 let* (Sex—Love—Motherhood: For Girls 14 and Above) and *Pohlaví - láska - otcovství: Pro mužský dorost od 15 let* (Sex—Love—Fatherhood: For Boys 15 and Above), Prague: Kliša.

<sup>108</sup> “V našich kapitalistických poměrech slyšíme jen, že děti přináší čáp, to ale není pravda.” “Sexuální otázka v táboře u Sezimova Ústí,” *Tvorba* 6, no. 35 (3 September 1931): 558.

<sup>109</sup> This book would have been a translation of the 1928 *Bringt uns wirklich der Klapperstorch?* Hodann, the socialist director of the Berlin-Reinickendorf public health office, was a well-known and controversial sex educator who had at least two other sex-education titles translated into Czech: *Pohlaví a láska v biologickém a společenském vztahu* (1935, translation of *Geschlecht und Liebe*) and *Hoch a děvče: Rozhovory o sexuálních otázkách mládeže* (1936), discussed in “Mudr. Max Hodann: Hoch a děvče,” *Tvorba* 11, no. 21 (22 May 1936): 335. An overview of his work can be found in Sauerteig, “Sex Education in Germany from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century,” 21–22. He is also discussed in Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, passim.

commented on an article in *Národní osvobození* (National Liberation) that suggested, among other things, that it was possible that a three-year-old child might already be homosexual.<sup>110</sup>

Certainly, during the First Republic, Czech-language texts on sexuality became numerous. Some of these were translated works while others were by Czech authors.<sup>111</sup> For example, Swiss sexologist and psychiatrist Auguste Forel's *Die sexuelle Frage* (1905) appeared in Czech translation as *Pohlavní otázka* in 1923.<sup>112</sup> *Married Love* (1918), by the British feminist sex educator Marie Carmichael Stopes, was published by Ludvík Bradáč in 1923 as *Manželská láska: Nový příspěvek k vysvětlení sexuálních nesnází*. Stopes emphasized sexual happiness in marriage, stressing that "surface freedom" had not provided British women of the educated classes with "the theoretical knowledge" that would allow her to imagine the physical aspect of marriage. The Czech edition added a series of photographs of a nude woman performing exercises.<sup>113</sup>

In 1924 the Communist women's paper *Žena* (Woman) advertised the 64-page *Dějiny lásky* (History of Love), with reference to women's "original equality with men" and "the unclear future of sexual and social life of men and women."<sup>114</sup> By this time, the Communist bookstore and publisher (on Perštýn in Prague I) offered a wide selection of titles relating to

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<sup>110</sup>Karel Horký, "Anděl mezi námi," *Fronta* 7, no. 18 (20 December 1934): 224–25.

<sup>111</sup> My information on these texts comes in part from advertisements in interwar periodicals and in part from bibliographic data in the Národní knihovna online catalog. The latter does not list all of the former, and relatively few of the titles listed are admitted to be in its collection.

<sup>112</sup>Augustín Forel, *Pohlavní otázka*, trans. Viktor O. Seifert (Prague: Sfinx, 1923), 59, 62, 65, 76–84.

<sup>113</sup>Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Married Love: A New Contribution to the Solution of Sex Difficulties* (New York: Eugenics Publishing Company, Inc., 1931), 12. *Married Love* first appeared in 1918 in Britain and was reprinted six times that year. It was banned in the US for obscenity. Stopes also wrote about birth control and other feminist issues. By 1924, Prague's Communist bookstore and publisher was offering three titles by Stopes: *Manželská láska*, *Moudré rodičství*, and *Zářivé mateřství* (advertised in *Žena: Týdeník komunistických žen* 10, no. 33). The exercising nude photos were special to the Czech edition of *Married Love*, and did not appear in the British or American editions.

<sup>114</sup> Advertisement in *Žena: Týdeník komunistických žen* 10, no. 41 (9 October 1924), 8.

sexuality, hygiene, pregnancy, birth control, venereal disease, and similar topics.<sup>115</sup> At the same time, readers of the mainstream magazine *Moderní dívka* (Modern Girl) were invited to buy R. Gerling's *Zlatá kniha manželství* (Golden Book of Marriage, 1923).<sup>116</sup> Gerling, described as a "celebrated popular sexologist" in the sex-reformist *Moderní hygiena* (Modern Hygiene), was also the author of *Pohlavního styku svobodných* (Liberated Sexual Intercourse) and the oft-reprinted *Diskretní odpovědi na důvěrné otázky* (Discreet Answers to Intimate Questions, 1924, 1929, 1932).<sup>117</sup> The Dutch gynecologist Theodore Van de Velde's *Ideal Marriage (Dokonalé manželství: Studie o jeho fyziologii a technice)*, which was available in Czechoslovakia by 1930, included diagrams of the female genitalia with information on clitoral stimulation. The book quickly appeared in several editions, perhaps because it had been put on the Papal Index.<sup>118</sup> Another title was Leonid Sevli's *Kdo je vinen? Paradoxy o pohlavní touze, lásce a manželství* (Who's at Fault? Paradoxes of Sexual Desire, Love, and Marriage, 1929). In 1936, the progressive press Družstevní práce published *Knih o manželství*, a translation of Hannah Mayer Stone and Abraham Stone's *Marriage Manual, a Practical Guide-book to Sex and Marriage* (1935). Books such as *Hygiene des Ehelebens: Der Führer zu Liebes- und Eheglücks* (1929),

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<sup>115</sup> Authors included Debay, Görling, Duffey, Adamík, Stopes, Záhoř, Svoboda, Schlégr, Ribbin, Štech, Batěk, Schamberger, Bulíř, Horák, Helbich, Forel, Kettner, Rybink, and Zikel, some of these with two or three titles listed (Advertisement "Lékařské příručky pro domácnost," *Žena: Týdeník komunistických žen* 10, no. 33 (14 August 1924), 9).

<sup>116</sup> The ad for *Zlatá kniha manželství*, which dealt with various sexual and marital questions, appeared on the back cover of *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 1 (October 1924).

<sup>117</sup> Allegedly, the rich contents of *Pohlavního styků svobodných* dealt with such matters as why sex was considered unclean; elderly virgins and unmarried mothers; the necessity of moral laws; free love; whether women were more sexually motivated than men; the sexual life of children; masturbation as self-violation; consequences of contact with prostitutes; and the like. It does not seem to have emphasized pleasure, but this may have been an advertising decision (Advertisement in *Moderní hygiena* 1, no. 7, 15 November 1929, 167-168). Reinhold (sometimes given as Reinhard) Gerling, 1863-1930, was a German author who wrote on a variety of topics besides sex. His works were translated into several languages, but apparently not English.

<sup>118</sup> In early 1931, *Levá fronta* ran an ad from the Průlom bookstore in Prague 12 proclaiming that the book had been placed on the Index and that one could obtain it in a good-quality edition for Kč 160 (*Levá fronta* 1, no. 17, 25 March 1931, 2); Th. H. Van de Velde, *Ideal Marriage: Its Physiology and Technique*, trans. Stella Browne (New York: Random House, 1930), 165-70, 178-80, 192. The German version, *Die Vollkommene Ehe: eine Studie über ihre Physiologie und Technik*, had become available in the late 1920s.

which offered “gory illustrations of breasts, gums, genitals, and anuses marked with sores,” provided fodder for Štyrský’s anti-marital collages.<sup>119</sup>

In 1932, the leftist cultural journal *Čin* (Action) regarded the volume *Pohlavní život* (Sexual Life) as interesting, and suggested its readers try out the book’s theories regarding women’s infertile days.<sup>120</sup> *Čin* (and perhaps other periodicals of the period that listed new books) was uncertain just how to classify books relating to sex, such as Antonín Trýb’s works on venereal disease.<sup>121</sup> Medical books really didn’t belong with theoretical science, did they? Weren’t they also practical, technological in the wider sense? Shouldn’t human natural science be treated as applied zoology like animal husbandry? There was also the issue of where to put it in bibliographic systems such as the Dewey Decimal system. *Čin* evidently felt a need to justify its placement of sex under the rubric of Technology, which suggests that readers had inquired what it was doing there.<sup>122</sup>

Numerous publishers offered these texts on sexuality; some, however, specialized in the topic. A profusion of Czech-language sex texts published by František Trefný appeared between about 1929 and 1933 (many written or compiled by himself); *Čin* noted his *Tajemství manželské lásky* (Secrets of Married Love), Gerling’s *Diskretní odpovědi na důvěrné otázky, Jak milovati* (How to Love), and *Všem, kdož milují* (To All, who Love), along with a translation of Stekel’s *Onanie*.<sup>123</sup> Trefný, a sex-reformist who also ran the Hydiko House of Modern Cosmetics, began

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<sup>119</sup> Josef Carl Schlegel, *Hygiene des Ehelebens: Der Führer zu Liebes- und Eheglücks* (Vienna: 1929), discussed in McEwen, “Viennese Sexual Knowledge,” 141.

<sup>120</sup>“Došlé knihy,” *Čin* 4, no. 10 (3 November 1932): 239.

<sup>121</sup> The versatile and prolific Trýb appears to have begun writing about venereal disease around 1919. This and dermatology were his primary areas of study, although he also published literary works. Judging by newspaper ads, most specialists in VD were dermatologists.

<sup>122</sup>Křtk, “Poznámky,” *Čin* 1, no. 10 (2 January 1930): 229.

<sup>123</sup> These appeared under the heading “Technology,” which also included books dealing with the manufacture of fruit wines, what every singer should know, and tools for woodworking (*Čin* 1, no. 8, 19 December 1929, 190). Trefný seems to have dealt only with sexual matters, whether in the form of educational or pseudo-educational

publication of the magazine *Moderní hygiena* in July 1929; his enterprises were heavily advertised in such publications as the humor magazine *Trn*. Though *Moderní hygiena* claimed to be devoted to questions of “hygiene, eugenics, sexuality, marriage, and cosmetics,” its initial explanatory page revealed sexuality to be its primary interest, as, devoting twice as much verbiage to that and underlining the whole, it stated

The sexual question takes up almost the *largest* part of our magazine, because sexuality was, is, and will be the most topical life problem and the whole world revolves around it. [...] [A]ccording to our program, we will present articles, the likes of which have never before been published in any Czech magazine.<sup>124</sup>

*Moderní hygiena* devoted articles to such topics as “Man as Adulterer”; the evils of male narcissism and the dangers it posed to marital sex; and the ability of the contraceptive jelly Patentex to kill sperm rapidly after ejaculation (Patentex could be bought for 35 Kč per tube at Hydiko or 45 Kč with the complete apparatus).<sup>125</sup>

Mainstream periodicals referred to matters of sex and gender in a fairly friendly, straightforward manner. In 1924, *Moderní dívka* teased: “Gentlemen, please, if kissing is merely a fashion, hold on to the good old fashion of your daddies and mommies, because that old

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materials (the series *Knihovna zdravotních rad*—Library of Health Advice) or the erotic (*Erotická knihovna*—Erotic Library). The series *Sexuální knihovna*, *Knihovna intimních rad*, and *Knihovna mladých mužů* (Sexual Library, Library of Intimate Advice, and The Young Men’s Library) presumably fell somewhere in between (the National Library in Prague has “lost” almost all of its copies of Trefný’s books). *Tajemství manželské lásky* was advertised in *Moderní hygiena* as not for persons under 19 and only for those who were married or planning to enter into that state.

<sup>124</sup> “Otázka sexuální (pohlavní) zaujme téměř nejtěžší část našeho časopisu poněvadž sexualita byla, jest a bude neaktuelnějším životním problémem a celý svět se kolem ní točí. [...] [B]udeme přinášeti články dle programu, které nebyly dosud v žádném českém časopise uveřejněny.” (*Moderní hygiena* 1, no. 1 (1 July 1929), 2.)

<sup>125</sup> F. Werner, “Antikoncepční prostředky,” *Moderní hygiena* 1, no. 1 (1 July 1929): 10–12; N. Nagy, “O podstatě narcismu,” *Moderní hygiena* 1, no. 1 (1 July 1929): 12–15; Frant. Scot, “Muž jako cizoložník,” *Moderní hygiena* 1, no. 1 (1 July 1929): 15–16. Patentex, intriguingly, was involved in bribery scandals and personal intrigues at Hirschfeld’s Institute in Berlin. Birth control manufacturers often sought endorsements and promotion from sex reform leagues and doctors. (Grossman, *Reforming Sex*, 18, 225 [note 19]). Trefný did not shy from endorsing specific products including Patentex in *Moderní hygiena*.

fashion would really suit you. [...] You're young and life awaits you—if it's worth maybe breaking your neck ... but don't forget to kiss.”<sup>126</sup>

Nor did *Gentleman*, which emphasized male elegance and urbanity, shy away from gender issues. A 1926 article, for example, considered the concept of the so-called hermaphroditism of beauty, and whether it was really true that “beauty is woman and woman is beauty.”<sup>127</sup> The *New Yorker*-like magazine, whose contributors included Devětsil members Adolf Hoffmeister and Artuš Černík, took care to appeal to readers attracted to either women or men by printing artistic nude photos of both sexes. On the differences between the sexes, *Gentleman* noted that the likes of Weininger, Freud, Stopes, Krafft-Ebing, Deflon, Wegener, Havelock Ellis, Bebel, Mantegazza, and many others had had their say.<sup>128</sup> *Gentleman* even discussed the existence of that exotic species, the gigolo, in Prague (deeming him morally weak).<sup>129</sup>

Not everyone was having a vigorous love life, of course. Quite a few books and articles touched on the subject of impotence. For example, in 1925, *Gentleman* printed an excerpt from Charles Féré's *L'instinct sexuel* (1899), which discussed abstinence and asserted that “[m]ost impotence is merely the fruit of sexual eccentricity and masturbation...”<sup>130</sup> A later issue addressed the problem of the man who senses he hasn't satisfied his partner, and asserted that

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<sup>126</sup> “Pánové, prosím vás, je-li líbání jen modou, držte se staré, dobré mody svých tatínků a maminek, protože tahle stará moda by vám moc slušela. [...] Jste mladí a život vás čeká—stojí-li vám to za to, že třeba zlámete vaz ... ale nezapomeňte líbat.” (“Úpadek milování,” *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 2 [November 1924]: 15)

<sup>127</sup> Ch. Lala, “Hermafroditismus krásy,” *Gentleman* 3, no. 1 (February 1926): 2–4, trans. Fr. H. Jelínek.

<sup>128</sup> Q. Palička, “Citlivost necitelných,” *Gentleman* 5, no. 1, 2 (March and April 1928): 14.

<sup>129</sup> je, “Pražský gigolo,” *Gentleman* 2, no. 10 (1925): 253.

<sup>130</sup> Charles Féré, “O pohlavní zdržlivosti a jejím vlivu na impotenci (Z díla: *L'instinct sexuel*),” *Gentleman* 2, no. 3 (1925): 77. Féré was also the author of *Dégénérescence et criminalité* (1888). The excerpt published in *Gentleman* represented the thinking of an earlier generation. Its parent work was deemed, in 1903, “the most important French study on sexual perversion” and emphasized the need for homosexuals, theorized as innately degenerate, to abstain from all sexual activity (E. Gley, *Etudes de psychologie physiologique et pathologique*, Paris 1903, 88, quoted in Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 146–47). Štyrský owned a copy of the Czech translation of *L'Instinct sexuel*, which appeared under the title *Pohlavní pud*. (Kamill Resler fond, LA PNP.)

premature ejaculation had replaced impotence as the neurotic symptom *du jour* for young men.<sup>131</sup> Beauplan's *Bujaré mužství: Pojednání o impotenci, pohlavní neurasthenii, předráždění, duševní skleslosti, odporu, chladnosti a nedostatečném vzrušení v ohledu pohlavním* (Lively Manhood: A Treatise on Impotence, Sexual Neurasthenia, Overexcitement, Mental Dejection, Aversion, Frigidity, and Inadequate Sexual Arousal) appeared in Czech in 1927 and was much advertised in *Moderní hygiena*.<sup>132</sup>

Were sex-educational books widely purchased? Presumably; as we can see, publishers produced numerous titles, sometimes in multiple printings, and advertised them in a remarkable variety of periodicals. The abundance of material on sex and sex education during the First Republic shows that Toyen's emphasis on the erotic, while not typical for female artists, was part of a strong interwar Czech interest in and investigation of sexuality.

Toyen and other Czech avant-gardists, then, grew up and worked in an environment where new ideas of sexuality and gender were both theorized and an important part of the cultural discourse, not just among intellectuals and artists like themselves, but also among the larger urban population.

#### 4.3.2 Female Sexuality

The struggle for the freeing of sex is the struggle for free love, and is closely related to the quest for new forms of world and social order. Socialism rightly

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<sup>131</sup>Antonín Trýb, "Pohlavní hoře z rozumu (z knihy 'Choroby sexuální a venerické)," *Gentleman* 2, no. 10 (1925): 252.

<sup>132</sup>This pamphlet was also noted in *Čin* 1, no. 40 (31 July 1930), 966. According to the National Library catalog, versions from both 1927 and 1930, with slightly different titles, were published by the tireless František Trefný. The library has lost its copy of the 1930 edition and apparently did not acquire the one from 1927.

pointed out the impossibility of bourgeois marriage. —Jaromír Novák [Jan Klepetář], 1927<sup>133</sup>

Czech attitudes about sex as well as women's rights had shifted during the fin-de-siècle and Toyen's early childhood. The late-nineteenth-century Progressive movement had split in two directions on sex, one nicknamed the "moral party" for its support of celibacy outside of marriage and the other the "immoral party" for its support of free union (free love) and contraception.<sup>134</sup> Future president Masaryk, one of the "moral party" members, had shocked the public when he spoke out against the then-unmentionable topics of prostitution and venereal disease in the 1880s, blaming both sexes.<sup>135</sup> Masaryk's feminism, however, was the turn-of-the-century variety. He emphasized companionate marriage, but thought too much emphasis was put on sex.<sup>136</sup> Like many feminists of both sexes, he advocated monogamy and sexual purity for both men and women. Masaryk even went so far as to assert that one life-long sexual partner was best for both sexes, an idea with little appeal for most surrealists.<sup>137</sup> Even Breton, perhaps monogamy's strongest surrealist advocate, was at best a serial monogamist.

At times the Progressives went far beyond the Czech feminists in their examination of gender issues.<sup>138</sup> Though on the whole women's journalism emphasized abstinence and purity, it did not shy away from discussions of sex during the prewar period, and articles with such titles

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<sup>133</sup> "Boj pro uvolnění sexu je bojem o volnou lásku a souvisí úzce se snahami po nové organizaci světového a společenského řádu. Socialism správně ukázal nemožnost buržoasního manželství." (Jaromír Novák [Jan Klepetář], *Prostitutky, jak žijí, milují a umírají: Dokumenty lidské bolesti a bídy* [Prague: Rudolf Rehman, 1927], 72.)

<sup>134</sup> Free union, also known as free love, referred to freely chosen relationships, not necessarily marital, that were the result of love and attraction rather than dynastic or financial interests. Literature of the time repeatedly stressed that it did not refer to promiscuous sex.

<sup>135</sup> Neudorfl, "Masaryk and the Women's Question," 261.

<sup>136</sup> Masaryk wrote extensively on women's and gender-related issues between 1880 and 1920. See Neudorfl, "Masaryk and the Women's Question," 258–82.

<sup>137</sup> See T. G. Masaryk, *Mnohoženství a jednoženství*, Knihovna pohlavní výchovy (Prague: B. Kočí, 1925).

<sup>138</sup> David-Fox, "The 1890s Generation," 125, citing Alois Hajn, *Výbor prací*, 329–330, and other sources. The "moral" party's position was connected to that of Masaryk.

as “The Problem of Modern Marriage,” “A Few Words on the Sexual Question,” and “Concerning the Prostitution Question,” appeared regularly, as did discussions of free union.<sup>139</sup>

The sexuality of (or expected of) ordinary Czech women continued to be largely based in marriage, but this was changing somewhat in the interwar period. In contrast to the German situation, women’s sexuality seems to have been less contested and less a source of anxiety. Czech women appear to have felt less oppressed and Czech men seem to have felt less threatened. Free love remained important to leftists, although others confused it with promiscuity.<sup>140</sup> Thus, as Czech feminists tended to advocate “purity,” their stance did not align with that of the leftists.

Birth control was available, but it was clearly not obtainable with sufficient ease or at a low enough price.<sup>141</sup> Popular opinions were mixed on abortion, but sex reformism made headway in making birth control socially acceptable. By the mid-1930s, advertising for birth control could be found not just in sex-reform publications like *Moderní hygiena*, but in mainstream regional women’s magazines such as the Plzeň-based *Žena a její reforma* (Woman and Her Reform).

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<sup>139</sup> See, for example, V.O., “Může-li volná láska být náhradou za manželství? (Několik slov ke knize L. Gumplowicze ‘Manželství a volná láska’),” *Vesna* 1, no. 11 (1 March 1905): 171–73, Anna Navrátilová, “Několik slov o otázce sexuální,” *Ženský obzor* 5, no. 5–6 (25 May 1905): 88–89; Olga Stránská-Absolonová, “K otázce prostituce,” *Ženský svět* 10, no. 9, 11, 12, 18 (5 May and 5 June and 20 June and 20 October 1906): 118–19, 146–47, 160, 240; Fr. Zíbr, “Problem moderního manželství,” *Ženský svět* 16, no. 15, 16, 17, 18 (5 September to 20 October 1912): 205–6, 227–28, 235–37, 253–54.

<sup>140</sup> On free love, see for example Sobotík, “Láska a komunismus,” *Popelka (Žena: Týdeník komunistických žen)* 10, no. 19 (1924): 1–2. See also: Madeleine Vernetová, “Volná láska,” *Červen* 4, no. 9 (2 June 1921): 133–38, trans. J. Bláha; Alexandra Kollontajová, “Pohlavní vztahy a třídní boj,” *Červen* 4, no. 19, 20 (1 September and 15 September 1921): 264–66, 275–79. Vernet states, among other things, that without absolute freedom love becomes prostitution. Kollontai’s 1920 marxist and feminist analysis of sex and gender relations received a positive review in the leftist *Červen* (X, “Referáty: A. Kollontajová: Die Neue Moral und die Arbeiterklasse,” *Červen* 4, no. 22 [13 October 1921]: 306–7).

<sup>141</sup> Some feminists felt the Czechs lagged behind their Viennese comrades in this area. Fresh, light rubber condoms were recommended (J. W., “Jak se chrániti před nežádoucím těhotenstvím?” *Ženské noviny: List žen sociálně demokratických* 14, no. 14 [7 April 1932]: 2).

There remained, of course, illicit sex, which had little place in sex-educational or sex-reformist ideals. Prostitutes, as women defined by sex rather than by reproduction, have long held a certain fascination for the rest of society.<sup>142</sup> With Czech feminists emphasizing purity for both sexes, their attitudes on prostitution were similar to those of the moderate German feminists, who tended to believe that prostitutes were deprived.<sup>143</sup> To a woman of Toyen's interests, however, prostitutes took on a different role. While it is likely that, like most socialists and Communists, she conceptualized prostitution as an exploitive relationship typical of bourgeois capitalism, her drawings suggest that the sexual aspect was of far more interest to her than the socio-economic aspect. Very likely, like many male avant-gardists, she romanticized the profession, as, apart from the harem, prostitution remained the most readily available direction for fantasies of untrammelled female sexuality.

While the figure of the Prague prostitute does not appear so ceaselessly in accounts and images of the city's life as her Berlin counterpart, she did have a similar role in the imagination, as is evident in Nezval's celebrations of the brothel (tinged, admittedly, with nostalgia), Toyen's *Pillow*, and literature and film of the period. Furthermore, it appears that in the 1920s, as in Berlin and, somewhat earlier, Paris, the Prague bourgeoisie began to experience an increasing degree of contact with both real and fictional prostitutes as a result of the popularity of revues and related forms of entertainment.<sup>144</sup> During the 1920s, "professional prostitutes" congregated in such central locations as na Příkopě, the Prašná brána, and in the passages of the Koruna and

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<sup>142</sup> On Czech prostitution through the early First Republic, see Milena Lenderová, *Chytila patrola, aneb prostituce za Rakouska i Republiky* (Prague: Karolinum, 2002).

<sup>143</sup> Even progressive German feminists regarded prostitutes as helpless, voiceless, victims. (Jill Suzanne Smith, "Reading the Red Light," 90–91)

<sup>144</sup> Jill Suzanne Smith, "Reading the Red Light," 30.

Rokoko; in essence, wherever people went to office jobs, prostitutes were thick on the streets.<sup>145</sup> Prostitutes also frequented cafés during the afternoon, with certain establishments on Václavské náměstí functioning as central meeting points. Bars were also popular, with some functioning to some extent as brothels.<sup>146</sup> In addition to the professional streetwalkers, “girls” in the revue theater often functioned as casual prostitutes to supplement their income. Meanwhile, efforts to control prostitution and protect youth included a legal directive that Public Administration agencies should supervise persons under eighteen and people of both sexes “leading an immoral sexual life,” and try to correct them.<sup>147</sup>

Still, while prostitution was widespread and seen as an important social issue, avant-gardists of Toyen’s generation did not have the kind of intimate, tormented relationship to it that the Decadents had had. Indeed, while most early feminists rejected sexual freedom as immoral and harmful to the family, increased availability of effective contraception gradually permitted female sexuality to be positive for ordinary women rather than an automatic cause of problems.<sup>148</sup>

### 4.3.3 Dance

Toyen’s primitivist *Three Dancers*, while a Paris product, fits easily within the Devětsil embrace of popular culture. But what did the work mean to its contemporaries?

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<sup>145</sup>Jaromír Novák [Jan Klepetář], *Prostitutky*, 12; Pavel Radkovský, “O muži a ženě: esaye málem erotická,” *Gentleman* 1, no. 5 (c. 1923): 6.

<sup>146</sup>Jaromír Novák [Jan Klepetář], *Prostitutky*, 13–17. In the 1920s the government brought out a massive study on prostitution.

<sup>147</sup>Law of July 11th, 1922, on the Control of Venereal Diseases, in Pelc, *Organisation of the Public Health Services in Czechoslovakia*, 74.

<sup>148</sup>Eva Uchalová, et al., *Czech Fashion, 1918–1939*, 14.

Three kinds of dance were of interest to urban Czechs of Toyen's generation: social dance, modern dance, and the highly choreographed dance of revue groups. In these interests, Czech women were similar to their counterparts in Germany, who have been more extensively researched.<sup>149</sup> Czech men also danced, of course, but their dancing was largely limited to social dance, so their interest in modern dance and revues was primarily as spectators.<sup>150</sup> As in Germany, during the 1920s dance was to a large extent seen as a female activity, and is of particular note because bodily liberation through dance was sometimes seen as parallel to women's political and social emancipation.<sup>151</sup>

The conflation of different types of dance occurred surprisingly often: an example of how new social dance steps were portrayed can be found in an article where Broadway star Anna Pennington, described as "a marvelous interpreter of artistry, strength, and movement in dance," is photographed wearing little clothing, in a very provocative pose, with one hand to her mostly bare bosom and the other lifting up her leg to display her polkadot garters. Below her photo appear three female dancers shown from the thigh down. Similarly, a small collage at the bottom of a story about a masked ball depicts the bare legs of a female chorus line, with the front solo

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<sup>149</sup> As Susan Laikin Funkenstein notes, female dancers were extremely common in both the Weimar Republic's mass imagery and its high art. Documentary photography, caricature, photomontages, sketches, prints, sculptures, and paintings all showed dancers. This seems to be true of Czechoslovakia during the same period (Funkenstein, "Figurations," 1). Folk dance was given little attention in interwar avant-garde publications, although Slovak folk dance was admired in Karel Plicka's film *Po horách, po dolách* (Petr Denk, "Slovenský film," *Index 2*, no. 7 [28 June 1930]: 54). After the war Nezval was photographed at the annual Stražnice folk festival, but this accords with the post-war regime's glorification of folk culture.

<sup>150</sup> Intriguingly, the pages of the 1920s men's magazine *Gentleman* appear to place more emphasis on contemporary social dance than on modern dance or revues. *Gentleman* had frequent articles on social dance and numerous ads relating to dance classes, dance establishments, and elegant clothing. Jaroslav Seifert recalled that modern dance was the only thing Teige was unsuccessful in teaching him. Apparently Teige was extremely fond of dancing and balls (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 452).

<sup>151</sup> In discussing dance, I use some of Susan Laikin Funkenstein's findings about Weimar Republic dance as a means of analyzing First Republic Czechoslovak imagery and writing on the subject. Regarding liberation of the body through dance, see Funkenstein, "Figurations," 10, and Karl Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy: Nudity and Movement in German Body Culture, 1910–1935* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 10–11.

dancer given a torso made of an ankle with high-heeled shoe.<sup>152</sup> Like German consumer periodicals of the same era, *Eva* made good use of photos of female modern dancers at practice.<sup>153</sup> Indeed, it could be said that, perhaps even more than sport, dance was marketed “as the epitome of style and modern life.”<sup>154</sup>

Modern dance was taught at several Prague schools and brought to public attention by the young dancer Milča Mayerová in cultural periodicals such as *Rozpravy Aventina*.<sup>155</sup> As in Germany, Prague modern dance took from the ideas of Dalcroze and Laban; Mayerová, for instance, was a Laban student.<sup>156</sup> Articles in popular magazines stressed that “through rhythm, synchronized movements in bodily sculpture lead to improving and attaining the highest expressions in artistic dance” and observed, “In the circles of our young world there is significant interest in this form of physical-esthetic training...”<sup>157</sup> Even the heavily political *Levá fronta* printed ads seeking female dancers for a troupe.<sup>158</sup> This becomes more understandable in the context of *Reflektor*’s articles about the need for modern dance to serve the proletariat and class struggle.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> “skvělou interpretkou umění, síly a pohybu v tanci,” “Taneční kroky,” *Eva* 1, no. 5 (15 January 1929), 5; Máša Broftová, “Marieta a maškarní ples,” *Eva* 2, no. 6 (15 January 1930), 15.

<sup>153</sup> For example, a page of photos of modern dancer Miroslava Holzbachová and her troupe appears next to an essay on the “sports ballet” of tennis-playing (*Eva* 13 (1 May 1930), 4-5).

<sup>154</sup> Funkenstein, “Figurations,” 2.

<sup>155</sup> Majerová did her best to popularize modern dance and gymnastics for women. For example her views on the subject were published in an early issue of *Eva* (“Anketa,” *Eva* 1, no. 3 [15 December 1928]: 9) and she was subsequently mentioned elsewhere in the magazine (N. Švejdová, “O Milče Mayerové,” *Eva* 1, no. 3 [15 December 1928]: 24) as well as in her own articles (Milča Majerová, “Dvanáct kostýmů za 2 hodiny aneb Nechuť k převlékání,” *Eva* 2, no. 6 (15 January 1930), 25).

<sup>156</sup> Funkenstein, “Figurations,” 15. For more on Dalcroze and Laban, see Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 15–21, 71–73.

<sup>157</sup> “Rythmem zladěné pohyby v tělesnou plastiku vedou zdokonalením a dosažením svých vrcholných projevů k uměleckému tanci” ... “V kruzích našeho mladého světa je značný zájem o tento směr tělesně-estetické výchovy...” (Ervína Kupferova, “Rythmika [v ‘Tanci a společnost’],” *Moderní dívka* 1, no. 3 [December 1924]: 4)

<sup>158</sup> *Levá fronta* 1, no. 3, 4 4 and 11 December 1930.

<sup>159</sup> See, for example, Leni Sachsová, “Máme tančit?” *Reflektor* 4, no. 14 (1928): 163 and “Rythmika,” *Reflektor* 4, no. 15 (1928): 177.

Revue featuring groups of meticulously synchronized chorus lines fascinated Prague audiences. Accounts of famous dance ensembles such as the Tiller Girls, the Hoffmann girls, the Albertina Rash girls, the Ziegfeld girls, and the Dolly Sisters appeared with some regularity in Czech publications.<sup>160</sup> Costumes were revealing and, not surprisingly, designed to please a heterosexual male audience, but women also enjoyed the performances and liked reading about the supposedly glamorous lives of the revue girls. Nonetheless, some commentators of the day wondered what drew women to these performances; for instance, Alfred Polgar wondered: “Why women go to revue theaters, I don’t know. There is no ensemble of half-naked boys to afford them the excitement that the girls afford us men. In revues the primacy of the male reveals itself still unshaken. There’s really nothing there for the ladies.” Jan Kvičala, too, thought that the revue was “above all a living panorama, actually meant ‘for men only.’” In his view, women who attended revues were “mostly just partners, lovers, or wives. And they are hardly likely to enjoy the way everything is set as a trap for men’s senses.”<sup>161</sup> These commentators, while making the attempt to see things from a woman’s perspective, clearly did not take into account the many women (such as Toyen and Höch, but also the anonymous readers of *Eva*) who evidently did enjoy watching other women in at least some of the performances.

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<sup>160</sup>C. Bergerac, “Girls, tanečnice, clowni,” *Eva* 1, no. 14 (1 June 1929): 12, trans. N.P. The Gertrude Hoffman girls are ranked first, the Tiller girls second, and the Italo Bigiarelli group third in Jan Klepetář, “Svět, který tančí,” *Gentleman* 3, no. 10 (November 1926): 231.

<sup>161</sup> “Proč chodí ženy do revuálních divadel, to nevím. Žádný ensemble polonahých boys jim neposkytuje vzrušení, jako je nám poskytují girls. V revuích ukazuje se primát muže ještě neotřesen. Pro dámy se tam neděje zcela nic.” (Alfred Polgar, “Girls,” *Gentleman* 4, no. 10 [1927]: 222, trans. G. W); “Je to především živé panorama, určené vlastně ‘jen pro muže’. Ženy, jež přicházejí podívat se na revui, jsou většinou jenom partnerky, milenky nebo ženy. A sotva se asi radují z toho, jak je to všechno nalíčeno jako past na mužovy smysly.” (Kvičala, “Girl a cowboy,” 596).

Prague revues were, to be sure, somewhat tamer than those in Berlin or Paris, although even a bad revue was better than none.<sup>162</sup> While it does not appear that they were as elaborate or as dependent on nudity as some of the foreign ventures, Toyen and other Czech avant-gardists had many opportunities to see both home-grown and foreign revues.<sup>163</sup>

On the whole, avant-gardists saw dance through an aesthetic lens. As in Weimar Germany, many Czech avant-gardists regarded revue dancers as a signifier of cosmopolitanism and modernity.<sup>164</sup> Toyen's *Three Dancers* delights in the movement and precision of revues, while also hinting at the naughtier performances of Paris strippers. How many Devětsilers, though, noticed Toyen's signature's strategic placement under the empty chair, suggesting her role as (invisible) voyeur?

#### 4.4 THE CZECH EROTIC

I noted that Freudian novels are now being translated from the Czech!—Louis Aragon<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> “Pražská revue je provinciální adaptací pařížského espritu.[...] snad i dosti špatná revue je lepší než žádná revue v zemi[...].” (Jaroslav Jan Paulík, “Shimmy a comp,” *Gentleman* 3, no. 6 [July 1926]: 137.)

<sup>163</sup> For discussion of the expressionist and nude dancing of the German performer Anita Berber, see Funkenstein, “Figurations,” 158–70, Lothar Fischer, *Anita Berber: Tanz Zwischen Rausch und Tod, 1918–1928 in Berlin* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1996), and Toepfer, *Empire of Ecstasy*, 83–96. Berber's work was also written about by Joe Jenčík, who wrote both for Prague audiences in *Rozpravy Aventina* and *Anita Berberová, Monographie* (Prague 1930), and in “Versuch einer Analyse des Tanzes der Anita Berber,” *Schriftanz* no. 1 (1931), 10, reprinted in Lothar Fischer, *Anita Berber*, 71–72, 95. Fischer notes her bisexuality and connection with Magnus Hirschfeld (p. 7). He also mentions her visits to Prague and connection to the Eldorado in Berlin (pp. 89-90). Hirschfeld was one of the few people to attend her funeral (Mel Gordon, *The Seven Addictions and Five Professions of Anita Berber: Weimar Berlin's Priestess of Depravity* [Los Angeles: Feral House, 2006], i). Jenčík wrote “Anita Berber's long, bony hand ripped the silken dress off the tarted-up old woman—a ghostly figure the dancer called Public Morality.” (Quoted in Gordon, *The Seven Addictions*, iv.)

<sup>164</sup> Funkenstein, “Figurations,” 13. There was, however, some uncertainty among Czech communists as to the suitability of jazz and revue dancing. See, for instance, “Jazz nebo harfa,” *Reflektor* 4, no. 8 (1928): 89, although responses to the piece vehemently favored jazz.

<sup>165</sup> Aragon, *Treatise on Style*, 72.

An unwitting smile, a sense of the comic, a shudder of horror—these are eroticism’s sisters. The sisters of pornography, however, are always only shame and disgust.— Jindřich Štyrský, 1933<sup>166</sup>

During the nineteenth century, pornography shifted from its earlier role, which had been more one of satirical social critique, to a primarily private, capitalist form of eroticism—a form of bourgeois titillation that surrealist writer Bohuslav Brouk would excoriate in his afterword to Štyrský’s “pornophilic” *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream* (1933). As David Seelow suggests, with pornography an underground industry and women “exiled from sexual pleasure,” the nineteenth century articulated attempts to understand sexuality in a rapidly changing world in which sexology “always plays off its pornographic mirror image.”<sup>167</sup>

Western concepts relating to the erotic and pornographic also underwent other significant shifts during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the second half of the nineteenth century, understandings of sexual desire became more psychological, especially among the bourgeoisie, where desire began to be related more to narratives dealing with inner life, emphasizing “motives, character, memories, dreams, and fantasies.”<sup>168</sup> At the same time, the notion became prevalent that pornography overstimulated the nerves and lowered resistance to temptations, functioning as a corrupting, degenerating force that could be defined to include not merely the titillating but also “immoral” content relating to birth control and pacifism.<sup>169</sup> Carolyn J. Dean suggests that during the interwar period, the term “pornography” was enlarged to mean not just “sexually exciting or morally questionable material” but “violation of the

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<sup>166</sup> From the promotional flyer for *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream*, in Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 70.

<sup>167</sup> Seelow, *Radical Modernism and Sexuality*, 19. On the nineteenth-century shift from social critique and radicalism to mere prurience, see Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800,” in *The Invention of Pornography*, ed. Lynn Hunt (New York: Zone Books, 1993), 9–45.

<sup>168</sup> Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 232.

<sup>169</sup> Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 228.

dignified human body,” including aesthetic and political violations. She argues that following the First World War, pornography was initially equated with “the destruction of the body politic.”<sup>170</sup> However, as sex-reformists and others argued that hypocritical repression of sexual information had actually contributed to moral degeneration, the idea spread that openness about sexuality and the body would renew rather than destroy society. Literary works formerly deemed pornographic, including those of the Marquis de Sade, were reassessed as a means of purifying society of perversion by expressing and expelling it.<sup>171</sup> Both repressive and anti-repressive attitudes were strongly present during the interwar period, with the French government, for example, moving toward an increasingly broad definition of pornography, although they did not automatically define erotic literature as pornographic. During this period, the educated public was coming to believe that sexually explicit literature and art (erotica) was “harmless” because of its aesthetic content, whereas pornography, by contrast, offered direct sensual excitation. Dorelies Kraakman suggests that in this modernist transformation, in which emphasis shifted from content to form, writings about sex could be considered literary and aesthetic, meaning that explicit but aesthetic depictions of sex need not be deemed pornographic, but that material which was judged pornographic was denied artistic value and relegated to “low culture.”<sup>172</sup>

This analysis, while applicable to such modernist works as the novels of D. H. Lawrence, is less suited to sexually explicit surrealist works, which were intended not as straightforward hygienic sex-reformism, but, as Dean proposes, were meant to disrupt and destroy the body politic. Surrealism, theorizes Dean, not only made frighteningly evident “the social body’s

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<sup>170</sup>Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 227.

<sup>171</sup>Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 230–34.

<sup>172</sup> Kraakman primarily discusses literature, not visual art, and takes her analysis from the eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. (Dorelies Kraakman, “Pornography in Western European Culture,” in *Sexual Cultures in Europe: Themes in Sexuality*, ed. Franz X. Eder, Lesley A. Hall, and Gert Hekma [Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999], 115–16.)

potential permeability” but also “renewed, purified, and reinvigorated” the social body through eroticism. Bataille, to be sure, objected that Breton and many other surrealists never pushed their eroticism far enough to be a real challenge to society, in part because of their tendency to gloss over Sade’s violence.<sup>173</sup> Bataille’s own erotic works, along with those of some other surrealists, particularly Masson, Bellmer, and Štyrský, do indeed subject the reader or viewer to extreme, socially unacceptable, events and scenes. Štyrský’s imagery, for example, went beyond the production of revolting—if potentially humorous—collages using internal organs and diseased bodies, and extended to Goya-esque images of bodies impaled on sharp branches.

Toyen’s work, however, only rarely participated in this kind of savage eroticism. While during the mid-1930s she did prepare some works suggesting mutilation, and a good many during that period hint at the *informe*, few of these were erotic. Almost never did she combine the erotic and the grotesquely base; a rare example is that of one of her images for Heisler’s “Only Kestrels Piss on the Ten Commandments” (1939), which depicts a blindfolded, crumbling female face from whose mouth issues a gigantic, loathsome tongue. Nearly always, Toyen’s surrealist eroticism strove less to rend the body politic with Bataille-approved extremism, than to explore, more in accordance with Breton, the mystery and the convulsive beauty of the erotic. This was a natural development from her pre-surrealist work, which while encompassing orgies, bestiality, and caged penises, nearly always had a lighthearted, playful, exploratory quality. All of her most unsettling imagery, most of it non-erotic, dates from the mid and late 1930s, when isolation, pain, and mutilation took precedence.

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<sup>173</sup>Dean, “History, Pornography and the Social Body,” 237. See also Georges Bataille, “Dossier de la polémique avec André Breton,” in *Écrits posthumes, 1922–1940*, vol. 2 of *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), 49–109.

#### 4.4.1 Fin-de-Siècle Eroticism

We ask our hand if it is not worn out with masturbation, our brain if it has not dried up with inherited or contracted syphilis...—Josef Váchal, 1922<sup>174</sup>

*Fin-de-siècle* culture and the Decadent movement in particular provided a significant precedent and source of ideas, especially for Štyrský and Nezval, but also for Toyen. During the *fin de siècle*, Paris, Vienna, and Budapest had all been major producers of pornography. The back page of Vienna's liberal *Neue Freie Presse* was filled with personal ads and a wide variety of types of paid sex.<sup>175</sup> Paris, of course, had developed a reputation for its erotica and pornography, but Prague, too, had no shortage of either sexually oriented, or potentially titillating, material during this period. Czech erotic photography had existed since the introduction of the daguerreotype, and in addition, by the latter nineteenth century, a wide variety of imported nude photos could be found downtown at the shop U města Paříže (At the City of Paris) on Celetná.<sup>176</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, books celebrating the female body were readily available, usually in German, although one appeared in Czech in 1904 as *Krása ženského těla* (Beauty of the Female Body).<sup>177</sup> Overtly erotic photography of nudes was widely produced at the end of the century,

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<sup>174</sup>Josef Váchal, *Erotikové* (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2001), 18–20 This edition includes translations into multiple languages.

<sup>175</sup>Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature*, 259–60.

<sup>176</sup> Pavel Scheufler, “Počátky fotografie aktu v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku,” in *Sex a tabu v české kultuře 19. století*, ed. Vladimír Macura and Vladimír Duchek (Prague: Academia, 1999), 208–9.

<sup>177</sup>Scheufler, “Počátky fotografie aktu v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku,” 210. Neudorflová describes *Krása ženského těla* as one of the less treacherous (“Jednou z nezáladnějších”) of the early twentieth-century collections of erotic photography. The publisher recommended it to readers for “education against immorality.” (Neudorflová, *České ženy v 19. století*, 194–95.

often in stereographs.<sup>178</sup> The situation did not change markedly after 1918, and thus nude and erotic/pornographic photos were easily accessible to Toyen and Štyrský.

In addition to titillating visual imagery, erotic literature was available, although initially not much of this was in Czech. Nezval, for instance, recalled sitting in the attic “flipping through a German edition of *Justine and Juliette*” and looking at *Rote Mühle, Zwanzig Marken Gage und eine Equipage*, and Soulié’s *Le Cadavre*; he connected the prostitute of his first sexual encounter to “all the women from the xylographic illustrations in these pulp novels.”<sup>179</sup>

As in France and Britain, the Decadents played an important role in bringing sexuality, which might otherwise have been left to the sexologists and psychoanalysts, into the public view. Czech surrealist approaches to sex drew strongly from Decadent models and ideas. Decadent interest in intermediate states, such as homosexuality and androgyny, autumn, dawn, dusk, greyness and pastel colors, Angst (based in the past but fearing the future), memory, dying, and the dream, as well as intermediate genres and forms, was shared by Czech surrealists.<sup>180</sup>

Prague’s Decadent *Moderní revue*, edited by Arnošt Procházka and Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic, was an influential cultural forum that continued publication until Procházka’s death in 1925. While the *Moderní revue*’s aestheticism and lack of any interest in the kind of political issues that occupied the surrealists were alien, its focus on the imagination, psychology, madness, and sex was akin to surrealism. The *Moderní revue* had a history of confiscation for indecency, and its 1895 issue devoted to Oscar Wilde was the first publication in Bohemia to

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<sup>178</sup> The more pornographic of these photos were of interest to the police, but apparently none now exists in public collections subsequent to the disappearance of the prewar collection from the Kriminální muzeum. (Scheufler, “Počátky fotografie aktu v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku,” 211–2)

<sup>179</sup> Vítězslav Nezval, *Sexual Nocturne*, in *Edition 69*, trans. Jed Slast, by Vítězslav Nezval and Jindřich Štyrský (Prague: Twisted Spoon, 2004), 49.

<sup>180</sup> See Pynsent, “The Decadent Nation,” 88–89.

discuss the literary treatment of homosexuality.<sup>181</sup> Co-editor Karásek's *Sodoma* (1895) was the first openly homoerotic collection of poetry in the history of Czech literature (the first edition was suppressed).<sup>182</sup> Nor was Karásek the only exponent of taboo sexuality at the magazine. Artist and writer Karel Hlaváček, whose sexual impulses were tormented and probably bisexual, designed many of the early covers, using imagery of vampiric serpent-women. Both his art and his poetry reeked of sexual anxiety. In *Exile* (1897), he depicted a demonic face conceived "as an outlaw from a sexual paradise" whose mouth took the shape of "salivating female genitalia."<sup>183</sup> Hlaváček's *Execution of the Soul* (1896-7) presents an androgynous head strangled by phallic, taloned, fingers—"the repulsive fingers metamorphosed into disgusting penises with finger nails, which I was likewise forced to stylise." Both of these works and their explicit meanings were known to the public by at least 1900, when the *Moderní revue* published the recently deceased artist's descriptions of their genesis.<sup>184</sup> All the same, despite Karásek's homoerotic verses and Hlaváček's fevered imagery, Czechs still considered French culture more openly erotic and the French Decadents more explicit than the Czech.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup>David-Fox, "Prague-Vienna, Prague-Berlin," 751.

<sup>182</sup>Rudolf Vévoda, "Sodoma: předtím a potom (Dobový kontext Karáskova vystoupení)," in *Sex a tabu v české kultuře 19. století*, ed. Vladimír Macura and Vladimír Duchek (Prague: Academia, 1999), 217. Decadent writer, editor, and collector Jiří Karásek not only co-edited the *Moderní revue* from 1894 to 1925, but also *Týn* (1920-1), *Okultní a spiritualistická revue* (1923-4), *Nový hlas* (1932), and *Český bibliofil*.

<sup>183</sup>Hlaváček wrote: "So I conceived Exile as an outlaw from a sexual paradise. Behold, a terrible thirst for the former paradisaal 'purity.' Sex changes him into a mouth with salivating female genitalia, convulsively gaping wide. Ah, Mr. Przybyszewski, I carried out the whole drawing in one breath, quite realistically drawn—but then such a terrible disgust and horror of my own work shook me—that I had to throw it away. And I stylised everything, already only on account of the crown prosecutor." (Karel Hlaváček, "Dopis Stanisław Przybyszewskému," *Moderní revue* (1900), quoted in Urban, *In Morbid Colours*, 473.)

<sup>184</sup>"I wanted to express here the terrible envy of everything real for what is psychic. Brutal reality strangles—the sexual reality of raw, hairy hands. In the same way the repulsive fingers metamorphosed into disgusting penises with finger nails, which I was likewise forced to stylise." (Karel Hlaváček, "Dopis Stanisław Przybyszewskému," *Moderní revue* (1900), quoted in Urban, *In Morbid Colours*, 477.) Some viewers perceived the head as feminine, others as masculine, apparently depending on sexual preference.

<sup>185</sup>Lodge, "The Peak of Civilization," 246.

In 1906 the first Czech erotic editions were published by Mládenecká knihovna (Bachelor's Library), an imprint of I. L. Kober. These included French short stories and proved to be the publisher's most successful line. From 1911 to 1917, the house also published a "serious" (*vážný*) line called *Erotická edice* (Erotic Edition), with titles like *Kleopatra*, *Hetéra*, and *Kupidovy hry o život i smrt* (Cupid's Games of Life and Death). In 1916 Jan Švehla published the first issue of *Erós: Časopis pro uměleckou erotiku* (Eros: Journal of Artistic Erotica), but it was suppressed by the police immediately after the first issue.<sup>186</sup>

Karel Hlaváček was by no means the only Czech visual artist of the *fin de siècle* to produce erotically motivated work. Like their foreign counterparts, the Czech Symbolists and Decadents specialized in sexual themes, especially relating to morbid eroticism and the *femme fatale*; as Otto Urban points out, Decadent themes were common to a wide range of *fin-de-siècle* artists whether or not consciously part of the movement.<sup>187</sup> The theories of psychologists and psychiatrists such as Charcot and Freud were already of interest to artists by the turn of the century, including first the Czech Decadents and then Expressionists and Cubists inspired by the 1905 Munch exhibition in Prague.<sup>188</sup>

František Kupka, for instance, created numerous images of prostitutes and *femmes fatales*. František Koblíha created several series on the theme of the *femme fatale*, including "Sex" and "Cleopatra" (both only partly extant), as well as "Woman" and "Women of My Dreams."<sup>189</sup> Such material ranged from the ethereal photographic nudes of František Drtikol to the pictorial and poetic cycle *Erotikové* (The Eroticists, 1922), a meditation on desire and

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<sup>186</sup>Dagmar Mocná, "Pokleslý secesní Erós," in *Sex a tabu v české kultuře 19. století*, ed. Vladimír Macura and Vladimír Duchek (Prague: Academia, 1999), 228–35.

<sup>187</sup>Urban, *In Morbid Colours*, 222.

<sup>188</sup>Urban, *In Morbid Colours*, 151.

<sup>189</sup>Urban, *In Morbid Colours*, 222.

disenchantment by Josef Váchal. Toyen's mid-1920s sketches of bestiality were innocent and playful compared to the grim image of a frenzied goat-fucker that accompanies the Váchal text "We ask [...] what father and what mother are the cause of our perversions?"<sup>190</sup> Váchal, for whom eroticism was closely tied to mysticism, had etched erotic playing cards in 1908 and created his first erotic bookplates around the same time. Váchal later recalled that at the beginning of 1913, two young Czech women writers visited him and "advised Deml and me to devote ourselves more to eroticism than to mysticism. (!)"<sup>191</sup>

Though these artists' more explicit work was never meant for public display, much of it was known to members of the artistic community. Váchal, for example, designed his explicit bookplates for friends of both sexes. And, as Karásek was a serious bibliophile and art collector, Štyrský and probably also Toyen would have had ample opportunity to acquaint themselves with his collections, erotic and otherwise. In later years, Karásek's personal library included a good many books designed by Štyrský and Toyen, as well as their exhibition catalogues.<sup>192</sup>

The relative freedom from harsh censorship enjoyed under Austria continued during the Czechoslovak First Republic. Indeed, the risqué cartoons that form the backbone of most issues of the interwar humor paper *Trn* (Thorn) make clear that considerable latitude was permitted in everyday published depictions of the sexes. While *Trn* also published a certain amount of political and social comment, bathroom humor and especially cartoons about sex appeared on nearly every page. Cartoons in *Trn* did not show male genitals—which were a staple of private

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<sup>190</sup>Váchal, *Erotikové*, 22–24.

<sup>191</sup>Jaroslav Anděl, "The Eroticists: The Mysticism and Eroticism of Josef Váchal," in *Erotikové*, by Josef Váchal, trans. Gerald Turner (Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2001), 62.

<sup>192</sup>Karásek's library and art collection now belong to the Památník národního písemnictví. Regarding his collecting, see Jan N. Assmann, et al., *Sen o říši krásy: Sbírka Jiřího Karáska ze Lvovic/Dream of the Empire of Beauty: The Collection of Jiří Karásek of Lvovice*, trans. Barbara Day (Prague: Obecní dům and Památník národního písemnictví, 2001).

Czech erotic imagery—but rarely showed women in a non-sexualized way, even if the woman was not represented as very attractive. The highly skilled cartoonists František Bidlo and Antonín Pelc took every opportunity to limn women with monstrous breasts and buttocks and with lifted skirts, as did many contributors of less originality and talent. Though *Trn* was occasionally censored, the deleted material was more often political than pornographic. Indeed, during the First Republic, Bidlo, Pelc, V. H. Brunner, Adolf Hoffmeister, and Emil Filla all produced exuberant erotic drawings, some of which would share space in Štyrský's *Erotická revue* along with those contributed by Toyen.

All the same, the wildly sexualized cartoon women in *Trn* did not mean that just anything went, as the 1929 censorship of *Maldoror* proved. Indeed, at the end of the 1920s, the Ministry of Justice conducted an inquiry into pornographic literature, which concluded 26 February 1930.<sup>193</sup> The topic of pornography could also be relied on to provide a leaven of scandal amidst day-to-day political reportage: at the end of 1931, *Fronta* gleefully followed the story of centrist politician Dr. Jaroslav Stránský's links to the production of underground pornography.<sup>194</sup>

Czech male avant-gardists were not more anxious about their masculinity than were male avant-gardists in France, Germany, or Britain (think of the Vorticists), nor was the notion of woman as commodity fetish developed more strongly in Czechoslovakia than in other western countries. Czech interwar avant-gardists did, however, bring ideas about sex more into the open than did some of their contemporaries elsewhere, and the cartoons and private drawings of the interwar Czech artists—both the men and Toyen herself—indicate that many of them were able

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<sup>193</sup>Ktk., “Poznámky: Anketa o pornografické literatuře,” *Čin* 1, no. 20 (13 March 1930): 482.

<sup>194</sup>Karel Horký, “Docent pornografie,” *Fronta* 4, no. 42 (10 December 1931): 658–59. The following issue also directed a small notice about the “Docent pornografie,” adding “He is currently present in Prague, in Spálená ulice, where you will find him either in Hydiko or in the criminal court.” (“Je právě přítomen v Praze, ve Spálené ulici, kde najdete jej buď v Hydiku nebo u trestního soudu.”) (“Z domova: Panu Josefu Čapkovi,” *Fronta* 4, no. 43 (17 December 1931), 675.) Hydiko was František Trefný's hygiene business. Horký and *Fronta* kept up the theme of the Docent of Pornography for several issues, more for political reasons than obsession with pornography.

to express anxieties about gender and sexuality in humor and fantasy, as their imagery for Štyrský's *Erotická revue* shows.

#### 4.4.2 Czech Surrealist Erotic Projects

Edition 69 will bring out works of outstanding literary merit and be an album of graphic art that will have long-standing artistic value. The print runs are necessarily kept to a minimum by the exclusively erotic nature of the work, as it is my wish that these volumes not become the property of a wider readership, for whom they were not created nor intended. In selecting from the work of living, contemporary authors I was guided solely by their quality. The names of the poets, writers, artists, and translators should dispel any suspicion that I wish to disseminate illicit, worthless pornography that is anonymously and privately printed. Of the older literature I have chosen works whose authenticity is beyond doubt, even though official literary history has remained silent about them on account of their supposed immorality.— Jindřich Štyrský<sup>195</sup>

During the early 1930s, when Toyen, Štyrský, and Bohuslav Brouk were quite close, all three, joined by other avant-gardists, began a period of intense exploration of sexuality and desire. During this period Toyen illustrated erotica for the imprints Lotos, Olisbos, Mys dobré naděje, and Štyrský's Edice 69—projects that included Beardsley's *Venus and Tannhäuser* (1930), Salten's *Josephine Mutzenbacher: Memoirs of a Viennese Tart* (1930), and Louÿs's *Pybrac* (1932). Toyen also illustrated works that were considered erotic, but for which she did not necessarily produce extremely explicit images, such as the *Heptameron* (1932) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1930). The latter was published as a private print, available by subscription, by Odeon.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Quoted in Jed Slast, "Translator's Note," in *Edition 69*, trans. Jed Slast, by Vítězslav Nezval and Jindřich Štyrský (Prague: Twisted Spoon, 2004), 128.

<sup>196</sup> In 1932-3, the Prague bookseller B. M. Klika ran an ad in *Žijeme* announcing the publication of the *Heptameron* for lovers of erotic literature, with 76 daring drawings by Toyen. An ad for the Lawrence book appeared in the first issue of *Levá fronta*. I have not been able to locate a copy to assess the illustrations.

Štyrský noted:

If we read the *Heptameron*, [...] we see that book decoration could not be entrusted to a better-chosen hand. Toyen has succeeded in creating a certain type of modern erotic illustration. In her drawings we find in the first place one predilection: a taste for girls' beauty. The torsos of women, eyes genteel, full of amorous ennui, horrible and perverted in the moment of orgasm, gently befogged in the hour of death, the breast shrouded in a fluttering wisp, the tincture of the dagger, the shadow of a crotch concealed by a dropped lace, the gesture of a hand to the pillow, an unfastened bodice lace, the lustful mouth of some sort of roving monk, a graceful little foot, the naked girl's limbs bent over the sleeping adolescent and all this repertory of honeyed details from which are comprised the amorous game. Wandering eyes over the outline of this world of women, often garbed only in their smiles, we finish dreaming only in the full intensity of the tales in the *Heptameron*, in which both sides of life are depicted in such peerless fashion.<sup>197</sup>

Meanwhile, Štyrský, presumably in concert with Toyen, was collecting a large library of works on sex and the erotic, and in 1931 he launched production of the privately printed *Edice 69*.<sup>198</sup> His combined experience as artist, writer, and editor suited him to the role of publisher, but it is clear that this was a team venture that involved considerable input from Toyen, Nezval, Brouk, and others.

Although Czechoslovak censorship was usually more political than sexual, the censorship scandal that followed the publication of the Czech translation of Lautréamont's *Maldoror* — which Štyrský had illustrated, and which did not feature explicit illustrations—taught Czech

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<sup>197</sup> “Čteme-li HEPTAMERON, marnotratné bohatství příběhů ve stavu nepřetržité metamorfózy, uvědomujeme-li si tuto ohromnou zásobárnu lidských charakterů a porovnááme-li s atmosférou tohoto díla bohatý soubor kreseb, který k němu vytvořila Toyen, vidíme, že výzdoba knihy nemohla býti svěřena ruce šťastnější. Toyen podařilo se vytvořit jakýsi typ moderní milostné ilustrace. V jejích kresbách nacházíme především jedinou zálibu: zálibu v dívčí kráse. Torza žen, oči ušlechtilé, plné milostné nudy, hrůzné a zvrácené v okamžiku orgasmu, něžně zamžené v hodině smrti, ňadra zahalená letícím obláčkem, protknutá dýkou, stín klínu překrytý pohozenou krajkou, gesto rukou na podušce, rozvázaná tkanička živůtku, vilná ústa jakéhosi potulného mnicha, půvabná nožka, nahá dívčí ramena skloučná nad spícím jinochem a celý ten repertoár úlisných detailů, z nichž se skládá milostná hra. Bloudíce očima po ohrysech tohoto světa žen, *oděných* mnohdy jen svým úsměvem, dosníváme teprve v plné intenzitě příběhy Heptameronu, v němž tak jedinečným způsobem je zachycen rub i líc života.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “Inspirovaná ilustrátorka,” 94–95)

<sup>198</sup> Among the books in Štyrský's possession at the time of his death were Féré's *Pohlavní pud*, Hans Rau's *Bludy v lásce* (1932), Záruba's *Ilustr. dějiny lásky*, Sade's *Aline et Valcour*, Beardsley's *Album kreseb*, *Sto let české fotografie*, and Brovanell's *Manželství*. Kamill Resler fond, LA PNP.

avant-gardists that published erotica had to be produced privately. It could be publicly advertised, but had to be sold by subscription with notices that the material was not to be made available in libraries or to children. It appears that this formality was sufficient to prevent confiscation. *Kvart 2*, for instance, advertised Beardsley's *Venuše a Tannhäuser* with three pictures by Toyen, and both *Kvart 2* and 3 advertised the *Erotická revue*.

Between 1931 and 1933, Štyrský published, concurrently, the *Erotická revue* and six titles under the imprint of Edice 69. The *Erotická revue*, which attained three issues, included a wide variety of sex-related material from around the world.<sup>199</sup> Articles by Brouk on masturbation were joined by excerpts from Freud, Césaire Lombroso, and Annie Reich (wife of Wilhelm Reich); poetry by contemporary Czechs Nezval, František Halas, and Karel Konrád joined those of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Gautier, Remy de Gourmont, Voltaire, and a host of Renaissance and Baroque French writers; Byron, Aretino, and Sade joined Martial; E. T. A. Hoffmann and Ernst Toller met Victor Hugo and Wanda Sacher-Masoch; Tibetan folktales, Chinese poetry, and Russian and “oriental” tales met eighteenth-century Spanish verse and Czech folk songs; articles on the history of lesbianism met up with aesthete Otakar Březina's discussion of homosexuality; theological remarks on women encountered a list of Parisian *maisons de rendezvous* and lists of Czech terms for bodily parts and sexual activities. The French surrealists were represented by translations of two of the *Researches*, a selection from *Irene's Cunt* by Louis Aragon, and a selection from the *Immaculate Conception* by Breton and Eluard. Identifiable Czech artists included Toyen, who contributed many reworkings of items from her sketchbooks, and V. H. Brunner, František Bidlo, Antonín Pelc, Adolf Hoffmeister, V. Mašek, Rudolf Krajc, Emil Filla, Alois Wachsman, and Štyrský himself. Though Toyen's drawings

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<sup>199</sup> The three issues of the *Erotická revue* were reprinted in 2001 by Torst.

usually appeared anonymously in the *Erotická revue*, by this time she was a well-known illustrator, so some of the subscribers probably recognized her style. A few of her drawings, such as those accompanying an excerpt from Malinowski, were clearly identified as her own.

Toyen, in fact, divided her contributions to the magazine into three groups. Those marked “XX” were rough primitivist sketches from around 1925: a nude man standing on a hotel bed and masturbating in front of a waiting woman; a woman and a sailor on a couch; four beds populated by two heterosexual couples, one male couple, and one waiting woman; and a mostly female daisy-chain echoed by an animal daisy-chain. In contrast, the drawings signed “T” mostly dated from the beginning of the 1930s and were considerably more sophisticated in style and content. These included a sleeping woman dreaming of penises; ithyphallic clowns; and an illustration of three “Women of the East.” There was also a sketch of a woman playing with phallic chess pieces; an image of one white and one black woman lolling on giant penises; *In an Exotic Paradise*—a drawing in which tiny African women climb on giant penises that appear to grow from the earth; and finally, the extremely surrealist drawing of a woman’s face with female genitalia in place of eyes and mouth. The third, much smaller, group was that of those openly designated “Toyen.” The only pictures so designated were a hermaphroditic drawing and the three drawings for the Malinowski excerpt. These, however, were similar enough in style and content to the “T” drawings that the alert reader would recognize them to be by the same artist. The strictly physical, pornographic fantasy of the early “XX” drawings had been replaced by a more imaginative, fairy-tale type of fantasy in which physical plausibility was left far behind. In this respect, the sketches worked well with the diverse fantasies of Bidlo, Brunner, and Wachsman, particularly the latter, who would also become a surrealist, though not a member of the early Prague group.

Štyrský published six works under the imprint of Edice 69: Nezval's *Sexual Nocturne*, illustrated by himself (1931); *Justine*, illustrated by Toyen (1932); Halas' *Thyrsos*, again illustrated by Štyrský (1932); a selection from Aretino's *Ragionamento*, illustrated by Toyen (1932); a selection from Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret, illustrated by Rudolf Krajc (1932); and his own *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream* (1933).<sup>200</sup>

Inspirations for Edice 69 were largely French. In addition to older French works such as those by the Marquis de Sade, surrealist models were of considerable importance. Bataille's *Story of the Eye* (1928) and Aragon's *Irene's Cunt* (excerpted in the *Erotická revue*), both illustrated by Masson, employed a quasi-autobiographical form of narrative akin to the one Nezval would use in *Sexual Nocturne* and Štyrský in *Emilie*. Nezval specifically mentioned Ernst's collage novels in *Sexual Nocturne*, and these provided a starting point for the style of Štyrský's collages for the same work.<sup>201</sup> Štyrský's and Nezval's own works for Edice 69 were, then, in close alignment with surrealism well before the Prague surrealist group was founded, as indeed were some of Toyen's.<sup>202</sup>

Four of the Edice 69 titles have been reissued and are readily available; I have not been able to locate copies of the other two (Aretino and Nougaret). The first title to be published under Edice 69 was Nezval's *Sexual Nocturne* (1931), with collages by Štyrský. In a promotional flyer for the book, Štyrský announced:

Those who adore the poet Vítězslav Nezval will be captivated and thrilled by this unforgettable dream whose erotic terror transforms a child into both a lover and a poet. *Sexual Nocturne* is an incarnation of the pervasive erotic and melancholic aura that envelops those sensitive souls who seek out moments of the Absolute. The atmosphere of this novella—remarkable for its narrative development of

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<sup>200</sup> For a discussion of Edice 69, see Slast, "Translator's Note".

<sup>201</sup> Nezval specifically describes the town bordello as having the "archaic charm" of an Ernst collage (Vítězslav Nezval, *Sexual Nocturne*, 34).

<sup>202</sup> František Šmejkal, "Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos," 162.

inner events—centers on a man who through an astonishing polyrhythm appears at various stages of his life at once. The romance’s setting is the evening promenade of a small town and a brothel, which is simultaneously a bar under different circumstances and at another time. Taking place as much in reality as it does in the author’s imagination, *Sexual Nocturne* is a mosaic of images where ennui is condensed through the archaism of desolate streetlamps, lunatic nights under a full moon, and floodlit bodies—the archaism of fetishism, garters, divans, makeup, alcohol, and the deep despondency of an insatiable sensibility.<sup>203</sup>

*Sexual Nocturne*, though predating alliance with the Paris surrealists, was in fact a thoroughly surrealist production. Writing somewhat in the style of Breton’s *Nadja*, but with a gothic tone that looked toward *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders*, Nezval recalled what is believed to have been his sexual initiation, and spun a tale of young lust punctuated with musings on sexuality and forbidden words.<sup>204</sup>

Nezval’s tale of small-town boyhood lust, however, was outdone by Štyrský’s obstreperous collages, which convey aspects of the underlying sense of the text rather than illustrating its specifics.<sup>205</sup> These collages, a combination of cut-outs from fin-de-siècle illustrations and his own raw genital scrawls, place the novella in an utterly new and unromanticized realm. The curious boy, gripping a phallic column, licks vaginal graffiti with a tongue fashioned from a fern frond. Weddings are shown as a matter in which the male is dwarfed by his sexual apparatus and the female is likened to an egg-laying grasshopper (who, plunging her ovipositor into the earth, takes the penetrative role). Throughout the novella, in fact, Štyrský ignored Nezval’s narrative in order to present his own critique of marriage as a trap

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<sup>203</sup>Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 7. Hoffmeister notes that Nezval was by nature a romantic and “loved all archaisms.” (Hoffmeister, *Čas se nevrací*, 30.)

<sup>204</sup>Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 33.

<sup>205</sup>Štyrský’s approach toward book illustration was as follows: “No illustration, save kitsch, can ever express the idea of the work. Modern illustration places acute emphasis on the relationship between the work’s *principle* and its *formal expression* [... It] naturally adapts to the intent of the poetic work, yet exists as a work in itself.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “The Joys of a Book Illustrator,” quoted in Jed Slast, “Translator’s Note,” Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 132.)

centered on the insect-like reproduction of the species. Though the male is lured by the female, Štyrský represented the male as a creature driven more by his ceaselessly engorged genitalia than by the promise of union with the female.

The chronologically pre-surrealist *Sexual Nocturne* brought to the fore the tendency within the Czech group to explore the profane, the explicit, and the illicit. Not only did Nezval rhapsodize about his passion for the words *mrdat* and *bordel* and how he first fucked in a bordello, but Štyrský took Ernstian xylographic collage in a rebellious, graffiti-inspired direction. Thus, while Breton celebrated romance, Nezval's novella's subtitle (*Příběh demaskované iluze*, A Story of Illusion Unmasked) pronounced romance an illusion. Breton claimed that he had never slept with a prostitute, because he didn't think he could love one and believed that he should remain chaste when not in love. This position was, at least in theory, grounded in a desire to see the end of capitalist imbalance of power between men and women.<sup>206</sup> Nezval, however, focused on the prostitute's role as object of youthful desire.

Toyen's six illustrations for *Justine*, though striking, are more conventional in that they augment and ornament the text rather than, as with Štyrský's collages for *Sexual Nocturne*, providing an additional, related yet separable, work. Very much in the style of her other illustrations of the period, they were hand-colored line drawings. And, apart from the frontispiece, which depicts a face—perhaps male, perhaps female—looking out through a set of labia skinned from their owner and held apart with tacks and hooks, the images are evocative but not specifically surreal.

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<sup>206</sup>Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, 69, 116.

František Halas's *Thyrsos*, was decorated by Štyrský, but did not break any new ground as far as visual style or content.<sup>207</sup> Štyrský's *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream*, however, made obvious, if it was not already, the surrealist direction of the artist's work. Its two parts consist of a dream-like narrative based in Štyrský's obsession with his dead half-sister, and a collection of photomontages whose source material came primarily from French and German porn magazines.<sup>208</sup> Marie, called Emilie in his writings, had died when he was six, yet became a major focus of fantasy.<sup>209</sup> In these photomontages, where, as in his collages for *Sexual Nocturne*, Štyrský created a related but essentially independent work, the artist emphasized genitalia of both sexes, with a kind of frantic coupling marked on the one hand by suggestions of voyeurism, and on the other by stress on orgasm and ecstasy. He joined Eros and Thanatos via imagery of coffins, skeletons, and gas masks.

*Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream* included a significant afterword by Bohuslav Brouk, who would become the Prague group's theoretician of sexuality and psychoanalysis.<sup>210</sup> Brouk emphasized the importance of the "pornophilic" in combatting the ruling classes, and argued that "[t]hose who conceal their sexuality despise their innate abilities without ever having risen above them." Such people, he asserted, cannot escape either their animality or their mortality. Forcing them to be aware of excremental and sexual acts, he stressed, destroys their fantasies of being superior to the corporeal. Brouk argued that so-called pornophiles and pornophilia "attack any mode of non-animality" people might use to elevate themselves; pornophiles emphasize human

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<sup>207</sup> Halas apparently instructed that *Thyrsos*, which he regarded as inferior juvenilia, never be reprinted, but it was reprinted by Primus in 2000. (See Slast, "Translator's Note," 133 and František Halas, *Thyrsos*, illus. Jindřich Štyrský, reprint, 1932 [Prague: Primus, 2000].)

<sup>208</sup> Ten collages plus, for a limited number of copies, an additional two.

<sup>209</sup> Jed Slast, "Translator's Note," Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 130–33; František Šmejkal, "Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos," 165.

<sup>210</sup> Brouk's interest in socialism began at the age of fifteen, after which he moved towards Communism. His interest in psychoanalysis must have followed shortly thereafter (Bohuslav Brouk, "Mé členství v KSČ," *Analogon* 2, no. 3 [1990]: 68–69).

nature and thus dispose of old excuses for inequality. Brouk posited that pornophilia could thus be a weapon for the oppressed, and claimed that “those who succumb to pornophilia are of a more revolutionary bent than those mired in the prejudices of the moribund bourgeoisie.”<sup>211</sup>

Brouk stressed that pornophilic work glorifies sexual pleasure outside the reproductive realm, combatting the conceited ruling classes through the pleasure principle. Art, he asserted, “mitigates the sadism of pornophilia only in its exploitation of sex’s biological function, which is as unpleasant to pornophiles as it is to pornophobes.” Distinguishing, however, between what one might call unmitigated pornophilia and titillating kitsch, Brouk excoriated the latter as “trash pornophilia” that suppresses its sadistic impulses and thus becomes accessible to exactly the caste that pornophilia attacks. He heaped scorn on puritans who imagine that pornophilia has the same meaning as their own secret pornography, which he claimed was designed only for an occasional arousal that “as a rule their shabby wives can no longer produce.”<sup>212</sup>

Warming to his theme, Brouk continued: “Pornophilic kitsch keeps to the recess. The artist, on the other hand, has expanded throughout the world. He pisses a sea, shits a Himalayas, gives birth to cities, masturbates factory chimneys, etc. Nothing is sacred to him, and the associations he makes are, above all, sexual.” The artist’s pansexuality thus both “attacks puritan impotence” and liberates sex from the procreative. “Our eroticism,” proclaimed Brouk, “must be rid of its depressing connection to plump wives and conjugal beds under which a chamber pot is lurking.” Brouk argued, finally, that the modern artist can ignore the socio-economic in favor of

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<sup>211</sup>Bohuslav Brouk, “Afterword,” in *Emilie Comes to Me in a Dream*, in *Edition 69*, trans. Jed Slast, by Vítězslav Nezval and Jindřich Štyrský (Prague: Twisted Spoon, 2004), 109–11.

<sup>212</sup>Brouk, “Afterword,” 112–14.

pleasure, experiencing the world “in its full emotive nature.” Because we are born to die, asceticism is indefensible; we must take pleasure from everything possible.<sup>213</sup>

As he was close to both Toyen and Štyrský from his late teens, it is probable that Brouk, rather than providing their theoretical underpinnings on sex, in fact learned from them and incorporated their ideas into his writings of the 1930s. Brouk’s first article, published in *Tvorba* at the age of 18, had dealt with psychoanalysis and marxism, and caught the attention of Nezval.<sup>214</sup> In 1930 he published another article on this topic in *ReD*, in which he argued that although originally psychoanalysis had been solely a medical specialty, bound to its therapeutic medium, it had entered the realms of art, philosophy, pedagogy, and so on. While the social value of psychoanalysis was generally seen as limited to helping neurotic individuals, Brouk argued that it could be used for the collective health and was not incompatible with marxism.<sup>215</sup> In the *ReD* article, which concluded with a critique of the work of Aurel Kolnai, Brouk particularly examined Freud’s discussion of exogamy, incest, and patriarchy, and, citing Kolnai’s *Psychoanalyza a sociologie*, related Freudian theory to Engels and Marx.<sup>216</sup> During Brouk’s association with the surrealist group, he contributed to the *Mezinárodního bulletinu surrealismu* (1935), the anthology *Surrealismus* (1936), *Ani labuť, ani Lúna* (1936), and wrote the afterword to Štyrský’s *Emilie*. On his own, his works during this period include *Psychoanalyza* (1932), *Psychoanalytická sexuologie* (1933), *Autosexualismus a psychoerotismus* (Masturbation and Psycho-eroticism, 1935), *O smrti, lásce a žárlivosti* (On Death, Love, and Jealousy, 1936), and

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<sup>213</sup>Brouk, “Afterword,” 116–19.

<sup>214</sup>Brouk, “Mé členství v KSČ,” 69.

<sup>215</sup>Bohuslav Brouk, “Marxismus a psychoanalyza: Problém oidipuskomplexu v moderní sociologii,” *ReD* 3, no. 9 (1930): 257.

<sup>216</sup> Kolnai, a political philosopher, published *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie* in 1920. It was excerpted in *Červen* in 1921 (see Kolnai, “Psychoanalyza a sociologie”), but Brouk presumably read the original. In closing, Brouk stated that the heart of Kolnai’s sociology was a retrograde misuse of psychoanalysis, and that Kolnai’s theory was the grossest error of bourgeois science (Brouk, “Marxismus a psychoanalyza,” 259–61.).

*Manželství: Sanatorium pro méněcenné* (Marriage: Sanatorium for the Inferior, 1937, with a cover by Toyen). His work was, for the most part, concerned with psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, and popular idiom.<sup>217</sup>

He went on to write lengthy treatises on psychology and sex, again from a marxist and anti-marital perspective. In *Psychoanalytická sexuologie*, as well as to some extent in *Autosexualismus*, Brouk argued that in sex there is only passive and active, pain and pleasure. Much of his theorization of male-female sex was built on this dynamic, which aligned with popular sex expert Van de Velde's hypothesis of a fundamental ambivalence in which "sexual feelings do not exist where antagonism is absent."<sup>218</sup> While the majority of *Autosexualismus* was devoted to an encyclopedic review of the literature on masturbation worldwide and throughout history, at the close of the book Brouk stressed the social and economic pressures that affect sexual desire, singling out marriage and prostitution: "Marriage and prostitution are in no way a means of eliminating sexual need, but rather on the contrary, they are institutions causing sexual need."<sup>219</sup> Brouk's analysis of marriage drew heavily on the ideas of August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879), which emphasized the role of bourgeois marriage in promulgating prostitution. He argued:

If we want thus to fight sexual need, we must fight to change today's social order, to eliminate marriage and prostitution, to achieve sexual freedom for all people of both sexes and all ages. If people to have, from youth, a sufficient opportunity for an ideal normal sexual life, it will certainly forestall the mass spread of the need for masturbation.

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<sup>217</sup> In 1936, Štyrský provided readers of *Magazin DP* with a convenient summary of Brouk's major publications, stating that in *Psychoanalýsa*, for example, Brouk not only introduced readers to the main currents of analytical psychology (namely Freud, Adler, and Jung), but also critiqued them. (Jindřich Štyrský, "Co nového v literatuře: Psychoanalýsa u nás," *Magazin DP* 3, no. 8 [February 1936]: 266)

<sup>218</sup> Van de Velde, *Sex Hostility in Marriage*, 9.

<sup>219</sup> "Manželství a prostituce nejsou také vůbec žádné prostředky k odstranění sexuální nouze, nýbrž naopak, jsou to instituce zpřičiňující sexuální nouzi." (Bohuslav Brouk, *Autosexualismus a psychoerotismus* [Prague: Odeon, 1992], 167.)

As long as it is a matter of causes of strictly psychopathic character, it is possible to expunge it merely with psychoanalytic treatment, but the successes of which in that regard are however very problematic. But we do not have to regret that, for not even ipsismus—psychopathically caused masturbation—is a burden, either to the individual himself, or to society.<sup>220</sup>

While *Autosexualismus a psychoerotismus* appears to have been the first work in Czech to deal with the topic of masturbation in a scientific manner, it shows that educated Czechs of the period had access to a wide variety of literature on human sexuality. Teige, for example, took notes on a variety of texts relating to sexuality and erotic art, including Ellis's *Sexual Psychology* and Brouk's *Autosexualismus*.<sup>221</sup>

In 1937, Brouk took direct aim at marriage, in *Marriage, Sanitorium for the Inferior*. This polemic, with its collage cover by Toyen, asserted: “The true, essential meaning and purpose of marriage is to procreate, to bring up children and to ensure their material well-being. Marriage is a machine for making children, a machine for making future generations, which best conforms to the socioeconomic structure of our time.”<sup>222</sup> Toyen's cover for this pamphlet is akin to Štyrský's collages for *Sexual Nocturne*, but within the bounds of what could be put on a book cover without censorship. Enshrined in a wreath-bedecked classical frame, a small dressed Victorian

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<sup>220</sup> “Podobné nesnáze se ovšem staví v cestu odstranění ipsace, tudíž v cestu překonání sexuální krize jen v dnešní společnosti. Manželství a prostituce nejsou také vůbec žádné prostředky k odstranění sexuální nouze, nýbrž naopak, jsou to instituce zpříčiňující sexuální nouzi. Jejich využití vyžaduje finanční oběti, a hlavně—pokud se týká prostituce— často také oběti zdravotní, i když přísným dbáním preventivních hygienických opatření můžeme se s největší jistotou uvarovat nákazy. Chceme-li proto bojovat proti sexuální nouzi, musíme bojovat o změnu dnešního řádu společenského, o odstranění manželství a prostituce, o sexuální svobodu všech lidí obojího pohlaví a jakéhokoliv stáří. Budou-li lidé mít od mládí dostatečnou příležitost k dokonalému normálnímu pohlavnímu životu, předejde se zcela jistě masovému rozšíření nouzové ipsace.

“Pokud pak běží o příčiny rázu přímo psychopatického, je možno odstranit je jen psychoanalytickou léčbou, jejíž úspěchy jsou však v tomto směru velmi problematické. Toho ale nemusíme litovat, neboť ani ipsismus, ipsace psychopaticky zpříčiněná, není ani jedinci samému, ani společnosti na závalu.” (Brouk, *Autosexualismus a psychoerotismus*, 167.)

<sup>221</sup> Teige fond, LA PNP.

<sup>222</sup> “Podstatný pravý význam a smysl manželství je plodit, vychovávat a materiálně zabezpečovat děti. Manželství je stroj na děti, stroj na nové generace, který nejlépe vyhovuje sociálně ekonomické struktuře naší doby.” (Bohuslav Brouk, “Manželství, sanatorium pro méněcenné,” in *Autosexualismus a psychoerotismus* [Prague: Odeon, 1992], 194, translation from Toyen, *Jednadvacet*, 69.)

man stands before a looming bodice. An oval cartouche below them suggests the vaginal opening and is penetrated by a long-handled pacifier.

While in the 1920s, Toyen's explorations of sexuality ran to sketches of a wide range of activities, in the 1930s an interest in genitalia, and especially phallic imagery, became notable. This phallic imagery has only recently emerged in art-historical studies. Earliest known are the sketches from around 1925, which are less specifically phallic than simply involving all manner of sexual practices. Around 1930, more notably phallic imagery appears in the form of the sketch *Dreamer* (1930), which shows a young woman surrounded by thought-balloons of penises; illustrations for *Venus and Tannhäuser* (1930); the 1931 circus-themed sketches that would later be reworked for Bohuslav Brouk; some of the illustrations for *Justine* (1932) and *Pybrac* (1932); and the sketch of a woman playing with phallic chess pieces (1932). In the mid-1930s, we find the sketch of a woman's hand caressing a flaccid dribbling penis (1936); caged penises in front of a masturbating woman; a sketch of female fingers touching the glans of three penises (1937); and in 1938 the *Jednadvacet* collection commissioned as a wedding present for Brouk's brother, which reworks several of the earlier sketches while adding new ones. Karel Srp suggests that there is a shift in the newer imagery, wherein women take the phallus into their own hands as an object of pleasure, that the phallus has two separate functions in Toyen's work: one of power that the woman must avoid and defend herself against, and one in which it is a submissive, fetishistic toy.<sup>223</sup> Certainly, Toyen emphasizes women's control of the pleasuring phallus. But it is only in *Justine* that the erect penis distresses the woman, for while one image in *Jednadvacet* does show the woman turning away and sticking out her tongue in seeming disgust, this is in conjunction

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<sup>223</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 90–93.

with a flaccid penis, perhaps one she was unable to arouse. All other phallic imagery published thus far represents the male genitalia as either pleasing to the woman or not prompting a female reaction. Even the early orgy scene in *Pillow/Cushion* shows male and female alike participating vigorously in the mostly heterosexual action. Thus, whatever the artist's acted-upon personal sexual preferences, in fantasy the male genitalia were evidently as interesting to her as the female. Both sexes are active in Toyen's erotica. And, with the exception of her illustrations for *Justine*, Toyen's erotica emphasizes the libidinous, while Štyrský's repeatedly associates eroticism with cruelty or death.<sup>224</sup>

Toyen's, Štyrský's, and Nezval's erotica of the early 1930s fit within the larger surrealist project of liberating human consciousness by exploring the unconscious and material that had been repressed by the individual or by society. Graphic sexual material was meant not just to shock the bourgeoisie, but was part of a psychoanalytically based investigation of the human mind and desire. Brouk's critiques of bourgeois sexuality and marriage, which aligned with international surrealism's vision of sex as something liberatory rather than reproductive or a cog in the socio-economic machine, vehemently separate Prague surrealist erotica and especially the work of Toyen, the only female artist in the group, not just from the daring but in most respects normative heterosexual erotica of other interwar Czech artists, but from mainstream Czech feminist emphasis on moral purity and monogamous relationship.

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<sup>224</sup>Karel Šrp, *Toyen*, 93.

## 5.0 THE TURN TO SURREALISM

They will all rise, the man-letter, gnawed bone, full stop, rag, altar, crutch, staircase, claw, stuffing, man-coffin, whistle, shoelace, pebble, luggage, cubes of mist, and man-sediment. There will rise liquid beings made of cotton wool, snake skins, feathered trees, in fragments, beings withering at the hip, stuck together from words, borne by the wind, full of pustules, nourished by ice, in outline, hollow beings, modelled in snow, in raw meat and in sand. —Jindřich Štyrský<sup>1</sup>

After a long gestation, the Prague surrealist group formed in early 1934. Nezval, Štyrský, Toyen, Honzl, Brouk, Biebl, Makovský, and Ježek were active from the start; Teige joined shortly after. Three other founders were never active. In all, the group represented a far more diverse set of talents than the Paris group. Teige theorized about the arts and their relation to politics; Nezval and Biebl were poets; Toyen, Štyrský, and Makovský were visual artists (though Makovský, a sculptor, soon dropped away); Brouk, a scientist, wrote about sex, psychoanalysis, and marxism; Honzl was an avant-garde theater director and semiotician; and Ježek was the extremely popular jazz composer and bandleader for the Liberated Theater. With Brouk performing the role of psychoanalytic and sexological theorist, and with Honzl and Ježek as prominent figures in the performing arts, Prague surrealism offered a breadth lacking in Paris surrealism, which avoided

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<sup>1</sup> “Povstane člověk litera, ohlodaná kost, tečka, cár, oltář, berla, schodiště, skoba, nádivka, člověk rakev, pišťala, tkanička, oblázek, zavazadlo, krychle mlhy, a člověk sedlina. Povstanou bytosti tekuté, z vaty, hadích koží, opeřené stromy, v útržcích, bytosti vadnoucí v boku, spleené ze slov, nesené větrem, plné vřidků, krmené ledem, v obryse, bytosti duté, modelované ve sněhu, syrovém mase, a v písku.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “Z přednášky v semináři J. Mukařovského v Praze,” in *Každý z nás stopuje svoji ropuchu. Texty 1923–1940*, ed. Karel Srp [Prague: Thyrusus, 1996], 129.)

theater and music and largely lacked theoretical writings outside the admittedly broadly defined areas of Breton's interest and expertise.

What drew Toyen, Štyrský, Nezval, and Teige to a movement they had previously rejected? Which ideas from Paris surrealism did the Czechs adopt, and with what twists and special emphases? How do these relate to Toyen's surrealist work? How did contact with the Prague group encourage the Paris group to forge a more international identity? How did the literary lineage of Czech surrealism differ from that of the French and how did it contribute to the group's thinking? Finally, how did politics affect the Prague surrealists, in particular the group's 1938 rupture over Stalinism?

## 5.1 *VOICE OF THE FOREST: THE CZECH RECEPTION OF SURREALISM*

I waited in vain for the arrival of the clairvoyant stenographer, when fever, having liberated itself from medical encyclopedias, extends even to fireworks and dancing.—Vitězslav Nezval<sup>2</sup>

The Czechs grew increasingly aware of surrealism during the 1920s. The first known Czech reference to Breton's First Manifesto appeared in November 1924, when Richard Weiner wrote, "I think that with this document a distant horizon indeed opens, by means of freudism, because it is possible to suppose that in this way the path will lead, I would say, toward the autonomy of

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<sup>2</sup> Nezval, "Parrot on a Motorcycle," quoted in Karel Šrp, "Karel Teige in the Twenties: The Moment of Sweet Ejaculation," in *Karel Teige/1900–1951: L'Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, ed. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. Karolina Vočadlo (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999), 25.

literature, that is to say toward a literature outside good and evil...”<sup>3</sup> As we have seen, however, avant-gardists in Prague and Brno were already familiar with early surrealism because French connections among Czech artists and writers kept them abreast of new developments. Teige had visited Paris in 1922, and Štyrský and Toyen themselves probably visited the first surrealist exhibition, at the Galerie Pierre in 1925.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, after the founding of the Prague surrealist group, Nezval recalled that he and Toyen and Štyrský had already been playing surrealist games in the mid-1920s.<sup>5</sup>

In 1924, František Götz discussed Goll’s versus Breton’s surrealism in *Host*.<sup>6</sup> A subsequent issue of the magazine translated Jean Goudal’s important article on surrealism and cinema, citing Breton.<sup>7</sup> In 1925, *Nová svoboda* too looked at “Breton’s wing of the surrealists” and the group’s approach to dreams.<sup>8</sup> Josef Šíma had become acquainted with Ernst and Arp in 1925. In 1926, Götz noted:

Surrealists have a precise formula for it: poetry originates when we turn off the will in the intellectual organism and tear apart utilitarian interests; then via absolute passivity it begins to develop the strange, illogical, and irrational zone of the fantasmagoric spirit; it is daydreaming which forms the images into autonomous, bizarre distortions; it is the half-mad vortex of illogical pictures and metaphors.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>“Myslím, že se písemnostem otvírá freudismem vskutku daleký obzor, poněvadž lze míti za to, tudy že vede cesta řekl bych k autonomii literatury, totiž k literatuře mimo dobro a zlo...” Richard Weiner, *Nadrealismus*, quoted in Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Český Surrealismus 1929–1953*, chron at beginning.

<sup>4</sup>Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Český Surrealismus 1929–1953*, 14.

<sup>5</sup>Vítězslav Nezval, *Neviditelná Moskva* (Prague: Fr. Borový, 1935), 18–19.

<sup>6</sup>Fr. Götz, “Nadrealismus.”

<sup>7</sup>Jean Goudal, “Nadrealism a kino,” *Host* 4 (1925): 200–4.

<sup>8</sup>“Bretonovo křídlo nadrealistů” (Jiří Ježek, “Pařížský list: Nadrealistická revoluce a sny,” *Nová svoboda* 2, no. 27 [9 July 1925]: 435)

<sup>9</sup>“Nadrealisté mají pro to přesnou formuli: poesie vzniká tehdy, když v duchovním organismu vypneme vůli a přetihneme užitek zájmy; tehdy při absolutní pasivitě začne se rozvíjeti podivné, nelogické a iracionální pásmo fantasmagorií duše; je to snění, jež přetváří představy v autonomní, bizarní zkresleniny; je to pološilený vír nelogických obrazů a metafor.” (Fr. Götz, “Obroda symbolismu,” 440–41.)

That same year, literary critic Václav Černý, too, assessed surrealism, particularly in terms of its relationship to Freud.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, when Philippe Soupault and Léon Pierre-Quint visited Prague in May 1927, and Soupault lectured on Lautréamont and the modern French novel, they did not perhaps tell alert Czechs anything startlingly new.<sup>11</sup>

### 5.1.1 The Literary Lineage

Would you open the door to Baudelaire?  
Toyen: “Yes, with affection.”<sup>12</sup>

Both the French and Czech surrealists saw themselves as preceded by much the same writers: Sade, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, Jarry, Apollinaire, and certain of the German Romantics. Unquestionably, Surrealism drew strongly from Romanticism and its heirs. The mid-nineteenth-century writer Baudelaire was of great significance both to the French surrealists and to the interwar Czech avant-garde. Baudelaire’s drug-induced Artificial Paradises had intrigued the Czech Decadents, prompting imagery of opium-smoking and delirium, and, as the critic Václav Černý noted, the interwar poets perceived Baudelaire less as an old master than as “‘young,’ as they were,” never mind that the more recent Fráňa Šrámek seemed like a fossil to

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<sup>10</sup> See Václav Černý, “K surrealistickému manifestu,” *Host* 5, no. 7 (April 1926): 190–5 and also Václav Černý, “‘Nemoc století’ nejmladší Francie,” *Host* 6, no. 7 (1926–27): 170–74..

<sup>11</sup> “Lautréamont a moderní francouzský román” was presented at the Měštanské besedě. Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, *Český Surrealismus 1929–1953*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> “Surrealist Inquiry: Would You Open the Door?” *Médium: Communication surréaliste* (1953), translated by Franklin Rosemont, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 251.

them.<sup>13</sup> Even the Communist journalist Julius Fučík wrote about Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* and *Fanfarlo*.<sup>14</sup> *Fanfarlo* was translated by Teige's companion, Jožka Nevařilová, and included Teige's own study of the author.<sup>15</sup>

Both Breton and the Czechs regarded Romantic successors Rimbaud and Lautréamont as revolutionary precursors to surrealism. For Breton, Rimbaud was a poet-revolutionary whose poetry lacked political content, whereas he found the relatively obscure Lautréamont's work to be revolutionary in both form and content.<sup>16</sup> Lautréamont's character Maldoror, not unlike the libertines in the work of the Marquis de Sade, represented for both French and Czech surrealists a vision of evil as a means of liberation for the individual repressed by society, effected through violent sexual cathexis.<sup>17</sup>

Like Breton, the Prague surrealists did not see Romanticism as one entity, but as a movement divided into the reactionary, the bourgeois, and the revolutionary; they traced their descent from what Teige called revolutionary Romanticism. From revolutionary Romanticism, he wrote, came Borel, Bertrand, Nerval, Baudelaire, Lautréamont, Rimbaud, and then Jarry, Apollinaire, and surrealism.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Štyrský was an expert on late-nineteenth-century French poetry, particularly Lautréamont and Rimbaud.<sup>19</sup> As already noted, he illustrated Lautréamont's

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<sup>13</sup> In this essay, Černý develops the generational theme that was of such importance in the 1920s, but no longer focusing on the three Czech generations discussed endlessly in that decade (Václav Černý, "Kritik a generace," in *Osobnost, tvorba a boj* [Prague: Václav Petr, 1947], 146–47).

<sup>14</sup> See Julius Fučík, "Charles Baudelaire," *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 10–12.

<sup>15</sup> See "Panorama," *ReD* 1, no. 4 (January 1928), 157–8.

<sup>16</sup> See André Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930)," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 117–94.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Waintrub, "Crimes of Passion: Surrealism, Allegory, and the Dismembered Body" (Ph.D. diss., Los Angeles: University of California, 1996), 46.

<sup>18</sup> See Karel Teige, "Revoluční romantik K. H. Mácha," in *Ani labuť ani Lúna: Sborník k stému výročí smrti Karla Hyňky Máchy*, new ed., ed. Vítězslav Nezval, reprint, 1936 (Prague: Concordia, 1995), 10–28.

<sup>19</sup> Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 18.

*Maldoror* in 1929, published on Rimbaud in the late 1920s and then began work on a study of the Marquis de Sade.<sup>20</sup>

Both Baudelaire and Rimbaud had long been familiar to francophile Czech readers—the surprisingly mainstream appeal of these writers for the Czechs is shown by the fact that the women’s magazine *Eva* published a translation of Rimbaud’s “Román” in 1930, with a quote from Baudelaire on the same page.<sup>21</sup> But although these two French poets would acquire a renewed significance for the surrealists, Apollinaire gained a special place in Czech literary history thanks to Karel Čapek’s brilliant translation of “Zone” and other poems. As more than one scholar has observed, the Čapek translation, particularly of “Zone,” not only brought Apollinaire’s work to a wider Czech audience but was an important work in its own right and prompted a remarkable shift in Czech poetic language.<sup>22</sup> Čapek’s translations disposed of the sometimes fervid diction of the Czech Symbolists and enshrined Apollinaire as the father of Czech literary modernism.<sup>23</sup> Teige himself enthusiastically hailed the translation as a “raucous globetrotting rhapsody.”<sup>24</sup> In addition, “Zone” emphasized Apollinaire’s connection to Prague, referring to the author’s earlier tale “Passant de Prague.”

The French and Czech avant-gardes, then, while both recognizing Apollinaire as an important literary figure, placed him differently. In French culture, Apollinaire was significant

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<sup>20</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 12. See Jindřich Štyrský, “Rodný kraj J. A. Rimbauda”; Jindřich Štyrský, “Rimbaud a jeho dílo”; Jean Arthur Rimbaud, *Rimbaud*; and Jindřich Štyrský, “Markýz de Sade,” 435–63.

<sup>21</sup> See *Eva* 2, no. 10 (15 March 1930), 14.

<sup>22</sup> See Jan Rubeš, “Constructing Modernity: Karel Čapek’s Translation of French Poetry,” in *On Karel Čapek: A Michigan Slavic Colloquium*, ed. Michael Makin and Jindřich Toman (Ann Arbor: Slavic Publications, 1992), 62–64, and Deborah Garfinkle, “Karel Čapek’s ‘Pásmo’ and the Construction of Literary Modernity Through the Art of Translation,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 345–66.

<sup>23</sup> Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 8.

<sup>24</sup> “[T]éto hlučné globetrotterské rhapsodie” (Karel Teige, “Guillaume Apollinaire: Několik poznámek k českém překladu ‘Pásma’,” *Kmen* 3 [June 1919]: 51.)

but one of many, while for the Czechs, he was a beloved founding modernist. French and Czech surrealists also responded somewhat differently to Apollinaire as precursor; Breton's admiration for Apollinaire had an oedipal quality while Teige and the Czechs simply accepted his significance.<sup>25</sup> Already by the first manifesto, Breton had begun to distance himself from Apollinaire, claiming that Gérard de Nerval's term "supernaturalism" would have served as well as Apollinaire's "surrealism" because it appeared that "Nerval possessed to a tee the spirit with which we claim a kindship, Apollinaire having possessed, on the contrary, naught but *the letter*, still imperfect, of Surrealism, having shown himself powerless to give a valid theoretical idea of it."<sup>26</sup> The Czechs saw no need to distance themselves from Apollinaire; indeed, he was of sufficient importance to Devětsil that the November 1928 issue of *ReD* was consecrated to commemorating the tenth anniversary of his death. The following issue also contained a significant selection of Apollinaire's work. But while Apollinaire was a crucial figure for the larger Czech avant-garde, this wide appeal meant he, even more than Baudelaire and Rimbaud, could not be seen as the special property of the Prague surrealists.<sup>27</sup>

Lautréamont, however, was primarily of interest to members of Devětsil and the surrealist group. Lautréamont had been known to the Czechs since 1907, when Miloš Marten, then the dominant critic for the *Moderní revue*, published an article profiling him. This was ten years before Aragon encountered a copy of *Les Chants de Maldoror* and brought it to the attention of Breton.<sup>28</sup> Shortly before *Maldoror*'s publication in Czech in 1929, critic Václav

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<sup>25</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 159–60.

<sup>26</sup>Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," 24–25.

<sup>27</sup> The present-day surrealist Petr Král notes in particular the Poetist fondness for Apollinairean themes of exotic voyages, the joys of "young civilization," and nostalgia (Král, "Un romantisme du possible," 14).

<sup>28</sup> Miloš Marten, "Zastřený profil," *Moderní revue* 13, vol? 19 (1906-7), 109-118, cited in Daniel Vojtěch, "On the Radical Wing of Modernity: The Concept of Decadence as the Horizon in Art and Life at the End of the Nineteenth Century," in *In Morbid Colours: Art and the Idea of Decadence in the Bohemian Lands 1880–1914*, ed. Otto M. Urban, trans. Barbara Day (Prague: Municipal House/Arbor Vitae/Moravian Gallery in Brno, 2006), 36. There is

Černý described the enigmatic French writer as a precursor to Tzara, Picabia, and Breton, and considered his life and death to be “‘dada’ avant la lettre.” To Černý, then, Lautréamont’s importance was largely as a precursor to the Dadaists.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, Lautréamont was read. One of the very first items in the first issue of *ReD* was Teige’s translation of a section of *Maldoror*.<sup>30</sup> When he and Jindřich Hořejší brought out their translation of *Maldoror* (dedicated to Soupault and illustrated by Štyrský), government censorship prompted Lautréamont’s immediate popularity among the greater avant-garde, and briefly rendered him “the man of the day.”<sup>31</sup> In an essay on Lautréamont in *ReD* that subsequently appeared as the afterword to *Zpěvy Maldororovy*, Teige explicitly connected Lautréamont and *Maldoror* to surrealism:

Enlightened by Lautréamont’s example, the Surrealist revolution valiantly breaks asunder the oppressive frame of social life, literature and art; it breaks through the wall between reality and irreality, it opens the immeasurable domain of dreams in which vibrates the emotional and sensory nature of man, it illumines a magical world where neither the laws of power nor the laws of reason apply, where our supports and limits are without meaning and without effect, where nothing is defined in advance nor limited by the bonds of logical relations, a world outside of health and sickness, beyond yes and no, the mystery of the poem.<sup>32</sup>

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some uncertainty whether it was Soupault, Aragon, or Apollinaire who actually introduced Breton to Lautréamont. (Waintrub, “Crimes of Passion,” 5.)

<sup>29</sup>Václav Černý, “Isidore Ducasse, předchůdce současné poesie,” *Host* 7 (1927–28): 209–11. Černý stressed the need to distinguish between the charlatan and the poet in Lautréamont’s work; he took Lautréamont’s satanism and pessimism to be affectation, rather than Baudelairean pain.

<sup>30</sup> See Isidore Ducasse (Comte de Lautréamont), “Zpěvy Maldororovy,” *ReD* 1, no. 1 (October 1927): 7–8, trans. Karel Teige.

<sup>31</sup> “Littérature: Les livres les plus lus en Tchécoslovaquie au cours de l’année 1929,” *Revue Française de Prague* 8, no. 46 (December 1929): 420–21, recapitulating a discussion of 1929’s most-read books in *Lidové noviny*. Already noted in the first issue of *ReD* as part of Odeon’s upcoming 1927–28 offerings, *Zpěvy Maldororovy* was described as a bibliophile edition, but the court found that “its lascivious acts grossly offend moral propriety and modesty and in such a fashion that it has caused a public scandal.” *Maldoror* was confiscated by police in 1929. (“...smilnými činy mravopověstnost a stydlivost uráží hrubě a takovým způsobem, že se tím zavedla příčina k veřejnému pohoršení.” *ReD* 3, no. 1 [October 1929], 4.) See this issue of *ReD* for further details of the censorship and response. The next issue includes further information and discussion of Lautréamont and *Maldoror*, including Léon Pierre-Quint, “Sadismus a láska u Lautréamonta,” *ReD* 3, no. 2 (November 1929): 33–34, trans. Bedřich Václavěk and Karel Teige, “1929,” *ReD* 3, no. 2 (November 1929): 41–45, and additional responses from Czechoslovakia and abroad. Despite the Czechoslovak liberal democracy, censorship (mostly political) was by no means infrequent. Communist periodicals were heavily censored, but the nationalist *Fronta* also suffered.

<sup>32</sup> “Osvícena příkladem Lautréamontovým rozráží směle surrealistická revoluce tísnivé rámce společenského života, literatury, umění, protrhuje hráz mezi realitou a irealitou, otevírá nesmírné oblasti snů, v nichž vibruje citová i smyslová příroda člověková, rozsvěcuje divotvorný svět, kde neplatí zákony moci ani zákony rozumu, kde naše

### 5.1.2 The Second Manifesto and the Generation on Two Chairs

Psychoanalysis asserts that art is a regression to infantile experiences.

I assert that today's art is the negation of all today's social forms. We act as though it were not reality at all. Art today is harakiri on reality. Art today is kabala, where for a very marked, wide strata of the population we put reality to death by an obscure manner. — Vítězslav Nezval, 1931<sup>33</sup>

The late 1920s, however, proved to be a time of upheaval for both the Paris surrealists and for Devětsil. In the Second Manifesto, Breton called for both action and “occultation,” believing that psychic automatism and dream exploration had failed not in themselves but because they were used more for literary effect than for exploration of the psyche; he wanted language not for the sake of language, but for the sake of liberating thought.<sup>34</sup>

Both Devětsil and the surrealists were wrestling with members' diverse relationships to Communism. In the Second Manifesto, Breton announced his desire to align surrealism with marxism: “I really fail to see—some narrow-minded revolutionaries notwithstanding—why we should refrain from supporting the Revolution, provided we view the problems of love, dreams, madness, art, and religion from the same angle they do.”<sup>35</sup> This suggested a reassuring seriousness of revolutionary purpose to hesitant Czechs, especially Teige. Communist-oriented

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opory a míry jsou bez významu a bez účinku, kde nic není předem určeno a vymezeno pouty logických vztahů, svět mimo zdraví a nemoc, mimo ano a ne, tajemství básně.” (See either Karel Teige, “Doslov,” in *Maldoror*, trans. Jindřich Hořejší and Karel Teige, illus. Jindřich Štyrský, by Isidor Ducasse, prepared by Philippe Soupault and Karel Teige [Prague: Odeon, 1929], 122 or Karel Teige, “Lautréamont,” *ReD* 2, no. 7 [March 1929]: 234)

<sup>33</sup> “Psychoanalytikové tvrdí, že je umění regresí k infantilním zážitkům.

“Já tvrdím, že je dnešní umění negací všech společenských forem dneška. Tváříme se, jako by vůbec ani nebylo reality. Umění dneška je harakiri na realitě. Umění dneška je kabala, kde velice markantním, širokým vrstvám nesrozumitelným způsobem popravujeme realitu.” (Vítězslav Nezval, “Předmluva k výstavě obrazů Štyrského a Toyena,” *Tvorba* 6, no. 48 [3 December 1931]: 764.)

<sup>34</sup>Balakian, *André Breton, Magus of Surrealism*, 98–99.

<sup>35</sup>Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930),” 140.

members of Devětsil could only support surrealism when Breton showed that Surrealism supported dialectical materialism.

And, while in the mid-1920s the French surrealists had moved away from dada-like parody and ridicule in favor of automatism and the recording of dreams, they returned to some of their earlier satirical methods to purge the group in the latter part of the decade, when they rejected the heretofore admired de Chirico.<sup>36</sup> While this was not, perhaps, a strategy calculated to gain friends, their purgative impulse had its counterpart in the Czech excoriation of the nine anti-Gottwald writers in 1929 (see Chapter 2), and may have appealed to some members of Devětsil as a sign of intellectual and political seriousness.<sup>37</sup>

In the same mood, by the fall of 1929, Štyrský had lost patience with the Czech avant-garde and suddenly launched debate regarding a generation “on two chairs” (sitting on the fence). His opening sally attacked the Devětsil generation, claiming “it equates the moon with the electric light bulb, love with sex and poetry with cash.” Sitting on two chairs, he opined, “is as obscene as secretly wishing to lie in two graves.”<sup>38</sup> In the course of this serialized rant, Štyrský specifically lambasted his colleague and erstwhile supporter Teige, claiming that Teige’s activities were “*never creative* but always compilatory,” and that Teige’s entire oeuvre was “nothing but a compilation of other people’s knowledge, other people’s theories, other people’s artistic methods, other people’s work, etc.” Štyrský denounced Teige for wanting to be “a poet, writer, journalist, film-maker, painter, caricaturist, literary and art critic, architect, editor, music

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<sup>36</sup> See Adam Daniel Jolles, “Curating Surrealism: The French Avant-Garde in Exhibition, 1925–1938” (Ph.D. diss., Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 74–75.

<sup>37</sup> The surrealist denunciation relates to growing Stalinism and “the end of a certain utopic conception of both avant-gardism and communism in the west.” Jolles, “Curating Surrealism,” 76–78.

<sup>38</sup> Jindřich Štyrský, “The Generation’s Corner,” in *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, ed. Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, trans. Alexandra Büchler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 676–77.

and film aesthetician, typographer, and advertising designer, etc., etc.” whose “expressions in literary and fine art were a series of absurd contradictions.” Indeed,

Teige proclaimed the renaissance of realistic primitivism, proclaimed collective folk art, then immediately reoriented to Cubism, but wrote a monograph on Zrzavý. Then, disgusted by everything, he announced the liquidation of art, clutching at Ehrenburg’s coattails. At that time he began producing Rodchenkian photomontages which he called pictorial poems, signed manifestos of poetism, all while flirting a bit with dadaism and declaring the victory of constructivism. Etc., etc.<sup>39</sup>

While Teige was not the only object of Štyrský’s venom, he was the most noticeable target and responded in *ReD*.<sup>40</sup> Teige was deeply hurt by this attack, and it was clearly a major reason for his later reluctance to sign on as a founding member of the Prague surrealist group.<sup>41</sup> However, both men remained on good terms with Toyen and Nezval.

The polemical battles of 1929-30, and the problem of combining creation with political propaganda, put Teige, and perhaps other future members of the group, in an ambivalent relation to surrealism. In the late 1920s, Czech avant-gardists still rejected Bretonian psychic automatism because they resisted reducing personality to a “biological-psychological automaton deprived of

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<sup>39</sup> “...jeho činnost nebyla nikdy tvůrčí, ale vždy kompilátorská a celé jeho dílo není než kompilací cizích vědomostí, cizích teorií, cizích uměleckých metod, cizí práce atd.

“...Pozorujme, čím vším chtěl K. Teige býti: básníkem, spisovatelem, žurnalistou, filmařem, malířem, karikaturistou, literárním i výtvarným kritikem, architektem, redaktorem, hudebním a filmovým estetikem, typografem, reklamním kreslířem, atd., atd. *A podívejme se, čím K. Teige dnes je.*

“Jeho projevy literární i výtvarné byly řadou absurdních protikladů. Teige prohlašoval renesanci realistického primitivismu, prohlašoval lidové kolektivní umění, hned na to se přeorientoval ke kubismu, ale napsal monografii o Zrzavém. Poté, zhnusen vším, prohlásil likvidaci umění, drže se šosů Erenburgových. V té době začal vyrábět rodčenkovské fotomontáže, jimž říkal obrazové básně, podepisoval manifesty poetismu, při tom všem koketoval mírně s dadaismem a prohlašoval vítězství konstruktivismu. Atd., atd.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “Generace na dvou židlích,” *Odeon*, no. 1 [October 1929]; no. 3 [December 1929]; no. 4 [January 1930]: 60. Emphasis in original.)

<sup>40</sup> See Teige, “1929,” 44–45, Karel Teige, “Polemické poznámky k aktuálním sporům,” *ReD* 3, no. 3 (December 1929): 88–91, and Karel Teige, “Epilog k diskusi o generaci na dvou židlích,” *ReD* 3, no. 3 (December 1929): 91–92.

<sup>41</sup> Nezval’s diaries allude to Teige’s mistrust of Štyrský at the time of the group’s founding, and of course Teige did not sign the founding document. Štyrský was not, however, the only person to hold such opinions of Teige. Critic Václav Černý, skeptical of aspects of Devětsil, later described Teige as a lad of good character, but whose opinions were unoriginal, echolaic, and obsessed with the need for art to be super-modern. Černý couldn’t resist adding that it was certainly written in the stars that “Charles” Teige would be the first Czechoslovak in history to go around Prague wearing a basque beret (Černý, *Paměti I*, 160–61).

sociohistorical specifics”; they rejected the idea of a passive stream of consciousness in favor of created consciousness.<sup>42</sup> In 1928, Teige wrote, “Having given all rights to subconscious inspiration and subjective fantasy, surrealism limited itself to the passive recording of opinions, storms, the ebb and flow of the subconscious oceans.”<sup>43</sup> At the same time, he was reluctant to renounce the irrational: “Whenever we speak of mathematical intuition, whenever we interpret by it the aesthetic efficacy of practical realization—hence the irrational value of a rational product—we recognize that behind the rational valuation remain the existence and function of the irrational.”<sup>44</sup>

As second-generation surrealist theoretician Vratislav Effenberger would conclude, “[Teige] found fault with surrealism, in terms of the theory of poetic creation, an insufficient comprehension of the element of conscious construction and, in the matter psychosocial and revolutionary, of the anarchist attitudes.”<sup>45</sup> At the same time, as Nezval made clear in his short-lived journal *Zvěrokruh* (Zodiac), Poetism’s principles were close to those of surrealism, particularly regarding the universality of poetry and “the socio-revolutionary conditioning of the creation of the avant-garde,” and by Teige’s theory, which progressively took on a psychoanalytic aspect. Effenberger suggests that the internal rapprochement of the two movements, hinted at by their shared origin in Apollinaire, was clear in Nezval’s works of the

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<sup>42</sup>Bojtár, “The Avant-Garde in Central and Eastern European Literature,” 61.

<sup>43</sup>“Surréalismus, dav všecka práva podvědomé inspiraci a subjektivní fantasii, omezil se na pasivní zaznamenávání názorů, bouří, přílivů a odlivů podvědomých oceánů.” (Karel Teige, “Abstraktivismus, nadrealismus, artificiélismus [Šíma, Štyrský, Toyen],” *Kmen* 2, no. 6 [1928]: 122.)

<sup>44</sup>“Tam, kde mluvíme o matematické intuici, kde jí vykládáme estetickou účinnost praktických realizací, tedy iracionální hodnotu racionálního výrobku, poznáváme, že za racionálním hodnocením trvá existence i účinnost iracionálního.” (Karel Teige, “K teorii konstruktivismu,” in *Svět stavby a básně: Studie z dvacátých let*, vol. 1 of *Výbor z díla*, ed. Jiří Brabec, et al. [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1966], 367–8, originally published 1928.)

<sup>45</sup> “[Teige] reproche au surréalisme, en matière de théorie de la création poétique, une compréhension insuffisante de l’élément de *construction consciente* et, en matière psychosociale et révolutionnaire, des attitudes anarchistes.” (Vratislav Effenberger, “L’Evolution du Surréalisme en Tchécoslovaquie,” *Change* 25 [December 1975]: 27)

early 1930s, where the playful spirit of Poetism and the associative short circuits of surrealism gave way to a deeper exploration of the unconscious.<sup>46</sup>

Czech avant-gardists, however, had no intention of neglecting the political dimension of art. In October 1929, the same month as Štyrský began his attack on the avant-garde, a group of leftist cultural workers, prompted by Teige, gathered at the Opera café and established the group *Levá fronta*. Among these founding members were Toyen and Štyrský, despite Štyrský's reservations about his peers. *Levá fronta* would concern itself with the political dimensions of modern art and cultural work, with international interests, and with plans for architecture, art exhibitions, and a literary section to fight against censorship. Like Devětsil, the group interested itself in all artistic fields.<sup>47</sup> Over the next few years, *Levá fronta* grew into a large and active organization with centers in both Prague and Brno, but because its program was more political than artistic, it has been neglected by non-Communist scholars. The surrealist group's precise relationship to *Levá fronta* is murky.<sup>48</sup> Surrealists belonged to the organization, but *Levá fronta* would not prove to be a consistent supporter of surrealism. Though many artists were indeed moving toward surrealism, many others were emphatically not.

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<sup>46</sup>Effenberger, "L'Evolution Du Surréalisme," 28. See also František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors," 66.

<sup>47</sup> "Informace: Levá Fronta," *Rozpravy Aventina* 5, no. 5 (24 October 1929): 57. See also Teige, "1929," 42–43 and "Levá fronta," *ReD* 3, no. 2 (November 1929): 48. In late 1927, Bedřich Václavek's remarks about the anthology *Fronta* (not to be confused with the nationalist periodical of the same name) indicate that in discussions during the previous year, this was intended to be a "levá fronta" (Bedřich Václavek, "Fronta," *ReD* 1, no. 1 [October 1927]: 30). The members listed in *ReD* were F. X. Šalda, Ot. Chlup, J. L. Fischer, Jos. Chochol, V. Vančura, Vítězslav Nezval, Iša Krejčí, Vilém Závada, F. Halas, Jar. Seifert, L. Novomeský, Toyen, Štyrský, Václavek, Dr. Ivan Sekanina, Clementis, Dr. Janda, Dr. M. Matoušek, and "the publishers Fromek, Prokop, et al." ("Levá fronta," 48.)

<sup>48</sup> Cabada discusses the development of *Levá fronta* and its relationship to the Party. One of the only scholars to consider *Levá fronta* since 1989, he regards it as having been under KSC control with only the appearance of being independent, referring to the surrealist group as a Communist cell within *Levá fronta*, one which had all the elements of a political organization rather than a free society of artists. (Cabada, *Komunismus, levicová kultura*, 141–59). Once *Levá fronta*'s archives can be located, much should become clearer about this relationship. See also the forthcoming dissertation by Shawn Clybor, Northwestern University.

Teige was in fact receptive to surrealism by the beginning of 1930, when in response to attacks by Štyrský and Fučík he not only stressed his commitment to marxism but to revolutionary art, stressing “the need to evaluate this incessant duel between academic, official creation (classicism, parnassicism, realism) and revolutionary creation (from romanticism through symbolism and cubism to surrealism).”<sup>49</sup> *ReD* had followed surrealism’s development closely. In its first issue, Teige had assessed the primary surrealist painters as being Miró, Tanguy, and Ernst.<sup>50</sup> The same issue had also featured a discussion of *Nadja* as a representative of surrealist literature of antirational revolt.<sup>51</sup> In 1930, *ReD* noted the founding of *Documents*<sup>52</sup> and the “very appealing review” *Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*, which had replaced the defunct *Révolution Surréaliste*.<sup>53</sup>

As late as 1932, however, Toyen and Štyrský were still exhibiting as Artificialists and stressing their distance from surrealism. The catalog for their March–April 1932 exhibition in Brno stated that they did not accept cubism, nor did they espouse surrealism, for they resisted its literary content and attachment to psychic automatism and the unconscious, which they felt remained outside the artist’s control. All the same, a “great nearness to surrealism” had begun to be admitted. They felt able to refer to their work creating a “new internal sequence,” suggesting Breton’s internal model.<sup>54</sup> Conceptually they were already very close. Štyrský wrote:

It will be a time of the slow blending of air, water, earth and fire, a time of that long-desired synthesis of three-dimensional and lyrical beauty. Creatures will freely cross-breed and, without the supervision of biologists, there will arise new unicorns and beetle-mammals, fabulous wethers and creatures fashioned from

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<sup>49</sup> “[P]otřeba zhodnotit ten ustavičný souboj akademické a oficiální tvorby (klasicismus, parnassismu, realismus) a tvorby revoluční (od romantismu přes symbolismus a kubismus k surrealismu).” (Karel Teige, “Bouře na levé frontě,” *Index* 2, no. 2 [10 February 1930]: 4.)

<sup>50</sup>Teige, “Surréalistické malířství.”

<sup>51</sup>e., “André Breton: Nadja,” *ReD* 2, no. 1 (September 1928): 37.

<sup>52</sup> See *ReD* 3, no. 4 (January 1930), 107.

<sup>53</sup> “Poznámky,” *ReD* 3, no. 9 (1930), 287.

<sup>54</sup>Jaroslav B. Svřček, *Katalog výstavy obrazů*.

swords, needles and daggers, beings of cotton wool, snake skins, feathered trees, bestial amalgams of immortal poetic works and flower pots, and many other prurient monstrosities.<sup>55</sup>

### 5.1.3 Poesie 1932

I say to you that a terrible time is come of visionaries and meditation, a time resembling that which immediately preceded creation. —Jindřich Štyrský<sup>56</sup>

In the fall of 1932, the Czech avant-garde presented its new post-Devětsil, surrealist-oriented direction at the large international Poesie 1932 exhibition at Mánes. As František Šmejkal has noted, it was “the first large-scale manifestation of Surrealism on Czech soil,” and was a precursor to the later international surrealist exhibitions. Poesie 1932 included a strong showing of Paris surrealists and others close to that group; Czech artists included Filla, Hoffmeister, Janoušek, Muzika, Toyen, Šíma, Štyrský, Wachsman, Makovský, Bedřich Stefan, and Wichterlová, all of whom had affinities with surrealism.<sup>57</sup> Nezval’s discussion of the exhibition directly related the work of both Toyen and Štyrský to surrealism.<sup>58</sup>

Writer and caricaturist Adolf Hoffmeister, though never a member of the Prague surrealist group, was a staunch supporter of the movement. *Rozpravy Aventina* published his group interview of the Czech Poesie 1932 exhibitors (Toyen, he noted, was silent, while Štyrský was absent), and *Žijeme* (We Live) printed his detailed discussion of the future organization of

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<sup>55</sup> “Bude to doba pomalého mísení vzduchu, vody, země a ohně, doba oné vysněné syntézy krásy plastické a lyrické. Živočichové budou se mezi sebou volně křížiti a bez dozoru biologů povstanou noví jednorozci a brouci-savci, báječní skopci a tvorové sestrojení z mečů, jehel a dýk, bytosti z vaty, hadích koží, opeřené stromy, animálové slepení z fasciklů nesmrtných děl vášnických a z květináčů, a mnohé jiné oplzlé obludy.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “Radosti ilustrátora knih,” in *Každý z nás stopuje svoji ropuchu. Texty 1923–1940 [Each of Us Is Tracking His Own Toad. Texts 1923–1940]*, ed. Karel Srp [Prague: Thyrus, 1996], 96.)

<sup>56</sup> “Pravím Vám, že přichází strašná doba vizionářů a meditací, doba podobající se té, jež předcházela bezprostředně stvoření.” (Jindřich Štyrský, “Radosti ilustrátora knih,” 96.)

<sup>57</sup> František Šmejkal, “From Lyrical Metaphors,” 66. The exhibition was 27 October–27 November.

<sup>58</sup> Vítězslav Nezval, “Poesie 1932,” in *Dílo 25: Manifesty, eseje, a kritické projevy z let 1931–1941*, reprint, 1933 (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1950), 19.

Prague surrealists.<sup>59</sup> Hoffmeister wrote, “It goes without saying that the organization [French surrealism] has brought new tasks and engaged the French surrealists in the social revolution. Here, where there is no organization, this exhibition is the first step toward positioning the creative element in the people’s confidence and world opinion.”<sup>60</sup> Subsequently, he observed that the Czech group exhibiting at Poesie 1932 “originated separately” with “kindred features” and that their grouping occurred naturally and logically. Hoffmeister regarded the Czech group’s conditions, origin, and history as “completely different” from those of the French group, observing that “it seems not only to live, but also to grow.” He then asked whether Mánes could provide “the same intellectual centralization and support of Surrealism as the air of Paris and the atmosphere of the artistic quarter,” and whether Czech Surrealism would survive “as a sort of artistic commune,” or “find by general agreement a capable leader, such as Breton.”<sup>61</sup>

Not everyone was enamored of Poesie 1932. The reviewer for the nationalist periodical *Fronta* noted that “Surrealism believes in the omnipotence of dreams, it is with psychic automatism, which whatever means make possible to articulate its own genuine functionality, without the control of reason and without any aesthetic or moral preconception.” He felt that “A

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<sup>59</sup> See Adolf Hoffmeister, “Výstava Poesie 1932,” *Rozpravy Aventina* 8, no. 4 (1932): 25, 27; Adolf Hoffmeister, “První pražská podzimní výstava,” *Žijeme* 2, no. 5 (September 1932): 149–51; and Adolf Hoffmeister, “Situační zprava surrealismu,” *Žijeme* 2, no. 9 (January 1933): 269–70; and Lenka Bydžovská, “The Rift Between Surrealism and Socialist Realism,” in *Adolf Hoffmeister*, ed. Karel Srp, trans. Steven Chess, et al. (Prague: Gallery, 2004), 113.

<sup>60</sup> “Je samozřejmé, že organizace přinesla nové úkoly a zařadila francouzské surrealisty do sociální revoluce. U nás, kde není organizace, je tato výstava prvním krokem k umístění výtvarnictví v lidském sebevědomí a světovém názoru.” (Hoffmeister, “První pražská podzimní výstava,” 152)

<sup>61</sup> “Náhlé seskupení, které prokázalo příbuzné znaky, bylo nesporně logickým důkazem hnutí a jeho oprávnění, tím spíše, že právě nebylo věcí spontánního okamžikového souhlasu, výřiku a útoku, ale vývoje jednotlivého...” “Otázka je, zdali Mánes, jako kulturní středisko, poskytne stejnou myšlenkovou centralisaci a oporu surrealismu, jako vzduch Paříže a atmosféra umělecké čtvrti, a zdali český surrealismus udrží se ve formě jakés takés umělecké komuny, nebo najde-li obecným souhlasem schopného vůdce, který by měl býti Bretonem. Prozatím je situace surrealismu taková, že lze říci, že ještě mládne.” Hoffmeister, “Situační zprava surrealismu,” 269–70.

different question is the propagation of this more or less literary-dilettantish movement with the collective of creative artists Mánes.”<sup>62</sup>

All the same, Poesie 1932 was in large part responsible for familiarizing the Czech public with surrealist art and for paving the way for surrealism—both within the official Prague group and outside it—to become arguably the dominant direction in 1930s Czech art.<sup>63</sup>

#### 5.1.4 The Ehrenburg Fracas

[S]urrealism is not just an artistic stance, method, and direction, but also a revolutionary poetic movement, which identifies itself with the marxist-leninist worldview and on the cultural front wants to intervene in the broad social and political question of the open struggle against war, against fascism, against religion, against the bourgeois family and official ideology.— Karel Teige, 1934<sup>64</sup>

By 1933, Nezval, at least, was ready to join forces with Breton. He and Honzl first met with the French surrealists in Paris in 1933. In *Neviditelné Moskve* (Invisible Moscow), Nezval recalled:

That day late in the afternoon we entered the Surrealist publishers on the rue de Clichy. I bought myself Breton’s *Les Vases communicants* and *Le Revolver à cheveux blancs*. [...] At his home at number 42 we learned that André Breton had just left. I’m tired, I’m desolate. I ask Honzl if we can rest in the café on the corner of the square. We enter. We took the first unoccupied table. Across from us sat André Breton.

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<sup>62</sup> “Surrealismus věří ve všemocnost snů, je psychickým automatismem, který jakýmikoliv prostředky umožňuje vyjádřiti svou opravdovou funkčnost, mimo kontrolu rozumu a mimo každou předpojatost estetickou či mravní.” “Jinou otázkou je propagace tohoto více méně literárně-diletanského hnutí spolkem výtvarných umělců Mánes.” (St. Hoblík, “Hvězda nad ‘Mánesem’,” *Fronta* 5, no. 32 [1 December 1932]: 502.)

<sup>63</sup> František Šmejkal, “From Lyrical Metaphors,” 67.

<sup>64</sup> “...ale surrealismus není jen umělecký názor, metoda a směr, nýbrž revoluční poetické hnutí, které se ztotožňuje s marxleninským světovým názorem a na kulturní frontě chce zasahovati do širokých sociálních a politických otázek otevřeným bojem proti válce, proti fašismu, proti náboženství, proti buržoazní rodině a oficiální ideologii.” (Karel Teige, “Deset let surrealismu,” in *Surrealismus v diskusi*, ed. Ladislav Štoll and Karel Teige [Prague: Knihovna Levé fronty, 1934], 8–9.)

‘It’s like a scene from *Nadja*,’ I say to him, he whom I could not but meet in my life, without whom my life would be infinitely poorer and sadder [...]’<sup>65</sup>

They visited Breton the next day, after which Nezval promptly wrote to Breton confirming the Prague desire to pursue “concrete collaboration” with Paris. The letter was almost immediately published in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*.<sup>66</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the Soviet writer Ilya Ehrenburg published an inflammatory column accusing the French surrealists of being indolent bibliophiles who dallied with Marx in order to mask their fondness for sadism and perversion, and especially a program of “masturbation, pederasty, fetishism, exhibitionism, and finally bestiality.” Though Ehrenburg spent much of his own time in cafés, he claimed that the surrealists wasted their time in cafés and bars instead of supporting the unemployed.<sup>67</sup>

The Ehrenburg article originally appeared 17 June 1933, but it did not appear in Czech until October, in the Communist journal *Tvorba* (Creation), when it galvanized opinions regarding surrealism. Shocked responses by members of the avant-garde who had known Ehrenburg since the 1920s promptly followed in the politically independent art journal *Volné směry* (Free Directions).<sup>68</sup> Teige wrote, “Comrade Ilya Ehrenburg, don’t you understand that it is

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<sup>65</sup> “Toho dne pozdě odpoledne jsme vstoupili v rue de Clichy do *Surrealistického nakladatelství*. Koupil jsem si Bretonovy *Les Vases communicants* a *Le Revolver à cheveux blancs*. [...] V domovníctví čísla 42 se dovídáme, že André Breton právě odešel. Jsem unaven, jsem zdrcen. Žádám Honzla, abychom si odpočinuli v kavárně na rohu náměstí. Vstupujeme. Vybrali jsme si první neobsazený stůl. Naproti nám sedí André Breton.

“‘Je to jako scéna z *Nadi*,’ říkám tomu, kterého jsem nemohl nepotkat v svém životě, tomu, bez něhož by byl můj život nekonečně chudší a smutnější [...]” (Vítězslav Nezval, *Neviditelná Moskva*, 16–17.)

<sup>66</sup> See Nezval diaries, LA PNP, and letter to Breton, included in Vítězslav Nezval, “Surrealismus v ČSR (1934),” in *Dílo 25: Manifesty, eseje, a kritické projevy z let 1931–1941* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1950), 70. The letter was *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (no. 5-6, p. 31). There is not much in Nezval’s diary about the encounter with Breton other than that it was exciting. Hoffmeister later described Breton as Nezval’s unhappy love, in contrast to Eluard, whom “he loved as a poet and friend.” This bears consideration since Nezval and Eluard both were to abandon the Bretonian fold for Communism (Hoffmeister, *Čas se nevrací*, 18).

<sup>67</sup> “... jiný program; onanismus, pederastii, fetišismus, exhibicionismus a konečně obcování se zvířaty.” (Ilya Ehrenburg, “Surrealisté,” *Tvorba* 8, no. 41 [12 October 1933]: 645, trans. Ilja Bart.)

<sup>68</sup> See Ehrenburg, “Surrealisté” and *Volné směry* 30 (1933-4).

appropriate that the Surrealists, as revolutionary intellectuals in the west should have a different, primarily destructive role, from that of Soviet intellectuals?” Nezval asked, “Would it not be a lamentable misunderstanding to require from poets, who without exception have a stance under the banner of dialectical materialism, something so problematic as ‘Socialist Realism’; is it not against the spirit of Marxist ideology to subjugate the poet?” Hoffmeister, noting that the surrealists were in conflict with the bourgeoisie, official art, and the police, remarked, “you cannot ban from life women, nonsense, love, dream, the subconscious, vice and chance.”<sup>69</sup>

When Ehrenburg and his wife visited Prague in early 1934, they debated surrealism with the painter Emil Filla, semioticians Jan Mukařovský and Roman Jakobson, writers Ladislav Novomeský, Jan Krejčí, Josef Rybák, and Julius Fučík, and surrealist supporters Nezval, Hoffmeister, and Teige. Ehrenburg insisted that the surrealists were anti-revolutionary and interested primarily in a pornographic approach to sexual deviations, while Hoffmeister, Nezval, and Teige defended surrealism as revolutionary and marxist, concerned with domestic and colonial policy, and resolutely anti-religious, anti-war, and anti-fascist. Neither side budged.<sup>70</sup> Ehrenburg reiterated in print that in his opinion, “socially surrealism is a step backward, antirevolutionary art.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Diskuse a názory, *Volné směry* 30, 1933-1934, 139-150; Karel Teige, “Milý příteli Iljo Ehrenburgu,” 145; Vítězslav Nezval, “Diskuse a názory: K Ehrenburgovu útoku proti surrealismům,” *Volné směry* 30, no. 6 (1933–34): 148; Adolf Hoffmeister, “Diskuse a názory: Můj přítel Ilja Ehrenburg patří na pranýř,” *Volné směry* 30, no. 6 (1933–34): 149–50, translated in Bydžovská, “The Rift Between Surrealism and Socialist Realism,” 114.

<sup>70</sup>R. [Karel Teige], “Ilja Ehrenburg,” *Doba* 1, no. 4 (15 March 1934): 51–2. It appears from Nezval’s diary that this encounter took place the evening of March 1 at the Metro café (Vítězslav Nezval diary, 1 March 1934, LA PNP).

<sup>71</sup> “[S]ociálně je surrealismus krokem dozadu, uměním protirevolučním.” (P.A., “Ilja Ehrenburg v Praze,” *Světovzor* 34, no. 10 [8 March 1934]: 12.)

## 5.2 CHAIN OF HAPPINESS: THE FORMATION OF THE PRAGUE SURREALIST GROUP

It is understandable that the authors of this depraved, colored, and formal sensation invoke Freudian psychoanalysis. Freud, who applied the case of hysteria to all mental events, who from his psychiatric position considers every person more or less crazy, is surprisingly the natural patron saint of all this painting, which awakens also the interest of our psychiatrists in making comparisons between these products of modern painting and the artistic expressions of madmen...—St. Hoblík, 1933<sup>72</sup>

*Surrealism is realism in the dialectical sense.* —Karel Teige, 1934<sup>73</sup>

Nezval's diaries give the impression that, as he would later claim, he was the activating force in forming the Czech surrealist group. Certainly, he played a major role. Honzl and Štyrský, however, were also significant in forming the group, as was, most likely, Toyen. And, though Nezval's diaries are blank for the second half of 1933, and thus give no clue as to the gestation of Prague surrealism, they show that Nezval and Štyrský met nearly every day in early 1934. Nezval also frequently mentioned meeting with Toyen, Bohuslav Brouk, and the composer Jaroslav Ježek during this period. Teige, who joined slightly after the group's founding, was also involved in discussions of surrealism, but had reservations regarding Štyrský and about surrealist estrangement from the Left.<sup>74</sup> The poet Konstantin Biebl, who lived outside Prague, was occasionally mentioned, as was the sculptor Vincenc Makovský (albeit usually in terms of his

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<sup>72</sup>“Je pochopitelno, že autoři těchto zvrácených, barevných a formálních sensací se dovolávají psychoanalysy Freudovy. Freud, který aplikoval případ hysterie na veškeré duševní dění, který ze svého psychiatrického stanoviska považuje každého člověka za menšího nebo většího blázna, je ku podivu přirozeným patronem všeho tohoto malování, jež vzbudilo i zájem našich psychiatrů k tomu, aby činili srovnání mezi těmito produkty moderní malby a výtvarných projevů bláznů...” (St. Hoblík, “Arcidíla 1933 [Procházka nejnovější výstavou ‘Mánesa’],” *Fronta* 6, no. 26 [7 December 1933]: 403–4)

<sup>73</sup> “...surrealismus je realismem v dialektickém smyslu...” (Teige, “Deset let surrealismu,” 55.)

<sup>74</sup>Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Srp, “The Lautréamont Case,” 183.

absence). The other founding members—Forbáth, King (Libuše Jichová) and Kunstadt—were brought in by Nezval but had next to no subsequent involvement with the group.<sup>75</sup>

How active, then, was Toyen herself in the founding of the group? Toyen appears fairly often, but not in the frequent manner that Štyrský does.<sup>76</sup> Given that Toyen was close to Nezval, and that she was less assertive than Štyrský—as well as that both Prague and Paris friends and photos make clear she was frequently on the scene—Toyen must have been present at more of the formative discussions than Nezval’s diaries specify. In fact, Nezval’s diaries show that Toyen was, in a quiet way, very much involved with the actual logistical work of founding the group. For example, she was active in distributing the surrealist flyer at the end of March, and on 30 March, Nezval noted that she had telephoned regarding leaflets going to *Volné směry*. On 3 April, Nezval recorded that he, Štyrský, Brouk, and Toyen had “polemized” about their leaflet with the Communist journalist Julius Fučík. Nezval and Toyen then met with Levá fronta. Likewise, though Nezval only mentioned Štyrský and the Vaničeks (associates of Nezval’s) regarding an evening of automatic drawing at the Metro café, it is unlikely that Toyen was absent.<sup>77</sup>

Once the surrealist group was underway, Nezval’s diaries frequently mentioned Toyen, and although these references do not reveal a great deal about her, they are very useful in gauging her presence within the group and for providing random bits of information. Nezval’s

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<sup>75</sup> Neither Nezval’s diaries nor King’s voluminous letters to him give any indication that these three writers played any real role in the group’s formation or subsequent life. Nezval fond, LA PNP.

<sup>76</sup> While Nezval’s diaries tend to list people with whom he met during the day, he did not always list everyone present at the café table, although from time to time he added that a particular person was “also” there.

<sup>77</sup> As the 13 March through 5 April diary entries were all written on 5 April, it is probable that there are some errors and omissions in his account. Nezval first met Toyen in the early to mid-1920s, and became well acquainted with her at that time. His diaries from the 1920s, however, are both scant and appear to be largely in code, and thus are of little use on any subject, and Toyen is no exception.

diaries, however, are useful only for specific periods, as each year he left as much as six months blank.

Throughout 1934, the Prague group actively promoted itself and its ideas. On 11 May 1934 the surrealists held an evening of lectures at Mánes; Communist writer Ladislav Štoll wrote in *Rudé právo* (Red Truth) that their theoretical underpinnings had little in common with dialectical materialism. Nezval responded, and Štoll replied to Nezval.<sup>78</sup> On 29 May 1934, Levá fronta, to which both Štoll and the surrealists belonged, held an evening lecture-discussion on surrealism at the Municipal Library, which reportedly attracted a thousand listeners. *Rudé právo*'s reporter observed that moderator Ivan Sekanina "expressed great interest in the questions discussed, but underlined that surrealism *is not* the main issue of 1934 and that [the question of] surrealism, like all cultural questions, remains *open* for Levá fronta and the revolutionary movement."<sup>79</sup> Teige, Nezval, Štoll, Kalandra, Spitzer, Honzl, and Famíra then spoke. Nezval defined surrealism as: "a type of activity that wants, in conformity with dialectical materialism and modern psychoanalytic science, to take a directly experimental route to elucidating the processes that give rise to poetry, to research them and to give them the possibility of maximum development and find the laws of the process that gives rise to poetry."<sup>80</sup> The evening led to the

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<sup>78</sup>Iš [Ladislav Štoll], "Večer skupiny surrealistů," *Rudé právo*, 15 May 1934, 4, and Vítězslav Nezval, "K referátu o večeru skupiny surrealistů," *Rudé právo* (17 May 1934): 4.

<sup>79</sup>"Schůze byla zahájena po 8. hodině předsedajícím drem Sekaninou. Tento kladně konstatoval velký zájem o diskutované otázky, ale zdůraznil, že surrealismus *není* hlavním problémem roku 1934 a že surrealismus jako všechny otázky kulturní zůstávají pro Levou frontu a revoluční hnutí *otevřenými*." (fn., "1000 lidí na diskusním večeru surrealistů," *Rudé právo*, no. 49 [30 May 1934]: 4)

<sup>80</sup>"Surrealismus je druhem aktivity, která chce v souhlasu s dialektickým materialismem a moderní vědou psychoanalytickou, přímo experimentální cestou objasnit procesy z nichž se rodí poesie, probadat je a dát jim možnost maximálního rozvíjení a naléztí zákonitost procesu z něž se poesie rodí." fn., "1000 lidí na diskusním večeru surrealistů". Nezval's wording in *Surrealismus v diskusi* was slightly but not significantly different. See Vítězslav Nezval, "O surrealismu," 77.

publication, later that year, of the volume *Surrealismus v diskusi* (Surrealism in Discussion), edited by Teige and Štoll.<sup>81</sup>

The publication of Breton's *Communicating Vessels*, which considered dreams and how dream life can be investigated in terms of dialectical materialism, brought increased Czech interest in surrealism. First published in French in 1932, it appeared in a Czech translation by Nezval and Honzl in 1934, with a xylographic collage cover by Toyen that placed the dreamer in a sarcophageal bed atop a table, near a figure wearing a primitive diving suit (pioneered by Karl Heinrich Klingert in 1797), observed by a bird of prey. The inclusion and prominent placement of the diver wandering barefooted above the dreamer's head suggests descent into the hitherto unexplored depths of the dreamer's unconscious, and hints at sexual arousal via the fortuitous placement of the figure's axe.<sup>82</sup> Communist journalist and surrealist sympathizer Závěš Kalandra soon wrote a detailed analysis of the book's place in marxist thought, with numerous references to Marx and Engels.<sup>83</sup> In 1935 British surrealist-supporter David Gascoyne would observe, "I do not think the book received in France the wide attention it deserved; but when a Czech translation was published recently in Prague, it was received with much enthusiasm..." Gascoyne quoted Kalandra's assessment: "This marvellously poetic surrealist book is at the same time a

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<sup>81</sup> For an overview of some aspects of the publication *Surrealismus v diskusi*, see Noémi Ripka-Schlochow, "A Travers les revues Tchécoslovaques," *Revue Française de Prague* 13, no. 65 (1934): 212–16.

<sup>82</sup> Thanks to Paul K for bringing Klingert's diving suit to my attention at <http://bibliodysey.blogspot.com/2007/04/splintered-remainders.html>.

<sup>83</sup> See Závěš Kalandra, "Čin André Bretona: Pozámky k českému vydání bretonovy knihy 'Spojité nádoby'," *Doba* 1, no. 15–16 (January 1935): 218–22. Kalandra was favorable to Breton's approach, which was perhaps desirable as beside his piece there appeared an ad claiming that recent discussion of surrealism had created a huge interest in this "direction" and noting that the book was by the leader of the French surrealists. The ad, placed by S.V. U. Mánes (publisher of *Spojité nádoby*) on page 221 states: "Několik diskusí o surrealismu na jaře tohoto roku vzbudilo obrovský zájem o tento směr." *Spojité nádoby* is described as "the basis for understanding surrealism and all its areas" and "the ABCs of surrealism" ("základem k pochopení surrealismu a všech jeho oblastí" and "abeceda surrealismu.") Nezval's novel *Monaco* appears second in the ad.

scientific act... whose central importance to the progressive edification of marxist-leninist science should be apparent to all true Marxists.”<sup>84</sup>

In January 1935, the Czech group presented the first Czechoslovak surrealist exhibition.<sup>85</sup>

In the exhibition catalog, Teige reiterated:

SURREALISM IS NOT AN ARTISTIC SCHOOL. To surrealists, art, painting, poetry, and theatrical creation and performance are not the aim, but a tool and a means, one of the ways that can lead to liberation of the human spirit and human life itself, on condition that it identifies itself with the direction of the revolutionary movement of history... The philosophy and world view of surrealism are dialectical materialism... And if the surrealists pronounce the word REVOLUTION, they understand by it exactly the same thing as the followers of that social movement which is founded upon the dialectical materialist world view.<sup>86</sup>

Responses varied. *Rudé Právo*'s reviewer looked favorably, though not uncritically, upon the surrealists' anti-bourgeois outlook and Štyrský's criticisms of marriage and the family, notably in the *Stěhovací kabinet* collages.<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, Hoblík, *Fronta*'s more conservative reviewer, provided a long and satirical piece claiming to have dreamt (inspired by a fairground flyer for an anatomical and pathological museum) of seeing a flyer for the “First exhibition of the surrealist group in the Czechoslovak Republic. Anatomical, psychopathological, pathological **PANOPTICON**.” The imagined flyer continued, “Gallery of the work of world surrealism, which is not an artistic school.” As examples, Hoblík noted Štyrský's *Hermaphrodite* and *Sodom and Gomorrha*, and Toyen's *Magnetic Woman*: “All life-sized. Open human bodies, where can be seen the whole mechanism and structure of the

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<sup>84</sup>David Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935), 123.

<sup>85</sup> See P.A., “Surrealisté se představují”, V.V. [Vojtěch Volavka], “Výtvarné umění,” *Panorama* 13, no. 2 (February 1935): 20. The exhibition ran January 15–February 3.

<sup>86</sup> “První výstava skupina surrealistů v ČSR,” 3–4, quoted in Sayer, “Surrealities,” 100, note 30.

<sup>87</sup>Neč., “Výstava skupiny surrealistů,” *Rudé právo*, no. 15 (18 January 1935): 4.

human body. Abnormality. Perversion. Natural science collections, collections of oneiric (new) and hallucinatory objects, illusion, etc.” Hoblík doubtless spoke for many visitors to the exhibition, and wittily expressed many of the concerns and interests of the Prague surrealists.<sup>88</sup> Around the same time, Hoblík voiced concern regarding the Communist inclinations of some artists and architects associated with SVU Mánes, particularly Štyrský, Toyen, Makovský, Hoffmeister, Honzík, and Feuerstein.<sup>89</sup>

### 5.2.1 Breton in Prague

This trip is a revelation. There are some really good people here: first, Nezval and Teige—two painters: Styrsky and Toyen—a very odd woman—they make magnificent paintings and collages—a sculptor: Makovsky.—Paul Eluard, April 1935<sup>90</sup>

The French surrealists, naturally, wanted to see first-hand what was happening in Prague. After a lengthy correspondence with Nezval, Breton, his wife Jacqueline Lamba, and Paul Eluard, accompanied by Josef Šíma, arrived in Prague on 27 March 1935 and stayed until 10 April, lodging at the elegant Hotel Paříž (Hotel Paris). During their visit, Breton gave three lectures in Prague: one at Mánes on “The Surrealist Position of the Object,” with slides (Eluard estimated 700 attendees); a political one to Levá fronta (Eluard also spoke there, then recited some poems to an estimated 350 people); and one to philosophy students with extracts from “What is

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<sup>88</sup> “První výstava skupiny surrealistů v ČSR. Anatomické, psychopatické, patologické P A N O P T I K U M.” “Galerie světových děl surrealismu, který není uměleckou školou.” “Vše v životní velikosti. Otevřená lidská těla, kde možno viděti celé ústrojí a složení těla lidského. Abnormality. Zrůdnosti. Sbírký přírodovědecké, sbírky onirických (snových) a halucinačních objektů, iluse, atd.” (St. Hoblík, “Sen noci Svatomatějské,” *Fronta* 7, no. 29 [7 March 1935]: 355–56)

<sup>89</sup> SVU Mánes appears to have been a hotspot of controversy in late 1934 and early 1935. (St. Hoblík, “Je ‘Mánes’ kulturní a nepolitický spolek?” *Fronta* 7, no. 23 [24 January 1935]: 281).

<sup>90</sup> “Ce voyage est une révélation. Il y a ici quelques gens très bien: d’abord Nezval et Teige—deux peintres: Styrsky et Toyen—une très curieuse femme—font des tableaux et des collages magnifiques—un sculpteur: Makovsky.” (Letter of 7 or 8 April 1935, in Paul Eluard, *Lettres à Gala, 1924–1948* [Paris: Gallimard, 1984], 252.)

surrealism?” (Eluard observed, “250 people—when [Henri] Bergson had only 50”—suggesting that surrealism had replaced Bergsonian philosophy.) Breton also lectured on the object to some 500 people in Brno. Breton and Eluard both spoke on the radio as well.<sup>91</sup> Friendship between the two groups was cemented on this trip.<sup>92</sup> The Czechs made every effort to fete the French; Eluard wrote Gala:

Our pictures in the papers, highly laudatory articles in the Communist papers, interviews, I think that Prague is our gateway to Moscow. But according to opinion here, we’ll have to wait a year. We live admirably here. They don’t let us spend anything. Delirious admiration and affection. On the street, workers recognize us from our photos. In the Jewish museum, the guard, a young student, thanks us for coming, etc. ...<sup>93</sup>

While the emotional connection was strong, both groups appear to have used the visit to stress the glories of surrealism to the outside world. While the French visitors, being unable to speak Czech, transmitted a garbled version of surrealism’s position in Czechoslovakia, it was a version that decidedly aggrandized surrealism. Eluard wrote:

[T]hough few in number, their radiance and their influence are so great that they are constantly obliged to rein them in, to discourage them. Their situation in the Communist party is exceptional. Teige directs the only Communist review in Czechoslovakia. In every issue there are one or two articles on surrealism. They were at the Writers’ Congress in Moscow and defended surrealism with furious energy. They are true poets, full of heart and originality.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup>Eluard, *Lettres à Gala*, 253.

<sup>92</sup>Breton, for example, wrote that the amazing flora in Santa Cruz “ne me fait pas oublier Prague et les délices d’une existence quotidienne avec vous, avec tous nos amis.” (André Breton to Vítězslav Nezval, 13 May 1935, Nezval fond, LA PNP. This letter is published in Czech translation in Vítězslav Nezval, *Depeše z konce tisíciletí: Korespondence Vítězslava Nezvala*, ed. Marie Krulichová, Milena Vinařová, and Lubomír Tomek, afterword by Milan Blahynka, Edice Vzpomínky a Korespondence [Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1981], 84.)

<sup>93</sup>“Nos photos dans les journaux, des articles très élogieux dans les journaux communistes, des interviews, je crois que Prague est pour nous la porte de Moscou. Mais de l’avis d’ici, il nous faut attendre un an. Nous vivons admirablement ici. On ne nous laisse rien dépenser. Une admiration et une affection délirantes. Dans la rue, des ouvriers nous reconnaissent d’après des photos. Au musée juif, le gardien, un jeune étudiant nous remercie de venir, etc...” (Eluard, *Lettres à Gala*, 253.)

<sup>94</sup>“Mais, quoique peu nombreux, leur rayonnement et leur influence sont si grands qu’ils sont obligés de constamment les freiner, les décourager. Leur situation dans le parti communiste est exceptionnelle. Teige dirige la seule revue communiste de Tchécoslovaquie. Dans chaque numéro il y a un ou des articles sur le surréalisme. Ils

This was something of an exaggeration. While the Prague group was well known and influential in Czechoslovakia, it was hardly dominant, nor was Teige's *Doba* the sole example of a Communist magazine. The Czech group was, in fact, working hard for primacy in a Communist milieu whose activists leaned toward socialist realism and were more interested in the German and Spanish situations than in the unconscious.

In closing his letter to Gala, Eluard reiterated his exaggerated impression of surrealist influence in Czechoslovakia: "The activity of the surrealists here has been enormous. Nezval has written 50 books. He's one of the 2 greatest Czech writers. Endless conferences, theater, revues. We're much more famous here than in France."<sup>95</sup>

At Mánes, noting the publication

of comprehensive and well-documented texts such as *Svět, který voní* by Karel Teige, the recent Czech translation of my *Nadja* and *Les Vases communicants*, various conflicting lectures given by our friends in Prague, the strictly objective account in *Surréalismus v diskusi* of the arguments engendered by surrealism in recent years, various exhibitions of painting and sculpture, and finally the recent founding of the magazine *Surréalismus*, edited by Vítězslav Nezval,

Breton concluded that he was "speaking to a mostly very well-informed audience."<sup>96</sup>

Breton, of course, could not read the poetist *Svět, který voní* (Fragrant World), nor the polemical essays in *Surréalismus v diskusi*. All the same, he stressed the "perfect agreement" of his ideas with those of Nezval and Teige—an agreement which he claimed, exaggerating like Eluard, had existed "for many years"—and stated, "Their efforts here have completely clarified

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étaient au congrès des Écrivains à Moscou et ont défendu le surréalisme avec acharnement. Ce sont de vrais poètes, pleins de c<sup>TM</sup>ur et d'originalité." Eluard, *Lettres à Gala*, 252–53.

<sup>95</sup> "L'activité des surréalistes ici a été énorme. Nezval a écrit 50 livres. C'est un des 2 plus grands écrivains tchèques. Sans cesse des conférences, du théâtre, des revues. Nous sommes bien plus célèbres ici qu'en France." (Eluard, *Lettres à Gala*, 254).

<sup>96</sup>Breton, "The Automatic Message," 160–61.

the origins and stages of the surrealist movement in France, a movement whose development they have continued to monitor intimately.” Nothing, he repeated, distinguished the activities of the Prague surrealist group, in whatever field, from his own. “It is through an ever strengthening bond which unites us—just as it unites us to a shifting nucleus of poets and artists either forming or established in other countries—that a truly concerted action will be taken.”<sup>97</sup> Breton’s endorsement of the Prague group was important to both groups, but overstated the similarities between Prague and Paris.

The Czechs, on their part, played up the French surrealists’ visit in order to show doubters in Levá fronta and elsewhere in the Party, as well as in the larger cultural scene, the importance of surrealism and to prove that they were, indeed, all utterly in accord, never mind how Hoblík and some of the Czech cartoonists might caricature them.

The Prague group and Czech reception of surrealism were clearly seen as feathers in the cap of the French group and were used as propaganda toward the formation of other international surrealist groups; David Gascoyne, who hoped to see the establishment of a British group, not only quoted from Kalandra’s article on *Communicating Vessels* but also noted that Breton and Eluard’s 1935 Prague lectures “to various left-wing organisations. [...] were extremely well received” and that the visit had resulted in the first international surrealist bulletin.<sup>98</sup>

The Prague and Paris surrealists thus collaborated in the creation of an imaginary identical surrealism. Publicity-wise, this benefited both groups as they strove to prove their importance and influence to the skeptical outside world, but it exaggerated the Prague group’s similarity, especially in its development, to that of the Paris group. This helped the French in

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<sup>97</sup>Breton, “The Automatic Message,” 160.

<sup>98</sup>Gascoyne, *A Short Survey of Surrealism*, 128.

their new project of building an international surrealism and shored up the Czechs' position at home as a group to reckon with.

### 5.2.2 Czechs in Paris

Shortly after the French surrealists went home, the Czechs paid them a return visit. Toyen and Štyrský had gone to Paris in spring 1935 to research Štyrský's book on the Marquis de Sade, and in June they made a return trip with Nezval, who was a delegate to the *Congres International des Ecrivains pour la Défense de la Culture*.<sup>99</sup>

From the standpoint of the Czechs, the visit was important for the acquaintance made or improved with a large number of fellow surrealists. Nezval and Toyen in particular took on a demanding schedule while Štyrský spent more time on his own photographing the city, especially the Père Lachaise cemetery.<sup>100</sup> It was also personally significant due to Štyrský's hospitalization and near-death from a heart problem. And, from the standpoint of international surrealism, it was momentous, due to events surrounding Breton's presence at the Congress. The unfortunate outcome for the surrealists, while perhaps inevitable given the political climate, was in part the result of Ilya Ehrenburg's 1933 attack on the group and his longstanding personal acquaintance with the Czech surrealists.

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<sup>99</sup>František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors," 67. Štyrský's unfinished manuscript was posthumously published as Jindřich Štyrský, "Markýz de Sade". Nezval's diary describes the three meeting at Prague's main train station prior to setting off. Nezval diary, 12 June 1935, Nezval fond, LA PNP.

<sup>100</sup>Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 26.

Early one evening, Toyen noticed Ehrenburg leaving a café, and mentioned this to Nezval. Overhearing, Breton asked “Where is he?” and proceeded to confront Ehrenburg, slapping the Soviet writer in the face in retaliation for his earlier insults.<sup>101</sup>

Breton was scheduled to address the Congress, but as Ehrenburg was head of the Soviet delegation, he made sure that Breton was not allowed to speak. Surrealist poet René Crevel, who had failed to reconcile Ehrenburg to Breton’s participation, then committed suicide.<sup>102</sup> Nezval, too, was maneuvered out of participating—apparently because he was a surrealist and opposed social realism.<sup>103</sup> Toyen thus played an important if unfortunate and perhaps unintentional role in the political history of surrealism by bringing Ehrenburg to Breton’s attention at this singularly unpropitious juncture.

Nezval’s diary gives an unusual degree of detail regarding the places the Czechs went in Paris and the many people with whom they met, but provides little sense of what sort of conversations took place other than that Toyen and Štyrský fought at least twice before Štyrský’s hospitalization. One thing that becomes clear from the diary is that Toyen’s longstanding friendship with Benjamin Péret must have begun on this trip.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, comparison of Nezval’s 1935 diary and his *Ulice Gît-le-cœur* (The Street Gît-le-cœur) quickly shows that although nowhere did he devote much attention to the specifics of his friendships with Štyrský and Toyen, they are very much present in the diary while in the “novel”

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<sup>101</sup>Vítězslav Nezval, *Ulice Gît-le-Cœur* (Prague: Fr. Borovy, 1936), 14.

<sup>102</sup>Roger Shattuck, “Writers for the Defense of Culture,” *Partisan Review* 51, no. 3 (1984): 406–7, and Herbert R. Lottman, *The Left Bank: Writers, Artists, and Politics from the Popular Front to the Cold War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), 3–4 for an account of Breton’s encounter with Ehrenburg and the subsequent failure of Crevel to reconcile Ehrenburg to Breton’s participation in the Congress (Crevel committed suicide that night). Nezval’s diary indicates that he, Toyen, and Štyrský went to Crevel’s funeral, expecting scandal. Nezval diary, 22 June 1935, Nezval fond, LA PNP.

<sup>103</sup>Shattuck, “Writers for the Defense of Culture,” 404.

<sup>104</sup>Nezval diary, 13 June to 5 July 1935, Nezval fond, LA PNP. On 17 June 1935—the day following a big fight between Štyrský and Toyen—Nezval noted that he had written an article about them, “stupid like an obituary.” It appears that this is the article that subsequently appeared in *Cahiers d’Art*.

they are merely background figures in his idealized tale of visiting the French surrealists and attending the Congress. Štyrský's brush with death is given emotional importance in *Ulice*, but Štyrský himself is a mere cipher, a figure cherished by Nezval but without personality or separate activities. Nor were the fights between Štyrský and Toyen alluded to in *Ulice*; perhaps these were not uncommon, or perhaps Nezval wanted to preserve the public impression of the two as an inseparable duo. In *Ulice*, Nezval emphasized his interactions with non-Czechs, rather than giving the more collective account of the Prague surrealists' experience in Paris that one might expect from a leader of the Prague group.

### 5.2.3 Czech Precursors

Mácha's diary has been expurgated so that dreamy-eyed youths admiring his statue in Prague's Petřín Park will not be disillusioned. But as Puškin once said, literature [...] cannot take fifteen-year-old girls into account. And fifteen-year-old girls read much more dangerous things than Mácha's diary anyway.—Roman Jakobson, 1933–34<sup>105</sup>

Despite avant-garde scorn for the National Revival, there apparently remained a need for the Prague surrealists to establish a Czech and Czech-language literary heritage, presumably to avoid criticism that surrealism was French and lacked roots elsewhere. Karel Hynek Mácha (1810–1836) proved the best candidate.<sup>106</sup> The grim and “gothic” Mácha had not been of particular

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<sup>105</sup>Roman Jakobson, “What Is Poetry,” in *Language in Literature*, ed. K. Pomorska and Stephen Rudy, trans. Michael Heim (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 371.

<sup>106</sup> While Mácha is now considered a part of the National Revival, and indeed belongs in this category as a Czech who abandoned the German language of his education to write in the newly resurrected Czech literary language, his long poem *May* was badly received in 1836, being neither political nor patriotic, nor nationalist in anything but its celebration of the Bohemian landscape. *Maj* (May) was a tour-de-force evocation of the final night of the condemned “forest lord” Vilém, who murdered his father for preceding him in the bed of his beloved Jarmila. For a discussion of Mácha and May, see Marcela Sulak, “Introduction,” in *May*, bilingual ed., trans. Marcela Sulak, by Karel Hynek Mácha (Prague: Twisted Spoon Press, 2005), 7–16. Sulak notes that Pan-Slavicists “felt betrayed” by

interest to Devětsil, but beginning in 1934 he took on an important role for both Nezval and Teige, and consequently for the group as a whole. Not only was Mácha an important Romantic poet, but he predated Lautréamont, thus subtly suggesting that the Czechs were once again ahead of the French.<sup>107</sup>

Mácha and his legacy became something of a *cause célèbre* when the poet was widely feted on the occasion of his centenary in 1936. The Prague surrealists argued that Mácha was a “revolutionary romantic” and not akin to such “Biedermeier” contemporaries as F. L. Čelakovský, Jaromír Erben, and František Palácý.<sup>108</sup> The surrealists, who despised the nationalist hoopla surrounding the poet, brought out their own volume of essays about him, *Ani labuť ani Lúna* (Neither Swan nor Moon), to which Toyen and Štyrský contributed several collages.<sup>109</sup>

Toyen’s collages for *Ani labuť ani Lúna* contrast with Štyrský’s in that Toyen used xylographic images in a style similar to that pioneered by Ernst, while Štyrský, who had been exploring collage extensively, used full-color magazine imagery in a manner solely his own. Toyen’s collages for this volume, however, while stylistically inspired by Ernst, predict some of her later themes, such as foxes, the talons of birds of prey, the use of hanging or otherwise empty garments, and picture frames through which one sees the unexpected. Toyen’s imagery relates to *Maj* most directly in its expression of wild nocturnal scenery, which echoes the condemned Vilém’s passionate evocation of the night forest from the confines of his prison cell.

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the poem’s lack of nationalism and disliked its “sensationalistic themes” but that Mácha’s skillful use of iambic tetrameter and melodic language have ensured its place as one of the great works of Czech literature.

<sup>107</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 266–69.

<sup>108</sup>Teige, “Revoluční romantik K. H. Mácha,” 18–19.

<sup>109</sup> The title of the surrealist volume comes from one of Mácha’s short poems. The word *Lúna*, while always translated as “moon” (*luna* in modern Czech), also suggests a literary term for womb, *lúno*, whose plural is *lúna*.

Bohuslav Brouk's essay for *Ani labuť* caused a stir when bibliophile and publisher Karel Janský, owner of Mácha's coded diary, discovered that Roman Jakobson had shown Brouk the diary.<sup>110</sup> Brouk's Freudian remarks were based upon the diary's sexual content, and furthermore *Ani labuť* included what Janský considered insulting remarks about collectors of Máchiana. Janský sued, the book gained publicity, and eventually Brouk was required to publish an apology of sorts.<sup>111</sup> By this time, Brouk was enough of a public figure to be described in *Čin* as "the well-known surrealist theoretician."<sup>112</sup> The same author noted, not without a touch of sarcasm, that Brouk's (and other surrealists') interest in Mácha's intimate thoughts was not surprising considering that Brouk's name had become famous for his scientific work, in particular "the first masturbation manual in the Czech language."<sup>113</sup>

Mácha was not the only Czech to be seen as a precursor to surrealism, although he was the only one generally accepted by the group. Nezval also considered the early twentieth-century Catholic writer Jakub Deml one.<sup>114</sup> Deml himself, though decidedly not a surrealist, recognized similarities between his own practices and those of the surrealists, although on the one hand he claimed that surrealism was "nothing new" and on the other that while it might be possible in

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<sup>110</sup> Jakobson made his own remarks on Mácha's diary in "Co je poesie?" Like Brouk, he regarded Mácha as "a classic Oedipal case." (Jakobson, "What Is Poetry," 371–75.)

<sup>111</sup> This brouhaha is detailed in the files of Kamill Ressler, who represented Janský. The case is briefly discussed in Václav Černý's memoirs; Černý describes Brouk as "a naive Anabaptist and half-boyish fanatic of freudism and surrealism, great friend of Štyrský and Toyen" ("novokřtěneckého naivního a polochlapeckého fanatika freudismu a surrealismu, velkého přítele Štyrského a Toyen") and gives the impression that the affair was not taken too seriously by non-Mácha-collectors (Černý, *Paměti I*, 301–2). Additional coverage can be found in Karel Polák, "Mácha surrealistický," *Právo lidu* 45, no. 155 (4 July 1936): 6, Vítězslav Tichý, "Ani labuť ani Lůna," *Čin: list pro kulturní a veřejné otázky* 8, no. 17 (13 August 1936): 264–5, and Václav Černý, "Dva hlasy z hlubin psychoanalýzy," *Literární noviny* 8, no. 21 (17 July 1936): 5, It was satirized in František Bidlo, illus., "Mácha bez konce," *Magazin dp* 4, no. 2 (September 1936): 64, and František Bidlo, illus., "Nezaručené prázdninové zprávy," *Literární noviny* 8, no. 21 (17 July 1936): 4.

<sup>112</sup> "... známý surrealistický teoretik Brouk..." (Tichý, "Ani labuť ani Lůna," 264.)

<sup>113</sup> "[P]rvní učebnice onanie v češtině." (Tichý, "Ani labuť ani Lůna," 265.)

<sup>114</sup> See Vítězslav Nezval, "Básník," *Tvar: Měsíčník pro umění a kritiku* 2 (1928): 288–89, and Rostinsky, "Jakub Deml's Proximity," 59–60.

painting, it was senseless in literature.<sup>115</sup> As Deml emphasized the “programatic” aspect of dream recording while the surrealists and some of the Romantics stressed spontaneity and suppression of reason in their exploration of dreams, the extremely different goals of Deml and the surrealists make it interesting that Nezval called Deml—apart from Mácha—“the only precursor of Czech Surrealism.”<sup>116</sup>

### 5.3 INVENTING AN INTERNATIONAL IDENTITY

At one table the surrealists with Nezval; opposite them, the socialist-realist block; Levá fronta from sympathy is close to the circle of people playing Russian billiards; there is even a table of Russian emigrés led by General Pavlenka. The Metro is in sum a café of all Slavs. The writers Vančura, Vachek, and Konrád are always sitting, unorganized.—*Světazor*, 1936<sup>117</sup>

In the 1920s, Devětsil had eagerly and perhaps even anxiously sought an identity as an internationally rather than Czech-focused movement. In general, this internationalist stance carried through into surrealism, but in a far less obvious manner due to a much-changed European situation and a different set of domestic concerns. The shift from twenty-somethings making international artistic contacts in an optimistic, prosperous period, to thirty-somethings retrenching during a world economic crisis, growing conservatism, and rising fascism should not

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<sup>115</sup> “Ale co bylo možno v malířství, nemusí mítí smysl a rozum v literatuře. To je jiná sféra. Ostatně surrealism není nic nového, má jej netoliko Francis James (sic), nýbrž už i Shakespeare, jenže u Shakespeare mluví tím jazykem jen blázní.” (Jakub Deml, *Mé svědectví o Otokaru Březinovi* [Olomouc: Votobia, 1994], 406.)

<sup>116</sup> “Jakub Deml je mimo Karla Hynka Máchu jediným předchůdcem českého surrealismu...” (Vítězslav Nezval, *Moderní básnické směry* [Prague: Dědictví Komenského, 1937], 34–35.) See also Rostinsky, “Jakub Deml’s Proximity,” 99.

<sup>117</sup> “U jednoho stolu surrealisté s Nezvaem, naproti socialistické-realistický blok, Levá fronta ze sympatie vedle kroužku hráčů ruského kulečnicku, nechybí ani stůl ruských emigrantů s generálem Pavlenkou v čele. Metro je dokonce kavárnou všeslovanskou. Neorganisován sedává spisovatel Vančura, Vachek a Konrád.” (“Kavárna na hlavní třídě,” *Světazor* 36, no. 7 [13 February 1936]: 109.)

be underestimated. The Prague surrealists, especially Teige, had already made the acquaintance of avant-gardists throughout Europe, but at this juncture, politics and personal interest directed them primarily toward France and the Soviet Union.<sup>118</sup> What then was their relationship to these very different cultural centers?

Deborah Garfinkle emphasizes that rather than envision international surrealism as a movement in thrall to a Parisian center, we should keep in mind the freedom possible to surrealist groups distant from the center and outside its scrutiny.<sup>119</sup> Certainly, the Prague group did not feel obliged to copy Bretonian surrealism, something that is immediately clear from its inclusion of music and theater. However, Garfinkle posits that a Czech strategy of “assimilating and adapting foreign elements” enabled Prague surrealism to negotiate contradictions that the Paris group could not; she argues that French and Soviet culture “were not rivals” in central, culturally neutral Czechoslovakia.<sup>120</sup> This is a more problematic assertion. French and Soviet culture were indeed rivals in Czech culture, where intellectuals and artists sought, ultimately without success, to balance interest in the two. Soviet culture was not simply contrasted to a broadly defined western capitalist culture, but was particularly envisioned as competing with seductive French culture, as Fučík made clear in his afterword to Seifert’s *The Nightingale Sings Poorly* (see Chapter 2).<sup>121</sup> The tendency to envision Czech culture as centered and syncretic, though it is founded in certain historical realities, does, as Witkovsky reminds us, grow out of essentializing notions of a “crossroads culture” that go back to the National Revivalists and

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<sup>118</sup> While the majority of Teige’s papers are believed lost, his surviving correspondence includes letters from Léger, Marinetti, Hannes Meyer, Neutra, Ozenfant, Prampolini, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Soupault, Mart and Lotte Stam, van Doesburg, and others.

<sup>119</sup> See Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 5.

<sup>120</sup> Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 9–10.

<sup>121</sup> Julius Fučík, “Afterword to *The Nightingale Sings Poorly*,” in Seifert, *The Early Poetry of Jaroslav Seifert*, 204–5.

Herder's concept of the center as harmonious synthesis.<sup>122</sup> In fact, while politically the Czech surrealists inclined toward Moscow, artistically, most of them (and particularly Toyen and Štyrský) looked to Paris and their own Central European culture.

Garfinkle also characterizes Teige and Nezval as opposing forces of intellect versus imagination, cosmopolitan versus local, rational versus mythic, Olympus-striving versus human-centered, and even as Moscow moving toward Paris and Paris moving toward Moscow.<sup>123</sup> In this formulation, she regards the story of Czech surrealism as a tragedy of two brilliant opposing forces, the critic and the poet.<sup>124</sup> While this assessment has a certain dramatic appeal, it oversimplifies both the dynamics of the group and the characters of Teige and Nezval. These two writers, because of their ability to pour forth staggering amounts of text, have tended to steal the theoretical limelight from the other active members of the group, of whom Štyrský, Honzl, and Brouk were also prolific and significant writers.<sup>125</sup> The theoretical contributions of Toyen and Ježek, the remaining core members, are now relatively opaque to us, because we do not know their contributions to surrealist discussions, but these cannot have been negligible. Ježek, a busy composer and conductor who suffered from severe congenital health problems, was perhaps less actively involved, but Toyen was deeply involved in the group from its outset until its wartime scattering. A group with at least six highly creative and intensely committed participants cannot be reduced to two voices.

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<sup>122</sup> Witkovsky cites and builds on the work of Vladimír Macura, who showed the persistence of the idea of the ideal center or core in Czech thought from Jungmann and Palacký to Kundera (Matthew W. Witkovsky, "The Cage of the Center," 209–11).

<sup>123</sup> Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 22.

<sup>124</sup> Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 23.

<sup>125</sup> Biebl was an important poet, but I am not aware of his producing any texts that could be considered to be theoretical or programmatic.

Prague surrealism was, however, to some extent an opportunity for the international movement to transcend francocentrism.<sup>126</sup> The Prague group appears to have been surrealism's first and most significant growth outside of the francophone world of France and Belgium. While surrealist activity was also occurring in Yugoslavia, Britain, and elsewhere, the Prague group was probably the most cohesive, mature, and theoretically focussed of the non-francophone cells.

Czech intellectuals and cultural figures outside the surrealist group clearly saw surrealism as an important modernist direction, but for the most part were not drawn into its orbit during the 1930s. The group's active members were all significant figures in the Prague cultural world, but their ideas were not representative of interwar Czech literature or art as a whole. At the same time, the Prague surrealists were by no means an isolated group of eccentrics. Other surrealist-inclined groups formed within Czechoslovakia, and many artists developed in a surrealist direction on their own.<sup>127</sup> Surrealist theater, too, as Šmejkal points out, was of major importance in Czechoslovakia, including not just Honzl's productions, but also E. F. Burian's group, which embraced surrealism in 1936.<sup>128</sup>

Did 1935 mark a high point for international surrealism, because in Czechoslovakia Breton was able to lecture to large audiences of interested non-surrealists? Perhaps, from the international standpoint. Breton could indeed lecture to *Levá fronta*, which was closely tied to the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSCĚ), despite his stormy relationship with the French Communist Party (PCF). This does not mean, however, that the surrealists' relationship with

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<sup>126</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 24.

<sup>127</sup> Devětsil-generation artists to move in a surrealist direction included František Janoušek, František Muzika, Alois Wachsman, František Vobecký, Zdeněk Rykr, Hana Wichterlová, and Josef Wagner. Younger artists allied with critic Jindřich Chaloupecký included František Gross, František Hudeček, Ladislav Živý, and Miroslav Hák. During the Nazi occupation, additional groups formed, notably *Skupina Ra* (František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors," 67, 83 note 17).

<sup>128</sup> The D36 Theater honored the Prague surrealists on the hundredth anniversary of the poet Máchá's death in 1936, and subsequently used surrealist techniques in their productions (František Šmejkal, "From Lyrical Metaphors," 68).

Levá fronta was always cozy; members of Levá fronta criticized the surrealists with some frequency. The hostility of these critiques, admittedly, is hard to assess. Seen from the outside, they seem harsh. At the same time, the interwar Czechoslovak avant-garde and leftist intellectuals maintained a tightly knit, eternally critical relationship that was already in place by the mid-1920s disputes over Proletarianism. This habit of intertwined comradeship and vitriolic criticism was intensifying by the mid-1930s and would become one of the most striking hallmarks of the postwar Communist state.

#### 5.4 *DANGEROUS HOUR: POLITICS AND THE PRAGUE GROUP*

It's really humorous: in the Soviet Union surrealists were denounced, in Paris dismissed, only narrow-minded red Czechs consider it to be revolutionary literature.—S. K. Neumann, 1936<sup>129</sup>

Would you open the door to Lenin?

Toyen: Yes, I would be very pleased to see him.

To Marx?

Toyen: Yes, in the friendliest way.<sup>130</sup>

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), though strong, owed most of its appeal during the interwar period to its opposition to capitalism. Its hostility to parliamentary democracy, the Czechoslovak state, and the highly popular T. G. Masaryk all militated against acceptance by the greater populace. Only in the mid-1930s, after it adopted a more nationalist tone, a willingness to

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<sup>129</sup> “Je to vlastně legrace: v Sovětském svazu surrealisty odsoudili, v Paříži je vyhodili, jen rudí Čecháčkové pokládají to za revoluční literaturu.” (S. K. Neumann to editors at Fr. Borový, 13 March 1936, copy in Štoll fond, AV ČR.)

<sup>130</sup> Surrealist Inquiry: Would You Open the Door? *Médium: Communication surréaliste* (1953), translated by Franklin Rosemont, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 251..

work with other parties, and a desire to defend Czechoslovakia against fascism, did it begin to lay the groundwork for widespread support of its larger goals.<sup>131</sup>

Communist attempts to fragment the avant-garde were launched at the Kharkov Conference on Revolutionary Proletarian Literature in 1930, where “revolutionary writers” criticized Devětsil and Slovak avant-gardists, an effort that soon had echoes in *Levá fronta*.<sup>132</sup> By 1931, Communist writer Ladislav Štoll was excoriating the new Štyrský-Teige-Brouk-Obrtel flyer *Rok* as a mixed-up mess of counterrevolutionary demagoguery posing as revolutionary literature.<sup>133</sup> French surrealists Louis Aragon and Georges Sadoul, who participated at Kharkov, soon went—under some duress—in a more stringently Communist direction that ultimately resulted in Aragon’s breaking with the surrealists.<sup>134</sup> Surrealists in both France and Czechoslovakia, however, continued to believe that it might be possible to work in tandem with the Communists.

In 1934 Nezval attempted to convince the Communist International that surrealism was a revolutionary art form and compatible with historical materialism, but Ilya Ehrenburg claimed he was considered naïve and insufficiently orthodox.<sup>135</sup> Tension between adherents of socialist realism and those who wished to leave room for surrealism and other forms of less obviously tendentious art heated up in the mid-1930s. The Czechoslovak situation was no exception, and

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<sup>131</sup>H. Gordon Skilling, “Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,” *Slavic Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1961): 654–5.

<sup>132</sup>Karel Šrp, “Teige in the Twenties,” in *Karel Teige/1900–1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, ed. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999), 273, Ladislav Štoll, “Lidé v ‘laboratoři’,” *Levá fronta* 1, no. 8 (15 January 1931): 1–2. See also Štoll’s complaints about Western avant-garde films as impotent bourgeois productions (Ladislav Štoll, “‘Avantgardní filmy’,” *Levá fronta* 1, no. 14 [26 February 1931]: 3).

<sup>133</sup>Štoll’s venom against *Rok* is astonishing, considering that Teige and perhaps others involved in *Rok* were *Levá fronta* members and an article by Teige appeared in the same issue of *Levá fronta* (l.s. [Ladislav Štoll], “Časopisy: Rok,” *Levá fronta* 2, no. 2 [October 1931]: 57–58).

<sup>134</sup>Helena Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism* (New York: Paragon House, 1988), 97–118.

<sup>135</sup>Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism*, 127–8. Soupault, perhaps a less biased source than Ehrenburg, also recalled Nezval as “a great poet whose naiveté was proverbial.” (“...un très grand poète dont la naïveté était proverbiale.” Soupault, *Vingt Mille et un Jours*, 207)

leftist publications debated the issue following the Moscow writers' and theater festival of 1934.<sup>136</sup> In a *Levá fronta* discussion of socialist realism, Teige actually argued that surrealism was the truest form of socialist realism, because unlike socialist realism, it dealt with psychological content.<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, part of the reason the Prague group sought a closer relationship with the Parisian group in 1935 was that the Czechs found themselves having the same difficulties with the Communist Party as the French were having. The Czechs announced, in the bilingual *Bulletin international du surréalisme*, that they proclaimed their solidarity with those ready to fight in the ranks of the revolutionary proletariat but that they would retain their right to maintain the independence of their experimental methods.<sup>138</sup> The Prague group's relationship with Czechoslovak leftists and Communists, while perhaps more cordial than that of the French, was

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<sup>136</sup> *Doba*, edited by Teige, presented a wealth of articles on the topic. See, for example, Teige's discussion of the architect Kroha's sociological photomontages (R. [Karel Teige], "K sociologii bydlení," *Doba* 1, no. 4 [15 March 1934]: 52–4); Breton on intellectual work and capital (André Breton, "Intelektuální práce a kapitál," *Doba* 1, no. 5 [29 March 1934]: 66–68); the Soviet viewpoint presented by Anatol V. Lunačarskij, "Socialistický realismus: Cesty vývoje sovětského umění," *Doba* 1, no. 13–14 (November 1934): 189–94; an announcement of an evening of discussion of the topic by E. F. Burian, A. Hoffmeister, Kurt Konrad, B. Mencák, Vít. Nezval, K. Teige, B. Václavek, and F. C. Weiskopf "Socialistický realismus," *Doba* 1, no. 13–14 (November 1934): 208\*; a consideration of Breton's views regarding the education of the working class ("Kulturní rozvoj dělnické třídy," *Doba* 1, no. 13–14 [November 1934]: 208); Adolf Hoffmeister, "Socialistický realismus," *Doba* 1, no. 17–18 (March 1935): 251–3\*; Eluard on surrealism and the workers' struggle (Paul Eluard, "Sbratření," *Doba* 1, no. 19–20 [6 November 1935]: ?–261). Teige, for example, writes "Podle názoru surrealistů není surrealismus v rozporu s všeobecnou teorií socialistického realismu. V umělecké praxi trvají však hluboké rozdíly, protože téměř všechna dosavadní praxe socialistického realismu, sovětského i západního, je více či méně poplatná metodám starého popisného realismu. Přes tyto rozdíly, které mezi surrealismem a socialistickým realismem trvají, ovšem může a musí existovati solidární spolupráce stoupenců obou směrů, které se bezvýhradně přihlašují k dialektickomaterialistickému světonázoru a k revolučnímu dělnickému hnutí, ve všech oblastech a otázkách kulturně politických, v boji proti reakci, fašismu a válce." Parenthetically, he notes that *Doba* provides a place for informative articles discussing socialist realism and surrealism (Karel Teige, "O Surrealismu," *Doba* 1, no. 19–20 [1935]: 275). Socialist realism was also the topic of K. Jiříček, "Poznámky k socialistickému realismu," *Index* 8, no. 4 (12 May 1936): 40–43.

<sup>137</sup> fn., "Diskuse o socialistickém realismu," *Rudé právo*, no. 193 (16 November 1934): 4. See also: "Socialistický realismus," *Tvorba* 9, no. 28 (23 November 1934): 436–37; Kurt Konrad, "Doslov k diskusi o socialistickém realismu," *Tvorba* 9, no. 29 (30 November 1934): 452–53; "Vít. Nezval odpovídá K. Konradovi," *Tvorba* 9, no. 30 (8 December 1934): 469–70; Kurt Konrad, "Realismus a romantismus: Doslov k diskusi o socialistickém realismu," *Tvorba* 9, no. 31 (15 December 1934): 483–85.

<sup>138</sup> Editorial, *Bulletin international du surréalisme/Mezinárodní buletin surrealismu*, (April 1935), 3–4.

extremely complex.<sup>139</sup> Interpretations of the actions of Teige and Nezval vary considerably. Some authors, like Ladislav Cabada, regard Teige as the complete Communist ideologue. Karel Srp, on the other hand, regards him as leftist but not definitively Communist, and not perhaps even a Party member.<sup>140</sup> Nezval is more consistently regarded as an unpredictable, emotional, creative force, even as politically naive within Communism—although under Communism, Nezval managed never to be purged, in part due to support from Štoll and others. Czech Communist interest in the surrealists in the 1930s was on the whole cautious and critical. *Rudé právo* announced Breton's visit to Prague in a single paragraph and reported on his lecture at Mánes in the same fashion.<sup>141</sup>

Both Breton and Teige opposed the Moscow show trials of 1935 and 1936. Breton, however, appears to have been quicker to realize the seriousness of the situation. At a surrealist meeting on 3 September 1936, Breton called Stalin “the great negator and the principal enemy of the proletarian revolution, [...] he undertakes not only to falsify the significance of men, but to falsify history—and as the most inexcusable of assassins.”<sup>142</sup>

Tensions in the Czechoslovak cultural world mounted, and in 1937 the Prague Levá fronta group split in two factions, one Stalinist and favoring Socialist Realism, and one, which included the Prague surrealists, insisting on freedom of creation within a unified anti-Fascist

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<sup>139</sup> The details of this relationship are beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Ladislav Cabada, *Intelektuálové a idea komunismu v českých zemích, 1900–1939* (Prague: Institut pro středoevropskou kulturu a politiku, 2000), Pfaff, *Česká Levice*, and the forthcoming dissertation by Shawn Clybor (Northwestern University).

<sup>140</sup> Karel Srp, “Karel Teige in the Twenties,” 22.

<sup>141</sup> “André Breton v Praze,” *Rudé právo*, no. 72 (26 March 1935): 3 and “André Breton v Praze,” *Rudé právo*, no. 77 (31 March 1935): 4; compare with the lengthy treatment given Louis Aragon in F.N., “Basilejské zvony,” *Rudé právo*, no. 75 (29 March 1935): 4, that same week.

<sup>142</sup> “Déclaration lue par André Breton le 3 septembre 1936 au meeting: ‘la Vérité sur le Procès de Moscou’,” in Pierre, *Tracts surréalistes et déclarations collectives I, 1922–1939*, 306–7. I have used the translation in Balakian, *André Breton, Magus of Surrealism*, 169.

front.<sup>143</sup> In 1938, the second Czechoslovak surrealist exhibition provided an opportunity for anti-fascist comment. Jan Mukařovský, who gave a talk at the exhibition, called it “one of the last manifestations of the free spirit in art.”<sup>144</sup> Teige’s Prague exhibition catalog introduction analogized between the Nazi term “entartete Kunst” and the Stalinist term “monstrous formalism.”<sup>145</sup> In other cities, Jakobson, Mukařovský, and leftist architect Jiří Kroha also drew attention to the tension between avant-garde and official art/ideology. Teige was specifically concerned about suppression of artistic freedom and freedom of speech and thought.

Nezval, meanwhile, had decided the Soviet trials were not purges, but something needed to protect the revolution. Thus, he objected to Teige putting an anti-Stalinist flyer into their joint January 1938 Štyrský-Toyen catalog. Nezval, who by this time was moving in a firmly Soviet direction in contrast to Teige’s increasing distance from the Soviets, took Teige’s remarks as inappropriate during the antifascist crisis, and in a stormy meeting on 7 March, attempted to dissolve the group.<sup>146</sup> Two days later, Nezval informed *Haló noviny* (Hello News) that he had disbanded the group. Press reports appeared in the Communist and fascist press on 11 March. The other surrealists met 14 March to discuss the situation, and addressed: 1) their position toward Nezval’s attempt to dissolve the group; 2) his expulsion; 3) the text of a letter to send Breton; 4) publication of the next *Bulletin internationale du surréalisme*; and 5) formulation of the group’s political position. They also criticized Nezval regarding founding members King and Kunstadt, who were “dilettantes,” and Forbáth, who had “nothing in common with

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<sup>143</sup>František Šmejkal, “From Lyrical Metaphors,” 68.

<sup>144</sup>Mukařovský, “Toyen za valky,” quoted in Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 144.

<sup>145</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 323.

<sup>146</sup>Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 312–3.

surrealism.”<sup>147</sup> They informed *Ranní noviny* (Morning News) that Nezval could not disband the group:

...all the members of this group state that Mr. V. Nezval is not entitled to liquidate the Prague Surrealist group, which will endure henceforth and continue in its activity in cooperation with the international Surrealist movement. This collaboration was attested to by the participation of Štyrský and Toyen in the recent international Surrealist exhibition in Paris. Mr. V. Nezval has been unanimously expelled from the Prague Surrealist group.<sup>148</sup>

Two days later, Teige followed up with a screed (also in *Ranní noviny*) elaborating on their position.<sup>149</sup> A piece from Nezval’s perspective appeared simultaneously in *Rudé právo*.<sup>150</sup>

Nezval disdainfully responded to Teige’s piece, saying that he had not broken with surrealism, but rather with the “four-page leaflet” (*čtyřlístek*) that was Teige, Štyrský, Toyen, and Brouk.<sup>151</sup>

Nezval felt that he had founded the group and had the right to disband it. Fučík, never a real ally to the surrealists, agreed that Nezval had every right to do this.<sup>152</sup> Breton pleaded with Nezval to

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<sup>147</sup> “nemá nic společného se surrealismem” See Jiří Brabec and Vratislav Effenberger, “Komentář,” in Teige, *Zápasy o smysl moderní tvorby. Studie z třicátých let*, 661–62; Deborah Helen Garfinkle, “Bridging East and West,” 314.

<sup>148</sup> “...konstatují všichni členové této skupiny, že p. V. Nezval není oprávněn likvidovat pražskou surrealistickou skupinu, která nadále trvá a bude pokračovat ve své činnosti a ve spolupráci s mezinárodním surrealistickým hnutím. Tato spolupráce byla osvědčena i účastí Štyrského a Toyen na nedávné mezinárodní výstavě surrealistické v Paříži. Pan V. Nezval byl z pražské skupiny surrealistické jednomyslně vyloučen.” (“Surrealistická skupina není rozpuštěna,” *Ranní noviny*, no. 62 [15 March 1938]: 4). The surrealists’ announcement was, however, more than slightly overshadowed by the death of the eminent professor and writer Otakar Fischer, not to mention Hitler’s recent annexation of Austria.

<sup>149</sup> This article is also where Teige first writes of Nezval having expressed antisemitic attitudes and asserts that he brought dilettantes into the group (Karel Teige, “K případu Vítězslava Nezvala a surrealistické většiny,” *Ranní noviny*, no. 64 [17 March 1938]: 4).

<sup>150</sup> “Nezval a Surrealisté,” *Rudé Právo* no. 64 (17 March 1938): clipping from Ladislav Štoll fond.

<sup>151</sup> Loose typewritten sheet, Nezval dossier, in Štoll fond, AV ČR.

<sup>152</sup> Vítězslav Nezval, “Nezval o likvidaci skupiny surrealistů,” *Tvorba* 13, no. 11 (18 March 1938): 132; Jef [Julius Fučík], “Nezvalův projev,” *Tvorba* 13, no. 11 (18 March 1938): 132. Fučík regarded the breakup of the surrealist group as a step toward the liquidation of a (Trotskyist) fifth column within the intelligentsia.

reconsider but was ignored.<sup>153</sup> Next, in his polemic *Proti proudu* (Against the Current), Teige enumerated all Nezval's sins<sup>154</sup>

This painful episode consolidated power in the hands of Teige and Štyrský as the remaining major Czech theoreticians of surrealism. It was around the same time as these political disruptions that the young poet Jindřich Heisler joined the group and rapidly became one of its most active members. Heisler would gradually replace Štyrský as Toyen's artistic partner, although during Štyrský's lifetime Heisler was close to both artists. As Heisler was Jewish, however, the Nazi takeover of Czechoslovakia meant that his public role in the group was extremely brief.

While the Prague surrealists regrouped following the rupture with Nezval, the destruction of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany drove them underground, where the group fragmented. After Heisler decided not to register as a non-Aryan in 1941, he hid in Toyen's flat in the Žižkov district until the end of the war.<sup>155</sup> Štyrský died in 1942 of pneumonia compounded by alcoholism and heart trouble, and Ježek, who had gone to America with Voskovec and Werich, died there in 1942 of kidney trouble. Among the group's larger social network, Jiří Jelínek (Remo), died at Mauthausen; the writer Vladislav Vančura and the Communist journalist Julius Fučík were executed in prison; and the journalist Milena Jesenská died at Ravensbrück. Following Štyrský's death, Toyen was the most established of the Czech surrealist painters, to the extent that such a thing was possible or of any importance at that point. While she did, to

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<sup>153</sup> André Breton, letter of 18 March 1938, Nezval fond, LA PNP. Garfinkle suggests, in light of Nezval's singing the praises of both Masaryk and Stalin, that actual politics were of less interest to Nezval than individual greatness, whereas Breton and Teige saw the use of art to monumentalize leaders as a sin against surrealism and culture (Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 322.).

<sup>154</sup> See Karel Teige, *Surrealismus proti proudu* (Společnosti Karla Teiga, 1993), 33–34, and Deborah Helen Garfinkle, "Bridging East and West," 328.

<sup>155</sup> The period during which Heisler was hidden in Toyen's apartment is the subject of the 2005 film *Toyen*. A précis of Heisler's career appears in Bédouin, *Vingt Ans de Surréalisme*, 243–44.

some extent, continue to work during the war, for the most part themes of gender and eroticism were muted, and their expression was closely related to the immediate pre-war period.

To some extent, surrealist activity had distanced the Prague group's members from rest of the Czech avant-garde, as many Czech avant-gardists felt the surrealists had gone in their own separate direction. Seifert, for example, felt that he saw less of Nezval and Teige after they became surrealists. He felt "[T]hey established new friendships with French artists, and Nezval with all his brutal robustness threw himself into the current of the new movement."<sup>156</sup> Literary critic Václav Černý, who was acquainted with the group's members, took a very dim view of Breton and of surrealist attempts to wed Marx and Freud.<sup>157</sup> Štyrský, in turn, had continued to maintain bitterly that the poets of his generation, even fellow-surrealists Nezval and Biebl, had sold out.<sup>158</sup>

After the war, the Czech cultural landscape was very different. Toyen was a well-established artist, but realism was in the ascendant, encouraged by the Communists. Most remaining Czech surrealists and their supporters, indeed, embraced Communism. Teige grew increasingly estranged from the Communists whereas Toyen and Heisler apparently decided against any relationship with Communism, and settled in Paris in 1947. The next chapter, then,

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<sup>156</sup> "Navázali nová přátelství s umělci francouzskými a Nezval s celou svou brutální robustností vrhl se do proudu nového hnutí." (Seifert, *Všecky krásy světa*, 451.)

<sup>157</sup> Černý's memoirs are scathing on this topic (Černý, *Paměti I*, 306–7). It appears that while surrealism never succeeded in impressing him (see Černý, "K surrealistickému manifestu"), his opinion of it sank as Breton attempted to "graft" Freudian psychology and related ideas onto marxism.

<sup>158</sup> "And my generation? It will write its slave songs unto death. F. Halas, you forgot in your poetic biography of Božena Němcová when B. N. had her first period! And Seifert also most stupidly commercialized his love of country. K. Biebl is only an afterthought next to the other two and it is not necessary to concern ourselves with him. And V. Nezval: 'Business is business!'" ("A moje generace? Bude až do smrti psát své písně otroku. F. Halasi, zapomněl jsi ve svém--básnickém životopise--Boženy Němcové, kdy měla B. N. poprvé čmýru! A Seifert také nejstupidněji zkomercializoval svou lásku k vlasti. K. Biebl jest jen výškrabek vedle nich obou a netřeba se jím zabývat. A V. Nezval? Business is business!" Jindřich Štyrský, "Fragmenty z pozůstalosti," in *Každý z nás stopuje svoji ropuchu. Texty 1923–1940 [Each of Us Is Tracking His Own Toad. Texts 1923–1940]*, ed. Karel Srp [Prague: Thyrus, 1996], 137.)

examines her Czech surrealist work in detail and the final chapter analyzes her postwar Paris work in terms of both situation and content.

## 6.0 ICONOGRAPHY, COLLAGE, AND DREAM

I also go TO THE MOTIF. To my dreams. — Jindřich Štyrský<sup>1</sup>

Interpretive delirium begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the *forest of symbols*. —André Breton, 1937<sup>2</sup>

Toyen's surrealist iconography of body parts, bodiless garments, shadows, and animals, which she began to develop around 1930, creates her own visual and semiotic language. The link between the Prague Surrealists and the Prague Linguistic Circle is well known but little explored.<sup>3</sup> How then do the semiotic theories of the Circle connect to Toyen's work and to the Prague surrealist group's work in general?

Do Toyen's fragmented and fetishized images of women and girls who evaporate or crumble away depict the surrealist *femme enfant* or represent repeated nightmares? How did Toyen formulate surrealist convulsive beauty? Collage aesthetic, which had become a major paradigm in visual art by the 1920s and which can be read dialectically and semiotically, was often the means by which she persistently fragmented, recombined, and fetishized body parts and their stand-ins.

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<sup>1</sup> "Také já jdu NA MOTIV. Do svých snů." Jindřich Štyrský, *Sny 1925–1940*, afterword by František Šmejkal and Jana Šmejkalová (Prague: Argo, 2003), np.

<sup>2</sup> Breton, *Mad Love*, 15. Breton's "forest of symbols" refers to Baudelaire's "Correspondances" from *Les Fleurs du mal*: "La Nature est un temple où de vivant piliers/ Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;/ L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles/ Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers."

<sup>3</sup> See, however, Toman, *Magic of a Common Language* and Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde*.

Likewise, while Toyen did not record dreams or admit to an obsession with her childhood, she shared parts of this creative process with Štyrský, as is suggested by her fondness for such titles as *Dream* and *Sleeper*. Toyen's work partakes of the Freudian uncanny and is a prime example of its haunting, traumatic oscillation between the familiar and the strange, with her surrealist practice functioning as, to quote Hal Foster, "so many attempts, compulsively repeated, to master trauma, to transform the anxious into the aesthetic, the uncanny into the marvelous."<sup>4</sup>

While surrealist interest in social change proved a major point of attraction for the Czechs, surrealist belief in plumbing the unconscious was of far greater significance for the Prague group's artistic production. Toyen admitted that while she would open the door gladly for Marx and Lenin, she would open the door to Freud in order to make him psychoanalyze her. Thus, while Toyen's mature imagery of body parts, bodiless garments, shadows, animals, and phantoms does employ a highly personal vocabulary, it is one which is fashioned through a surrealist poetic lens, is informed by psychoanalytic theory, and is often structured with a collage aesthetic of fragmented but additive parts.

## 6.1 *OBJECT-PHANTOM: THE SEMIOTICS OF SURREALISM*

Not only has Teige learned much from the linguists of the Prague Circle, but he has also taught us much. It is thanks to him, in large measure, that we have penetrated the dynamic of artistic development, of aesthetic creation... And then, next to Teige, one must cite Nezval, that poet of such astonishing variability, truly gifted with the magic art of metamorphosis.—Roman Jakobson, 1972<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 48.

<sup>5</sup>“Non seulement Teige a beaucoup appris des linguistes du *Cercle de Prague*, mais il nous a beaucoup enseigné. C'est grâce à lui, dans une large mesure, que nous avons pénétré la dynamique du développement artistique, de la

Semiotic theorists Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukařovský were members of the interwar Prague Linguistic Circle, or Prague School, as was founding surrealist Jindřich Honzl.<sup>6</sup> Both Jakobson and Mukařovský had a strong interest in the avant-garde. During the formative years of the Prague Linguistic Circle in the early 1920s, Jakobson had been closely involved with Nezval and other members of Devětsil, and he took an early interest in French surrealism as well.<sup>7</sup> Mukařovský's involvement with the Circle began in 1927; he soon became one of the most active members of the group,<sup>8</sup> and along the way, became well acquainted with the nascent surrealists.<sup>9</sup> Both were involved in establishing a semiotically oriented aesthetics. Not surprisingly, both Jakobson and Mukařovský were involved in discussions of surrealism from the outset.<sup>10</sup> On 23 March 1934, for instance, Nezval and Jakobson sat in the Metro café debating

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création esthétique... Et puis, à côté de Teige, il faut citer Nezval, ce poète d'une si étonnante variabilité, vraiment doué de l'art magique de la métamorphose." (Roman Jakobson, "Entretien de Roman Jakobson avec Jean Pierre Faye, Jean Paris, Jacques Roubaud," in *Hypothèses, Trois Entretiens et Trois Études sur la Linguistique et la Poétique. Présentations et Contributions de Jean-Pierre Faye, Jean Paris, Jacques Roubaud, Mitsou Ronat*, ed. Jean Pierre Faye and Jacques Roubaud [Paris: Seghers, Laffont, 1972], 38.)

<sup>6</sup> Two other theorists, Veltruský and Effenberger, wrote in the postwar period. Jakobson, Mukařovský, and Honzl, then, are significant as interwar theorists, while Veltruský and Effenberger are more of interest here for their commentary. For an overview of Prague Structuralism, which grew out of the Prague Linguistic Circle, see Peter Steiner, "The Conceptual Basis of Prague Structuralism," in *Sound, Sign and Meaning: Quinquagenary of the Prague Linguistic Circle*, vol. 6, ed. Ladislav Matejka, Michigan Slavic Contributions (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), 351–85. An introduction to Mukařovský can be found in René Wellek, *The Literary Theory and Aesthetics of the Prague School*, Michigan Slavic Contributions 2 (Ann Arbor: Department of Slavic Languages and Literature, University of Michigan, 1969). For a history of the Prague Linguistic Circle, see Toman, *Magic of a Common Language*.

<sup>7</sup> "Je sais aussi [...] que des poètes comme Aragon ou Breton ont toujours cherché à être directement informés des idées nouvelles en linguistique: dès que sont parus les deux premiers volumes des *Travaux du Cercle de Prague*, Eduard Pichon les signala à Aragon..." (Jakobson, "Entretien de Roman Jakobson avec Jean Pierre Faye, Jean Paris, Jacques Roubaud," 40–41).

<sup>8</sup> Although Mukařovský was acquainted with Jakobson by 1926, apparently he was not in contact with the Prague avant-garde until the end of the decade (Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde*, 127, 133.)

<sup>9</sup> Věra Linhartová, "La place de Roman Jakobson dans la vie littéraire et artistique," in *Roman Jakobson: Echoes of His Scholarship*, ed. Daniel Armstrong and C.H. van Schooneveld (Lisse: The Peter de Ridder Press, 1977), 223–26. Mukařovský expressly defended modernist art in such essays as Jan Mukařovský, "Diaklektické rozpory v moderním umění (1935)," in *Studie z estetiky* (Prague: Odeon, 1966), 255–65.

<sup>10</sup> Vančura, Hoffmeister, and Nezval were Devětsil members who frequented the writer Karel Čapek's Friday gatherings; Mukařovský and Mathesius, of the Circle, also attended Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die*

the “sense” or “meaning” (*smysl*) of a surrealist group, with Honzl and Štyrský also involved in the discussion. Later in the day, Honzl telephoned Nezval to come over to the café U Juliše because Mukařovský was there and Nezval could give him the new surrealist flyer to read. The debate with Jakobson resumed the following day.<sup>11</sup> Connections between the two groups were visible elsewhere as well. The Slovak literary journal *Slovenské smery*, for example, published articles relating to surrealism, poems referring to surrealism, and theoretical work by Jakobson, Mukařovský, and Bogatyrev.<sup>12</sup>

Prague School theorists overall emphasized the possible properties of the sign’s material, such as paint or stone, in addition to its coded significance. They also, recognizing that the signified may be immaterial (a fiction), resisted a so-called atomistic approach to the sign, and allowed complex structures to be whole signs rather than insisting on dealing with only the component parts. This allowed whole works of art to be simultaneously composed of discrete signs and to be signs themselves.<sup>13</sup>

This emphasis on the sign’s material separated the Prague School approach from earlier Symbolist notions of metaphysical correspondences. Emphasis on perceptual mode and the material of the sign, and analysis of the relationship between and among parts rather than of the parts themselves, enabled recognition and analysis of such matters as simultaneity, redundancy

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*Avantgarde*, 58). For a detailed examination of Mukařovský’s relationship to the Czech avant-garde, see Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde*.

<sup>11</sup> Nezval diary, 23–24 March 1934, Nezval fond, LA PNP. On Nezval and Mukařovský, see also Vítězslav Nezval, *Z mého života*, 158–59, as well as the poems to Mukařovský and Jakobson in Vítězslav Nezval, *Zpáteční lístek* (Prague: Fr. Borovy, 1933), 155–59. Several of Nezval’s poems for Jakobson are discussed in Toman, “A Marvellous Chemical Laboratory,” 328–33.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, *Slovenské smery* 5 (1937-1938).

<sup>13</sup> Michael Lowell Quinn, “The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford: Stanford University, 1987), 17–19.

and contradiction.<sup>14</sup> As a result, complexity and tension within signs and sign complexes contributed to the effectiveness and dynamism of the sign in Prague School thought.<sup>15</sup>

### 6.1.1 Roman Jakobson

What we have been trying to show is that art is an integral part of the social structure, a component that interacts with all the others and is itself mutable since both the domain of art and its relationship to the other constituents of the social structure are in constant dialectical flux.—Roman Jakobson, 1933–34<sup>16</sup>

Though Roman Jakobson devoted more of his attention to poetry than to visual art, his development was strongly affected by art and artists. He recalled, “I associated with young painters during my adolescence. I had long talks with them about the relation between painting and poetry, between visual signs and verbal signs. This is how an interest in semiotics came into my life...”<sup>17</sup> Jakobson’s interest in art and artists was reciprocated. Josef Šíma, for instance, referred in his diaries to the role Jakobson’s theories played in his painting.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Jakobson’s intellectual background in Romantic and Hegelian philosophy harmonized not only

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<sup>14</sup> Two translations of the same literary work, then, have different material. Prague School theory and Geneva School linguistics differ especially in the concept of the signified, with Mukařovský’s notion of a level of signification between sign and referentiality. It is in the intermediary phase, in the mind, where the aesthetic object resides. Mukařovský thus makes an “immaterial aesthetic object [...] part of a semiotic process.” (Quinn, “The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory,” 17–9)

<sup>15</sup> The functional approach was originally conceived by Karl Bühler in his theorization of communication as being inexorably semiotic, which Mukařovský expanded in the direction of art via his concept of the aesthetic function. (Quinn, “The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory,” 23–4)

<sup>16</sup> Jakobson, “What Is Poetry,” 378.

<sup>17</sup> Emmanuel Jacquart, “Interview with Roman Jakobson: On Poetics,” trans. Robert Lechner, *Philosophy Today* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 66. Among his interests in this realm were the question of norms and their violation in creative works; the relationship of selection and combination in these works; how such works signify; and how they are encoded and decoded. (Thomas G. Winner, “The Aesthetic Semiotics of Roman Jakobson,” in *Language, Poetry and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska, et al. [Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987], 257–58.)

<sup>18</sup> Krystyna Pomorska, “The Autobiography of a Scholar,” in *Language, Poetry and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska, et al. (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987), 8.

with his affinity for avant-garde art in general but with surrealism in particular.<sup>19</sup> His early Prague articles were read by Devětsil members, and helped shape avant-gardist ideas. For instance, in a 1921 discussion of realism in art, he specified that although realism could refer to the artist's intent to be true to life, in practice it often referred to reception—to the reader's or viewer's perception of the work being true to life. These two separate meanings, noted Jakobson, had become confused within the history of art. Jakobson regarded visual illusion possible, although he noted the necessity of learning “the conventional language of painting in order to ‘see’ a picture,” whereupon the painted image becomes a conventionalized ideogram and must be “deformed” to be seen afresh. While the freshness of a verbal or visual image depends on its relationship to the canon, the perceived realism of the result depends on whether we attend to the creator's intent (possibly to “deform” the “ideogram” in search of greater realism) or the reception (which could be conservative and find the work lacking in realism).<sup>20</sup> This analysis would prove very congenial to surrealist desire to work only from Breton's internal model. It most certainly lay behind Teige's assertion that surrealism was “*realism in the dialectical sense*.”<sup>21</sup>

Jakobson also supported surrealist work with suggestions—for example, reminding Nezval and Honzl, during the translation of *Communicating Vessels*, of the role of dreams in Czech literature—and spoke at the Brno opening of Toyen and Štyrský's 1938 exhibition.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Elmar Holenstein, “Jakobson's Philosophical Background,” in *Language, Poetry and Poetics: The Generation of the 1890s: Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Majakovskij*, ed. Krystyna Pomorska, et al. (Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1987), 16.

<sup>20</sup> See Roman Jakobson, “On Realism in Art,” in *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, ed. L. Matejka and K. Pomorska, reprint, 1921 (Cambridge, MA and Ann Arbor: MIT Press, 1971), 38–46, first published as Roman Jakobson, “O realismu v umění,” *Červen* 4, no. 22 (13 October 1921): 300–304.

<sup>21</sup>Teige, “Deset let surrealismu,” 55. Emphasis in original.

<sup>22</sup> “Today Jakobson told me that he knows about some interesting material, accounts of Erben's dreams... Ask Roman about it when you speak to him.” See Honzl letter to Nezval, 26 July 1934 in Vítězslav Nezval, *Depeše z*

### 6.1.2 Jan Mukařovský

Mukařovský emphasized the interrelation of structures—in other words, that art, for example, should be analyzed in relation to other systems, such as politics, class, language, and so forth. A particular relationship between the components, rather than a specific component alone, might thus dominate a structure.<sup>23</sup> He was also prepared to consider numerous types of artistic structure, including such classifications as individual works, a specific artist's oeuvre, works of a particular art form, or works of a particular nation or historical period.

In “Art as Semiotic Fact” (1934), Mukařovský proposed a tripartite sign theory in which

Every work of art is an autonomous sign composed of: (1) An artifact functioning as a perceivable signifier; (2) an ‘aesthetic object’ which is registered in the collective consciousness and which functions as ‘signification’; (3) a relationship to a thing signified (this relationship refers not to any distinct existence, since we are talking about an autonomous sign—but to the total context of social phenomena, science, philosophy, religion, politics, economics, and so on, of any given milieu).<sup>24</sup>

This essay was Mukařovský's first directive that art be seen as a sign, and coincides with the foundation of the Prague surrealist group.<sup>25</sup>

Mukařovský rejected purely aesthetic distinctions between art and non-art. In other words, since the sign's function may change over time, an art object may acquire non-aesthetic

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*konce tisíciletí: Korespondence Vítězslava Nezvala*, 198, translated in František Šmejkal, “From Lyrical Metaphors,” 68, 83, note 13.

<sup>23</sup> In Russian formalism, which was closely related to Czech formalism, stress was placed on finding a dominant component within each structure. In the Prague School, however, especially in the writings of Mukařovský, emphasis was placed more on the *relationship* of the components than on dominance. (Quinn, “The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory,” 15.) On interrelationships and dominance, see Jan Mukařovský, “Standard Language and Poetic Language,” in *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, trans. and ed. Paul L. Garvin (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1964), 20–1.

<sup>24</sup> Jan Mukařovský, “Art as Semiotic Fact (1934),” in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, trans. Irwin R. Titunik (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1976), 9.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas G. Winner, “The Aesthetics and Poetics of the Prague Linguistic Circle,” *Poetics* 8 (1973): 89, 92. “Art as Semiotic Fact” was presented in 1934 and published in 1936.

functions, while a non-art object may become a Duchampian readymade.<sup>26</sup> Thus, Mukařovský's work was attuned to fundamental surrealist concepts and his analysis of aesthetic semantics (especially his refusal to make a qualitative distinction between art and non-art) was close to Teige and Effenberger's ideas.<sup>27</sup> As Fijalkowski and Richardson observe, Mukařovský was intrigued by the role of language in surrealist visual art because in surrealism the concrete thing rather than the sign takes the role of symbol, confounding the relation between an image's content and its form. This, they point out, was strongly evident in Toyen's work by the late 1930s, which moved "towards a veristic depiction of trauma or the *insolite*" in her illustrations for poetry and as she began to prepare her series of wartime drawing cycles.<sup>28</sup>

Mukařovský theorized the aesthetic as threefold, with function and norm in an inseparable dialectical relationship, with value as their synthesis.<sup>29</sup> In "Standard Language and Poetic Language," he listed five kinds of art-related norms. The first related to conventions of art and aesthetic contemplation, in which the type of subject matter and its social implications was important (is the topic controversial and can it be represented in a given society, for instance). The second involved the material of the sign itself—paint, stone, plastic, etc. Questions of desirability, legibility, audience comfort, ease of use, and so forth helped define the object and even the art form (oil painting, performance art). The third related to issues of genre, which could be highly codified or relatively fluid, and included norms of audience response and

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<sup>26</sup> See Jan Mukařovský, *Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value As Social Facts*, trans. Mark E. Suino (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1970).

<sup>27</sup> With the exception of Karel Čapek and Jan Zrzavý, Mukařovský's discussion of creators was limited to Devětsil members Burian, Honzl, Nezval, Šíma, Štyrský, Toyen, and Vančura. (Illing, *Jan Mukařovský und die Avantgarde*, 188)

<sup>28</sup> Fijalkowski and Richardson, "Years of Long Days," 20–21.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Mukařovský, "The Esthetics of Language," in *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, trans. and ed. Paul L. Garvin (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1964), 31–32 and Jan Mukařovský, "The Aesthetic Norm," in *Structure, Sign, and Function: Selected Essays by Jan Mukařovský*, trans. and ed. John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), 49.

attitudes toward it. Fourth, Mukařovský considered larger, more universalizing, norms, such as the work's relationship to beauty and grace, and to affective forms of reception. These were not necessarily universal ideals but orientational and ultimately violable. The fifth type of norm related to individual reception of the work of art, which must to some degree differ from that of the larger society. Finally, Mukařovský posited that all norms exist dialectically and in varying relational positions through time (history).<sup>30</sup>

Mukařovský also proposed three categories of aesthetic value, which were based on the circumstances of audience reception. One related to individual response to artistic signs, though Mukařovský made clear that the individual's response was always formed in relationship to societal norms that (at the most basic level) permitted the individual to recognize the work as art. Second, aggregated individual responses comprised a larger "collective consciousness" rooted in, again, societal norms and institutions.<sup>31</sup> Third, Mukařovský saw the variation of aesthetic values over time as constituting an evolutionary factor, whose two parts were the artistic canon and the avant-garde. The canon gradually shifts, but overall consists of works that remain interesting, if for changing reasons. In contrast, the avant-garde's role is to provide new works and disrupt existing structures. (New "popular" works satisfy audience expectations because they fit within existing structures, but they provide no challenge, and are often derivative and formulaic, whereas challenging and disruptive works require analysis and digestion but may eventually

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<sup>30</sup>Mukařovský, "Standard Language and Poetic Language," 18; Jan Mukařovský, "Problémy estetické normy," in *Cestami poetiky a estetiky* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1971), 35–48. Elsewhere, Mukařovský presented a related but somewhat different set of four norms, citing first material norms, second technical norms (conventions, genres), third practical norms (socially bound thematic norms), and fourth, norms of aesthetic tradition (Mukařovský, "The Aesthetic Norm," 53–4).

<sup>31</sup>Quinn, "The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory," 34; Mukařovský, "Art as Semiotic Fact (1934)," 4.

enter the canon.)<sup>32</sup> Clearly, then, the relationship of art and social context was a major concern for Mukařovský.<sup>33</sup>

### 6.1.3 Jindřich Honzl

Jindřich Honzl, as a surrealist, semiotician, and stage director, looked to the (re)discovery of stages and theaters outside the middle and upper-class norm, such as street theater, circus, and carnivalesque masking. Honzl also considered types of performance and theatricality celebrated by Devětsil during the 1920s, such as sports, children's games, barkers, and even the performance-like movements of harbor cranes.<sup>34</sup> Via Honzl's extensive writings about the semiotics of theater, we can see how Prague School semiotic ideas were deeply embedded first in the practice of Devětsil and then within the Prague surrealist group itself.

Both Honzl and fellow Devětsil stage director Jiří Frejka theorized popular culture as intermediary between art and life. Their stage practices relate both to Russian formalism (via Jakobson and Viktor Shklovskij) and to the early surrealism of Apollinaire and Goll, therefore on the one hand connect to formalist theories of the communicative and the poetic, and on the other to proto-surrealist notions of objects and actions.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Quinn, "The Semiotic Stage: Prague School Theatre Theory," 36–7.

<sup>33</sup> Mukařovský repeatedly emphasized the ways in which the arts relate to their contexts. See also Ladislav Matejka, "The Sociological Concerns of the Prague School," in *The Prague School and Its Legacy in Linguistics, Literature, Semiotics, Folklore, and the Arts*, ed. Yishai Tobin, Linguistic and Literary Studies in Eastern Europe Vol. 27 (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1988), 219–26.

<sup>34</sup>Jindřich Honzl, "Dynamics of the Sign in the Theater (1940)," in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R Titunik, trans. I.R. Titunik (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1976), 76–7.

<sup>35</sup> Witkovsky proposes that in Honzl and Frejka's productions, "props, sets and actors' bodies were all deployed as elements of live performance, materially connected to 'life' yet unfolding in the space of 'art.'" (Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Avant-Garde and Center," 176–78.)

In his examples of shifting signs (props as characters, projections as speakers, etc.),<sup>36</sup> Honzl focused on “the special character of a theatrical sign whereby it changes its material and passes from one aspect into another, animates an inanimate thing, shifts from an acoustical aspect to a visual one, and so on.” Honzl stressed that the changeability, or versatility, of the theatrical sign “is its specific property,” but admitted that it is here that “the main difficulty of defining theatrical art lies.” This led him to the problem of “who or what is the central, creative element of dramatic expression.” Was it the playwright? The actor? The director? Each, said Honzl, may take the primary role, and each function is present whether or not a specific person embodies it (without a playwright, words and/or plot still have their place; without a director, an “organizational force” is still needed; without actors, there still must be action). That this can be so, and that the scenic function exists even in the absence of scenery, led Honzl to conclude that the changeability of the theatrical sign is unlike what we find in any other art.<sup>37</sup> Surrealist visual art, however, also often manifests this changeability within the picture plane or object, if in a less fundamental way than within theater. Surrealist art, and especially that of Toyen and Štyrský, animates the inanimate and shifts meaning among signifiers. Honzl’s theater-based concepts of performance by non-actors (such as props or projections) and the importance of shifting signs (such as the animation of the inanimate), as well as his and Teige’s long-term emphasis on the Devětsil themes of circus, sport, and children’s games, link to Toyen’s use of empty garments to signify absent bodies, her predilection for imagery relating to the circus and children’s toys

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<sup>36</sup> See Honzl, “Dynamics of the Sign in the Theater (1940),” 84–5; Milan Obst and Adolf Scherl, *K dějinám české divadelní avantgardy* (Prague: Nakladatelství Československé Akademie Věd, 1962), 299. Witkovsky suggests that *Breasts of Tiresias* and *Methusalem*, “with their complementary handling of human-object relations, stand at the heart of Honzl’s program for a renewal of contemporary drama.” (Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Avant-Garde and Center,” 232).

<sup>37</sup>Honzl, “Dynamics of the Sign in the Theater (1940),” 85–6. Mukařovský reiterates Honzl’s stress on the shifting dominance of the individual components (Jan Mukařovský, “On the Current State of the Theory of Theater,” in *Structure, Sign, and Function: Selected Essays by Jan Mukařovský*, trans. and ed. John Burbank and Peter Steiner [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978], 207–8.

(depicting or more often signifying performance), and her tendency to make “actors” out of items even less “alive” than clothing.

On a less semiotic note, Honzl asserted that “the so-called realistic theater at the turn of the twentieth century assumed in the spectator an *inability to see and interpret reality* through the prism of his imagination” while ancient and folk theater expected close attention and concentration from the audience.<sup>38</sup> Surrealism returned to the spectator seeing and interpreting reality through the imagination.

The Prague School semioticians looked at surrealist work in a manner utterly different from previous approaches, especially those employed in France, and analyzed surrealist work semiotically rather than psychoanalytically or poetically.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the close ties between the Prague surrealists and the Prague Linguistic Circle show that the work of the Prague surrealists not only *can* be considered semiotically, but that it may at times have been created with semiotic theory, so to speak, in mind. The semiotic inclinations within the Prague group would even surface in Bohuslav Brouk’s postwar study *Lidé a věci* (People and Things, 1947), in which he explored the meanings and functions objects take on—economic, social, commemorative, cultic, magical, pleasurable, and so forth.

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<sup>38</sup>See Jindřich Honzl, “The Hierarchy of Dramatic Devices (1943),” in *Semiotics of Art: Prague School Contributions*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R Titunik, trans. Susan Larson (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1976), 118–27. Emphasis in original.

<sup>39</sup>František Šmejkal, “From Lyrical Metaphors,” 68.

## 6.2 *NEITHER WINGS NOR STONES; WINGS AND STONES:* A HIGHLY PERSONAL VISUAL AND SEMIOTIC LANGUAGE

It's not the technique of painting that is surrealist, it's the painter, and the painter's vision of life. — Joyce Mansour, 1960<sup>40</sup>

It is time to abandon the world of the civilized and its light. It is too late to be reasonable and educated—which has led to a life without appeal. Secretly or not, it is time to become completely different, or to cease being.—Georges Bataille, 1936<sup>41</sup>

Through her imagery of body parts, bodiless garments, shadows, and animals, Toyen created a highly personal visual and semiotic language. While this language is allusive and obscure, to some degree it can be decoded and interpreted. Childhood, mimicry, emptiness, and fragmentation are themes that repeatedly occur in Toyen's surrealist work, articulated via a rich iconography of significant details. These construct gender and eroticism via thematic groups, though many of Toyen's iconographic units slip fluidly from one category to another and express multiple layers of signification.

### 6.2.1 Childhood as Nightmare

Over and over, Toyen employed the figure of the lone girl. Sometimes headless, sometimes faceless, sometimes existing only in shadow or represented by an empty garment, the prepubescent girl haunts Toyen's work of the 1930s and 1940s. The artist's book illustrations,

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<sup>40</sup> Joyce Mansour, BBC radio broadcast, 19 February 1960, "In Defense of Surrealism," translated from French excerpts in *BIEF: Jonction surréaliste* no. 12 (15 April 1960), quoted in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xxxiii.

<sup>41</sup> Georges Bataille, "The Sacred Conspiracy," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 179.

many of which were for children's literature, depict both boys and girls within the conventions of their genre, but the paintings, prints, and drawings make a recurrent character of the lone girl in an alien landscape. What, then, did this figure represent for the artist?

During Toyen's early career as an illustrator, she repeatedly encountered the relentlessly sentimental aspect of child imagery in commercial illustration. Her own commercial images of children are similar in style to, if more sophisticated in concept than, the fashion illustrations of children to be found in *Eva*. Modernist art, on the other hand, rejected sentimentality and tended to be, as Anne Higonnet says, "skeptical of the entire subject of the child." To the extent that modernist art showed children at all, it was in imagery that subverted the popular sentimental image of childhood.<sup>42</sup>

Why, then, the image of the girl? In *Message of the Forest* (1934) her pale, severed head is gripped by a faceless bird of prey. On the cover to Nezval's *Chain of Happiness* (1936), she stands blindfolded at a scene of carnage, and on the frontispiece she tiptoes, holding a damaged doll, toward a bound, draped, faceless man. In *Sleeper* (1937), she stands with a butterfly net in a barren landscape. In *Dream* (1937), her bloodied garment stands at another ghastly site. The series *The Shooting Gallery* (1939–40) shows her, in one instance, holding a jump rope in a desert landscape between two dead cockerels; other images in the series variously show her head as gagged or blindfolded, as a broken egg or a crumbling yet transparent stone, or show her as a schoolgirl staring into the distance, away from an enormous dismembered bird, all on a flat, endless expanse of ground. In the series *Day and Night* (1940–43) she floats, half disembodied, above barren scenes of toy or phantom animals, and clings to a giant toothy palate that grows from the ground like a tree. In *Relâche* (1943), she hangs upside down, her feet melting into the

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<sup>42</sup> Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 39.

wall behind her. The girl is either alone or seen with animals and toys, except in the two images from *Chain of Happiness*. Postwar, the pre-pubescent girl vanishes, replaced by an older figure.

Toyen's girls can be taken to represent the figure of a dreamer, into whose identity the viewer may enter, but who ultimately can be taken as the image of the artist's own dreaming psyche, a psyche wandering ceaselessly in an alien and hostile land. In only one of these images does she engage with another figure: that of the defaced bound man.

What kind of nightmare childhood is this? While Toyen and Štyrský shared an interest in the theme of childhood, Štyrský longed to recover his own, and wrote: "Where to save oneself? In the paradise of my childhood. In the Arcadia of my childhood. My childhood is my country. My dreams are my country."<sup>43</sup>

In his *Second Dream of Emilie*, he described a collaboration similar to that with Toyen, one filled with imagery common to both artists:

I am about 8–10 years old and Emilie and I are playing with dolls in the garden at Čermná. The dolls we are playing with are broken: headless, legless, only having SOMETHING like a head. [...] Workers are erecting a fence around the garden. I remark that 4 × 35 posts will be needed. We run through the high grass towards the posts. Deep holes have already been dug along the road. My pockets are full of various broken bits of coffee mugs, plates, pitchers bearing painted flowers, ornaments, pieces of landscape, pieces of a face, shards of drinking glasses with engraved roses, etc. All of it I throw into the holes, though I regret doing so, explaining to Emilie that it will make the fence sturdy. Emilie also wants to contribute something so she unwraps her cone of candy and tosses green menthol lozenges into the holes. Then we sit down by one of the holes, into which we've thrown all the broken dolls, and out of nowhere a post is standing there, alternating between dancing in the hole like a pestle in a mortar and laboriously moving up and down like a pulp mill.

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<sup>43</sup> "Où se sauver? Dans le paradis de mon enfance. Dans mon Arcadie d'enfance. Mon enfance est ma patrie. Mes rêves sont ma patrie. Des nuages il y tombe de la neige noire." František Šmejkal, "Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos," 165 An apparently later version is "Kam se zachránit? Do ráje mého dětství. Už mne ta smrdutá Praha pohltila. Kam se mám zachránit? Do krajin mé dětské Arkádie, nebo do snů? Z oblak padá tam černý sníh." (1940, in Jindřich Štyrský, "Fragmenty z pozůstalosti," 137.

I have recorded this *important* dream for the vivid impression that stayed with me upon waking—that I make love like a child.<sup>44</sup>

Though Emilie represents Štyrský's half sister Marie, in his dream she brings to mind that other significant Marie in his life, Manka who became Toyen.

While the theme of childhood was one shared by both artists, Štyrský's eroticism, with its recurring imagery of dead women, is overtly linked to death in a way that Toyen's is not. Whereas Štyrský put a dream-childhood into words, a dream-childhood manifests in Toyen's art, just as death was clearly visible in Štyrský's work while in Toyen's it functions as a subtext. Toyen's imagery indicates that she associated childhood with pain, fear, constriction, and a sense of dazed bewilderment.

Toyen knew Freud's theories of infant sexuality, which recognized that even the youngest and most ignorant child is a sexual being. She would also have drawn on her own memories of childhood life and fantasy. Toyen told Annie LeBrun that she had been making erotic sketches as far back as she could remember. Manka Čermínová, early twentieth-century child, was not lacking in sexual interests, nor perhaps in sexual experiences. The child in Toyen's work, however, is not so much erotic or sexually active as dazed, stunned, or sleepwalking. And indeed, this prompts the viewer's suspicion that something has either happened or is about to.

To return to Toyen's girls, in *Chain of Happiness* (1936), first we see a blindfolded girl standing above a fallen soldier. Though the soldier has fallen, his sword has not, and takes a phallic role that was surely not accidental. Since the girl is blindfolded, however, she points in a

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<sup>44</sup> Jindřich Štyrský, "Second Dream of Emilie (October 2, 1926)," in Nezval and Štyrský, *Edition 69*, 124–25. Emphasis in original. For discussion of Štyrský's dreams, see František Šmejkal, "Štyrský entre Éros et Thanatos" and Jindřich Štyrský, *Sny 1925–1940*.

different direction. A bit of misdirection? Or an invitation to open the book and uncover the frontispiece, where the bound Christ-like figure hangs on a post? Here the girl, with her broken doll, tiptoes on the tightrope toward the tied-up faceless figure: is this confrontation a precursor to the modern therapy in which abused children are given dolls upon which to point out the places in which they were inappropriately touched? Has the doll's damage been displaced to her face? And why does Jesus, if it is Jesus, have even less face than the doll? Has he been censored, blotted out because that face is unbearable? What lies under that larger-than-usual mass of drapery? Then, in *Relâche*, the seemingly headless girl in modern-day skirt and panties hangs upside down as if performing a difficult gymnastic feat, her actual feet melting into the wall behind her. On the ground below are planted a strange sort of hood and an object resembling a fly-swatter. It appears as though some unpleasant ritual has just ended or been interrupted, presumably one involving punishment.

Consider the series *Shooting Gallery* (1939–40), with the faceless, fragmenting, transparent girl holding a jump rope in a desert landscape between two dead cockerels; the cracked head lying like an egg upon its side; the crumbling transparent head; the girl gazing away with her school satchel on her back. Surely this was not a response solely to Nazi occupation of Bohemia. Toyen's drawing cycles of this period show intense brittleness, fragmentation, and aridity, with many references to childhood in her imagery of animals (mostly dead) and toys. No, the childhood themes so prominent in Toyen's work of the 1930s and 1940s are not purely a response to the prewar and wartime situation, but are surely an expression of deeper anxieties which Toyen repeatedly felt compelled to delineate.

In Toyen's work it is not the girl who is appealing or seductive. No, she roams traumatized through flat landscapes, so unlike the topography of Bohemia. It is the adult or

teenaged woman who is openly sexual, openly seductive—although she, too, is often a shadowy figure or indicated by her absence from her clothing. This openly sexual or seductress figure first appears in a very straightforward manner in Toyen's early erotica, but in her surrealist incarnation would scarcely develop until after 1947.

### 6.2.2 Emptiness and Insubstantiality

The earth, draped in its verdant cloak, makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live that are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere.—André Breton, 1924<sup>45</sup>

Beyond what I am, I meet a being who makes me laugh because he is headless; this fills me with dread because he is made of innocence and crime [...] He reunites in the same eruption Birth and Death. —Georges Bataille, 1936<sup>46</sup>

Just as Marie Čermínová 'disappeared' to create art, the artist also ultimately removed women from her Surrealist paintings of the late nineteen thirties. —Katja Zigerlig, 1998<sup>47</sup>

One of the most striking features of Toyen's imagery is her emphasis on the headless, the faceless, the empty, and the fragmented female body. This imagery, along with that of the girl, became pervasive in the mid-1930s, around the same time as the formation of the Prague surrealist group. Although Toyen's earlier sketches and book illustrations had also included many female figures, these were mostly whole or in conventional parts.

In her perceptive master's thesis on Toyen, Katja Zigerlig writes: "The transition is gradual; at first woman is organically rendered as a 'petrified' torso rather than body. Then corporeal presence ceases and corsets are eventually the only imprints of female presence amidst

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<sup>45</sup>Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," 47.

<sup>46</sup>Georges Bataille, "The Sacred Conspiracy," 181.

<sup>47</sup>Katja A. Zigerlig, "Fetishized and Fossilized: Feminine Presence in Toyen's Drawings and Paintings," unpublished master's thesis (Washington, DC: American University, 1998), 23.

organic material.”<sup>48</sup> Did Toyen, as Zigerlig suggests, initially employ the female body for arousal, and then dematerialize her representations of women in her transition to surrealism? As early as 1931, the figure of the headless woman appears in an illustration for S. K. Neumann’s *Žal* (Woe). Headless and armless, this lightly draped figure resembles a modern version of an ancient Greek statue, and is an intermediary between Toyen’s naturalistic illustrations and the delicate, fragmentary, semi-surrealist imagery she was in the process of developing for her literary illustrations. Similarly, *Wedding Allegory* (1932) juxtaposes a faceless bride with her headless upper torso in see-through bra. Woman first becomes a stony or nebulous torso in works such as *Magnetic Woman* (1934), and then the body disappears, represented only by garments and shadows. By emphasizing the figure via its absence, this was to some extent, as Zigerlig suggests, a pictorial solution that avoided virtue-vice, subject-object.<sup>49</sup> Still, while women fade out of Toyen’s paintings and drawings of the 1930s, and even figures with heads often lack faces, they never leave entirely. Women continue in the form of shadows and ghosts, becoming particularly notable from the late fifties on.

What, then, of the fragments and beheadings that manifest everywhere in Toyen’s work of the 1930s? Toyen signaled her intent to recombine and regender the figure in *Hermaphrodite* (1932). None of the illustrations for *Justine* (1932) show a complete figure, but are composed of torsos, genitalia, and faces. By 1933, disembodied eyes begin to appear on fragments of matter or superimposed on pieces of torn material, as in an illustration for Apollinaire’s *Alkohol* (1933) and for the 1934 book *Čajové květy* (Tea Flowers). *Mirage* (1934) presents a young woman’s head, possibly on a pillar, with eyes apparently gouged out; *Girl’s Head with Spiderweb* of the same year employs the same theme. And, of course, *Message of the Forest* (1934) includes a

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<sup>48</sup>Zigerlig, “Fetishized and Fossilized,” 23.

<sup>49</sup>Zigerlig, “Fetishized and Fossilized,” 23.

girl's decapitated head. Fingers appear in a sort of shadow box in *Sleeping Earth* (1937), while *Pebbles of the Evening* and *Loner* (1937) show what appear to be heads of hair growing out of the earth. Everything in Toyen's work, animals, in particular, begins to appear in pieces and in the process of cracking and crumbling or dematerializing. This theme of fragmentation was one Toyen shared with Štyrský during the early 1930s,<sup>50</sup> as well as with Teige's collage work, and may relate to Brouk's theory of partialism, in which the extremities and their clothing are stand-ins for the penis, while the torso and head substitute for the vagina. Brouk set this out in *Psychoanalytická sexuologie* in the section following Fetishism:

If during gratification the object or subject, whole or only its part, has an arousing effect, sexual gratification breaks down into *totalism* and *partialism* [...] Partialism turned toward some bodily part of the heterosexual partner has the purpose of concealing and failing to appreciate his true sex. Partialism of the extremities usually seeks a surrogate penis in extremities and in their accompanying items of clothing, while partialism of the torso and head finds in individual parts of the torso and head a symbol of the female sex, which does not evoke fear of castration like the actual genitalia.<sup>51</sup>

Heads, headlessness, and empty garments can thus refer to the female genitalia, while gloves would represent the male (although their openings are female). Empty garments became a favorite signifier in Toyen's work beginning in the mid 1930s, hinted at with the headless *Rose Ghost* and *Yellow Ghost* (both 1934), and becoming decidedly empty with the collages for *Ani*

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<sup>50</sup> During the latter 1930s, Štyrský worked on a series of works involving eyes, usually in multiples, which he linked to the experience of watching his father die. (Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 37.)

<sup>51</sup> "Jestliže při ukájení působí vzrušujícím objekt nebo subjekt celý nebo jen jeho část, rozpadá se sexuální ukájení na *totalismus* a *partialismus* [...] Partialismus obrácený na některou tělesnou část heterosexuálního partnera má za účel zakrýt a zneuznat jeho pravé pohlaví. Partialismus extremit hledá v okončetinách a jim příslušných částech oděvu obvykle surogát penisu, partialismus trupový a hlavový nachází pak v jednotlivých částech trupu i hlavy symbol ženského pohlaví, neevokující kastrační strach jako pohlaví samo." (Bohuslav Brouk, "Psychoanalytická sexuologie," in *Lidská duše a sex* [Prague: Odeon, 1992], 111, 113, translated in Vojtěch Lahoda, "Teige's Violation: The Collages of Karel Teige, the Visual Concepts of Avant-Garde and René Magritte," in *Karel Teige: Surrealistické koláže 1935–1951*, trans. Richard Drury, Vojtěch Lahoda and Karel Srp [Prague: Detail, 1994], 17.)

*labut', ani Lúna* (1936), followed by *Dream, Sleeper, The Abandoned Corset, and Morning Encounter* (all 1937).

For instance, in *Sleeper*, there's no girl, but just a white, fissured, empty cone of a coat topped with a head of reddish hair. We don't know if the hair has a face or if an arm connects the cone to the green butterfly net. There certainly aren't any butterflies in this dreary landscape, neither against the darkish sky nor fluttering over the heavy land. The harsh-textured brown paint of this inhospitable field matches the empty landscape, empty net, and empty coat. What is this vacant coat trying to capture? A partial answer comes from Nezval's poem "Hunter of Images" from *Playing Dice* (1928):

In a straw hat with my butterfly net on the shore  
I'm catching you butterflies resting on the mute mouths of statues  
Which yawn coldly when the bloody dust snows  
On the sky in the west like a smouldering haystack  
A large net with the sea on its shoulders  
The night falls in the ruins of crystals  
The gaze reaches beyond the fans of shimmering froth  
Ah, forever do I fish for you, mouths of coral.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, *Dream* (1937) presents a creepy, barren drippy aqua landscape with an uninhabited bloody-looking garment standing to the left, confronting a mysterious structure from which hang two weird little sausage-shaped items. Pendula? Jump-rope handles? This bloody-seeming garment has a childish air but stands up for itself, like an all-too-solid ghost, one encrusted with laundry starch and old gore. Did a girl have her head cut off in this gown? Or her maidenhead, perchance? The eyeless outfit seems more enduring than the odd things hanging from the wall, perhaps some kind of sanitized, made-silly male parts. Still, the gown has a tragic, stoic air while the dangling things seem blandly used to dangling.

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<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Karel Šrp, *Toyen*, 135.

In *The Abandoned Corset* (1937), the blue corset signifies the absent woman and her sexuality, as does the one in the collage *Ani labut', ani Lúna* (1936), which might be enjoying its slightly rakish progress downstream in a presumably Heraclitean river. Perhaps the blue corset has been nailed to a tree-trunk out in the forest and left to commune with the woodland spirits. One of the oddities about this painting is its title. The blue object seems so obviously a corset, yet its Czech title refers to a burrow. Might this be a reference to Kafka's story "The Burrow," first published in 1931? The burrower of the story lives in a lair of tunnels; it is obsessed on the one hand with its territory, and on the other with freedom. It fears the unknown, dreads the incursion of predators. Toyen designed the cover for the Czech translation of *The Castle*. Did she then equate the empty corset with a Kafkaesque burrow finally abandoned by its tenant and victim? The females of more than one species are highly territorial. Women of Toyen's childhood, like many women even today, had their domestic territory, their elaborate rituals of cleaning, and were encased in proper, constricting dress. Many dreaded change, while simultaneously longing to escape their corsets and prescribed gender roles.

*At the Green Table* (1945) shows little of the joy most Czechs felt at being liberated from the Nazis. In fact, the title may relate to a dance performance that depicted war beginning and ending at a green baize conference table.<sup>53</sup> The painting moves in Toyen's postwar direction of greater clarity of figures while retaining an enigmatic content. A green field stretches out endlessly, punctuated by red and yellow hens, billiard balls, and a house. But there, on the side of the roofless house, is a flying dress attached to the shadow of a woman. An empty house upon which to hang an empty woman?

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<sup>53</sup> This hypothesis is proposed by Zimiles, "In Search of Toyen," 383. The dance performance to which Zimiles appears to refer is Kurt Jooss' leftist *Der Grüne Tisch*, which premiered in 1932. For a discussion of this work, see Susan Manning, *Ecstasy and the Demon* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 160–65.

Such hung-up or floating garments had first appeared in *Ani labut', ani Lina* (1936) and *The Abandoned Corset* (1937), then reappeared in *At the Green Table* and in the complex collage-painting *Natural Laws* (1946). The motif shifts to one of ghostly figures defined largely by garments and shadows, and to small items of clothing, particularly gloves.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the untenanted garment, in its various forms, became one of the most important themes in Toyen's work from the 1930s on. Frida Kahlo, too, used this device. But Kahlo's depictions of empty clothing convey readily comprehensible ideas about herself, her personal history, and her *Mexicanidad*.<sup>55</sup> Zigerlig suggests that Toyen's use of the corset—which signifies restriction—functions as an affirmation—because the corset is empty.<sup>56</sup> “Life is elsewhere,” as Rimbaud, Breton, and Kundera all said. Perhaps, but the corset and the other garments also signify the woman or girl and her sexuality. The fact that the garments have been removed, however, is reminiscent of Joan Rivière's 1929 theory of socially defined “womanliness” as a masquerade for all women;<sup>57</sup> this woman is simultaneously defined by and leaving behind the garments of her masquerade.

The year 1934 marked the beginning of Toyen's emphasis on ghostly figures, as well as of a brief period of interest in eyeballs (*Remains of the Night, Object-Phantom*, 1937), heads of hair without faces, and suppurating meat-like forms. The excessively corporeal temporarily coexists with the insubstantial and vaporous, but in the 1930s, even Toyen's ghosts were

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<sup>54</sup> Srp proposes that Toyen preferred the motif of the torso during what he calls her intuitive surrealist period (her early surrealist works) but by the outbreak of war she had replaced the figure by “corsets, dresses, hair, eyes, fingers or puppets.” (Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 135)

<sup>55</sup> Kahlo, Srp posits, shows “narcissistic self-depiction” while Toyen's use of untenanted garments indicates the “elimination of all direct references to one's own fate and political and social opinion.” (Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 127)

<sup>56</sup> Zigerlig, “Fetishized and Fossilized,” 29.

<sup>57</sup> See Joan Rivière, “Womanliness as a Masquerade,” *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 10 (April-July 1929): 303–13.

strangely physical, like blobs of phlegm and ectoplasm. They cannot be called spiritual ghosts, but bodily phantoms, the revenants of physicality and tumors. *Rose Ghost* and *Yellow Ghost* are perhaps the most vaporous of these, yet also the closest to human forms.<sup>58</sup>

Toyen's imagery of emptiness, ghosts, shadows, and fragmentation to some extent relates, at the symbolic level, to Bataille's imagined headless Acéphale, whom Rosalind Krauss describes as "the irrational, decapitated victim who has no access to modernism's imperious visual mastery." Though Krauss argues that surrealism scorned modernist visuality, rejecting the primacy of reason and invoking "the limitless indeterminacy of the fetish" in honor of (irrational) desire,<sup>59</sup> both Toyen and Štyrský relocated the eye during the 1930s and rendered it a haunting, even "omnipresent," voyeur. Josef Vojvodík suggests that for Štyrský, at least, the visual is deconstructed by the olfactory and oral—as Štyrský wrote, "my eyes must always be thrown food. They swallow it down, insatiably and brutally"<sup>60</sup>—rather than coming from a truly surrealist "inner vision." As Martin Jay points out, surrealism prized visionary sight over reason and observation.<sup>61</sup> While Štyrský fed upon visual stimulation, both he and Toyen transformed their visual observations into images of waking dreams. Štyrský's own explorations of the eye concluded with his Oedipus-like image of a blinded face, which is usually taken to represent the artist himself. Toyen began by plucking out the eye (as in *Mirage*) and making it an independent object (*Remains of the Day*, *Object-Phantom*), but before long it vanished from her work as an

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<sup>58</sup> Toyen may have taken the idea of the colored ghosts from Nerval's "Zelené strašidlo," which appeared in translation in *Listy pro umění a kritiku* 2, 1934, 446-449. *Rose Ghost* sold for a record sum of 3,150,000 Kč in 2002. (Blanka Frajerová, "Obraz od malířky Toyen dosáhl letos rekordu," *Večerník Praha/Pražské Slovo* 12, no. 280 [2002]: 19.)

<sup>59</sup>Rosalind Krauss, "The Master's Bedroom," *Representations*, no. 28 (Autumn 1989): 56.

<sup>60</sup> See Josef Vojvodík, "Oralizace a olfaktorizace oka. K psychologii čichového vnímání v díle Jindřicha Štyrského," *Umění* 48, no. 3 (2000): 136-51. (The Štyrský quote is translated in the abstract.) Vojvodík additionally proposes that Štyrský perceived the female body primarily via smell, taste, and touch, with his visual perception of women limited to a dematerialized, intangible "whiteness."

<sup>61</sup>Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 236.

iconographic symbol. The ideas of painful, ever-present visuality that she briefly explored with Štyrský in the 1930s soon gave way to other concerns.

### 6.2.3 Toyen and Legendary Psychasthenia

Take care: in playing the phantom, one becomes it. Roger Caillois, 1935<sup>62</sup>

Another way of considering Toyen's more ghostly figures can be found in Roger Caillois's theory of mimicry. Caillois, a young member of the Breton group, arrived in Prague in July 1934, where he spent time with the Prague surrealists.<sup>63</sup> Upon his return to Paris in late November, Breton questioned him in detail regarding the news from Prague.<sup>64</sup> In 1935, Caillois's famous essay "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" appeared in *Minotaure*.

Caillois' essay theorized that "the fundamental question proves to be that of distinction: distinctions between what is real and imaginary, between wakefulness and sleep, between ignorance and knowledge, and so on." For Caillois, "any acceptable project" must chart these distinctions "very precisely" and "insist on resolving" them. He continued, "Certainly, no distinction is more pronounced than the one demarcating an organism from its environment... We

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<sup>62</sup> Roger Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" (*Minotaure* 7, 1935),] translated in Edward D. Powers, "When Father Doesn't Know Best: Surrealism, Metaphor, Masculinity" (Ph.D. diss., New York: New York University, 2003), 1.

<sup>63</sup> Fijalkowski and Richardson, "Years of Long Days," 17. Caillois, though perhaps better known for his association with Bataille and the College of Sociology, was originally connected with Le Grand Jeu, then joined the Breton group in 1932. He went to Prague to study Slavic folklore and mythology. Petr Bogatyrev of the Prague Linguistic Circle then encouraged him to go to Slovakia and Ruthenia. Caillois published two studies as a result of his research: "Les Spectres de midi dans la démonologie slave," *Revue des Etudes slaves* XVI, 1936, fasc. 1-2, p. 18-37, XVII, 1937, fasc. 1-2, p. 81-82, and "Le complexe de midi," *Minotaure* 9 (1936), 9-10. (František Šmejkal, *Josef Šíma* [Prague: Odeon, 1988], 148, note 184.) Caillois acquired his knowledge of Slovak folk art during his Czechoslovak trip (Alain Bosquet, *Roger Caillois* [Paris: Editions Seghers, 1971], 178).

<sup>64</sup> Breton to Nezval, 24 November 1934, LA PNP.

should pay particular attention to this phenomenon, and ... to ... its pathology ...: namely, the set of phenomena referred to as mimicry.”<sup>65</sup>

Describing this practice of mimicry as “a veritable *lure of space*,” Caillois claimed that it could not be a defense mechanism, but was “a disorder of spatial perception.” In other words, the animal resorts to mimicry because it cannot tell where its body begins and ends. Since the organism is simply one point among many in space rather than, as it were, the center of the universe, “[d]ispossessed of its privilege, it quite literally *no longer knows what to do with itself*.” Caillois called this “disorder” in relationship between personality and space “legendary psychasthenia” and related it to schizophrenic feelings of a sense of depersonalization through assimilation into space, which he connected to a psychoanalytic return to the womb. In summary, he stated, “alongside the instinct of self-preservation ... there proves to be a very widespread *instinct d’abandon* attracting them toward a kind of diminished existence; in its most extreme state, this would lack any degree of consciousness or feeling at all. I am referring, so to speak, to *the inertia of the élan vital*.”<sup>66</sup>

By 1934, Toyen had abandoned the creation of swampy and fluid Artificialist landscapes in favor of increasingly arid surrealist scenes that emphasized cracks, fissures, and fragmentation. She had already begun to work with ideas of fragmentation and texture prior to Caillois’ visit to Prague. Her image for Apollinaire’s *Alcools* (1933), as well as others of this period, such as the illustration for *Čajové květy* (Tea Flowers, 1934) shows a shard of a face

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<sup>65</sup>Roger Caillois, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” in *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, ed. Claudine Frank, trans. Claudine Frank and Camille Naish (Duke University Press, 2003), 91.

<sup>66</sup>Caillois, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” 99–100, 102–3. Emphasis in original.

against a similar background.<sup>67</sup> Around the time of Caillois' visit, figures as well as backgrounds began to crack, fissure, and fragment. Toyen then began to explore themes of mimicry, fascination, and the "veritable *lure of space*... a disorder of spatial perception."<sup>68</sup>

Toyen's major works of 1934 include several that explore the theme of mimicry. The paintings *Rose Ghost* and *Yellow Ghost* both present spectres that are beginning to match their surroundings, although remaining distinct from them. The series *Voice of the Forest* shows owl-like figures that take on a camouflage-like resemblance to their backgrounds, which suggest tree bark. Likewise, in *Magnetic Woman*, the torso, while contrasting in hue with its background, is developing horizontal fissures that echo the background.

Somewhat later works such as *Dream* (1937) and *Sleeper* (1937), while not involving camouflage, depict figures that seem as though they may be in the process of vaporizing and melding with their surroundings. This becomes explicit in *After the Performance* (1943), which shows a figure that bears no resemblance to its background except for the telling detail that the girl's feet have disappeared into the wall and her head is nowhere to be found. Toyen's work of the latter 1930s and early 1940s often shows objects or figures that have attempted to imitate or are in the process of becoming more like their surroundings; typically, they crumble away or become increasingly transparent. Later works eschew arid cracking for a smoother, more vaporous connection with the surroundings.

This predilection for blending and camouflage and disappearance continued in Toyen's work, often in combination with other ideas. For example, in the *Seven Swords* series of 1957, one can interpret the misty figures' relationship with their surroundings in a variety of ways,

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<sup>67</sup> While Toyen had not fully developed this theme in 1933, the fact that she was already beginning to work in this manner may have prompted ideas for Caillois. Without specific dates for her 1934 oeuvre, we cannot be certain which works from that year predate Caillois' visit.

<sup>68</sup>Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 99.

related to but not precisely partaking of mimicry. The figures are more like ghosts and apparitions emerging from a mist than they are quite like women vanishing into their surroundings.

Over the years, Toyen's exploration of themes related to mimicry expanded. Cracks and fissures gave way to fluid and vaporous relationships. Over time, Toyen developed this imagery of mimicry to a very complex and fully realized extent, and by the early 1940s, with *Dangerous Hour* (1942), she had begun to explore Caillois' related concept of fascination, in which the subject mimics an animal, rather than a plant or inanimate object, in order to fascinate prey.

Much of Toyen's later work, in fact, becomes a game of One in the Other, where everything is depicted in terms of something else. Is something a woman or a fox, a fox or a dense cluster of leaves, a bat or a pillow, a tongue or a venus flytrap, Daphne or a laurel tree? Are women leopards or shadows? We can see that some of these organisms may no longer know where to place themselves in space (those open and closed, dense, or thinned-out spaces of which Caillois writes), while others take advantage of this uncertainty in which the connection between consciousness and a particular point in space becomes vague, liminal, and ultimately is lost. Camouflage or disorder of perception? To quote Caillois on "assimilation to space," the "dispossessed soul," digested by space, "tries to look at *himself from* any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, *dark space where things cannot be put.*"<sup>69</sup> Toyen explored this concept and sensation in a remarkable number of her postwar works, the majority of which were done after her 1947 relocation to Paris.

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<sup>69</sup>Caillois, "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia," 99–100.

### 6.3 DAY AND NIGHT: TOYEN'S USE OF COLLAGE STRUCTURE

Discrepancies of time, place and person are irrelevant to the psyche. —Bruno Schulz, 1936<sup>70</sup>

Ce n'est pas la colle qui fait le collage. (it's not the paste that makes the collage.)—Max Ernst<sup>71</sup>

Toyen, who first worked in collage around 1925, and made it uniquely her own by the 1960s, structured many of her painted and drawn works using a collage-derived aesthetic. In her use of collage and collage aesthetic, she showed her fundamental allegiance to international avant-gardist developments as well as to more narrowly surrealist norms. Collage and photomontage became standard modes of representation during the interwar period, to the extent that collage has even been considered part of the twentieth-century move from monism and the Absolute to pluralism and uncertainty.<sup>72</sup> It attacked the idea of art as imitation of nature, and undermined ideas of life and art as stable or whole.<sup>73</sup> Tristan Tzara, for instance, regarded collage as revolutionary because it incorporated “a piece of everyday reality which enters into relationship with every other reality that the spirit has created.” In its identification of collage as “a mixture of realities belonging to different orders,” this assessment specified, as Harold Rosenberg later observed, a relationship between modern assemblages and metaphysical principle, the

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<sup>70</sup> “The Annexation of the Subconscious: Observations on Maria Kuncewicz’s *The Foreigner*,” in Bruno Schulz, *Letters and Drawings of Bruno Schulz*, ed. Jerzy Ficowski, trans. Walter Arndt and with Victoria Nelson (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 96.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in J. H. Matthews, *Languages of Surrealism*, 33.

<sup>72</sup> Katherine Hoffman, “Collage in the Twentieth Century: An Overview,” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 1–2.

<sup>73</sup> Donald B. Kuspit, “Collage: The Organizing Principle of Art in the Age of the Relativity of Art,” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 53.

combination of art with items from daily life.<sup>74</sup> And, as Donald Kuspit notes, “The collage demonstrates rebellion against determining beliefs in the very act of articulating them through the choice of fragments.”<sup>75</sup>

Rosalind Krauss, in her discussion of the semiotics of collage in Picasso’s cubist works, concludes that collage “can talk about space without actually employing it; it can figure the figure through the constant superimposition of grounds; it can speak of light and shade through the subterfuge of a written text.” Because each collage element functions “both literally and as the material signifier for its opposite,” collage deals with “a presence whose referent is an absence, *meaningful only in its absence*.” Though here she speaks of the ground, the significance is broader. Krauss proposes that collage sets up “discourse in place of presence, a discourse founded on a buried origin, a discourse fueled by absence.” Collage, she posits, catches the artist “within a system of plenitude with an empty center, the representation of a representation whose subject is always absent.”<sup>76</sup> We see this system of representing an absent subject repeatedly in Toyen’s work, whether in pasted collage or in seemingly seamless paintings.

Elza Adamowicz too emphasizes a semiotic approach to collage, stating that it invites semiotic analysis, because the mechanisms of cutting and pasting that characterize collage “define all semiotic utterances.” Since collage elements are chosen from existing material, collage is, then, “the recycling of pre-existing signs.”<sup>77</sup> It is up to the viewer to interpret these recombinant signs.

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<sup>74</sup>Harold Rosenberg, “Collage: Philosophy of Put-Togethers,” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 60–61.

<sup>75</sup>Kuspit, “Collage,” 48.

<sup>76</sup>Rosalind Krauss, “Representing Picasso,” *Art in America* 68 (December 1980): 96.

<sup>77</sup>Elza Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image: Dissecting the Exquisite Corpse*, in *Cambridge Studies in French* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20.

### 6.3.1 Collage in Surrealist Thought

For me, the only *manifest truth* in the world is governed by the spontaneous, clairvoyant, insolent connection established under certain conditions between two things whose conjunction would not be permitted by common sense.—André Breton, 1947<sup>78</sup>

In 1969, Lucy Lippard observed that collage aesthetic underlies all surrealist art, with the pun as its basis. Though regarding surrealist painting as “dated,” she conceded that its tenets of collage aesthetic, concreteness, automatic techniques, chance/random order, black humor, and biomorphism, continued to be important, with surrealist emphasis on direct experience and the work as a communicating vessel between artist and viewer being the links that join contemporary artists of diverse movements and sensibilities to one another.<sup>79</sup> This theorization of collage as foundational to surrealist art came directly from the surrealists themselves. Breton noted:

Apart from what surrealism might have owed at that time to other influences—to Chirico for the conscious manipulation of the dream, to Duchamp and Arp for the acceptance of chance, to Man Ray for his photographic ‘rayograms’, to Klee for his partial automatism—it is obvious now, looking back, that it was already fully in evidence in the work of Max Ernst. In fact, surrealism had immediately profited from his 1920 *collages*, which introduced an entirely original scheme of visual structure yet at the same time corresponded exactly to the intentions of Lautréamont and Rimbaud in poetry.<sup>80</sup>

It was probably Louis Aragon, however, who worked out the most acute and detailed explanation of the question of collage aesthetic. In 1930, Aragon noted that “virtually no one seems to have

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<sup>78</sup> “Ascendant Sign” (1947), in André Breton, *Free Rein (La Clé des champs)*, trans. Michel Parmentier and Jacqueline d’Amboise (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 104. Emphasis in original.

<sup>79</sup> Lucy Lippard, “Introduction,” in *Surrealists on Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), 2–3, 8.

<sup>80</sup> André Breton, “Artistic Genesis and Perspective of Surrealism,” in *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: MacDonald & Co., 1972), 64. Emphasis in original.

noticed a singular occupation certain people are now systematically undertaking, which recalls more the procedures of magic than those of painting.” This was, in other words, collage.<sup>81</sup> In his analysis of the development of collage, Aragon observed that not only had technique become unnecessary, but that “painters are truly beginning to use objects as words.”<sup>82</sup> For Aragon, the principle of collage was paramount, not whether the artist had used paper and paste: “The principle of collage once admitted, painters had unknowing passed from white to black magic. It was too late to retreat.”<sup>83</sup>

This, of course, was only a starting point for surrealist collage. The Dadaists and Surrealists repeatedly characterized collage, whether visual or verbal, in terms of love and copulation, and Robin Lydenberg proposes that surrealist collage was a fundamentally erotic exploration of tangential relations, touch, and adventurous connections.<sup>84</sup> Citing passages from Breton, Ernst, Arp, and Tzara, Lydenberg observes that Dadaist and surrealist collages “bring everything into contact, producing not isolated erotic encounters but a pandemic sexuality, an all-inclusive polymorphous perversity.”<sup>85</sup> The collage thus became an objective correlative for the chance encounter and even for surrealist collaboration.<sup>86</sup>

Toyen’s surrealist work, whether technically collage or not, repeatedly employs collage-born principles of eroticized juxtaposition, particularly in her postwar work. The other Czech surrealists, too, gave collage careful thought in addition to working in the medium. Teige’s article “O fotomontáži,” (On Photomontage) written in 1932 before he himself had begun to

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<sup>81</sup>Louis Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” in *The Surrealists Look at Art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*, ed. Pontus Hulten (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 52.

<sup>82</sup>Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 56–57.

<sup>83</sup>Aragon, “The Challenge to Painting,” 55.

<sup>84</sup>Robin Lydenberg, “Engendering Collage: Collaboration and Desire in Dada and Surrealism,” in *Collage: Critical Views*, ed. Katherine Hoffman (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 274–75.

<sup>85</sup>Lydenberg, “Engendering Collage,” 277.

<sup>86</sup>Lydenberg, “Engendering Collage,” 278–79.

work seriously in collage and before the formation of the Prague surrealist group, shows a detailed knowledge of the history of collage and photomontage, focused especially on the contributions of Höch, Haussmann, Heartfield, Ernst, Moholy-Nagy, and the Soviets.<sup>87</sup> Though Teige did not discuss surrealist collage at length in “O fotomontáži,” he took notes on Aragon’s “The Challenge to Painting.”<sup>88</sup> He contemplated collage in terms of both photomontage and film, apparently in order to avoid the suggestion of cubist collage, and called montage a “planned and deliberate association and alternation of diverse film fragments and images with the aim of reaching a desired rhythmic and visual effect.”<sup>89</sup> Teige’s own collages would rearrange the female form, usually in a sculptural or architectural manner, and were informed by his detailed study of erotic art.<sup>90</sup>

Štyrský’s *Stěhovací kabinet* (Portable Cabinet or Traveling Valise) series consisted of 66 collages done for the first surrealist exhibition in Prague. This was his largest series of collages yet, and while inspired by Ernst’s xylographic works, the individual collages made strong use of color reproductions, especially of food, medical imagery, and holy pictures.<sup>91</sup> Toyen’s own collages of the 1930s followed Ernst’s xylographic style more closely, but as she clearly had other potential models, this was a conscious choice, one suggesting a desire to evoke the past rather than, as Štyrský and Teige usually did, a reinvented present day.

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<sup>87</sup>Karel Teige, “O fotomontáži,” *Žijeme* 2, no. 3–4 (June-July): 107–13; no. 6 (Sept.): 173–78 (1932).

<sup>88</sup>Vojtěch Lahoda, “Teige’s Collages 1935–1951: The Erotic Object, the Social Object, and Surrealist Landscape Art,” in *Karel Teige/1900–1951: L’Enfant Terrible of the Czech Modernist Avant-Garde*, ed. Eric Dluhosch and Rostislav Švácha, trans. David Chirico (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 1999), 295.

<sup>89</sup>“K estetice film,” Studio, quoted in Lahoda, “Teige’s Collages 1935–1951,” 297.

<sup>90</sup>Teige left careful notes on his readings on the erotic and erotic art, labeled as Eros, Eros a Estetika, Erotismus, Eroto-Eстетika, Erotické umění, and Eros, Láska, all at the LA PNP. See discussion in Karel Srp, “Collage as Simultaneity and Contradiction: The Pictorial Conceptions, Quotations and Paraphrases of Karel Teige,” in *Teige, Karel: Surrealistické koláže 1935–1951*, trans. Richard Drury, Vojtěch Lahoda and Karel Srp (Prague: Detail, 1994), 27.

<sup>91</sup>Karel Srp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 29–30.

How to analyze surrealist collage? As Adamowicz suggests, psychoanalysis is becomes “a discourse among others, exploited as ready-made material, to be analysed as a social construct whose models the surrealists manipulate and transform in their conscious and often parodic reworkings of fragments of psychoanalytical discourses and models.” Since the recycled images retain only traces of their original meanings, such “recodings” may be “the dynamic reworkings of the ‘signe ascendant’ rather than the fixed traces of a trauma...”<sup>92</sup> Or they may be simultaneously traumatic repetitions *and* dynamic reworkings, as seems likely in the work of Toyen and Štyrský. As Breton wrote in “Signe ascendant,” poetic and mystical analogy transgress “the rules of deduction to let the mind apprehend the interdependence of two objects of thought located on different planes.”<sup>93</sup> Surrealist work normally has multiple meanings and multiple functions, of which the psychoanalytic is often one mode, the comic sometimes another, and the evocation of the strange and marvelous is almost always in play.

### 6.3.2 Metaphor, Metonymy, and Displacement

Not only language, but the whole of intellectual life is based on a game of transpositions, of symbols, which can be described as metaphorical. On the other hand, knowledge always proceeds by comparison, which connects all known objects to one another in relations of interdependency. Given any two among them, it is impossible to determine which is designated by the name proper to it and is not a metaphor of the other, and vice versa. —Michel Leiris, 1929<sup>94</sup>

Discussions of metaphor in the arts were an integral part of Czech modernist thinking during the 1920s. In 1926, for instance, the critic Václav Černý wrote of the importance of metaphor in

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<sup>92</sup>Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 22.

<sup>93</sup> “Ascendant Sign” (1947), in Breton, *Free Rein*, 105.

<sup>94</sup> Michel Leiris, Metaphor, Alastair Brotchie, *Encyclopædia Acephalica*, 61.

poetry and image, especially for the French cubists, dadaists, and surrealists, and asserted that metaphor was the “criterion of value” for modern poetry; indeed, “it’s what makes poetry poetry.”<sup>95</sup> Černý stated further:

The character of popular, everyday metaphor is visual in the overwhelming majority of cases. Poetry, too, is the reflection of this from the middle ages up to Romanticism. [...] The roots of modern polyform metaphor extend back only to the Symbolists, with whom there was an expansion from the visual domain to that of all the senses; the visual was transformed into the acoustic, into the tactile, etc. It relates to the Symbolist doctrine of correspondences of sounds, colors, and smells: ‘...les couleurs, les parfums et les sons se répondent’ says Baudelaire’s sonnet “Les correspondances.” Baudelaire was indeed the first for whom not only visual images, but also colors, tactile sensations, and especially aromas had powerful evocative capacity, the power to bring the metaphorical imagination into action...<sup>96</sup>

In his poetist writings, Teige, of course, developed this Baudelairean concept into his idea of poetry for the five senses, although even in surrealism a truly multisensory poetry did not fully come into being. But how did these ideas of metaphor and correspondence develop within surrealism, especially among the Czechs?

Because of surrealist fondness for analogy, critics have historically regarded metaphor to be surrealism’s dominant trope.<sup>97</sup> Recent scholars, however, have questioned this view. Already

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<sup>95</sup> “Metafora je kriteriem ceny moderní básně; činí poezii poezii.” Václav Černý, “Metafora, její druhy a úloha v nové poesii,” *Host* 5, no. 10 (1926): 295.

<sup>96</sup> “Charakter lidové, běžné metafory je valnou většinou vizuální. Toho odrazem je i poezie od starověku až po romantism. [...] Polyformní metafora moderní sahá svými kořeny teprve k symbolistům; pole její rozšířeno je u nich z oboru vizuálního do oboru všech smyslů; vizuální přenášeno v akustické, v hmatové, atd. Souvisí to se symbolistickým učením o korespondenci zvuků, barev a vůní: ‘...les couleurs, les parfums et les sons se répondent’ praví Baudelaireův sonnet ‘Les correspondances’. Baudelaire byl vůbec první, pro nějž nejen obrazy zrakové, ale i barvy, počítky hmatové a zvláště vůně měly mocnou schopnost evokační, moc uvádět v činnost imaginaci metaforickou...” (Černý, “Metafora,” 297.) Černý also wrote on the use of psychoanalysis in art and literature; Václav Navrátil was another author writing on metaphor. See Černý, “Psychoanalytické extempore” and Václav Navrátil, “O metafoře,” *Kvart*, no. 4 (Spring 1935): 47–48.

<sup>97</sup> Jakobson, who regarded metaphor and metonymy as “two gravitational poles,” posited that Romanticism was metaphoric, Realism metonymic, Symbolism metaphoric, Cubism metonymic, and Surrealism metaphoric, in an alternating sequence. He regarded the metaphor-metonymy divide as native not only to language but to “other semiotic systems” and considered prose to be metonymic, poetry metaphoric. (Roman Jakobson, “Two Aspects of

in 1957, Lacan, for instance, offered complications. On the one hand, he suggested that surrealism had discovered “that any conjunction of two signifiers would be equally sufficient to constitute a metaphor, except for the additional requirement of the greatest possible disparity of the images signified, needed for the production of the poetic spark, or in other words for metaphoric creation to take place.”<sup>98</sup> However, Lacan rejected Reverdy and Breton’s metaphoric spark, stating “The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain.”<sup>99</sup>

Present-day scholars have continued in this line of thought. Elza Adamowicz suggests that the substitutions of one thing for another in collaged exquisite corpses (a balloon for a head, machine for a torso) “seem irreducible to the analogical process.”<sup>100</sup> John Westbrook proposes that rather than metaphor, “metonymy, seen as indexing the real, was the underlying figure of surrealist discourse.”<sup>101</sup> Edward D. Powers asserts, likewise, that surrealist collage is metonymic rather than metaphoric because it is founded in physical proximity rather than conceptual similarity.<sup>102</sup> Brandon Taylor, however, assesses Ernst’s collage novels as narrative and metaphoric and thus replacing “the carefully organized metonymies of Cubism.”<sup>103</sup> Was surrealism more metonymic than metaphoric? Perhaps more important than a determination of

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Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” in *Language in Literature*, ed. K. Pomorska and Stephen Rudy [Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987], 111, 114.)

<sup>98</sup>Jacques Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud,” in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 156.

<sup>99</sup>Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 157.

<sup>100</sup>Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 80–81.

<sup>101</sup>John Westbrook, “Reinventions of the Literary Avant-Garde in Interwar France: *Documents: Between Surrealism and Ethnography*” (Ph.D. diss., New York: New York University, 2001), 16.

<sup>102</sup>Powers, “When Father Doesn’t Know Best,” 5–6.

<sup>103</sup>Brandon Taylor, *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 69.

hierarchy is recognition that both processes come into play.<sup>104</sup> Adamowicz argues that the surrealists pushed both metaphor and metonymy “to their limits.” She suggests that Štyrský’s collage *Bathers* (1934), for instance, functions neither quite as metaphor nor as metonymy, but, with its use of grotesquely large internal organs to replace the bathers’ heads, “[t]he work thereby aggressively stages a multiple displacement, from the lower to the upper anatomy, genitals to head, the female body to the male organ, the veiled to the unveiled.”<sup>105</sup> In Toyen’s work, especially in her later paintings but already visible in her pre-surrealist (but so utterly surrealist) drawing of the woman’s face with eyes and mouth made of female genitalia, metaphor and metonymy are simultaneously at work, with parts metonymically standing for a whole and one thing metaphorically like another (female genitalia representing other bodily parts but also having a metaphoric similarity).

Thus, surrealist work uses both metaphor and metonymy, even repeatedly slipping between the two. This tendency is not surprising, considering that Lacan regarded metaphor and metonymy as corresponding to freudian condensation and displacement of meaning,<sup>106</sup> and Jakobson theorized metaphor (condensation of meanings together) and metonymy (displacement of one onto another) as two primary operations of human language.<sup>107</sup>

Displacement, indeed, is constantly occurring. Something is always, metaphorically or metonymically, displacing something else. Long chains of association ensue as one displacement

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<sup>104</sup> Martin Jay, for that matter, observes that the spark between the signifiers is not exactly metaphorical because “the principle of paradigmatic similarity does not work to create a unified symbol.” Nor does he find the sparking signifiers metonymic, but suggests that “their ineffable effect is produced by their very resistance to such traditional modes of signification.” (Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 240.)

<sup>105</sup> Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 83–85.

<sup>106</sup> Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 160.

<sup>107</sup> Jakobson, “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances,” 113.

follows another.<sup>108</sup> This kind of associative chaining often appears in surrealist literature, especially in the poetry of Nezval. As Benjamin Paloff observes regarding Nezval's poem "Edison," "Nezval folds his similes into long anaphoric chains, so that the original object of comparison is eventually lost within a series of transformations..."<sup>109</sup> Nezval exacerbates the effect of this process by placing his anaphora in conjunction with present-tense verbs that make for continuous transformations in an endless present.<sup>110</sup> The fluidity of these associative chains also permits easy movement between the visual and the linguistic.<sup>111</sup> Toyen's work increasingly relied on chains of displacement: of corsets for women for sexuality or personality; of One-in-the-Other-like simultaneities.

Donald Kuspit, however, observes: "Even the idea of displacement does not focus what is occurring in the collage. What counts is that it remains incompletely constituted, for all the fragments that constitute it." The collage is always in the process of becoming. "The incongruous effect of the collage is based directly on its incompleteness, on the sense of perpetual becoming that animates it."<sup>112</sup> He adds: "Collage [...] is very much about these dark fringes, these absences, as well as about the positive presence of positively ap-prehended [sic] fragments."<sup>113</sup> The image of the disembodied girl in *Sleeper*, in *Dream*, and that of the woman in many postwar paintings, is predicated on this incompleteness, this sense of becoming, the haunting absence. Breton displaced objects playfully, stating:

[A] statue is far less interesting on its pedestal than in a pit, where an aurora borealis reproduced in the magazine *Nature* is less beautiful than in any

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<sup>108</sup>Samantha Kavky, "Authoring the Unconscious: Freudian Structures in the Art of Max Ernst" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 137.

<sup>109</sup>Benjamin Barnaby Paloff, "Intermediacy: A Poetics of Unfreedom in Interwar Russian, Polish, and Czech Literatures" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge: Harvard, 2007), 306.

<sup>110</sup>Paloff, "Intermediacy," 309.

<sup>111</sup>Kavky, "Authoring the Unconscious," 137.

<sup>112</sup>Kuspit, "Collage," 43.

<sup>113</sup>Kuspit, "Collage," 43.

unexpected elsewhere. ...[I]n order to be truly displaced, the statue had to have once lived a conventional statue-life in a conventional statue-place.<sup>114</sup>

Toyen, however, displaced objects and bodily parts more urgently. Lacan suggests:

Between the enigmatic signifier of the sexual trauma and the term that is substituted for it in an actual signifying chain there passes the spark that fixes in a symptom the signification inaccessible to the conscious subject in which that symptom may be resolved—a symptom being a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element.<sup>115</sup>

He continues:

And the enigmas that desire seems to pose for a ‘natural philosophy’—its frenzy mocking the abyss of the infinite, the secret collusion with which it envelopes the pleasure of knowing and of dominating with *jouissance*, these amount to no other derangement of instinct than that of being caught in the rails—eternally stretching forth towards the *desire for something else*—of metonymy. Hence its ‘perverse’ fixation at the very suspension-point of the signifying chain where the memory-screen is immobilized and the fascinating image of the fetish is petrified.<sup>116</sup>

Lacan suggests that it is in memory that we find “the chain that *insists* on reproducing itself in the transference, and which is the chain of dead desire.”<sup>117</sup> He concludes, “the symptom *is* a metaphor whether one likes it or not, as desire *is* a metonymy...”<sup>118</sup>

### 6.3.3 The Dream

Dreams are a shield against the humdrum monotony of life; they set imagination free from its chains so that it may throw into confusion all the pictures of

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<sup>114</sup>André Breton, “Foreword,” in *The Hundred Headless Woman*, by Max Ernst, trans. Dorothea Tanning (New York: George Braziller, 1981), 9.

<sup>115</sup>Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 166.

<sup>116</sup>Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 166–67. Emphasis in original.

<sup>117</sup>Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 167. Emphasis in original.

<sup>118</sup>Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter,” 175. Emphasis in original.

everyday existence and break into the unceasing gravity of grown men with the joyful play of a child....—Novalis, 1802<sup>119</sup>

These metaphoric and metonymic condensations and displacements relate closely to the dream and to Freud's analyses of the workings of the dream. As Freud wrote,

When the whole mass of these dream-thoughts is brought under the pressure of the dream-work, and its elements are turned about, broken into fragments and jammed together—almost like pack-ice—the question arises of what happens to the logical connections which have hitherto formed its framework.<sup>120</sup>

He then asked:

What representation do dreams provide for 'if', 'because', 'just as', 'although', either—or', and all the other conjunctions without which we cannot understand sentences or speeches?

In the first resort our answer must be that dreams have no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts. For the most part dreams disregard all these conjunctions, and it is only the substantive content of the dream-thoughts that they take over and manipulate. [...]

The incapacity of dreams to express these things must lie in the nature of the psychical material out of which dreams are made. The plastic arts of painting and sculpture labour, indeed, under a similar limitation as compared with poetry, which can make use of speech; and here once again the reason for their incapacity lies in the nature of the material which these two forms of art manipulate in their effort to express something.<sup>121</sup>

Adamowicz suggests that some surrealist works, such as Ernst's *Une semaine de bonté*, seem to simulate dream processes, with suspension of causal relations resulting from editing and interruptive elements. Compulsive repetition of signs and scenarios marks the obsessional; strategies of displacement show in cropped bodies, while condensation occurs in the recycled

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<sup>119</sup> Novalis, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), Part I, Chapter 1, quoted in Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 83.

<sup>120</sup> Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 312.

<sup>121</sup> Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 312.

signs' ambivalent meanings.<sup>122</sup> Kavky, similarly, argues that some surrealist work represents a conscious and continuous dream.<sup>123</sup> Ernst's collage novels, being to some extent episodic, naturally lend themselves to notions of dream, while the paintings of Delvaux, for instance, immediately suggest the dream. Toyen, who referred to sleep and dreams in so many of her titles, did so in a less programmatic manner than Ernst, Delvaux, or for that matter Štyrský, who sometimes worked directly from dreamed sources, but she nonetheless used the dream (whether or not specific dreams actually experienced in sleep) as a unifying paradigm. As a reviewer wrote in 1931, "One can characterize the whole exhibition with the name given to one of Toyen's paintings: 'Dream Flora.'"<sup>124</sup> In fact, Toyen's dream scenes, with their bodiless girls and women, repeat the signs and scenarios of absence, desolation, and displacement, and are dreamlike in a far more disturbing manner than that suggested by Ernst's humorously archaic collages. Here, we should keep in mind that Freud theorized that since dreams and art were disguised fulfillments of suppressed/repressed wishes, the disturbing content of the wish causes "visual and narrative distortion" of the dream/art. Fragmentation and absence of (apparent) logic result from conflicting forces, one of which is the wish and the other of which is its censorship, and the dream/art as the result of combined desire and repression.<sup>125</sup>

Štyrský, of course, had begun collecting his dreams starting in 1925. In the late 1930s, he began to illustrate these, creating a portrait of his inner life for a planned publication; thirty-three appeared posthumously in *Sny* (Dreams).<sup>126</sup> Teige, meanwhile, referred to the "waking dream"

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<sup>122</sup>Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 118.

<sup>123</sup>Kavky, "Authoring the Unconscious," 1.

<sup>124</sup>"Man könnte diese ganze Ausstellung mit dem Namen charakterisieren, den ein Bild von Toyen trägt: "Traumflora"." (Pečírka, "Bilder-Ausstellung")

<sup>125</sup>Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 144.

<sup>126</sup>Karel Šrp, *Jindřich Štyrský*, 40–41. See Jindřich Štyrský, *Sny 1925–1940*.

rather than the dream of sleep.<sup>127</sup> Such waking dreams relate to the hypnagogic visions of Ernst's notes on frottage:

I stress the fact that, by a series of suggestions and transmutations which arise spontaneously—as with what are known as hypnagogic visions—such drawings lose the character of the material in question (wood) and take on the appearance of unexpectedly precise images, potentially able to reveal the obsession's original cause or to produce a simulacrum of this cause.<sup>128</sup>

With their acceptance of surrealism, Toyen and Štyrský began to make frequent use of frottage and frottage-like textures.

#### 6.3.4 The Uncanny

There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable—a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown.—Sigmund Freud<sup>129</sup>

[The surrealists] don't grow 'the dream for the dream,' as it might appear. Vítězslav Nezval, 1934<sup>130</sup>

The marvelous is less the extreme tension of existence than the conjunction of desire and external reality. It is, at a precise moment, the disturbing instant when the world gives us its agreement...—Pierre Mabille, 1977<sup>131</sup>

Both Margaret Cohen and Hal Foster have proposed the Freudian theory of the uncanny as a way of approaching Surrealist work. Freud was intrigued by the sense of the uncanny both as it manifested itself in life and in literature, and theorized that in life it is prompted largely by

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<sup>127</sup>Teige, "Doslov," 194.

<sup>128</sup> Max Ernst, quoted in André Breton, "The Surrealist Situation of the Object," in *The Surrealists Look at Art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*, ed. Pontus Hulten (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 183–84.

<sup>129</sup> Footnote 1, Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams (First Part)*, 111.

<sup>130</sup>"Nepěstují 'sen pro sen', jak by se tomu zdálo". (Vítězslav Nezval, "O Surrealismu," in *Surrealismus v diskusi*, ed. Ladislav Štoll and Karel Teige [Prague: Knihovna Levé fronty, 1934], 77.)

<sup>131</sup>"Le Merveilleux est moins encore la tension extrême de l'être que la conjunction du désir et de la réalité extérieure. Il est, à un moment précis, l'instant troublant où le monde nous donne son accord..." (Pierre Mabille, *Le Merveilleux* [Paris: Pierre Jean Oswald, 1977], 70.)

surmounted animistic/superstitious beliefs and occasionally by repressed material; current ideas about the uncanny relate to the latter.<sup>132</sup> Foster suggests that “the uncanny is crucial to particular surrealist oeuvres as well as to general surrealist notions” and “is not merely contemporaneous with surrealism [...] but also indicative of many of its activities.”<sup>133</sup> As Cohen notes, “Breton’s narratives are filled with uncanny happenings.”<sup>134</sup> Though the Surrealists did not specifically adopt the idea of the uncanny, Foster posits it is “everywhere” in the movement’s unconscious, with surrealist practices functioning as “so many attempts, compulsively repeated, to master trauma, to transform the anxious into the aesthetic, the uncanny into the marvelous.”<sup>135</sup> Foster concludes that Surrealist imagery of “convulsive beauty” is also compulsive (compelled to repeat, and thus partaking of the uncanny) and suggestive of death or at least expiration/suspension/arrest. As its terrain, like that of traditional beauty, remains the female body, it then “involves the patriarchal subject in the inextricability of death and desire.”<sup>136</sup> Or at least, this would be the case for the male artists analyzed by Foster.

Breton’s opening pair of questions in *Nadja*—Who am I? and Whom do I haunt? reek of the uncanny, and at the same time, as Adamowicz notes, the search for the self expressed in the first question is repeatedly displaced by the search for the haunted other.<sup>137</sup> While Foster only examines the work of a small number of surrealist men, the work of surrealist women, and

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<sup>132</sup> Freud’s discussion of the uncanny in literature is equally pertinent to visual art. (See Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, 1917–1919, ed. James Strachey [London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, 1981], 219–52.)

<sup>133</sup> Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, xvii.

<sup>134</sup> Margaret Cohen, “Mysteries of Paris: The Collective Uncanny in André Breton’s *L’Amour Fou*,” in *André Breton Today*, ed. Anna Balakian and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1989), 101.

<sup>135</sup> Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, xviii, 48. While reviewers have pointed out some potential weaknesses in Foster’s theory, these do not seem to negate its overall usefulness as a means of looking at specific surrealist oeuvres. See, for example, James Elkins, “Compulsive Beauty,” *The Art Bulletin* 76, no. 3 (September 1994): 546–48, and Daniel Herwitz, “Compulsive Beauty,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 53, no. 4 (Autumn 1995): 433–35.

<sup>136</sup> Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 23–29.

<sup>137</sup> Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 130.

notably that of Toyen, often partakes of the Freudian uncanny and is a prime example of this kind of haunting, traumatic oscillation between the familiar and the strange.

Although Toyen used a wide variety of imagery and compositions, repetition was an important element in her repertoire. In the oeuvre of such a prolific artist, repetition is not in itself surprising. Groups of related images and themes combine to show ideas that were of particular significance to the artist. Toyen's work, however, features obsessive repetition and returns to the past, especially childhood, much like the Freudian unconscious. An image or motif may repeat frequently, vanish, and then reappear years later. Formal configurations, source materials, and techniques repeat as well as theme and iconography.<sup>138</sup>

Repetition of themes and motifs suggest the compulsive repetition of a forgotten traumatic experience, or, as Breton wrote in *Nadja*, "perhaps I am doomed to retrace my steps under the illusion that I am exploring, doomed to try and learn what I should simply recognize, learning a mere fraction of what I have forgotten."<sup>139</sup> Regression or repetition may, however, be necessary in order to recapture the essence of a past experience or feeling and make art of it. As Krauss writes of Ernst's work *The Master's Bedroom*,

underneath it all the element of repetition, the anxiety brought on by the uncanniness of the experience, by the fact of an already-there that is returning, returning in the form of an object that can only represent loss, an object whose identity resides precisely in the fact that it is lost.<sup>140</sup>

Although Benjamin linked surrealist fascination with the outmoded to a revolutionary strategy of dismantling capitalism, surrealist use of the outmoded, most famously by Ernst but also by

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<sup>138</sup>Kavky, "Authoring the Unconscious," 16.

<sup>139</sup> André Breton, *Nadja*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 12. The opening of *Nadja* is almost a meditation on the uncanny.

<sup>140</sup>Krauss, "The Master's Bedroom," 67.

Toyen and Štyrský, is generally of materials from the artist's own childhood.<sup>141</sup> Adorno theorized that effectiveness of surrealist images and ability to shock derives in

part literally and partly in spirit, from illustrations of the later nineteenth century, with which the parents of Max Ernst's generation were familiar. [...] One must therefore trace the affinity of surrealistic technique for psychoanalysis, not to a symbolism of the unconscious, but to the attempt to uncover childhood experiences by blasting them out. What surrealism adds to the pictorial rendering of the world of things is what we lost after childhood: when we were children those illustrations, already archaic, must have jumped out at us, just as the surrealistic pictures do now. The action of the montage supplies the subjective momentum, and seeks with unmistakable intention... to produce perceptions as they must have once been.<sup>142</sup>

Krauss stresses that “Adorno locates the accomplishment of surrealism in its uncanny staging of the archaic in the midst of the depersonalized, rationalized, and commodified world of modernism.”<sup>143</sup> She suggests that the readymade—by which she means pieces of collage as well as Duchampian readymades—“as a marker of the site of serial production, needs to be approached in relation to the repetitive mechanisms of consciousness and the unconscious.”<sup>144</sup>

How does uncanny repetition function in Toyen's work? We see her repeating particular images and themes (such as the girl, the glove, the claw) and specific compositional configurations (the flat expanse of ground, the viewer's perspective onto the scene). Repetition of scenic elements such as the flat expanse of the 1930s, with its straight horizon line, succeeded by the often claustrophobic interior spaces of the postwar years, hints at a sense of being unable to escape, first from unrelenting exposure, and then from disorientation and spatial confusion. The girl takes the role of the dreamer, who experiences and re-experiences solitude, disturbing

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<sup>141</sup>Kavky, “Authoring the Unconscious,” 210–11.

<sup>142</sup>Theodor W. Adorno, “Looking Back on Surrealism,” in *The Idea of the Modern in Literature and the Arts*, ed. Irving Howe (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 222.

<sup>143</sup>Krauss, “The Master's Bedroom,” 62.

<sup>144</sup>Krauss, “The Master's Bedroom,” 75.

juxtapositions of toys and dead animals, and is sometimes herself fragmented and dismembered. At the same time, elements such as the raptor's claw speak of pain and death, while gloves and other items of female attire increase in frequency over time and signify the female body and female sexuality, as, to some extent, does the postwar imagery of interiors, doors, windows, and intense surface patterning. The move from the often-dismembered girl of the 1930s to the usually vaporous woman of the postwar period suggests a shift from haunted self ("who am I") to haunting self ("whom do I haunt").

This *haunting self*, as Adamowicz calls it, can to some extent be traced in the surrealists' hybrid strategies, through their intertextual strategies, their portraits and self portraits, and their "appropriation of masks." Perhaps, as she suggests, identity can be regarded as "a semiotic strategy where the self is both displayed and displaced in figures which articulate ambivalent spaces of identity."<sup>145</sup> Toyen's use of intertextuality most notably involves the use of collage items, and especially, in her later work, the occasional use of highly recognizable images such as that of Bernini's statue of Apollo and Daphne.<sup>146</sup> Her recognizable portraits and self-portraits are almost nonexistent—there is one extremely early self portrait, plus portraits of Breton and Péret. Masks come into play only later, if we consider as masks the relatively stylized faces that occur in some of the last works and the actual masks designed for Radovan Ivšić's *Roi Gordogane* (1976). Masking in the sense of covering the face, however, had begun much earlier. The use of shadow and leopard-coat patterning in the postwar work also functions as a kind of full-body masking that both participates in and plays games with Rivière's concept of womanliness as masquerade.

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<sup>145</sup> Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 130.

<sup>146</sup> Lenka Bydžovská has recently written about this kind of intertextual collage in Toyen's late work, but I have not yet seen her article.

As Judith Butler argues: signification is “*a regulated process of repetition*” and occurs within the compulsion to repeat. Thus, ‘agency’ can exist if a variation on that repetition is possible. If new options for gender are able to contest the existing rigid codes of binary gender, then subversion of identity becomes possible only within the practices of repetitive signification. “The injunction *to be* a given gender produces necessary failures, a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunction by which they are generated.”<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, the Surrealists’ interest is less, as Adamowicz states, “in decoding and interpreting than in combining incongruous images and disorientating the reader,” who imaginatively engages with the collage-text as a “vicarious experience.” She proposes that “The sign is thus experienced as a mystery to inhabit rather than an enigma to be deciphered. [...] Pleasure derives less from the solution to a mystery than from the disorientation founded in desire, in the enigma as enigma.”<sup>148</sup> How then does one read some of these images? To some extent we oscillate between the experiential and the analytical; we settle into a dreaming mode, following the work on an intuitive level, then halt and attempt to interpret, to solve the puzzle of meaning on an intellectual level. Any one method of interpretation, whether psychoanalytic, semiotic, iconographic, gestalt, alchemical, astrological,<sup>149</sup> will prove insufficient in the end, because of Toyen’s shifting and multi-leveled meanings. The final chapter, then, examines some of the ways Toyen continued to develop her imagery in Paris during the postwar years, in the company of a new group of associates.

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<sup>147</sup>Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 145. Emphasis in original.

<sup>148</sup>Adamowicz, *Surrealist Collage*, 127.

<sup>149</sup>For an alchemical approach to surrealist meaning, see M.E. Warlick, *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001). As for astrology, surrealist fascination with this suggests that analyses focusing on astrological content could prove productive.

## 7.0 TOYEN IN PARIS 1947–1980

I think surrealism has not deviated from the first prescription of its program, which is to preserve the potential of visual arts for constant self-renewal so as to express human desire in its unceasing fluctuation.—André Breton<sup>1</sup>

In 1947, following World War II and in response to the rise of Stalinist Communism in Czechoslovakia, Toyen and her second artistic partner, the poet and artist Jindřich Heisler, moved permanently to Paris. They promptly became active members of the Breton group, which became their permanent social and artistic milieu.<sup>2</sup> Postwar French surrealism and the Paris surrealist group were thus the final direct influence on Toyen's thinking. Many of her most important works date from her second Paris period, and her visual language and iconography continued to evolve in the latter part of her life, while continuing to address themes of gender and the erotic.

The surrealist group that Toyen and Heisler found in Paris in 1947 was in many ways a very different one than that Toyen had encountered in 1935. World War II had scattered its members, many to North America, and only some had returned. Of those close to Toyen, both

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<sup>1</sup> "Surrealist Comet," in Breton, *Free Rein*, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Heisler renounced his Czechoslovak citizenship in 1948 and, with little experience writing French, enlarged his explorations of visual art practice. He died, however, at the beginning of 1953.

André Breton and Benjamin Péret had come back. Paul Eluard had remained in France but was now estranged from both Breton and Toyen.<sup>3</sup>

After the war, French surrealism was weak and no longer in the forefront of the French cultural scene. As Serge Guilbaut has shown, however, Paris and the French did not willingly let New York lay claim to being the capital of the art world.<sup>4</sup> Nor did the Paris surrealists take kindly to the idea that they were no longer considered a dominant direction in French culture. Though Existentialism was capturing postwar France's philosophical interest, Breton and the remaining Paris surrealists managed to attract many new members. Some were, like Toyen, surrealists uprooted from other lands. Many were simply, like the new surrealists in Prague, from a generation that had grown up during the war. Many in this younger generation were drawn to surrealism because it offered an alternative to Existentialism and Stalinist Communism.<sup>5</sup> Many were women.

Until recently, postwar surrealism was not merely neglected but actively denigrated. Maurice Nadeau's *Histoire du surréalisme* (1945) proclaimed the movement dead.<sup>6</sup> Lucy Lippard, similarly, wrote that surrealism had passed its prime by 1935, had lost most of its major artists by 1945, had its last important show in 1947, and was senile until Breton's death in 1964.<sup>7</sup> By 1935, it is true, social and socialist realism were in the ascendant, and after World War II a whole succession of other movements and ways of thinking about art came to the fore. And, as

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<sup>3</sup>Ivšić states that in April 1946, Eluard, who had become a member of the French Communist Party, visited Prague and told Toyen to choose between himself and Breton. As an anti-Stalinist, Toyen chose Breton, despite her previous deep friendship with Eluard (Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," 121–3). Eluard did not detail his trip in extant letters to Gala (Paul Eluard, *Letters to Gala*, trans. Jesse Browner [New York: Paragon House, 1989], 258–59).

<sup>4</sup> See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

<sup>5</sup> The postwar situation caused some to choose surrealism for the first time and others to break away in favor of more rigorous politics (Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, 461).

<sup>6</sup>Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*.

<sup>7</sup>Lippard, "Introduction," 2.

Alyce Mahon observes, “The cosmopolitan and inclusive nature of Surrealist art [...] ostracized it from Communist and Existentialist circles, both of which supported the Soviet Union and rebuked America...”<sup>8</sup> However, critical obsession with the new and fashionable tells us little useful or interesting about the artists and movements whose position on the wheel of fortune has gone down. This new Paris group provided Toyen and Heisler with a ready-made social and artistic circle.

Both Toyen and Heisler integrated themselves into the Paris group as best they could. The adjustment could not have been easy. In the spring of 1948, Heisler wrote that they had had a terrible winter as a consequence of the (political) events in Czechoslovakia.<sup>9</sup> Around the same time, they hoped to arrange a Toyen exhibition at the Sidney Janis gallery in New York, but this did not come to fruition.<sup>10</sup> Heisler’s correspondence of the late 1940s, which generally included Toyen’s greetings to the recipient(s), shows his efforts to regroup the surrealists and to get the new review *Néon* off the ground. Toyen was among those who provided illustrations for *Néon*, but the magazine ceased after five issues for lack of funds.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938–1968*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> “Je puis vous dire que nous avons passés, Toyen et moi, un hiver terrible à Bois Colombes avec tous les évènement intervenus en Tchecoslovaquie etc.” (Jindřich Heisler, letters to Frederick Kiesler, microfilm 850940, Letters received by Frederick Kiesler [Los Angeles: The Getty], 17 May 1948. These letters are published in Czech translation in František Šmejkal, *Jindřich Heisler/Z kasemat spánku*, 319–33. Most of these letters are also signed by Toyen.)

<sup>10</sup> On 24 March 1948, Heisler inquired of Frederick Kiesler regarding the possibility of getting Toyen an American visa. He then wrote, “Je vous prie de m’écrire se qu’il se passe au sujet de l’exposition de Toyen en Amerique.” Heisler, letters to Frederick Kiesler, 17 May 1948. It appears that the Sidney Janis gallery was interested. (Heisler, letters to Frederick Kiesler, 27 July 1948.)

<sup>11</sup> Among the names mentioned in Heisler’s Paris correspondence are Brauner, Hérold, Breton, Michaud, Arp, Jacqueline Lamba, Matta, Pierre Loeb, Rémy Duval, Mme. Picabia, Sarane Alexandrian, Stanislas Rodanski, Claude Tarnaud, Vera Hérold, David Hare, Nicolas Calas, Aragon, Tzara, Charles Duits, Alain Jouffroy, Pierre Demarne, Pierre Mabilille, Duchamp, Patrick Waldberg, Péret, Mary Reynolds, and even Sartre. (Heisler, letters to Frederick Kiesler, 1947–48.) The first postwar surrealist journals came into being in good measure through Heisler’s activity. (Věra Linhartová, “Jindřich Heisler,” in *Štyrský, Toyen, Heisler*, ed. Jana Claverie [Paris: Musée national d’art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982], 81.) *Néon* was founded in 1947 with an editorial committee of Heisler, Claude Tarnaud, Sarane Alexandrian, Stanislas Rodanski, and Věra Hérold; its first issue appeared in January 1948 (Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, 483).

## 7.1 ELECTIVE AFFINITIES: NEW COLLABORATORS

[P]rofessors and art historians, seeking to make surrealism an avant-garde movement like the others, generally forget an essential dimension, friendship. The friendship without which could never exist that ‘shared creation of thought’ which is at the root of so many of the splendors of surrealism. Not only is it about making work together, but because the discovery of elective affinities protects from the world’s miseries, all exulting that which each one holds the most singular.—Radovan Ivšić, 2001<sup>12</sup>

An important part of Toyen’s surrealist life in both Prague and Paris was her collaboration with other surrealists. Collaborative effort was always a vital part of surrealism, and was a value that developed independently among both the French and the Czechs. For Toyen, this habit of collaboration went back to Devětsil days, when she and Štyrský had collaborated on a number of book covers, often for works by other Devětsil members.<sup>13</sup>

Toyen also frequently collaborated with friends on the naming of her works. Thus, Nezval had been the source of many of her earlier titles, while Heisler and the Paris surrealists came up with names for later works. At times, Nezval wrote entire poems relating to Toyen’s paintings; it is not always clear whether poem or painting came first. The title *Hlas lesa* (Voice of the Forest), for example, refers to four paintings by Toyen, a work by Nezval, and a short opera by Martinů with libretto by Nezval.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Du surréalisme, dont, faute d’en saisir le sens profond, professeurs et historiens d’art, s’ingénient à faire un mouvement d’avant-garde comme les autres, on oublie généralement une dimension essentielle, l’amitié. L’amitié sans laquelle n’aurait jamais existé cette ‘mise en commun de la pensée’ à l’origine de nombreuses splendeurs du surréalisme. Non qu’il s’y soit agi de faire oeuvre ensemble mais parce que la découverte d’affinités électives protège de la misère du monde, tout en exaltant ce que chacun a de plus singulier.” (Ivšić, “Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie,” 119–20)

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the most familiar example of a Devětsil collaboration is the book *Abeceda*, which documents Milča Mayerová’s choreography of Nezval’s poem and was designed by Teige. For discussion of *Abeceda*, see Matthew S. Witkovsky, “Staging Language: Milča Mayerová and the Czech Book Alphabet,” *Art Bulletin*, March 2004.

<sup>14</sup> The 1935 Martinů opera was composed to Nezval’s libretto, premiered on radio, and had its first performance outside Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic in New York in 2002 (*Productions: Hlas Lesa and Les Larmes du*

Similarly, the collaborative volume *On the Needles of these Days*, with text by Heisler and photographs by Štyrský, was designed by Teige and dedicated to Toyen. Ian Walker suggests that the dedication may indicate “her invisible role” in creating the book and that it hints at the complexity of the relationships between Toyen, Štyrský, and Heisler.<sup>15</sup> The Toyen-Heisler collaboration *Z kasemat spánku* (From the Casemate of Sleep, 1941) was dedicated to Štyrský.<sup>16</sup> Several Czech surrealists collaborated on a booklet celebrating Toyen’s fortieth birthday, *Život začíná ve čtyřiceti* (Life Begins at Forty, 1942), and wartime photographic works signed by Heisler were titled and dated on the back by Toyen.<sup>17</sup>

After the war, Toyen continued her friendships with Breton and Péret, and became friendly with Breton’s new wife, Elisa. Several of the new Paris surrealists, including Georges Goldfayn, Robert Benayoun, Radovan Ivšić, and Annie LeBrun, would also become close to Toyen. Ivšić writes that “Wild, solitary, secret, Toyen paradoxically embodied one of the most beautiful figures of surrealist friendship, in France as well as in Czechoslovakia.”<sup>18</sup> He adds:

And if, on their part, Jindřich Štyrský, Karel Teige, Jindřich Heisler, like Yves Tanguy, Benjamin Péret, Paul Eluard (before he became a Stalinist), and subsequently Robert Benayoun and Georges Goldfayn, dedicated to her an undivided friendship, I believe that for a great number of surrealists who rubbed shoulders with her later, Toyen has remained fundamentally an unknown and perhaps just an enigma.<sup>19</sup>

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*Couteau* [New York: Gotham Chamber Opera], [http://www.gothamchamberopera.org/pro\\_hlas\\_larmes.html](http://www.gothamchamberopera.org/pro_hlas_larmes.html). Toyen’s painting *Paravent* (1966) may have taken some inspiration from Seifert’s early poem of the same title.

<sup>15</sup>Walker, “Between Photograph and Poem,” 2, 17.

<sup>16</sup>Walker, “Between Photograph and Poem,” 17.

<sup>17</sup>*Jindřich Heisler - A Crystal in the Night: Surrealist Photographs Made Clandestinely in Nazi-Occupied Prague, 1943/1944*, (New York: Ubu Gallery, 1998), [www.ubugallery.com](http://www.ubugallery.com).

<sup>18</sup>“Sauvage, solitaire, secrète, Toyen incarna paradoxalement une des plus belles figures de l’amitié surréaliste, tant en France qu’en Tchécoslovaquie.” (Ivšić, “Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie,” 120)

<sup>19</sup>“Et si, de leur côté, Jindřich Štyrský, Karel Teige, Jindřich Heisler, come Yves Tanguy, Benjamin Péret, Paul Eluard (avant qu’il ne devienne stalinien), par la suite Robert Benayoun et Georges Goldfayn, lui vouèrent une amitié sans partage, je crois que pour un grand nombre des surréalistes qui l’ont côtoyée plus tard, Toyen est au fond restée une inconnue et peut-être même une énigme.” (Ivšić, “Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie,” 120)

Members of the Paris group contributed titles to Toyen's paintings and she produced drawings and prints relating to some of their books, although it was not until the 1960s that she embarked on new full-scale collaborative projects. In the spring of 1966, Toyen showed Ivšić a cycle of ink drawings and requested he write a text on the theme "Ce sont des débris de rêves" (1967).<sup>20</sup> This collaboration was followed by *Sur le champ* (1967), *Tout près, les nomades* (1972), and *Annuaire de lune* (1977) with Annie Le Brun, and *Roi Gordogane* with Ivšić (1968).<sup>21</sup>

In Paris, Toyen regularly attended surrealist meetings and events. Ivšić recalls that she regularly attended the six o'clock surrealist meetings, which were held at various Paris cafés, but preferred for the most part to observe. "Her discretion and voluntary effacement in the presence of the public fooled superficial observers," he notes, "who were incapable of imagining what intense life was hidden by the calm of her immense luminous gaze." It was only in private, with close friends, that Ivšić feels she really spoke. In those circumstances, she had a great deal to say, including many comments and suggestions. In her recollections, she could portray a person in a few words or definitively explain a situation, whether tragic or comic. According to Ivšić, Toyen could "talk for hours, exhibiting a devastating sense of humor." Most of the time, however, she stayed on her guard, deliberately presenting herself as antisocial.<sup>22</sup>

Toyen may even have been the object of "special attention" from group members during the 1950s. In 1953, Breton, Heisler, and Péret published a small monograph on her work, with cutout cover by Guy Doumayrou; the invitation to her exhibition at the Étoile Scellée contained

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<sup>20</sup>Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," 125.

<sup>21</sup> See Renée Riese Hubert, "Annie Le Brun et Toyen," *Obliques*, no. 14–15 (1977): 174 on *Sur le champ* and *Annuaire de lune*.

<sup>22</sup> "Sa discrétion et son effacement volontaire en présence du public ont trompé des observateurs superficiels, incapables d'imaginer quelle vie intense cachait le calme de son immense regard de lumière." "Elle pouvait ainsi raconter pendant des heures, faisant preuve d'un humour dévastateur." (Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," 124.)

phrases by such contributors as Bédouin, Breton, Schuster, and Péret. Toyen's work appeared in every issue of *La Brèche: Action Surréaliste* except for that featuring Štyrský. In 1958, her exhibition of the series *The Seven Swords Unsheathed* ("Les sept épées hors du fourreau," an homage to Apollinaire) at Galerie Furstenberg was complemented by essays by Benayoun, Yves Elleouët, Goldfayn, Mesens, Péret, Silbermann, and Breton.<sup>23</sup> These paintings, of seven eroticized phantom women, depict heavily abstracted, faceless figures, in which the artist used the misty, nebulous painterly style typical of her mid-1950s work but returned to an erotic content and began to work with some of the images and iconography that she would further develop in the 1960s. Le Brun would later suggest, "There is only the conventional brutality of images of a body in the process of letting itself be reduced to the state of a 'desiring machine,' Toyen opposes an *erotic of the analogy*, opening as far as the eye can see the landscapes of an imaginary lover always in the quest of himself."<sup>24</sup>

After the death of Breton and the disintegration of the official surrealist group, Toyen took an active role in discussions relating to collective activity.<sup>25</sup> For example, she was deeply involved in Éditions Maintenant, to which she contributed the collage series *Vis-à-vis* (1973). She repeatedly insisted on the necessity of returning to a romanticism that would not be ethereal but rather what she termed "romanticism with buttocks," which she specified must not forget the body and the importance of the erotic dimension to the poetic quest.<sup>26</sup> Toyen's participation in the Paris group gives us hints of what it would have been in the Prague group, where she was doubtless more forthcoming.

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<sup>23</sup>Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, 561.

<sup>24</sup>"Voilà qu'à la brutalité convenue des images d'un corps en train de se laisser réduire à l'état de 'machine désirante', Toyen oppose une *érotique de l'analogie*, ouvrant à perte de vue les paysages d'un imaginaire amoureux toujours en quête de lui-même." (A. Le Brun, "Toyen ou l'insurrection lyrique," 146)

<sup>25</sup>Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," 127.

<sup>26</sup>Ivšić, "Comme on fait son rêve, on fait sa vie," 128.

## 7.2 FEAST OF ANALOGIES: POSTWAR SURREALIST DIRECTIONS

The marvelous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the romantic *ruins*, the modern *mannequin*, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility for a period of time.—André Breton, 1924<sup>27</sup>

After World War II, Surrealism continued to develop, with certain directions taking on increasing importance as Breton continued to seek new means to attain the surreal and as the constituency of the group changed. Two of these directions, the occultation of surrealism and interest in utopian socialism, manifested in Toyen's postwar work, at times as part of her eroticized visual world. Increased participation in the movement by women, meanwhile, gave her work a different gender context, one in which she was no longer the only or one of the only women to take a major role in a surrealist group.

### 7.2.1 The Occultation of Surrealism

Toyen's work took on an increasingly mystical look after World War II, leaving behind her 1930s depictions of disembodied eyeballs and other Bataillean detritus. This was probably in part a response to her new situation in Paris and constant contact with Breton. The Second Manifesto, published in December 1929 in the final issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, had called for a purification of the movement and asked "for the profound, the veritable occultation of surrealism."<sup>28</sup> But what did the occultation of surrealism mean? Scholars disagree as to the meaning of "occultation." Some use "occultation" in its sense of becoming more obscure or less

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<sup>27</sup>Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," 16.

<sup>28</sup>Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930)," 136.

obvious. Others believe that Breton, especially after the Second Manifesto, wanted to integrate surrealism with the occult.<sup>29</sup> Both meanings are useful in understanding the development of surrealism subsequent to the Second Manifesto, and especially after World War II. Breton's original intent in calling for occultation was in part to defy the French psychological establishment, emphasizing clairvoyance and dissociation over curing mental illness.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Breton emphasized, both in *Exquisite Corpse* and in other endeavors, the concept of pooling the thoughts of several individuals<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, while surrealism had once stressed its scientific goals, Breton increasingly favored myth, poetry, and the occult.<sup>32</sup> He envisioned a need to bring the “magic mind” back to European thought and art, placing magic and the occult in opposition to Christianity and the rational. While Breton emphasized Hegelian dialectic as crucial to surrealism, with surrealism functioning as the synthesis of rational and irrational, he frequently referred to occult authors and over the years amassed a remarkable collection of their works. Believing that a magical mentality was fundamentally human and that the historical esoteric tradition could be of use, Breton saw both art and magic as attempting to reconcile the inner and outer worlds. Both the French poets considered to be the precursors of surrealism (Hugo, Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Mallarmé, Jarry, Apollinaire) and the utopians were interested in occultism.<sup>33</sup> Ideas of cosmic harmony and analogy were attractive to the surrealists, as was the idea of the physical world as symbolic of another reality, which appeared in Novalis, Swedenborg, Nerval's

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<sup>29</sup> See McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 17, and Nadia Choucha, *Surrealism and the Occult* (Oxford: Mandrake, 1991).

<sup>30</sup> McShane stresses that dynamic psychiatrists, especially Janet and Flournoy, worked with mediums, and that concepts of “telepathic waves, dissociation and clairvoyance,” and “traumatic memory” derived from Janet and were used by the surrealists to theorize the creation of Exquisite Corpses. (McShane, “Exquisite Corpse,” 23–24, 39.)

<sup>31</sup> Among these he included astrology and “metapsychics (especially as it concerns the study of cryptesthesia)”. (Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism [1930],” 178–79, from his footnote on occultation of surrealism.)

<sup>32</sup> Browder, *André Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism*, 145.

<sup>33</sup> Browder, *André Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism*, 135.

*Aurélia*, and Baudelaire's sonnet *Correspondances*. Magical affinities between seemingly disparate objects also pertain to surrealist conceptions of the relationships between objects. In surrealist thought, the doctrine of Correspondences extended Reverdy's idea that the poetic image becomes increasingly effective the farther apart the terms it joins. While hints of the magical and occult are not immediately evident in Toyen's most erotic works, an aura of mysticism surfaces in many of her works, some of which have an erotic component. Toyen's interest in such ideas is particularly evident in her works of the early 1950s, such as *They Rise at Dawn* and *All the Elements* (both 1950). The birds joining the mouths of the kissing couple in *They Rise at Dawn* suggest a mystical more than physical union, and the four objects in *All the Elements* suggest the classical and astrological four elements: Earth, Water, Air, and Fire.

### 7.2.2 Utopian Socialism

[T]hose of us in the arts must pronounce ourselves unequivocally against man and for woman, bring man down from a position of power which, it has been sufficiently demonstrated, he has misused... —André Breton, 1944<sup>34</sup>

Social progress and changes of period are brought about by virtue of the progress of women towards liberty, and social retrogression occurs as a result of a diminution in the liberty of women. — Charles Fourier, 1846<sup>35</sup>

Would you open the door to Fourier?  
Toyen: Yes, with the greatest interest.<sup>36</sup>

As a one-time anarcho-Communist, Toyen had a long history of interest in utopian socialist ideas; anarcho-Communism emphasizes cooperation, abolition of the state and private property,

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<sup>34</sup>Breton, *Arcanum* 17, 62.

<sup>35</sup>Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvendu, trans. and eds., *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 195.

<sup>36</sup>Surrealist Inquiry: Would You Open the Door? *Médium: Communication surréaliste* (1953), translated by Franklin Rosemont, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 251–52.

and individually fulfilling work in place of wage labor. While she was in general sympathy with Communism during the 1930s, it is probable that, like Štyrský, she regarded the Party with some skepticism even before the show trials. Once surrealism broke with official Communism in the 1930s, the movement's political aspect lost direction. While the alliance with Communism had always been problematic, it had given the group a strong position from which to work, both in Prague and Paris. Postwar surrealist politics, however, were perhaps more intellectual than practical.<sup>37</sup> By the 1940s, Breton found early nineteenth-century French utopian socialism increasingly appealing, with Flora Tristan, Père Enfantin, and especially Charles Fourier of particular interest. Breton ranked Fourier with Sade and Freud as one of the three “emancipators of desire,” the one who took “the unpleasant bull of human bad conscience” by the horns,<sup>38</sup> an admiration made concrete in his *Ode à Charles Fourier* (1945).

The ideas of Sade, Fourier, and Freud did not, of course, combine to create a seamless plan for a surrealist world. While Sade had stressed the extremes of individualism, Fourier had emphasized a diverse yet harmonious collective social body.<sup>39</sup> While Freud had assumed that civilization required repression, Fourier had opposed civilization itself and theorized the necessity for a complete end to repression.<sup>40</sup> Fourier, indeed, envisioned human history as cyclical, with his own society—“Civilization”—in the fifth stage, while Harmony, the longed-for eighth stage, would be marked by people grouping into communities called Phalanxes, settled in phalansteries.

Though Fourier planned Harmony's Phalanxes in minute detail, with attention to almost every aspect of human society and life, his ideas on gender, sexuality, and the family are most

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<sup>37</sup>Browder, *André Breton: Arbiter of Surrealism*, 128–29.

<sup>38</sup>Breton, *Conversations*, 222.

<sup>39</sup>Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 75.

<sup>40</sup>Seelow, *Radical Modernism and Sexuality*, 7.

significant in terms of surrealism, and were probably those of the strongest interest to Toyen. Fourier regarded marriage and the family as repressive institutions that would be replaced by elective affinities.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, his acceptance of the varieties of sexual preference meant that those who had once been considered perverts (in his terminology, “heptagynes,” “omnigynes,” and “omnisexuels”) would have a valuable place in Harmony, because everyone’s desires would be matched to complementary desires and to tasks that satisfied these desires. Thus, in his rejection of sexual repression, the pleasure principle was to triumph; everyone would find a means of expressing and fulfilling his or her desires in a manner that would enrich rather than harm society.

Fourier also sought equality for women in work and sex, though he stressed gender difference.<sup>42</sup> In the surrealist EROS exhibition catalog of 1959–60, Simone Debout proposed that for Fourier, women took the role Marx had assigned to the proletariat:

If women are to be the lever for total effective liberation, they would not be able, like the proletariat, to assure its triumph by violence: internal maturity alone can give it birth: conditioned by economic transformations, it relies on the progressive dismantling of prejudices. Fourier leads us to an unheard of place where no human being is treated as a means, but only ever as an end.<sup>43</sup>

Fourier’s work was available in Czech as well as French, and had received notices in the Social Democratic feminist paper *Ženské noviny* during 1933. However, the full extent of Fourier’s utopian sexual thought—its acceptance of all forms of sexual activity within the structure of the Phalanx—was not known until 1967, when his long-suppressed *Nouveau Monde amoureux* was finally published. Toyen’s painting by this title (1968), named by Annie Le Brun,

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<sup>41</sup>Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 70.

<sup>42</sup>Copley, *Sexual Moralities in France*, 71.

<sup>43</sup> Simone Debout, “La Plus belle des passions,” in *L’Exposition Internationale du surréalisme (EROS)*, 23, quoted in Ades, “Surrealism, Male-Female,” 173.

demonstrates how rapidly the surrealists acquainted themselves with this work.<sup>44</sup> Toyen's rows of collaged dogs and shadow cats, arranged on a blazing red chessboard and linked by a foreground of leopards, suggests the orderly but vibrant grouping of the passions and their devotees. This and other late works also suggest Fourier's theory of Universal Analogy, which proposes that "all of nature depicts the harmony or conflict of the human passions."<sup>45</sup> Toyen's use of animal and plant imagery from the late 1930s forward indicates that she was well acquainted with this theory.

### 7.2.3 Women and the Feminine in Postwar Surrealism

When I joined the Surrealist Group in Paris in 1966 I was immediately impressed by the forceful, energetic presence at the group's daily meetings, of such women as Mimi Parent, Nicole Espagnol, Joyce Mansour, Elisa Breton, and Toyen. — Penelope Rosemont<sup>46</sup>

Surrealist interest in the position of women grew following the war, although never in a standard feminist manner. Penelope Rosemont argues that the period of 1947 to the present—"the least acknowledged period in its history"—has been the time when surrealism has experienced the greatest participation of women and Third World peoples.<sup>47</sup>

Simultaneous with the numerical increase of women in postwar surrealism, Surrealist attention to the feminist statements of "precursor" writers became increasingly noticeable. The catalog to the 1947 international surrealist exhibition, for example, quoted Saint-Just as stating: "Among truly free peoples, women are free and adored." The Saint-Simonian Père Enfantin was

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<sup>44</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 242.

<sup>45</sup>Beecher and Biennu, *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction*, 421.

<sup>46</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 290.

<sup>47</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 389.

also quoted: “All is false today in the relations between man and woman. These relations are that of master and slave; this must disappear among us. When YOU JUDGE a woman, you, men, you, Saint-Simonians, you are in a state of immorality.”<sup>48</sup> Many other figures admired by the surrealists had also expressed feminist sentiments. Fourier, for instance, had written that “*the extension of women’s privileges is the general principle of all social progress.*”<sup>49</sup> In 1819, the Gothic novelist Charles Robert Maturin had sermonized that “where woman is thus degraded, man is a brute. [...] if we make them slaves, we are slaves ourselves—we may bind them with chains, but the ‘iron enters into our own souls’.”<sup>50</sup> In 1871, Rimbaud had observed “When the infinite servitude of woman shall have ended, when she will be able to live by and for herself [...] she too will be a poet. Woman will discover the unknown. Will her world be different from ours? She will discover strange, unfathomable things, repulsive, delicious.”<sup>51</sup> Women writers among surrealism’s precursors and inspirations were now also given increasing importance in surrealist publications.<sup>52</sup>

Penelope Rosemont, thus, suggests that those who regard surrealism as “some sort of male chauvinist plot” are misguided and resemble those who turn the cause of women’s equality

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<sup>48</sup>“Dans les peuples vraiment libres, les femmes sont libres et adorées.” “Tout est faux aujourd’hui dans les rapports de l’homme et de la femme. Ces rapports sont de maître à esclave; ceci doit disparaître parmi nous. Quand VOUS JUGEZ une femme, vous, hommes, vous, Saint-Simoniens, vous êtes dans un état d’immoralité.” (*Le Surréalisme en 1947* [1947], 31, 111.)

<sup>49</sup> “*l’extension des privilèges des femmes est le principe général de tous progrès sociaux,*” emphasis in original. (Charles Fourier, *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales*, vol. 1 of *Œuvres Complètes*, 3d ed. [Paris: Librairie Sociétaire, 1846], 133.)

<sup>50</sup>Charles Robert Maturin, “On the Necessity of Female Education,” in *Sermons* (London: Constable, 1819), 182. Maturin stressed, however, that it was only under Christianity that women were “exalted.”

<sup>51</sup>Arthur Rimbaud, *Illuminations and Other Prose Poems*, rev. ed., trans. Louise Varèse (New York: New Directions, 1957), xxxii-xxxiii.

<sup>52</sup> These included the “surrealist in love” poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859); Marianna Alcoforado (1642-1723); Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823); and Emily Brontë (1818-1848). In the more occult realm, there were Hélène Smith (Catherine Elise Muller, 18??-1929) and the “prolific theorist/practitioner of erotic magic,” Maria de Naglowska (c. 1885-post 1940). In addition, in the 1940s, Breton’s reading of Fourier’s *Complete Works* had led him to the early socialist feminist Flora Tristan (1803-1844); in 1957 he published some of her letters in *Le Surréalisme, même*. (Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, xl-xliii, 121. See also *Le Surréalisme, même* 3 (Autumn 1957), 4-12.)

into a repressive rather than liberatory movement.<sup>53</sup> It is likely that Toyen herself would have opposed repressive forms of feminism but would have agreed with the feminist-compatible views of her acquaintance Mary Low, a younger surrealist who wrote:

The first thing we notice is that femininity is not feminine. The feminine type is a type obtained by men at the price of making women all but useless, and as soon as the latter emerge from 'the functions proper to their sex' to become doctors or chauffeurs, they cease to personify the feminine ideal. But the household duties 'proper to their sex' are not such: they are merely secondary and restricted functions that have been determined, not by the sex of women, but by the political discrimination of which women are the objects. The feminine ideal does not correspond to the intellectual possibilities of women. It is a denial of them. The submissive housewife, resigned, obedient, monogamous, is not the ideal of a woman, but an ideal slave.<sup>54</sup>

We may also find some version of Toyen's views in the writings of Nora Mitrani. In 1957, Mitrani lamented, "In women, the combination of extreme beauty and intellectual audacity still remains rather exceptional, for on the one hand, the clever man sees to it that the pretty woman cannot become liberated (let her thrive as his luxury slave, his beauty queen, his cover girl), and on the other, that the liberated woman cannot claim to be beautiful." Mitrani, like many surrealists, was less interested in political and economic equality than in freeing women to bring about "Rimbaud's great hope" by discovering "strange, unfathomable things."<sup>55</sup>

Annie Le Brun's views on feminism may give further clues to Toyen's. In the introduction to *Lâchez tout*, her 1977 critique of aspects of French feminism, Le Brun wrote: "...I confess that the ordinary conflicts between men and women have been of very little concern to

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<sup>53</sup>Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 389.

<sup>54</sup>Mary Low and Juan Breá, *La Verdad contemporanea* (Havana, 1943), translated by Mary Low, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 143. Low, who met Toyen in the late 1930s, wrote on women in history ("Woman and Love Through Private Property") as well as on topics relating to surrealism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. See Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 123.

<sup>55</sup>Nora Mitrani, "On Slaves, Suffragettes, and the Whip," Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 235.

me. My sympathy goes rather to those who desert the roles that society assigns them.” Le Brun concluded,

We are not the only ones who have encountered a point of transparency before plunging into the night of our differences and who have come up not caring whether we are male or female. [...] My frantic individualism is exactly in proportion to all that strives toward the interchangeability of all beings.<sup>56</sup>

In this changing postwar climate, Toyen was not the only woman among the surrealists to pursue erotic themes. Postwar Surrealist women’s expression of overt sexuality was particularly notable among such writers as Joyce Mansour, Valentine Penrose, Unica Zürn, and Lise Deharme, and in the work of filmmaker Nelly Kaplan.<sup>57</sup> Black humor, too, though perhaps envisioned by Breton as more typically masculine than feminine, proved a genre that Toyen and other surrealist women could make their own, often to comment on gender.<sup>58</sup> As Annie Le Brun has described it, black humor is “the mark of the greatest insubordination, capable of affirming itself among the most varied minds,” with “subversive and liberating values [...] that place it quite naturally at the extreme point of the human adventure.” Le Brun calls it “a total revolt of the ego which refuses to let itself be affected by its own sensibility,” against “all repressive notions [...] with a mood of affective and intellectual subversion that threatens the wellbeing of everything that considers itself stable.”<sup>59</sup> The writings of Leonora Carrington, as well as Ithell

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<sup>56</sup> Annie Le Brun, Introduction to *Lâchez tout*, translated by Guy Ducornet, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 307, 309.

<sup>57</sup> See Sarane Alexandrian, *Histoire de la littérature érotique* (Paris: Seghers, 1989), 280–86.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, “Surrealist Black Humour: Masculine/Feminine,” *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 3, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/publications/papers/journal1/>. See Breton, *Anthology of Black Humor*, xix.

<sup>59</sup> “...la marque de la plus grande insoumission, capable de s’affirmer chez les esprits les plus divers, ... “les valeurs subversives et libératrices... qui le placent donc tout naturellement à la pointe de l’aventure humaine.” “...révolte totale du moi qui refuse de se laisser affecter par sa propre sensibilité. ... A l’ensemble des notions répressives... l’humour noir oppose un climat de subversion affective et intellectuelle qui risque fort de miner la santé de ce qui se croit sur pied.” (Annie Le Brun, “L’Humour noir,” in *Entretiens sur le surréalisme*, dir. Ferdinand Alquié [Paris, La Haye: Mouton, 1968], 100, 104, translated in Suleiman, “Surrealist Black Humour: Masculine/Feminine,” 3.

Colquhoun's *Pine Family*, some of Remedios Varo's later work, and certain of Frida Kahlo's paintings all exhibit considerable black humor. Black humor appeared in Toyen's work as early as her collages for *Ani labut, ani luna* (1936), in which undergarments take on almost animate life, but developed to a far greater degree during the 1960s, especially in the late collages. *Midi-Minuit* (1966) with its wild fetishization of women's hair; the *Sur-le-champ* series (1967), which play with the notion of the *vagina dentata* using black-and-white reproductions printed on Pepto-Bismal-pink paper; her collage of lipstick-headed motorcyclists; the gorgeously spare and rhythmic collage of a man's sleeved arm wielding a razor on a woman's panty-hosed leg (1967); and above all *Irreplaceable Against Razor Burn* (1965), which depicts a woman constructed from domestic appliances, all make pointed and extremely funny comments on gender attitudes and expectations.

These blackly humorous late collages bring to mind three strategies that Susan Rubin Suleiman theorizes women artists use to situate their work in relation to that by dominant males. One is mimicry, in the form of exaggerated mimicking of male stereotypes of "woman." A second response is the "explicitly hostile parody or critique," which Suleiman regards as implying a double, ambivalent allegiance: one to avant-gardist formal experimentation and playful innovation, and one to "feminist critique of sexual ideologies." A third strategy is that of assimilation, in which the work does not foreground gender issues and cannot be distinguished in form or values from works by the writers' male colleagues. Suleiman suggests that assimilation, mimicry, and hostility represent three positions along a continuum.<sup>60</sup> Toyen's work, especially

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<sup>60</sup>Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 27, 167; Susan Rubin Suleiman, "Dialogue and Double Allegiance: Some Contemporary Women Artists and the Historical Avant-Garde," in *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*, ed. Whitney Chadwick (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 128–55; and Suleiman, "Surrealist Black Humour: Masculine/Feminine," 5–8.

from the 1950s on, functions in all three modes. The series *Seven Swords*, for example, can be seen as either assimilation or mimicry, while a work like *Midi/Minuit* can be read in all three ways.

### 7.3 NEW WORLD OF LOVE: NEW ICONOGRAPHY

I feel sorry for those who have not, at least once in their lives, dreamt of turning into one or other of the nondescript objects that surround them: a table, a chair, an animal, a tree-trunk, a sheet of paper [...] They have no desire to get out of their skins, and this peaceable contentment, untroubled by any curiosity, is a tangible sign of the insupportable bumptiousness that is the most obvious prerogative of the majority of mankind. —Michel Leiris, 1929<sup>61</sup>

Toyen's entire oeuvre aims at nothing less than the correction of the exterior world in terms of a desire that feeds upon and grows from its own satisfaction. — Benjamin Péret, 1953<sup>62</sup>

Toyen's style and iconography continued to develop after she settled in France. Formally, she explored an almost poster-like clarity during the early 1950s, followed by a return to highly painterly, abstracted imagery in the latter part of the decade, perhaps inspired by Abstract Expressionism. This then gave way to cleaner lines again in the 1960s. Visually, her work shows hints of Pop and Op art, such as in her use of high-contrast color choices and the reappearance of the chessboard pattern that had been so popular among Devětsil artists.<sup>63</sup> 1960s mass visual culture also made its appearance in her collage work, particularly in the form of brightly

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<sup>61</sup> Michel Leiris, "Metamorphosis. -- 2. Out of the Self," in Alastair Brotchie, *Encyclopædia Acephalica*, 60.

<sup>62</sup> "Toute l'œuvre de Toyen ne vise pas à autre chose qu'à corriger le monde extérieur en fonction d'un désir qui s'alimente et s'accroît de sa propre satisfaction." Péret, "Au Nouveau-Monde, maison fondée par Toyen," in Breton, Heisler, and Péret, *Toyen*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> On Devětsil chessboard imagery, see Lenka Bydžovská and Karel Šrp, "On the Iconography of the Chessboard in Devětsil".

lipsticked mouths with glaringly white teeth, but also through other sexualized female bodily parts, such as the masses of hair in *Midi/Minuit*. This iconography relates very specifically to themes of desire and eroticism.

### 7.3.1 Toyen's Late Imagery of Desire

Not to mention the naive erotic objects, the series of pornographic photos, but as well the thousands of mouths, legs, breasts, eyes cut out at random from magazines, which Toyen never ceased to collect.—Annie Le Brun, 1982<sup>64</sup>

He no longer looks deep into your eyes when he loves you [...] [T]he expression of the mouth is more important than that of the eyes, since the mouth has become the mirror of the soul [...]—Christian Dior, c. 1956<sup>65</sup>

In 1956, Nora Mitrani sarcastically observed of Christian Dior's advertisement, "It's clever, it flatters a woman, it settles and affirms her, she who is offered simultaneously as prey and trap, in the silky universe where her body undulates, joyful to be only a body giving pleasure." Mitrani's discussion of the woman created by fashion, living in "a world foreign to a soul devastated by the pain of being," provides a key to Toyen's late images of women. Mitrani described such Dior-mouthed Technicolor Marilyns, who, much like the figure in Toyen's *The Silences of Mirrors* (1958), "dance sheathed in red velvet, their mouths and eyelids half open, wild," as the objects of "waves of laughter and catcalls," and stated, "This unfurled laughter cannot create a protective mask, nor can it suppress the heart palpitations and the hateful excitement inspired by those for whom everything is sex." Indeed, Mitrani specifically charged that for men, "excitement is preferable to gender confusion" because "they would prefer all women to slip into

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<sup>64</sup>Annie Le Brun, "A l'instant du silence des lois," in Štyrský, *Toyen, Heisler*, ed. Jana Claverie (Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, 1982), 58.

<sup>65</sup>Christian Dior, quoted in Nora Mitrani, "About Cats and Magnolias," (1956), Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 230–31.

Marilyn's fascinating mold" so that "the excitement may remain contained and thoughts noble."

Mitrani remarked:

To the proudest, to the most hard-bitten among women, they hold out the prospect of access to the masculine world, on the condition that they 'behave like real women,' with moist, swollen lips made up with that brilliant, sonorous rouge testifying to the male appetite for the female, the easy woman, her intense mouth is already half open ... The glittering wild animal with sugar-candy nails has a soul: it can be inhaled, like perfume hidden in the warm hollow of a bodice.<sup>66</sup>

This description of the purely sexual, animal-like, red-lipped female typified by the image of Marilyn Monroe, whose gender must never be confused, is almost a prescription for certain of the new developments in Toyen's imagery, which began around the same time as Mitrani's essay appeared.

Mitrani suggested that while women generally, urged on by "a great many convergent suggestions and desires," try to "submit to this melting-erotic image of themselves," nonetheless, women know that "the mouth cannot be the mirror of the soul, and that such images are invented by men who don't want women to become their sisters," and they may "fend off" this image by emphasizing their eyes rather than their mouths.<sup>67</sup> In closing, Mitrani called for women to simultaneously assume both the "Marilyn" role and the role of the "woman-poet conceived by Rimbaud", stating, "In that case, the masculine categories will no longer be worth much, and men will get scared." She concluded, "The ambiguity of the female-woman is transferred to love, whose object—or whose accomplice—she remains."<sup>68</sup>

Toyen would certainly have read Mitrani's essays, which appeared in *Le Surréalisme, même* and other surrealist publications, and she probably participated in discussions of Mitrani's

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<sup>66</sup> Nora Mitrani, "About Cats and Magnolias," Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 230–31.

<sup>67</sup> Nora Mitrani, "About Cats and Magnolias," Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 231.

<sup>68</sup> Mitrani, in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 232.

ideas at surrealist meetings. She was very open to developing themes inspired by other surrealists and by surrealist precursors, so Mitrani's essays may well have inspired ideas for new imagery with which to explore her existing preoccupations. Thus, a new symbol of desire in Toyen's late work is the figure of an adult seductress who often appears in a partly animal form or with animal attributes—the successor to the empty girl. Subsequent to the phantom women in *The Seven Swords* series of 1957, notable examples include the female figures in *The Silences of Mirrors* (1958), *Paravent* (1966), *Eclipse* (1968), *When the Laws Fall Silent* (1969, named from *Justine*<sup>69</sup>), and *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970). A small collaged element in *At Silling Castle* (1969), meanwhile, hints at the ancient theme of Mistress of Animals, although one of the three figures is a man, in contrast with the snarling lion at the woman's other side.

Simultaneously, discrete fetishized body parts took on a new importance. Toyen's first faceless heads of hair had appeared in the 1930s, suggesting anonymous physical masses; postwar, they developed into fetishized depictions, of which the most notable are the two collages *Midi-Minuit*. Hair also appears in *Debris des rêves* and other works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially in imagery of birds reaching for locks of women's hair.

Mouths, tongues, and kisses had quietly begun to appear around 1949 with linked bird tongues, although Toyen had already depicted fellatio in *Venus and Tannhäuser* (1930) and *Justine* and *Jednadvacet* (1938). During the early 1950s, Toyen went through a period of stylized kiss imagery (fish, birds, mustelids, and mostly genderless human heads), but then, perhaps beginning with *Melusine* from the *Seven Swords* series, she turned to tongues as a notable element of their own. These tongues, whether in *Melusine* (1957), *They Touch Me in Sleep* (1957), *Furrow in the Mirror* (1959), or *Made Up for the Performance* (1962), often combine

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<sup>69</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 251.

with vaginal imagery, taking the lips-nether lips concept one step further and suggesting a clitoris that is also a tongue. This is specifically the case in *Seven Swords: Melusine, Furrow in the Mirror, They Touch Me in Sleep*, and *Made Up for the Performance*. Tongues appear in other forms as well: bats show their tongues (*Frequently Strewn Sheets*, 1959; *Night After Night*, 1960); tongues appear as discrete elements (*Mists of Solitude*, 1961), purse closures (*One in the Other*, 1965), and as the end of a knife (*Banquet of Analogies*, 1970). *Les Puits dans la tour/Débris de rêves* (1966) features tongues prominently on the cover and lurking slyly in additional prints. This tongue, to be sure, can have a phallic look to it as well. In this sense, Toyen, like Bellmer, played with reorganization of the body.

Akin to these representations of tongues, but more specifically related to Mitrani's remarks, an open, often collaged, red-lipped mouth makes its appearance in *The Folding Screen* (1966), *Sur-le-champ* (1967), *Through the Balmy Night* (1968), *When the Laws Fall Silent* (1969), and the masks for Ivšić's *Roi Gordogane* (1976). By 1968, the symbol of the full-lipped closed mouth with protruding tongue had appeared, as in *Eclipse* (1968) and the print *Tir* (1972). As Srp points out, Toyen had long since given up any real attempt to portray the human face, but replaced it with masklike imagery, sometimes from her vast collection of clippings, which she saved in envelopes (lips, eyes, corsets, etc.).<sup>70</sup> This avoidance of the life-like face, this preference for blankness and masking, suggests protectiveness of the woman's true identity in the process of her enacting what Rivière termed the "masquerade" of femininity.<sup>71</sup>

As we have just seen, vaginal and clitoral imagery is notable in Toyen's late work as well. *Fire Smoulders in the Veins* (1955), probably inspired by a black Schiaparelli dress of 1945 featuring a vertical vaginal zipper, shows a dark object—almost certainly also a dress, given the

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<sup>70</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 270, 280.

<sup>71</sup> See Rivière, "Womanliness as a Masquerade".

extremely similar Schiaparelli design and Toyen's fondness for garments as signifiers—with a white vertical vaginal opening topped by a tiny bow. And, rather than having a head, the green-gowned figure in *The Seven Swords: Melusine* (1957) has gigantic billowy labia with a tongue-like central clitoris; *They Touch Me in Sleep* (1957) presents small abstracted vaginal openings with tongue-like clitorises; while the figure in *Furrow in the Mirror* (1959) has, in place of a head, a well-furred pubic area with a particularly tongue-like clitoris reaching down to a more anatomical-looking specimen in the form of a collar. Discrete vaginal imagery that is often suggestive of the Czech graffiti symbol for the female genitalia also appears in works of the 1960s such as *Dream* (1964) and *Secret Room without Lock* (1966). Less explicitly, glove and other long buttoned openings also take on a strongly vaginal significance in such works as *Far in the North* (1965), *One in the Other* (1965), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (1970), and the complex drawing and collage of 1976 in which a partially buttoned gown reveals the mostly invisible wearer's mons veneris. A vaginal collage done for Annie Le Brun includes Le Brun's notation: "*Bijou favori*: "La patte méditative d'un grand fauve sur la clitoris" (1968).

Toyen's favorite signifiers often appear in combination in the late work. For example, *Made Up for the Performance* (1962) presents a ghostly seated woman outlined by reddish fox faces; a bright rose object that simultaneously suggests a tongue, a feather, and a venus fly-trap curls forward from her waist to form a dark vaginal opening, while in the background rises a kind of enormous suspended vaginal architecture in dim bluish tones.

Imagery of animals and birds became important in Toyen's work as early as the series *The Animals Are Asleep*, but developed more erotic overtones in the 1950s.<sup>72</sup> Images of mating animals appear frequently in the late work, having begun in 1955 with the beetles of *So Far, So*

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<sup>72</sup> Srp suggests that animals now took on a larger role in her imagination than people (Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 258).

*Old*. These mating animals include the butterflies of *Paravent* (1966), the wildcats of her untitled collage of 1972, the lizards and frogs of *Vis-a-vis* (1973), and the dogs of the 1976 drawing. However, animals or parts of animals often signify sexuality without explicitly mating. Birds (especially of prey) usually seem to represent the male, leopards the female, but many other types of animal appear in the late work, especially foxes and mustelids, perhaps because of their role in the fur industry and associations with luxurious women's wraps. In *Elective Affinities* (1970), for instance, mustelids blend into the couch as if in a game of One in the Other. The painting's title refers to the Goethe novel of 1809, which critics have variously considered either an attack on or a defense of marriage, and which was one of the first works of fiction to be treated psychoanalytically.<sup>73</sup> The concept of elective affinities was one of considerable interest to the surrealists, however, and may or may not refer directly to the Goethe novel.

What do these eroticizing combinations signify? Karel Srp suggests that in Toyen's imagery of the 1960s, man challenges and woman adopts a defensive pose, with the "predetermined result" that the woman becomes "a dangerous beast of prey."<sup>74</sup> This builds on Mitrani's reference to the Dior ad offering woman "simultaneously as prey and trap."<sup>75</sup> Srp also proposes that by conflating women and animals, Toyen suggested a dual female nature in which animals represent the dark side of the soul and shadows represent "the secret longings which bring about [woman's] subjugation."<sup>76</sup>

The female, however, is apparently as predatory as the male. While anxiety and sexuality are definitely linked in Toyen's work, women are often shown as powerful beings. Srp, who reads Toyen's leopard women via Baudrillard's *On Seduction*, proposes that in the coalescence

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<sup>73</sup>Astrida Orle Tantillo, *Goethe's Elective Affinities and the Critics* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2001), 46–47.

<sup>74</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 258.

<sup>75</sup>Nora Mitrani, "About Cats and Magnolias," Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 230–31.

<sup>76</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 260.

between woman and leopard, woman becomes “both alluring and lured, active and passive,” allowing herself “to be seduced for the sake of seduction itself,” the leopard skin serving both as bait and protection. He quotes Baudrillard in reference to such leopard-woman paintings: “As in the seduction process, the woman has neither body nor her own desire. But what of that body and that desire? She does not believe in them herself, she toys with them. Without her own body she is pure semblance, an illusion, an artificial construction which is seized by the desire of another.”<sup>77</sup> This reading makes sense in terms of Mitrani’s critique of the sexualized female of advertising, and is interesting in light of Toyen’s bodiless women. At the same time, Toyen’s themes of animals, mutating women, and landscape, in which she portrays birds, fish, and insects as well as mammals, indicate female power as well as vacancy. Toyen made a practice of suggesting presence by absence, and her use of animal imagery is one way in which she represents Fourier’s theory of Universal Analogy.

### 7.3.2 Shadows

If Truth burst forth absolutely naked, she would be beautiful without being terrifying; but, firstborn of the flame, a veil of smoke obscures her long, admirable body. For allowing itself to remain in shadow, the form of the body is even better divined; for Truth, the ambiguous veil is fatal shamelessness; its name, *scandal*.—Nora Mitrani, 1950<sup>78</sup>

In the 1940s, Toyen began to use a new signifier: the shadow. Her use of shadows had been remarkably infrequent before around 1940, when she began to add somewhat non-naturalistic shadows to the series *The Animals Are Asleep* and *Day and Night*, as well as to other works.

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<sup>77</sup> Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 262. Leopards, incidentally, do not merit an index entry in Maillard-Chary’s *Le Bestiaire des surréalistes*. Toyen’s leopard imagery may, however, have been inspired in part by Knopff’s *The Caresses of the Sphinx*, 1896.

<sup>78</sup> Nora Mitrani, “Scandal with a Secret Face,” in Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, 227.

With *At the Green Table* (1945), she inaugurated a more Magrittean use of shadows, with the dress casting a woman's shadow on the side of the roofless house. In *Myth of Light* (1946), she explicitly played with Magritte-like unreal shadows, causing Jindřich Heisler's shadow to hold a "real" uprooted plant threatened by a shadow wolf created by two small gloved hands.

Denis Hollier suggests that shadows

are the very exemplar of a nondisplaceable sign: rigorously contemporary with the object it doubles, it is simultaneous, nondetachable, and, because of this, without exchange-value. [...] With it, the relation of sign to the thing signified escapes the metaphor of the separation of body and soul: cast shadow is a sign that doesn't survive.<sup>79</sup>

This, he proposes, gave the shadow an unusual importance for the surrealist painters, especially because the painted shadow is not *cast* by the painted body, but is only *represented*. Only in a work with a three-dimensional aspect can a cast shadow be other than accidental. Even in a photograph, the cast shadow "survives" the object that produced it, going from indexical to iconic, causality to resemblance, metonymy to metaphor. However, Toyen, along with de Chirico, Dali, and Magritte, painted shadows with no visible cause.<sup>80</sup>

Several of Toyen's paintings from the 1960s make memorable use of the causeless shadow. *Dream* (1964) presents a woman's shadow that we might imagine as cast by a woman outside the picture, except that this shadow is interrupted by the fiery paws of a leopard which is itself half shadow, thus indicating that these shadows cannot be read as representations of natural cast shadows. Again, in *Paravent* (1966), an apparently male shadow lurks to the left while the faceless female phantom clothed in leopards pulls off her green glove above the head of a lipstick-mouthed leopard, her own foggy head shadowed by two mating moths (This painting

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<sup>79</sup>Denis Hollier, "Surrealist Precipitates: Shadows Don't Cast Shadows," *October*, no. 69 (Summer 1994): 14.

<sup>80</sup>Denis Hollier, "Surrealist Precipitates," 115–21.

may perhaps have been inspired by Seifert's poem "Paravent," but does not employ the same imagery). The figures in *Eclipse*, meanwhile, are formed by shadows or silhouettes and are definitely not cast shadows; in *When the Laws Fall Silent*, the "male" shadow, with collaged lipsticked mouth, produces a masked bird in lieu of an erect penis, while the "female" figure is represented mainly by a leopard-skin with gleaming human breasts.

Shadows in Toyen's late work, then, have a life of their own, not necessarily bearing any relationship to solid objects; they thus can be a version of the phantoms she had begun to work with in the 1930s. Srp suggests that for Toyen, shadows manifest "the concealed inclinations of human consciousness" and that animals positioned in front of outlined standing figures represent "the so-called dark side of the soul" and perhaps instinctive nature.<sup>81</sup> This interpretation is useful but perhaps too specific, considering the nearly identical function played by the shadow-bodies and the phantoms, and also keeping in mind Toyen's fondness during this period for shadowy spaces in general, which appear in far more paintings than do actual defined shadows or shadow-figures. Insubstantiality links here to an ever-present desire, floating from painting to painting like a cloud or miasma.

### 7.3.3 The (Im)Permeability of Space

Shadows and phantoms were by no means Toyen's only means of showing an insubstantiality of physical forms. In the postwar years, Toyen often introduced architectural elements such as doors, windows, walls, and cross-sections into her work, but tended to make walls permeable or

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<sup>81</sup>Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 260.

transparent, with the external and internal flowing one into the other.<sup>82</sup> These architectural elements first made their appearance in a significant way at the end of the war with *At the Green Table* (1945), *The Myth of Light* (1946), *Natural Laws* (1946), and *Safes* (1946), and developed more fully in subsequent years.

This permeability of built spaces became eroticized and increasingly mystical in subsequent years with such works as *Midnight, the Heraldic Hour* (1961), *Made Up for the Performance* (1962), *Chessboard* (1963), *At a Certain Hour* (1963), *Dream* (1964), *Midi-Minuit* (1966), *Paravent* (1966), *Secret Room without a Lock* (1966), *Eclipse* (1968), *The New World of Love* (1968), *At Silling Castle* (1969), and *Reflection of Ebb Tide* (1969). As Srp points out, in *At a Certain Hour*, the window frame “no longer links the exterior with the interior but has become an autonomous, freely suspended motif” while the unusual view of the Bernini sculpture, which removes Apollo, renders the viewer Daphne’s pursuer: “Anyone looking at the painting is now Apollo [...] Daphne is the artist herself.”<sup>83</sup> Indeed, windows often function in surrealist work as liminal apertures to the unconscious. Not only did Breton refer to windows and their role in both the First Manifesto and in *Surrealism and Painting*, but windows in surrealist work can suggest on the one hand a means of escape or transition, and on the other, the introspection of looking inward.<sup>84</sup> Often, however, Toyen avoided providing a window, and created womblike enclosed spaces.

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<sup>82</sup> Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 291.

<sup>83</sup> Karel Srp, *Toyen*, 242–44.

<sup>84</sup> See Susan Harris Smith, “The Surrealists’ Window,” *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 13 (1984): 48–69. See also Breton, “Manifesto of Surrealism (1924),” 21 and Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 2, 129.

### 7.3.4 One in the Other

We had already gone beyond thinking that any object might be described in terms of any other, but rather that any *action* and also any *person*, even placed in a precise situation, might be described in terms of any object, and *vice versa*.— André Breton, 1954<sup>85</sup>

These ambiguous spatial relationships relate to Caillois's ongoing work on mimicry. In *Man, Play, and Games*, he stated:

All play presupposes the temporary acceptance, if not of an illusion (indeed this last word means nothing less than beginning a game: *in-lusio*), then at least of a closed conventional, and, in certain respects, imaginary universe. Play can consist not only of deploying actions or submitting to one's fate in an imaginary milieu, but of becoming an illusory character oneself, and of so behaving. One is thus confronted with a diverse series of manifestations, the common element of which is that the subject makes believe or makes others believe that he is someone other than himself. He forgets, disguises, or temporarily sheds his personality in order to feign another. I prefer to designate these phenomena by the term *mimicry*...<sup>86</sup>

Caillois specifies that “The pleasure lies in being or passing for another.”<sup>87</sup>

In this text, Caillois posited four fundamental types of game, that of competition, that of chance, that of simulation (mimicry), and that of vertigo. Games were fundamental to surrealism, especially games founded upon chance and mimicry. Caillois' description of the importance of mimicry and illusion in play—the game of mimicry—speaks to an important aspect of Toyen's late iconography. He stressed,

Mimicry is incessant invention. The rule of the game is unique: it consists in the actor's fascinating the spectator, while avoiding an error that might lead the spectator to break the spell. The spectator must lend himself to the illusion

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<sup>85</sup> Breton in *Médium*, New Series, no. 2, Feb 1954, p. 17, quoted in Roger Caillois, “Riddles and Images,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 41: Game, Play, Literature (1968): 148, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman.

<sup>86</sup> Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), 21.

<sup>87</sup> Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 21.

without first challenging the decor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself.<sup>88</sup>

However, while, as Caillois stated, the child playing train “is not trying to persuade his father that he is a real locomotive,”<sup>89</sup> in Toyen’s work the illusory characters, the diverse manifestations, the shedding of personality in order to feign another, leave us uncertain what is the original and what is the simulation.

Furthermore, some of these works clearly involve the surrealist game One in the Other—everything is something else while simultaneously itself. In this game, whose title Toyen gave to one of her paintings, a player chooses an identity which must then be expressed in terms of a different identity which the remaining players have bestowed upon him/her. The person can be a terrier described as a flowerpot, a butterfly described as a wand, etc. Three identities are consequently involved—the player’s own, the player’s chosen identity, and the identity given to the player—and these commingle in the attempted description.

When we recollect Caillois’s earlier work on mimicry, it becomes clear that concepts of playful illusion intersect with those of pathology and dissolution of the self, and indeed Claudine Frank points to Caillois’ “lifelong obsession with depersonalization, the dissolution of the self, and the *instinct d’abandon* (instinct of letting go).”<sup>90</sup> We can see the same issues at work in the art of Toyen, possibly as early as the Artificialist period, but definitely visible by 1934, and developed to a high degree in the postwar work. This interest was the result of a shared compulsion toward this subject matter, which in both surrealists would have been encouraged by familiarity with the ideas of *Le Grand Jeu*, and which for Toyen seems to have been nourished

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<sup>88</sup>Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 23.

<sup>89</sup>Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 21.

<sup>90</sup>Claudine Frank, ed., *The Edge of Surrealism: A Roger Caillois Reader*, trans. Claudine Frank and Camille Naish (Duke University Press, 2003), 9.

by Caillois' early formulation of ideas relating to mimicry, simulation, spatial perception, and the *instinct d'abandon*.

Unlike Caillois, however, who regarded the question of distinction and demarcation as the fundamental issue to be resolved by "any acceptable project," Toyen chose to elaborate upon the *indistinction* between real and imaginary, wakefulness and sleep, organism and environment, and worked with the association of ideas, the principle of contiguity, and magical connection. For Toyen, the question was not whether contiguity and the failure to demarcate were pathological and a disorder of perception, but how best to express the sensation of assimilation to space, the experience of fascination, and the relationships of seemingly unrelated objects and beings. For Toyen, these ideas and experiences were intimately tied to performance of feminine gender and its relationship to sexuality and eroticism.

#### 7.4 CONCLUSION

Toyen, key figure, incarnation elegiac of pride and of noblesse without presumption. She would speak little, would not write, her theoretical contribution is impalpable, she leaves behind only a pictorial production of immensity, but her presence would possess an emotional weight that is hard to imagine.—Robert Benayoun, 1988<sup>91</sup>

As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an 'act,' as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status.—Judith Butler, 1990<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Toyen, figure clé, incarnation élégiaque de la fierté et de la noblesse sans présomption. Elle parlait peu, n'écrivait pas, sa contribution théorique est impalpable, elle ne laisse derrière elle qu'une production picturale certes immense, mais sa présence possédait un poids affectif qu'on imagine mal." (Robert Benayoun, *Le Rire des surréalistes* [Paris: La Bougie du Sapeur, 1988], 38)

<sup>92</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 146–47.

In this dissertation, I have asked several questions. Some are specific to Toyen—does she depict the surrealist *femme enfant* or represent repeated nightmares? How does she formulate surrealist convulsive beauty? Does she redefine or merely restate surrealist tropes? Other questions are broader, and relate to how her artistic choices were shaped by the cultural, social, and intellectual currents of her time.

First, I have shown that Toyen grew up during a period of successful Czech feminist activity, which surely provided her with an internal model of an unsubjugated woman, which she developed to a greater extent than did most of her peers, and which she took further in some aspects of her life and work than in others. Second, I have made clear that Toyen must have been aware of Central European sex-reformist ideas that were prevalent and widely discussed in her youth, which would have encouraged her in her pursuit of artistic sexual expression. Likewise, she was aware of related currents in sexology and psychoanalysis, which were of considerable interest to members of the Prague surrealist group as well as to members of the Paris group.

As a member of first Devětsil, then the Prague surrealist group, and finally the Paris group, Toyen not only received the general support of her chosen avant-garde groups, but also succeeded in gaining the enthusiastic endorsement of highly verbal, high-status or soon-to-be high-status, much-published male friends such as Jindřich Štyrský, Vítězslav Nezval, Karel Teige, Bohuslav Brouk, Jan Mukařovský, André Breton, Paul Eluard, and Benjamin Péret. Toyen, by pursuing an avant-gardist direction, by representing herself as a liberated but not actively feminist working woman of possibly lesbian preferences, and by allying herself to a largely male avant-garde peer group, created a means for herself to fit into the highly social Prague cultural world. Intentionally or not, she differentiated herself from women artists of more traditional bent, whose work was covered in *Eva* and the feminist magazine *Ženský svět*. Unlike

modernists such as Vlasta Vostřebalová-Fischerová and Milada Marešová, whose work remains largely undiscovered even in the Czech Republic, the famously reticent Toyen, through her quiet but active participation in Devětsil and the surrealist group, her partnership with Jindřich Štyrský, and her prolific production of book covers and illustrations, made herself widely known to the interwar Czechoslovak public. I have shown that Toyen's work in erotic art also separated her from the larger Czech feminist movement, which during the interwar period still stressed sexual purity and monogamy for both genders, and that this placed her in the more sexually active context of the jazz-age New Woman. Thus, in interwar Czechoslovakia, Toyen herself was both representative and exceptional. She was representative in being something of a New Woman—she worked, wore pants, smoked—and like many women she attended the UMPRŮM design school rather than the fine art academy. But she was also very much an exception. She was a member of the avant-garde, having joined the Devětsil group in 1923 with her male associates Jindřich Štyrský and Jiří Jelínek. Toyen also presented herself differently than did most of her contemporaries; her persona was complex and intriguing in its gender ambiguity.

Thus, while the Czech feminist movement had created an atmosphere encouraging to women's artistic ambitions, it was the camaraderie, relative openness, and political radicality of the interwar Czech avant-garde that provided a space for Toyen's development as an avant-gardist with an erotic turn of mind. While the avant-garde included few women and would have been considered male-chauvinist by today's standards, this largely male group welcomed a woman of ambiguous gender identity and unclear sexual preference, and encouraged her to become one of its leading artists. We might usefully contrast this situation with Hannah Höch's subsidiary status within the Berlin Dada group—Höch's work seems to have been more highly respected by the Czechs than it was at home, where she was praised for her sandwiches rather

than her collages. Devětsil and its successor, the Prague surrealist group, provided a warm and unconventional extended “family” that approved of Toyen’s audacious explorations beyond the bounds of conventional femininity and morality. Other women artists, meanwhile, lacked the benefit of such established male peer groups, and formed something of a female art ghetto.

While I do not suggest that Toyen consciously strategized her positioning within the male-dominated Czech avant-garde and Prague cultural scene, I do posit that she found a means of making herself and her work known that eschewed the energetic self-promotion typical of Czech modern dancers Mira Holzbachová and Milča Mayerová and that was also practiced by actress and author Olga Scheinpflugová. These women’s names, photos, writings, and opinions appeared regularly in First Republic popular periodicals such as the arts journal *Rozpravy Aventina* and the women’s magazine *Eva*. Interwar Czech society was very open to verbal, intellectual, extroverted female cultural figures, but female visual artists, often less vocal, needed to ally themselves with highly visible and vocal figures—in Toyen’s case, the artist and writer Štyrský, the poets Nezval and Seifert, and the theorist Teige.

Did Toyen, as Srp suggests, separate the explicitly erotic from the rest of her work? I believe not. As Le Brun states, the mere fact that Toyen never published most of her erotic drawings does not mean she separated out the explicitly erotic work. Le Brun sees Toyen’s erotica of the 1930s as continuing in the same humor while (particularly in the case of *Justine*) deepening their vision of the erotic world.<sup>93</sup> I have argued that, from a professional standpoint, Toyen’s explicitly erotic work was necessarily somewhat separate from the rest of her oeuvre, but otherwise we cannot productively draw a line between her more explicit and her more veiled eroticism.

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<sup>93</sup>A. Le Brun, “Toyen ou l’insurrection lyrique,” 138–9.

Indeed, I have shown that Toyen remained fascinated by gender and sexuality throughout her career. Each phase of her career was marked by new ways of exploring these areas, whether via the seemingly straightforward primitivist imagery of the mid-1920s, the abstracted feminized landscapes and waterscapes of Artificialism, the playful and often fantastical phallic imagery of her erotic illustrations, or the increasingly rich and varied forms of her surrealist work, which included ghost-women, women signified by their empty garments, disconnected and fragmented bodies, mimicry in both Caillois's sense and Susan Rubin Suleiman's sense of the word, fetishism, vaginal imagery, and depictions of sexually suggestive animals.

I have also considered Toyen's representations of self, the feminine, and sexuality in relation to those of other women within and connected to surrealism, showing that while in many respects her work differs from that of the painters, it relates to some of the women's writings, especially that of Nora Mitrani. Toyen was an intelligent and well-read artist but not so much one who reasoned out her work as one who digested her readings and conversations and then worked in a strongly intuitive, symbolic manner to express her surrealist vision.

Why did Toyen pursue themes of gender and eroticism? Given that she did not state her reasons outright, we cannot be entirely certain of the underlying reasons. However, the need of many surrealist men to rebel against the father and their refusal to accept other authority figures in place of the father is well documented. We know that Štyrský's rebellion against his father was crucial to his development, because he wrote about it and because his friends Nezval and Michl mention it in their memoirs. Surrealist women, too, often rebelled against their fathers, and sometimes against their mothers as well. I believe it is indicative that Toyen did not reveal details of her childhood to her friends, nor did she apparently mention her father's name, occupation, or date of death. Only her mother and sister emerge in the inheritance documents

kept by Toyen's lawyer, while her father's identity is tucked away in the civic documents kept by the Prague police: Toyen's residence records and passport applications. This lacuna in itself, in conjunction with her vehement desire to separate from her family, suggests an intense desire to reject her father. For a woman, rejection of the father must play a somewhat different role than it would in the classic male-male oedipal scenario. At the same time, we cannot rely too heavily on Freud's rather limited and stereotypical formulation of children's feelings toward their parents. Many men in western society do experience some form of oedipal feelings, but this says nothing of men who do not, or of women who may experience something similar. Toyen saw herself as being in at least some respects masculine, and rejection of her father may well have resembled Freud's oedipal complex; he looms in the background as an important factor in her psychological development, one whose significance is suggested by the paucity of adult males in her oeuvre.

At the same time, in a broader social sense, Toyen, who grew up during a period of successful but difficult feminist agitation, during which Czech women attained higher education and the vote, may also have been responding to broader societal structures and attitudes whose proponents had attempted to prevent girls like her from becoming educated, independent, sexually liberated women. I have shown, furthermore, that Czech modernists of Toyen's generation, while valuing fundamental feminist goals, tended to believe marxism was the best rubric for ending inequality. Feminist groups were regarded as somewhat passé; women's rights, like rights for homosexuals and the proletariat, would come with the new classless society. This tension between desire for gender equality and prioritization of class struggle above rights and equality must certainly have affected Toyen's choices in terms of gender representation and her preference for working with erotic over visibly feminist imagery.

And, despite Benayoun's reference to the girl in *Sleeper* as a *femme enfant*,<sup>94</sup> I believe Toyen's girls do not represent the *femme enfant*, a figure better described as resembling the wild and very young surrealists Meret Oppenheim, Leonora Carrington, and Gisele Prassinos. Toyen's girls, rather, are dreamers adrift in a desolate and alarming landscape. As Nezval stated in 1936, Toyen's work responds to Breton's concept of the *explosante-fixe* and helps us fully comprehend the surrealist dictum that "beauty must be convulsive," by capturing surreal mystery in a moment of fixity, even in the process of transformation. At the same time, while many of Toyen's works are explicitly sexual, and some of them show the female form swathed in an air of Romantic mystery, she does not simply cater to male fantasy, but expresses, through the dream and the uncanny, a vision of haunted and vanishing femininity. I suspect that Toyen, a woman whose first twenty years coincided with great struggles for feminist progress and who saw that progress eroded in the 1930s, who rejected her family from the age of 16 to become a successful artist, expresses not just individual psychic wounds, but also the repressed trauma of the women of her generation, the New Women who carried within themselves the lost, repressed, and suppressed little girls of the fin-de-siècle. In her postwar work, Toyen continued to grapple with sexuality and gender expectations in a period when popular culture, as Mitrani so pointedly observed, exalted the purely sexualized woman over the intellectual or creative woman but when surrealism as a movement sought to bring the archetypal feminine to the fore as a counterweight to the long dominance of the archetypal masculine.

In sum, by examining Toyen's work and circumstances from so many interconnecting vantage points, I have provided new evidence regarding Toyen's development and iconography as well as regarding the Czech avant-garde and Czech women, and have provided a detailed

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<sup>94</sup>Benayoun, *Erotique du Surréalisme*, 115.

examination of some of the ways in which the interwar Czech avant-garde developed its ideas in relation to those of the French avant-garde.

## APPENDIX A.

### CHRONOLOGY

Toyen's Life	Toyen's Work and Milieu	World Events
21 September 1902: Toyen (Marie Čermínová), aka Manka (1902–1980) born to Václav Čermín and Marie Čermínová		
		1914–1918: World War I
		1918: Foundation of Czechoslovakia
1919–1922: studied at UMPRŮM under Emanuel Dítě		
Summer 1922: met Jindřich Štyrský and Jiří Jelínek on Korčula (Yugoslavia)		
Spring 1923: Toyen, Štyrský, and Jelínek joined Devětsil		
	November–December 1923: Toyen exhibited paintings in the Bazaar of Modern Art (Second Devětsil exhibition), probably her first group exhibition	
December 1924–March 1925: Toyen traveled in France, apparently alone		
	1925: Toyen and Štyrský began to collaborate on book covers	
Autumn 1925: Toyen and Štyrský went to Paris		
	December 1925: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited work in the show L'Art d'aujourd'hui	
	October 1926: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited work in their studio in	

	Paris-Montrouge, with a pamphlet entitled “Artificielisme”	
	November–December 1926: Toyen and Štyrský’s first solo exhibition, at Galerie d’art contemporain, Paris	
	1927: Toyen and Štyrský contributed to the one-off avant-garde journal <i>Fronta</i> and published statements about Artificialism in Czech there and elsewhere	
	Winter 1927: Toyen, Štyrský, and Vincenc Nečas published a guide to Paris	
	December 1927–January 1928: solo exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský at Galerie Vavin in Paris, with introduction by Philippe Soupault	
	June–July 1928: solo exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský at Aventinská Mansarda, Prague, with introduction by Karel Teige	
	May 1929: Toyen and Štyrský, assisted by Josef Haša, designed airbrushed fabrics	
	November 1929–January 1930: Toyen and Štyrský participated in a Christmas modern art exhibition at Aventinská Mansarda	
	March 1930: Toyen and Štyrský held an exhibition at Aventinská mansarda, with introduction by Nezval	
	June 1930: exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský in Kroměříž	
	October 1930–3 Štyrský published the <i>Erotická revue</i> , with drawings by Toyen	
	November–December 1930: Toyen and Štyrský participated in 100 Years of Czech Art 1830–1930, at Mánes, Prague	
	April 1931: Toyen and Štyrský participated in the Exposition d’art moderne, Brussels	
	Fall 1931: Štyrský began publishing <i>Edice 69</i>	
	November–December 1931: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited at Umělecká beseda, Prague	
	March–April 1932: Toyen and Štyrský exhibition in Brno	
	October–November 1932: Toyen and Štyrský participated in the surrealist-oriented exhibition <i>Poesie</i>	

	1932 at Mánes, Prague	
	December 1932: Toyen and Štyrský were accepted into the Mánes association	
	November–December 1933: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited drawings at Krasná jizba, Prague	
	March 1934: Toyen and Štyrský signed declaration founding the Czechoslovak surrealist group	
	January 1935: exhibition of the Czechoslovak surrealist group at Mánes, Prague	
	March–April 1935: the Bretons and Paul Eluard visited Prague	
	June 1935: Toyen, Štyrský, and Nezval visited the Paris surrealists; Toyen met, among others, Ernst, Tanguy, Duchamp, Dalí, and Cahun, and Man Ray photographed her. Toyen pointed out Ilya Ehrenburg to Breton, prompting an incident that resulted in Breton being refused the chance to speak at the writers' conference.	
	1936: publication of <i>Neither Swan Nor Moon</i> , commemorating the poet Mácha	
	May 1937: Toyen (Štyrský?) participated in the Exhibition of the Czech Avant-garde, Prague	
	1938: Toyen and Štyrský participated in the International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris; they held a show of their work at Topič in Prague which traveled to Brno and Bratislava	
		September 1938: Nazi occupation of the Sudetenland
	December 1938: Toyen created the erotic booklet "21" for Bohuslav Brouk as a present to his brother	
		March 1939: Nazi occupation of all of Bohemia and Moravia
	1941: Toyen hid Jewish surrealist Jindřich Heisler in her apartment until the end of the war	
	21 March 1942: Jindřich Štyrský died of pneumonia; Toyen inherited his art, had his gravestone made, and, postwar, arranged for exhibition of his work	
		1942: Assassination of Reichsprotektor Heydrich, resulting in Nazi liquidation of the village of

		Lidice
		September 1944–May 1945: liberation of Czechoslovakia by Allies
	November–December 1945: Toyen's first solo exhibition without Štyrský, at Topič, Prague	
		1946: Communists (KSČ) won 38% of vote
	21 March 1947: Toyen and Heisler went to Paris to organize her exhibition at the Denise René gallery, joined the Paris surrealists, and decided to remain in France due to the political situation in Czechoslovakia	
	July 1947: Toyen participated in the exhibition Le surréalisme, at Maeght, Paris	July 1947: USSR insisted Czechoslovakia reject previously accepted Marshall plan support
	November 1947: International surrealist exhibition at Topič, Prague, a smaller version of the Maeght show	
	1948: Heisler and others produced the review Neon, with drawings by Toyen	February 1948: Communists seize power in Czechoslovakia
	1951: death of Karel Teige, rumored to be by poison, now regarded as heart failure	
	3 January 1953: death of Jindřich Heisler	
	May 1953: solo exhibition at Galerie A l'étoile scellée, Paris	
	May 1955: solo exhibition at Galerie A l'étoile scellée, Paris	
	April 1958: solo exhibition at Galerie Fürstenberg, Paris	
	March–April 1960: solo retrospective exhibition at Raymond Cordier, Paris	
	June 1962: solo exhibition at Raymond Cordier, Paris	
	March 1964: Toyen was included in an exhibition of Imaginative Painting at Hluboká nad Vltavou	
	1966: death of André Breton	
	November 1966–January 1967: Retrospective exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský in Brno and Prague, the first in Czechoslovakia since the 1948 coup	
1967: Toyen moved into Breton's original Paris studio, by invitation of his widow		
		1960s: Prague Spring

		August 1968: Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia
1969: as a result of the breakup of the Paris surrealist group, Toyen became reclusive		
9 November 1980: death of Toyen		

## A.1 MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

November–December 1923: Toyen exhibited paintings in the Bazaar of Modern Art (Second Devětsil exhibition), probably her first group exhibition

December 1925: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited work in the show L'Art d'aujourd'hui

October 1926: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited work in their studio in Paris-Montrouge, with a pamphlet entitled “Artificielisme”

November–December 1926: Toyen and Štyrský's first solo exhibition, at Galerie d'art contemporain, Paris

December 1927–January 1928: solo exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský at Galerie Vavin in Paris, with introduction by Philippe Soupault

June–July 1928: solo exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský at Aventinská Mansarda, Prague, with introduction by Karel Teige

November 1929–January 1930: Toyen and Štyrský participated in a Christmas modern art exhibition at Aventinská Mansarda

March 1930: Toyen and Štyrský held an exhibition at Aventinská mansarda, with introduction by Nezval

June 1930: exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský in Kroměříž

November–December 1930: Toyen and Štyrský participated in 100 Years of Czech Art 1830–1930, at Mánes, Prague

April 1931: Toyen and Štyrský participated in the Exposition d'art moderne, Brussels

November–December 1931: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited at Umělecká beseda, Prague

March–April 1932: Toyen and Štyrský exhibition in Brno

November–December 1933: Toyen and Štyrský exhibited drawings at Krasná jizba, Prague

January 1935: exhibition of the Czechoslovak surrealist group at Mánes, Prague

May 1937: Toyen (Štyrský?) participated in the Exhibition of the Czech Avant-garde, Prague

1938: Toyen and Štyrský participated in the International Surrealist Exhibition in Paris; they held a show of their work at Topič in Prague which traveled to Brno and Bratislava

November–December 1945: Toyen's first solo exhibition without Štyrský, at Topič, Prague

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July 1947: Toyen participated in the exhibition Le surréalisme, at Maeght, Paris

November 1947: International surrealist exhibition at Topič, Prague, a smaller version of the Maeght show

May 1953: solo exhibition at Galerie A l'étoile scellée, Paris

May 1955: solo exhibition at Galerie A l'étoile scellée, Paris

April 1958: solo exhibition at Galerie Fürstenberg, Paris

March–April 1960: solo retrospective exhibition at Raymond Cordier, Paris

June 1962: solo exhibition at Raymond Cordier, Paris

March 1964: Toyen was included in an exhibition of Imaginative Painting at Hluboká nad Vltavou

November 1966–January 1967: Retrospective exhibition of Toyen and Štyrský in Brno and Prague, the first in Czechoslovakia since the 1948 coup

## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY OF NAMES

Toyen (Marie Čermínová), nicknamed Manka (1902–1980)

Václav Čermín: Toyen's father

Marie Čermínová: Toyen's mother

Zdena Svobodová: Toyen's older sister

Bohumil Svoboda: Toyen's brother-in-law, a railroad employee

Bartoš, Jan: Writer

Bidlo, František (1895–1945): Artist, cartoonist

Biebl, Konstantin (1898–1951): Poet, Devětsil member

Brouk, Bohuslav (1912–1978): Psychoanalyst, Prague surrealist

Brežina, Otakar (1868–1929): Symbolist poet, aesthetic theorist

Brunner, V. H. (1886–1928): Artist, caricaturist

Burian, Emil František (1904–1959) Composer, stage director, writer. Founded Voice-Band (1927), a Levá fronta founder. Founded theater D 34. Devětsil member

Chochol, Josef (1880–1956): Architect, Devětsil member

Čapek, Josef (1887–1945): Artist and writer. Died at Bergen-Belsen.

Čapek, Karel (1890–1938): Writer

Černík, Artuš (1900–1953): Editor of *Pasmo*, theater and film critic; Devětsil member

Černý, Václav (1905–1987): Writer, literary scholar

Deml, Jakub (1878–1961): Priest, mystical writer

Drtíkol, František (1883–1961): Photographer, Buddhist

Ebertová, Eva (–1951): Teige's younger partner

Feuerstein, Bedřich (1892–1936): Architect, Devětsil member

Filla, Emil (1882–1953): Cubist painter

Fragner, Jaroslav (1898–1967): Architect, Devětsil member

Frejka, Jiří (1904–1952): theater director, Devětsil member

Fučík, Julius (1903–1943): Communist journalist and theater critic, Devětsil member, executed by the Nazis and later revered as a martyr

Girgel, Otto: publisher

Gottwald, Klement (1896–1953): Czech Communist leader, first Communist president of Czechoslovakia

Götz, František (1894–1974): writer, critic, member of Literární skupina, co-editor of *Host*

Gutfreund, Otto (1889–1927): Cubist and Social Civilist sculptor

Hába, Alois (1893–1973): Microtonal composer, theoretician

Halas, František (1901–1949): Poet, Devětsil member, *Pasmo* editor

Heisler, Jindřich (1914–1953): Poet and artist; Prague surrealist, Toyen's artistic partner from about 1938–1953

Hlaváček, Karel (1874–1898): Decadent artist and writer

Hoffmeister, Adolf (1902–1973): Writer, cartoonist, Devětsil member

Honzík, Karel (1900–1966): Architect, Devětsil member

Honzl, Jindřich (1894–1953): Theater and film director, Devětsil member, Prague surrealist

Horký, Karel (1879–1965): journalist, editor of nationalist weekly *Fronta*

Hořejší, Jindřich (1886–1941): Poet, Devětsil member

Jakobson, Roman (1896–1982): Prague Linguistic Circle, Devětsil member

Janský, Karel: bibliophile, collector of Máchiana

Jelínek, Jiří (Remo) (1901–1941): Artist, Devětsil member. Died at Mauthausen.

Jenčík, Joe (1893–1945): Choreographer, dance writer. His “Jenčíkovy Girls” performed to Ježek’s music for the Osvobozené divadlo, 1929–36

Jesenská, Milena (1896–1944): Journalist, feminist, associate of Kafka; married Jaromír Krejcar, died at Ravensbrück

Ježek, Jaroslav (1906–1942): Jazz composer and conductor, Devětsil member, Osvobozené divadlo, Prague surrealist. Emigrated to USA, 1939.

Kalandra, Závěš (1902–1950): Communist journalist connected to Prague surrealists; executed by Communist regime

Karásek ze Lvovic, Jiří (1871–1951): Decadent writer, editor, bibliophile, homosexual rights activist

Kisch, E. E. (1885–1948), German-language journalist, Devětsil member

Klepetář, Jan (1902–1978): writer, also known as Jaromír Novák

Kodíček, Josef (1892–1954): Theater director and critic

Konrád, Karel (1899–1971): writer, Devětsil member

Krajc, Rudolf (1907–1934): Artist

Kramář, Vincenc (1877–1960): Art collector, early supporter of French cubism

Krejcar, Jaromír (1895–1949): Architect, Devětsil member, husband of Milena Jesenská

Krejčí, Iša (1904–1968): Composer, critic, conductor.

Krejčí, Jan: marxist journalist and Devětsil member

z Lešehrad, Emanuel (1877–1957): Decadent writer

Linhart, Evžen (1898–1949): Architect, painter, Devětsil member

Mácha, Karel Hynek (1810–1836): Czech Romantic poet

Mahen, Jiří (pen name of Antonín Vančura)(1882–1939): Writer, Devětsil member

Markalous, Evžen (1906–1971): Writer, photographer, Devětsil member

Martinů, Bohuslav (1890–1959) Composer, friend of Nezval. Emigrated to USA, 1941. Opera Hlas lesa.

Mayerová, Milča (1901–1977): Modern dancer, loosely associated with Devětsil

Michl, Karel (1898–1982): Writer, early friend of Štyrský

Mrkvička, Otakar (1898–1957): Artist, Devětsil member

Mukařovský, Jan (1891–1975): Prague Linguistic Circle

Muzika, František (1900–1974): Artist, Devětsil member

Nečas, Vincenc (1903–1972): Journalist, Devětsil member

Nebeský, Václav (1889–1949): Art critic and theoretician connected to the Tvrdošíjn group.

Nejedlý, Zdeněk (1878–1962): Musicologist, Communist politician, writer. First Communist minister of culture and education.

Neumann, S. K. (1875–1947): Poet, editor, Communist

Nevařilová, Jožka (–1951): Teige's long-time partner, a translator

Nezval, Vítězslav (1900–1958): Poet, dramatist, Devětsil member, Prague surrealist

Obrtel, Vít (1901–1988): Architect, designer, poet, editor of *Kvart*, Devětsil member

Pelc, Antonín (1895–1967): Cartoonist

Peroutka, Ferdinand (1895–1978): Writer, Masaryk supporter, anti-Communist

Pitterman-Longen, Emil Artur (1885–1936): Artist, theater and film director

Procházka, Arnošt (1869–1925): Decadent editor of *Moderní revue*

Resler, Kamill : Toyen's lawyer, bibliophile

Rössler, Jaroslav (1902–1990): photographer, Devětsil member

Schulz, Karel (1899–1943): Writer

Seifert, Jaroslav (1901–1986): Poet, member of Devětsil, Nobel prize winner

Svrček, J. B.: Writer, Devětsil member

Šalda, František Xaver (1867–1937): Literary critic and author, sympathetic to Devětsil

Šíma, Josef (1881–1971): Artist, Devětsil member, member of Le Grand Jeu

Štoll, Ladislav (1902–1981): Writer, critic, postwar Communist literary czar

Štorch-Marien, Otokar (): Publisher, promoter of the arts

Štulc, Vladimír: Devětsil member

Štyrský, Jindřich (1899–1942): artist and writer, Toyen's artistic partner 1922–1942; Devětsil member, Prague surrealist

Teige, Karel (1900–1951): Theoretician and artist, Devětsil member, Prague surrealist

Trefný, František: Sex reformist, proprietor of Hydiko and editor of sex reform publications

Váchal, Josef (1884–1969): Writer, artist, mystic

Václavek, Bedřich (1897–1943): critic, Devětsil member, marxist aesthetician, died at Auschwitz

Vančura, Vladislav (1891–1942): Playwright and director, Devětsil member, executed by the Nazis

Voskovec, Jiří (1905–1981): Actor, playwright, Devětsil member. Formed the Osvobozené divadlo (1928–1938) with Jan Werich. Emigrated to USA, 1939.

Wachsman, Alois (1898–1942): Painter and architect, Devětsil member, surrealist

Weisskopf, F.C.: writer

Werich, Jan (1905–1980): Actor, playwright, Devětsil member. See Voskovec.

Wichterlová, Hana (1903–1990): Sculptor

Wolker, Jiří (1900–1924): poet, Devětsil member

Žižka, Otokar (1907–1963): Bibliophile, writer, sued for plagiarism by Toyen

Zrzavý, Jan (1890–1977): Artist

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### Archives and Libraries

#### Literární archiv, Památník národního písemnictví (LA PNP)

Aventinum fond

Jan Bartoš fond

Jaroslav Bednář fond

Karel Josef Beneš fond

Konstantin Biebl fond

Artuš Černík fond

V. Holub fond

Hyperion fond

Jan Jelínek fond

Jiří Karásek ze Lvovic fond

A.B. Kohout fond

Antonín Kratochvíl fond

Lešehradeum fond

Karel Michl fond

Vítězslav Nezval fond

Emil Pacovský fond

Josef Portman fond

Kamill Resler fond

Karel Teige fond

Národní Archiv (NA)

Policejní ředitelství Praha II

AV ČR

Ladislav Štoll fond

Národní knihovna, Prague

Knihovna Uměleckoprůmyslového musea v Praze

Městská knihovna, Prague

New York Public Library

Library of Congress

Getty Research Institute Library

University of Pittsburgh Libraries

Columbia University Libraries

University of California Libraries

### **List of Contemporary Newspapers and Periodicals Used**

When possible, I provide political orientation, dates and place of publication, and significant personnel.

Avantgarda (1925–1926?)

Blok (1946–1949) arts

Cahiers d'Art: French

Červen (1918–1921), ed. S. K. Neumann, leftist culture

České slovo: Ústřední orgán Československé strany socialistické (1907–1945, includes Ženské slovo and Večerní České Slovo), newspaper of the Czechoslovak socialist parties from 1919–1926, of the Czechoslovak National Socialist parties from 1926–1938

Čin (1929–1938), eds. František Fajfr, Josef Kopta, Bohuslav Koutník, Marie Majerová. Cultural and public matters.

Damské modní listy, fashion magazine

Damský modní obzor (1911–12) fashion magazine with articles and patterns

Dav, Slovak Communist

Disk (1923–1925), Devětsil journal

Doba: časopis pro kulturní i politický život, ed. Karel Teige

Erotická revue, ed. Jindřich Štyrský

Eva (Melantrich), illustrated women's magazine

Fronta (1927–1939), independent nationalist weekly, ed. Karel Horký, primarily on politics

Fronta (Brno) 1927, one-shot leftist and modernist anthology

Gentleman, Similar to the early New Yorker, but for the elegant male. Latter issues published by Otakar Štorch-Marien's Aventinum.

Le Grand Jeu, journal of the group Le Grand Jeu

Hálo noviny (1933–1938), newspaper

Hlas (1930s) Gay liberation magazine.

Horizont, architectural magazine

Host (1921–1927?), ed. František Götz and A.C. Nor; organ of Literární skupina. Cultural, esp. literary

Humoristické listy (1858–1941), weekly humor paper

Index, ed B. Vaclávek, etc. Moravian-based cultural and leftist

Kmen (1920–1), ed. F. X. Šalda, then S. K. Neumann, Cultural

Kmen (from 1926 on)

## Kritika

Kvart, ed. Vít Obrtel. Cultural journal publishing international literature and essays, architecture

Levá fronta (1930–1933) Leftist

Lidová kultura: Kulturní týdeník pracujícího lidu (1945–1950), leftist or Communist newspaper

Lidové noviny (1893–1945 and again to the present) Brno, Prague. Newspaper Described by Orzoff as “Independent”

Listy pro umění a kritiku, eds. B. Fučík et al

Literární noviny (1927–1951 and again to the present), daily literary newspaper

Lumír (1851—at least 1904), literary

Magazin DP (1934–35; continues Žijeme? Magazin Družstevní práce) eds Josef Cerman, Václav Kaplický, B.M. Klika, J.E. Koula, Josef Sudek, Dr. Zdeněk Voráček, Ladislav Žák. Leftist cultural.

Minotaure, surrealist-related French arts magazine

Moderní dívka, magazine for very young women

Moderní hygiena, sex reform magazine

Moderní revue (1895–1925), eds. Arnošt Procházka and Jiří Karásek. Decadent journal

Musaion ed. Karel Čapek in 1921, cultural

Musaion (1929– ), cultural

Nová svoboda (1924–1939). Weekly. Described by Orzoff as Social Democratic opinion journal. Primarily political and economics.

Nový hlas, ed. Karásek et al. Gay liberation journal following Hlas.

Odeon, ed. Jindřich Štyrský. Cultural.

## Panorama

Pásmo (1925–1926?), ed. Artuš Černík. Devětsil-oriented. Brno.

Phases, French surrealist-related journal

Prager Presse (1921–1938), Prague German-language newspaper

Právo lidů (1892–1948). Social Democratic newspaper, Prague

Přerod

Přítomnost (1924–1945). Described by Orzoff as weekly opinion journal of Peroutka. Castle.

Ranní noviny (1933–1938?), newspaper

ReD (1927–1931) Devětsil journal.

Reflektor (1925–1929?). ed. S.K. Neumann. Pub. Melantrich.

La Révolution Surréaliste

La Revue française de Prague (). Published by the Alliance française.

Rozpravy Aventina, Published by Otakar Štorch-Marien

Rudé právo: Ústřední orgán komunistické strany Československa (1920–1995), originally Social Democratic, then Communist daily

Slovenské smery. Slovak literary review, with strong interest in surrealism and the Prague Linguistic Circle

Studentská revue, leftist

Světozor, Mainstream photo essay magazine.

Telegraf (1929–1945), newspaper. Described by Orzoff as National Socialist.

Tribuna (1919–1928), newspaper

Trn, humor

Typografie 34 (1927)

Tvar: Měsíčník pro umění a kritiku (1927–1931)

Tvorba: List pro kritiku a umění (1926–1938). Communist cultural magazine

U-Blok (U čtvrtletník skupiny Blok) (1936–1937?), ed. Bedřich Václavek, Petr Jilemnický, Jan Noha. Leftist.

Umění, ed. Zdeněk Wirth. Art historical journal.

Var: Pokrokový list pro veřejné otázky (1921–1930?), ed. Zdeněk Nejedlý (leftist), published by Rejman from vol. 2 (not the same as Var: list pro kulturní otázky, 1921–1953 published by Melantrich), vol. 1, 3

Vesna, feminist

Vesna, Slovak cultural magazine

Volné směry (1896–1947) art monthly

Zvěrokruh: měsíčník soudobého umění (1930), ed. Nezval

Žena, organ of the Svazu katol. ženských spolků československých, Catholic women's magazine

Žena: Tydeník Komunistických žen (1919–1926?, included Komunistka and Popelka). Weekly for Communist women

Žena a její reforma, mainstream, feminist-friendly magazine published in Plzeň

Ženské noviny (1919–1944), feminist and Social Democrat, political and economic weekly

Ženský časopis Eva, Catholic women's periodical

Ženský obzor, feminist

Ženský svět, feminist 34 (1930)

Žijeme: "obrázkový magazin dnešní doby, orgán Svazu československého díla" eds Josef Cerman, Václav Kaplický, arch. Fr. Kerhart, B.M. Klika, Milena Krejcarová (1932–3)

Život, art (issue 2 produced by Devětsil)

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"5. kongres Ligy pro sexuální reformu." *Nový hlas* 1, no. 7–8 (November 1932): 11–14.

"André Breton v Praze." *Rudé právo*, no. 72 (26 March 1935): 3.

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A.P. "Proti celibátu veřejných zaměstnankyň." *Žena: Týdeník komunistických žen* 10, no. 28 (10 July 1924): 9.

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