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SURRÉALISME EN 1947 – OCCULTISM AND THE POST-WAR MARGINALISATION OF SURREALISM

Abstract: The exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947*, organised in Paris (Galerie Maeght) by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp was an attempt to consolidate and reorient the Surrealist movement in the post-war reality. According to the trend set by Breton in his *Rupture inaugurale*, Surrealism was going to become tied with occultism more strongly than ever before. The exhibition, whose main topic was “a new myth”, was arranged in the form of an initiation path, consisting of the Hall of Superstitions, the Labyrinth of Initiation, etc. One reason for the critical panning of the exhibition was the fact that in that period all forms of esoteric trends were associated with Fascism, and myth was more and more frequently acknowledged as an obstacle in building new, rationally organised society.

The aim of this paper is to present how the strategy of Breton, who proclaimed the need for establishing “a new myth” and connecting Surrealism with occultism against the Paris intellectual milieu, contributed to the marginalisation of the Surrealist movement.

Keywords: Surrealism – occultism – myth – fascism – exhibition.

On 7 July 1947, the International Exhibition of Surrealism was opened at Galerie Maeght in Paris. Although the exhibition proved to be a turnout success¹, many commentators perceived it as a beginning of the end of the movement. “Indeed, after the exhibition at Maeght this art lost its impetus on the international front, and the answers which it gave to the changing world

¹ G. Durozoi, *History of the Surrealist Movement*, transl. A. Anderson, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 2004, p. 472 described it as “a lively success”. The total number of visitors amounted to 40,000 visitors.

(both in the visual field and the field of ideas), lost their attractiveness”, wrote Piotr Piotrowski².

The post-war position of Surrealism was determined, to a great extent, by the fact that many first-plan figures associated with the trend (i.e. André Breton, Max Ernst, Yves Tanguy, André Masson) had decided to emigrate. Surrealist art, as *Entartete Kunst*, had limited opportunities to develop under the German occupation³. It was only the *La Main à Plume* group that tried to pursue the Surrealist activity in Paris. However, in the period of difficult post-war settlements, it was the moral attitude that had major significance. A few months after the liberation, Albert Camus wrote that the French society had been divided into “men of the Résistance” and “men of treason and injustice”⁴. The Surrealists coming back from emigration found themselves in a very inconvenient situation. The status of moral winners granted a dominating position to the participants of the *Résistance* – the French resistance movement, where an important role was played by *Partie Communist Française* (the French Communist Party). Although Surrealism distinctly situated itself on the left side of the political spectrum, its relations with the *PCF* were very tense. Breton defined his ambitions to bind poetry with revolution by bringing together Marx and Rimbaud: “Transformer le monde, a dit Marx, changer la vie, a dit Rimbaud, ces deux mots d’ordre pour nous n’en font que un”⁵. From the early 1920s, he tried to combine the Surrealist concepts of dream images, obsessive love, with the program of the *PCF*. However, the period when he was a card-carrying party member was as short as a couple of months of 1927. A conflict about the Surrealists’ participation in the International Congress of Writers in the Defence of Culture (1935) organised by the Communists resulted in an official break with the *PCF*. The main source of the problems was the different perception of the role of art by the Surrealists and the Moscow-dominated Communist party representatives, who promoted social realism. Breton always emphasized (also in the post-war period) the need for an artist’s absolute independence. He sought the

² P. Piotrowski, *Surrealistyczne Interregnum*, in: *Mistrzowi Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu uczniowie*, ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Małkiewicz, Kraków 2001, p. 305.

³ G. Durozoi, *History ...*, pp. 423-426.

⁴ A. Camus, “Combat” (October 20, 1944) quoted in E.E. Adams, *After the Rain: Surrealism and the Post-World War II Avant-garde. 1940-1950*, ProQuest, Ann Arbor 2007, p. 99. On the Surrealism and politics see: H. Lewis, *The Politics of Surrealism*, Paragon House, New York 1988; C. Reynaud Paligot, *Parcours politique des Surréalistes, 1919-1969*, CNRS, Paris 1995; *Surrealism, Politics and Culture*, ed. R. Spiteri, D. LaCoss, *Studies in European Cultural Transition*, vol. 16, Aldershot and Burlington, Ashgate 2003.

⁵ A. Breton, *Position politique du surréalisme, Oeuvres complètes*, ed. M. Bonnet, Gallimard, Paris 1992, vol. 2, p. 459.

effectiveness of art in the revolutionary qualities of the meaning coming from the creator's unconscious. The party, on the other hand, expected the Surrealists to follow the Communists' directives and join their propaganda program. After the Moscow trials (1936-1938), Breton turned against Stalin and joined the Trotskyist opposition. A meeting with Trotsky in Mexico (1938) resulted in the Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art and the establishment of the International Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art (*Fédération Internationale d'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant – FIARI*). As a supporter of Trotsky, he became an independent person shunned by the *PCF*, which was supporting Stalin's side. Breton's numerous former friends, such as Aragon, Éluard, Tzara, who were holding important positions in the Stalinist *PCF* as well as in the press, radio and publishing houses, became his deadly enemies.

On the other hand, the Surrealists fell into disfavour with conservative politicians, speaking out on the problem of the Indo-China⁶. Moreover, in the post-war atmosphere, where patriotism, solemnity and celebrating French tradition were highly valued, almost every artistic gesture was perceived as a transgression.

One of the most important voices in the discussion on the Surrealism's position in post-war France was the speech made by Tristan Tzara⁷, who as a *PCF* representative acknowledged the necessity of complete subordination of poetry to the party's requirements and accused the Surrealists of the lack of effectiveness in their activities. He emphasized their absence in difficult times and criticized the shallowness of the problems they were raising. The existentialists' position towards Surrealism was described by Jean-Paul Sartre⁸, who described the Surrealists in his writings as eternal youths rebelling against their bourgeois parents, who appeared to be completely unable to take action at the moment of truth. Although the polemics were sharp, in that period Surrealism must have been an unignorable challenge, making the French intelligentsia crystallize their opinions⁹.

In response to the criticism, on 21 June 1947 Breton published the *Rupture inaugurale* manifesto signed by fifty artists. Categorically confirming a break with the *PCF*, the manifesto accused the party of opportunism and betraying the proletariat by participating in the government of the bourgeois state. It

⁶ In 1947 they published a manifesto *Liberté est un mot vietnamien* signed by 25 persons.

⁷ Published in an augmented version as *Le Surréalisme et l'après-guerre*, Nagel, Paris 1947. On the polemics Tzara-Breton see: *Mélusine*, no. 17, *Chassé-croisé Tzara-Breton*, ed. H. Béhar, L'Âge d'Homme, Paris 1997.

⁸ Qu'est-ce que la littérature?: IV. Situation de l'écrivain en 1947, *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 20 (May 1947).

⁹ M. Beaujour, Sartre and Surrealism, *Yale French Studies* 1963, no. 30, p. 86.

also specified the historic mission of Surrealism: elaborating a new myth. “A new myth” also became the chief slogan of the exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947*.

The exhibition, prepared by André Breton and Marcel Duchamp,¹⁰ was an attempt to consolidate and reorient the movement in post-war reality. The person responsible for implementing the whole project and designing the *Salle de Superstition* was the architect Frederick Kiesler. The exhibition featured ca. 200 works of more than 100 artists from 25 countries¹¹, including 30 installations specially prepared for this occasion. Breton and Duchamp described the form of the exhibition in details. On 12 January 1947, Breton sent out a letter-invitation to the exhibition¹², in which he explained its ideological assumptions. The letter determined the subjects and even the dimensions of the particular works, leaving relatively little space for the artists’ own interpretation. It shows that the exhibition was going to illustrate the theses of *Rupture inaugurale*. Like the previous exhibitions prepared jointly by Breton and Duchamp, this one also had the form of a complex installation. Its layout was subordinated to the concept of “a new myth” and shaped as a kind of path which every visitor had to follow. The decision was taken to display the work *Conglomeros* by Victor Brauner, a figure consisting of three naked bodies connected with one head, in the exhibition window. The work was chosen because, according to Breton, it had the greatest potential to give shock and, consequently, to arouse interest. The cover of the catalogue was also of provocative character. It was designed and produced by Marcel Duchamp and Enrico Donati. Its famous luxurious version was supplied with a foam-rubber, hand-painted copy of a female breast placed on a piece of black velvet. Differently from all exhibition rooms in the world, a notice read: please touch (*prière de toucher*).

¹⁰ They cooperated for the third time, after the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1938 in Paris and the exhibition First Papers of Surrealism in 1942 in New York.

¹¹ E.g. Poland-related artists: Stanisław Grabowski and Jerzy Kujawski – on the topic of participation of Kujawski in the Surrealist movement and the International Exhibition of Surrealism in 1947 see: *Jerzy Kujawski. Maranatha*, Exhibition catalogue in the National Museum in Poznań, ed. A. Turowski, National Museum in Poznań, Poznań 2006. There exist many descriptions of *Surréalisme en 1947* exhibition diverging in details. My description is based mostly on the catalogue *Breton, Duchamp, Kiesler. Surreal Space 1947* of the exhibition organized by Österreichische Friedrich und Lillian Kiesler-Privatstiftung, Vienna 2013. It seems very reliable thanks to the preserved in Kiesler archive photographs of the exhibition. The project to show them in New York as a separate exhibition was never carried out.

¹² The content of this invitation was published in the exhibition catalogue, a typescript from Breton’s archives is available on the website of the Centre Pompidou: WWW.andrebretton.fr/fr/item/?GCOI=56600100837330# (10.06.2014).

Not all the aims of the project were successfully accomplished. It had been planned that the lower storey of the gallery would host the works of the precursors of Surrealism, such as Bosch, Arcimboldo, Blake, Goya, Redon, and another room – those of the transient Surrealists, such as de Chirico, Masson, and Dalí. Yet in fact the exhibition began with the stairs symbolising the successive steps of the initiation. Each step corresponded to a card from the tarot Major Arcana (the Fool card was not considered at all) and one book, e.g. the first level corresponded to the Magician and the book *Melmoth the Wanderer* by Charles Maturin, the third one – the Empress and *Rêverie d'une proméneur solitaire* by Jean Jacques Rousseau, the fourth one – the Emperor and *The Golden Bough* by James Frazer. It also referenced the works by Meister Eckhart, Swedenborg, Hölderlin, Sade, Jarry, Apollinaire, Fourier, Kafka, etc. At the top of the stairs leading to the first floor, a miniature lighthouse was sending light signals. The upper landing featured i.a. the sculpture by Hans Arp resembling a comet – *Fuit de la Lune* and a large canvas by Arshile Gorky. The second stage of initiation could be reached in the *Salle du Superstition* designed by Kiesler. The whole oval-shaped room was to be associated with femininity, nature, the primordial. The unsettling atmosphere was enhanced by the dark-turquoise drapes hung on the walls and the Black Lake painted on the floor by Max Ernst. Duchamp's *Rayon vert* emitted green, uncanny light. Discovering more uncanny objects and art works located there, *un initié* was to find out that nobody is resistant to primitive, magical states of mind. Religious superstitions should obviously be rejected, yet a very primordial way of mental functioning, going beyond *rational* consciousness, is essential for accepting a new myth. The primitive orientation of the mind is a crucial element of the Surrealist approach to reality¹³. The objects gathered in this room were mostly taboo-figures and totems. They included such pieces as *L'homme angoisse* by David Hare, *La Cascade architecturale* by Joan Miró, *Le Whist* by Robert Matta, *Le mauvais oeil* by Enrico Donati, *L'Échelle qui annonce la mort* by Yves Tanguy, *Le Totem des religions* and *Figure anti-taboo* by Kiesler. The next level of initiation was purification and rebirth, which were going to take place in the *Salle de Pluie* designed by Duchamp. Going through the curtain of rain symbolised purification – and it was an obvious provocation. Rain was also falling on the bronze sculpture by Mary Martins. There was also a billiard table in the room as well as some paintings. Despite all the obligatory elements of initiation rites contained in the room, an important role was also played by humour.

¹³ T.M. Bauduin, *Occultation of Surrealism: a Study of the Relationship Between Bretonian Surrealism and Western Esotericism*, Elck Syn Waerom Publishing, Amsterdam 2012, p. 234, <http://dare.uva.nl/document/462796> (26.05.2014).

Ironic distance was very important in Breton's concept of the "occultation of Surrealism". Creating the initiation path and at the same time undermining its significance was a characteristically Surrealistic effort. Treating irony and humour as an essential element of an artwork is a feature distinguishing a significant part of the avant-garde tradition from religious ritual.

The culmination of the initiation process was the labyrinth *Le Dédale*, where an adept, after going through the process of purification, could admire magical "objects". The room designed by Duchamp hosted 12 altars on which Surrealist fetishes were displayed, still in the same tongue in cheek convention. Breton wanted the altars to resemble those associated with voodoo practices and the cultic altars of the American Indians which he had seen during the journey he made in 1945 across the western part of the USA. It was then that he visited the reservations in New Mexico and Arizona and became interested in the beliefs of the Hopi and Zuni Indians. On his way back to Europe, in the winter of 1945, he visited Haiti, where he watched voodoo ceremonies¹⁴. The route through the labyrinth was outlined by a transparent Ariadne's thread. Twelve octagonal niches contained the altars devoted to a being, a category of beings, or to a subject which is capable of living mythical life – *susceptible d'être doué de vie mythique*. Those beings included amazing animals (e.g. *Le Condylure* – *Condylura cristata*, a star-nosed mole, whose pointed snout ends with red or pink appendages resembling a star), *objects fantômes* (e.g. a window from Magna sed Apta – a screen/dream interface of the main characters of George du Maurier's novel *Peter Ibbetson*; Falmer's hair from *Chants du Maldoror* by Lautréamont), *fictional characters* (e.g. Jeanne Sabrenas, the heroine of *La Dragonne* by Alfred Jarry; the Juggler of Gravity – a character designed by Duchamp for *The Large Glass*, yet never actually used). The only historical figure honoured with an altar was Raymond Roussel. Each altar corresponded to a zodiac sign. The entrance was guarded by the figure of *The Great Transparent One* by Jacques Hérold – an artistic expression of Breton's idea. The viewing of the works was constantly accompanied by the sound of an electric bell. The last room was a "Library", which contained cabinets with books, pictures and mementos associated with Surrealism. A Surrealist kitchen, which was going to crown the show, remained only a project.

Probably the best personification of the Surrealist "new myth" are the Great Transparent Ones. Breton writes about them for the first time in June 1942 in *Prolegomènes à un troisième manifeste ou non*¹⁵. They also appear in

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁵ N. Lübecker, *Community, Myth and Recognition in 20th Century French Literature and Thought*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London and New York, 2009, p. 53.

the catalogue of the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition 1942 in the text *De la survivance de certains mythes et de quelques autres mythes en croissance et en formation*. It is accompanied by a drawing of Jupiter and winds (according to the German doctor and alchemist, Michael Maier), a quotation from *Le Horla* by Guy de Maupassant about a man visited by a transparent creature, and a work by David Hare depicting a naked female body turned into a flame¹⁶. However, his interest dates back to the 1930s, the period of intensive, yet uneasy, contacts with Georges Bataille and his Collège de Sociologie. In 1935, Breton became a member of the group Contre-Attaque, created by Bataille, which aimed at fighting Fascism the Fascist way – with the use of violence and the social potential of mythical thought. The whole undertaking lasted for only a couple of months and turned out to be a fiasco. However, the understanding of myth presented by Contre-Attaque and propagated by the Collège de Sociologie, based on the ideas of Georges Sorel, remained important for Breton in the 1940s. At the same time it was an exceptionally ill-chosen source of inspiration, since Sorel's works were also inspiring the practitioners of Fascism¹⁷.

In *Prolégomènes*, Breton writes about the periods in history when traditional intellectual disciplines seem insufficient, when different forms of knowledge and states of consciousness are being sought. “Que penser du postulat «pas de société sans mythe social»; dans quelle mesure pouvons-nous choisir ou adopter, et imposer un mythe en rapport avec la société que nous jugeons désirable?”¹⁸ Further, he suggests that *Les Grands Transparents* constitute a myth which is capable of playing a social role. The objectives of Surrealism, which he defined in his lecture *La situation du surréalisme entre deux guerres* delivered in 1945 to the French students at Yale, are associated with using the social potential of a myth. Surrealism, a movement which penetrated “the vast, dark area of Ego, where myths immensely swell and at the same time wars hatch” must begin “preparations of practical sort for intervention in mythical life, which at the beginning takes the form of large-scale purification.”¹⁹ The whole exhibition seems to be aiming at implementing this idea. What draws attention is the pragmatic character of Breton's concept. As in *Reflections on Violence* by Sorel, the nature and form of

¹⁶ See: R. Golan, *Mis en suspens de l'incrédulité: Breton et le mythe de Grands Transparents*, in: *André Breton: La beauté convulsive*, Paris: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou 1991, pp. 353-54.

¹⁷ N. Lübecker, *Community...*, p. 63. See also: M. Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism: The Mobilization of Myth, Art, and Culture in France, 1909-1939*, Duke University Press, Durham 2007, esp. chapter *Fascism, Modernism and Modernity*, pp. 17-62.

¹⁸ A. Breton, *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste ou non*, in: idem, *Manifestes du surréalisme*, Gallimard, Paris 1990, p. 156.

¹⁹ Quoted in: N. Lübecker, *Community ...*, p. 78.

the myth are unimportant. What is important is the fact that a myth can act as an encouraging image, the energy which attracts and creates. The thing to do is to “put your head down and go for it” (“foncer tête basse”), and the rest should be left to coincidence²⁰. In the article “Vers un nouveau mythe?”, published in the Surrealist magazine *VVV*²¹, Patrick Waldberg quotes the words of Breton, who was supposed to have said that virtually everything, any kind of object – even an ashtray – may easily become a cult object.²² However, cult objects perceived in this way, assembled at an exhibition – whether they are a star-nosed mole or Falmer’s Hair – cannot cause surprise. The question of a myth also appears in the fictional conversation between Breton and President de Brosses (the creator of the term “fetish”) in *Vie légendaire de Max Ernst précédé d’une brève discussion sur le besoin d’un nouveau mythe*. Breton returns in it to the theory of myth of the Collège de Sociologie and claims that in the current situation (1942), when nationalist fetishes responsible for the war are extremely widespread, it is necessary to organize human beliefs in a different way. Breton emphasizes that artists may be creators of new myths. He gives the example of Max Ernst. In Breton’s concept there is no differentiation between art and myth. Art should become mythical, myths may be artistic. Ernst plays an important political role as a creator of contemporary myths. The shift from “myth” to “artistic myth” is significant. Undoubtedly, it is an important difference from the pre-war concept of Contre-Attaque. Despite the critical opinions which he had already heard in America, Breton stuck to his concept, arranging the exhibition in 1947.²³ The catalogue contained the text *The Absence of Myth* by Bataille, who claimed that the conviction that myth is absent or no longer important constitutes the myth of contemporary society. The word itself has become devalued and today it only means “something false” by definition. This kind of conviction is deeply wrong and dangerous: contemporary society needs a mythical base like no other²⁴.

In Surrealist theory, myth and magic are inseparably bound and serve the revival of the disenchanted Western world. The “occultation” of Surrealism

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²¹ P. Waldberg, „VVV”, February 1944, pp. 41-42.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²³ In the American “View” magazine, connected with Surrealists, Harold Rosenberg, recalling anti-rationalism of Contre-Attaque, wrote: “the production of myths, which disintegrate humanity into warring cults, has become the chief occupation of the world’s most brilliant talents, such as Goebbels, Mussolini and thousands of editors, advertising men, and information specialists.”, *Breton – A Dialogue*, „View”, no. 2 (Summer 1942).

²⁴ G. Bataille, *The Absence of Myth*, in: *idem, The Absence of Myth. Writings on Surrealism*, transl. M. Richardson, Verso, London, p. 48.

was going to serve the same purpose. This term appears for the first time in the Second Manifesto of Surrealism from 1929:

L'approbation du public est à fuir pardessus tout. Il faut absolument empêcher le public d'entrer si l'on veut éviter la confusion. J'ajoute qu'il faut le tenir exaspéré à la porte par un système de défis et de provocations. JE DEMANDE L'OCCULTATION PROFONDE, VÉRITABLE DU SURRÉALISME. Je proclame, en cette matière, le droit à l'absolue sévérité. Pas de concessions au monde et pas de grâce.²⁵

Here, “occultation” (from Latin *occulere* “conceal, cover”) means mainly concealment, darkening, hindering access. However, it also indicates a strong bond between Surrealism and occultism. Esoterism was always inscribed in the history of Surrealism, which, being “a tail prehensile” of Romanticism and Symbolism, shared their interests in this respect. It is worth noting that the books which were deemed to provide the necessary level of initiation during the exhibition in 1947 are not occultist treatises, but mainly Romantic and Symbolic literature. An important source of inspiration, at least for Breton, were also scholarly studies of Romantics’ and Symbolists’ works carried out with esoteric elements in mind²⁶.

Despite an impressive turnout, the exhibition was panned by the critics. In a letter to Breton, Duchamp wrote: “It’s wonderful still to be greeted with such scorn at our age”²⁷. However, it was not the type of an aggressive reaction that Surrealists appreciated so much. There was no scandal. It is frequently pointed out that Surrealism was much too well-known in that period to be still able to surprise the public. Bernard Dorival recommended the exhibition as another cheap, trashy entertainment for “good-natured simpletons” from the back of beyond; he compared the event to a disco in a youth club or a trip to the museum of wax figures²⁸.

Except for the difficulties the Surrealists had to face in the political landscape of post-war Paris, their failure apparently resulted from the “occultation” strategy chosen by Breton. It was also the reason why the exhibition was an obvious challenge to Communism. A short dictionary of philosophy, repeatedly reissued in Moscow in the 1940s and 1950s, describes occultism as “a relic of the Middle Ages”, “one of the most repulsive forms of idealist obscurantism”, “an instrument of muddling the consciousness of the masses

²⁵ A. Breton, *Second manifeste du surrealism*, in: *idem, Manifestes du surrealism*, Gallimard, Paris 1990, pp. 127-129.

²⁶ T.M. Bauduin, *Occultation...*, p. 17.

²⁷ E. Adams, *After the rain...*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

in the interest of the bourgeoisie”²⁹. The Surrealists who were close to the Communist party published a satire titled *Le surréalisme en 947*. A slight change in the title, which put the event 1000 years back, sneered at the supposedly reactionary character of Breton’s proposal. Another pastiche changed the title of Breton’s introduction to the catalogue *Devant le rideau* to *En plein rideau*. The original title emphasized the tension of the culminating moment right before pulling up a curtain – revealing a new myth, a new beginning, while the title after the alteration suggested that the curtain had fallen down on Breton’s head.

Moreover, in that period the hermetic tradition in France tended to be associated with the intellectuals with right-wing views, and thus it was even more unacceptable for the Communists³⁰. However, the Surrealists definitely had a leftist attitude, and their interest in occultism stemmed from their critique and rejection of the religious and cultural values of the West.³¹ Such a combination of a leftist political orientation and a serious interest in esoteric thought was uncommon and resulted in suspicion and aversion on both the left and the right sides of the political spectrum. The failure to communicate with the leftist milieu was evidenced by the failure of the book about the connections between Surrealism and occultism written by the rightist Catholic journalist Michel Carrouges.

Occultism and myth stand in opposition to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and at the same time – to intellect, progress, democracy, briefly speaking – to modernity; as such they are equal to Fascism. This idea, considerably simplifying the problem, returned frequently shortly after the end of World War II, when the need for understanding “what went wrong” with the Western civilisation was still acute. This claim is sometimes made even today. It was supported and authorised by Adorno in his *Theses Against Occultism* written in 1947 and then included in his *Minima Moralia* published in 1950. Another author who also emphasised the ties between Fascism and occultism was Orwell, in his essay on W. B. Yeats published in 1946³². Breton’s belief in myth seems paradoxical to everyone who thinks that World War II is an example of the dangers associated with employing myth for political purposes. Breton tried to counter these opinions with

²⁹ “Occultism” entry, in: *Krótki słownik filozoficzny*, ed. M. Rozentel and P. Judin, translated from the fourth revised and enlarged Russian edition, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1955, p. 407.

³⁰ T.M. Bauduin, *The Occultation...*, p. 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³² M. Pasi, *The Modernity of Occultism: Reflections on Some Crucial Aspects*, in: *Hermes in the Academy. Ten Years’ Study of Western Esotericism at the University of Amsterdam*, ed. W. Hanegraff, J. Pijnenburg, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2009, p. 59. (59-73).

a different way of understanding the connections between war and myth. He included his views on this topic in a book written during the war, *Arcane 17*.³³ Its title refers to the 17th card of the Major Arcana tarot, the Star symbolizing hope and rebirth. The war is a failure of the Western world, rational and masculine. It can be only rescued by what is feminine and at the same time irrational – magic and a myth. However, in the post-war situation, myth and occultism, used for whatever purpose, would also be disqualified due to their association with Fascism.

It is interesting to note that Surrealism, inherently predisposed to undermine the values of the Western world, evoked associations with Fascism from the very beginning. In 1925, Roger Fry visited Paris. He saw the paintings by Miró and Masson for the first time and, inspired by this experience, wrote in his letter to Gerald Brenan about the tendency for “mysticism, obscurantism, symbolism, expressionism” in the new art and thought. “The positive classic spirit is dead for a moment. And with everything is mixed an element of violence and fascism.”³⁴ The war distinctly polarized the viewpoints. The artistic approaches were all the more difficult to accept. “In artistic culture, blasphemy, thinkable in the 1920s (...) now much too easily destabilized the whole order, in which anything not associated with humanism belonged to totalitarianism. This was expressed in the rhetoric of Strzemiński, who in 1936 called Surrealist subconscious a regressive ‘pulse and the sound of blood’, quoting extracts from *Mein Kampf* by Hitler”³⁵. It seems that the Surrealist concept of “a new myth” and “occultation”, presented during the exhibition *Surréalisme en 1947* did not have a chance to succeed. In the black and white post-war world, references to myth and occultism were automatically and exclusively associated with Fascism. It appears to have been one of the important reasons for the marginalisation of Surrealism.

In May 1955 (...) Paris was already a different city – there were no Surrealists in galleries, and those who remained faithful to the Surrealist tradition searched new ways out, avoiding Breton’s orthodox approach.³⁶

³³ A. Breton, *Arcane 17*, Brentano, New York, 1945. French edition corresponded with the exhibition opening (Sagittaire, Paris 1947).

³⁴ F. Spalding, *Roger Fry, Art and Life*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980, p. 250.

³⁵ A. Turowski, *Budowniczość świata. Z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej*, Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 215. It concerns Strzemiński’s article *Aspekty rzeczywistości*, “Forma” 1936, no. 5, in: Władysław Strzemiński, *Pisma*, ed. Z. Baranowicz, Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków, 1975, p. 273.

³⁶ A. Turowski, *Kłopoty z figuracją w czasach abstrakcji*, in: *Mieczysławowi Porębskiemu – uczniowie*, ed. T. Gryglewicz, M. Hussakowska, L. Kalinowski, A. Małkiewicz, Kraków, p. 384.

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SURREALISME EN 1947 – OKULTYZM I POWOJENNA MARGINALIZACJA SURREALIZMU (streszczenie)

Zorganizowana w Paryżu (Galerie Maeght) przez André Bretona i Marcela Duchampa wystawa *Surréalisme en 1947* była próbą skonsolidowania i reorientacji ruchu surrealistycznego w powojennej rzeczywistości. Zgodnie z kierunkiem, który Breton wyznaczył w *Rupture inaugurale*, surrealizm miał związać się silniej niż kiedykolwiek przedtem z okultyzmem. Głównym tematem wystawy był “nowy mit”. Zaplanowana została jako rodzaj ścieżki inicjacyjnej. Znalazły się tam m.in. Sala Przesądów, Totem Wszystkich Religii, Labirynt Inicjacji, etc. Jednym z powodów krytycznego przyjęcia wystawy był fakt, że w tym czasie wszelkiego rodzaju ezoteryczne prądy kojarzyły się z faszyzmem, a mit coraz częściej uznawano za przeszkodę w budowie nowego, racjonalnie zorganizowanego społeczeństwa.

Celem artykułu jest wskazanie, w jaki sposób strategia Bretona, który głosił potrzebę stworzenia “nowego mitu” i związania surrealizmu z okultyzmem wbrew niechętnie nastawionemu do ezoterycznych nurtów środowisku intelektualnemu powojennego Paryża, przyczyniła się do marginalizacji tego kierunku.

Słowa kluczowe: surrealizm – okultyzm – mit – faszyzm – wystawa.