



ARSENAL

SURREALIST SUBVERSION

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Dear Edouard,

Immediately after sending you my last letter I received the little book Bombardier géant du rêve noir by Alain-Pierre Pillet, from Switzerland. Although I have thus far had the chance only to glance through it, even this quick perusal has sufficed to convince me that I was perhaps too hasty, in my letter to you, in expressing some pejorative suppositions regarding these friends. Doubtless I attributed too much significance to a simple exchange of letters of some time ago; having received Le La, I wrote to them to acknowledge it and asked them how they viewed themselves & their activity in relation to the many & varied tendencies "in & around" surrealism today. To this came a reply that was not only brief (four or five lines) but definitely evasive, & without the slightest indication of any interest in our own orientation & activity here. We took them to be more or less a Swiss "branch" of the Bounoure family, and consequently of little interest to us. But this little book suggests that perhaps there is something more to it all. It is impossible, in any case, to remain indifferent to such formulations as: "'Et pourtant elle pue" (Galilée découvrant la rotation de Paul Claudel autour d'un kilo de lard." We shall see!

Did I tell you I had a charming letter from Daniel Guérin, with some kind words for the Breton volume & a few reminiscences regarding André and surrealism? Have you ever been in touch with him at all? It is curious -- his 100 Years of Labor in the USA, only recently published in English, is unquestionably the finest compact history of American labor; nothing written by any American scholar can be compared to it. It is the only work, for example, which recognizes the exceptional importance of the Chicago newspaper strike of 1947-49 -- the first major battle against the Taft-Hartley Slave Labor Act which, still on the books, has had such a disastrously paralyzing effect on the working class movement in this country (the Act was, of course, designed precisely to have such an effect). Guérin's lucid discussion of that crucial strike was of particular interest to me, since it was led, in fact, by my father, and it remains today a permanent reference-point in my "personal mythology," having been one of the major events occurring during my childhood....

Among the many new developments here is one that cannot fail to lead to more & more "interesting possibilities" in the coming months and years: the beginnings of some form of collaboration with American Indian writers & painters, some of whom, in fact, regard themselves



as surrealists! You know we included some things along this line in the exhibition of 1976, but there it was a case of "objective" affinities -- works that we regarded as fitting in perfectly with our activity. Now it is a question of American Indians, some still living on the Reservations, steeped in tribal traditions, but also aware of -- & interested in -- the newest developments in poetry & the plastic arts. We are sure of having the close collaboration of some of these friends in future exhibitions, in FREE SPIRITS, perhaps also in ARSENAL. I shall write more about this in another letter, & hope also to secure some photographs of some of their works. Meanwhile, you can well understand how enticing it is to read -- as J. Karl Bogartte did recently, in a magazine -- that there is a whole group of young Hopi who, it is said, are pursuing a militant activity, including the issuing of manifestoes, etc., comparable to the activity "of the French surrealists of the 1920s"!!!

Do you have any correspondents/collaborators/contacts in the West Indies (Antilles)?

I gather from remarks in passing by the comrades from Alabama that you are not on the best of terms with José Pierre. We have had no contact with him for many years, & I have no idea to what extent, if any, he has kept up with our activity here. Could you explain, in a few words, the nature of your differences with him? I did send him, in January, some of our publications, but have not thus far received any acknowledgement....

Whatever became of that project, by a friend of Michel Rémy's, to translate Paul Garon's Blues & the Poetic Spirit?

When will there be another issue of PHASES?

Please do let me here from you AS SOON AS POSSIBLE about your writing something for ARSENAL No. 4. We are forging ahead with all alacrity & are eager to keep going until it is "on the stands." If the article I have proposed to you is perhaps too ambitious, you are of course free to simplify it in any way that you wish. But please let me know soon!

Hoping all's well in Paris, & looking forward to hearing from you very soon,

With best wishes to you & to Anne Ethuin,

Surrealist greetings,

Franklin Rosenot

