

JOHN LYLE, HARPFORD, SIDMOUTH, DEVON

25 December 1970

Dear Edouard Jaguer,

I am very pleased to have your letter, and to establish relations. In the interests of clarity, I write in English because, although I read French very well, I find it very difficult to express myself in writing it, and I hope you will understand my English better than my very bad French. If not, tell me, and I will write in French in future.

Jacques and I produced the first issue of TRANSFORMAction as an after-thought, for the Exeter Festival of Surrealism in 1967 - the whole production took only five days from the notion to the product. Jacques died here on the opening day of that Festival, which was something he had hoped for for a very long time: the revival of surrealism in England. The second issue came out in 1968. Soon after, I had to close my bookshop in Exeter, and stay at home to look after my two young children, whose mother had left them. Being father, mother, cook, laundrymaid, and breadwinner left no time for me to be also editor, writer, typesetter, printer, publisher and distributor of TRANSFORMAction, so for two years, no further issue appeared. Now that I have another girl to look after my children, no 3 was able to appear. Unfortunately, everything went wrong with its production - my printing press was broken, the paper merchants sent me damp paper which would not print properly - and replaced it with another lot of damp paper; and the platemaker sent plates which began to lose their image as soon as they began to print. I was forced to produce the magazine as well as was possible under these circumstances, or wait until next February before everything could be put right. As no. 4 is half ready, I didn't want to wait, so you have this very badly printed issue.

In addition to this review, which is the centre of surrealist activity here, I felt the need for a more mobile publication which would be able to deal with topical events, quickly. So BLUE FOOD was begun, and the first number included as a supplement to TRANSFORMAction 3. In future, BLUE FOOD will be concerned with specific events, and each issue will have a theme. No. 2 is devoted to the Art Racket; no. 3 will probably be concerned with Women's Liberation - unless some scandal should

occur in the meantime which needs our attention. The feuilleton will not propose answers, but will ask questions, call bluff, and point out ambiguities.

I hope also to begin a series of small publications similar to Les Poquettes Volantes, or the Fontaine 'L'Age d'Or' collection, which will produce short texts of surrealist interest - such as Jarry's "Vieux de la Montagne", & Forneret's "Diamant", and contemporary French writing, in English translation. This series will be called "Flying Eggs" - and I would be glad to have any suggestions from you for suitable texts.

These publications together form the focus of our activities. It is fitting that Jacques should have an issue of TRANSFORMAction devoted to him, since it was with him that I worked out the whole scheme in 1967. You can imagine what an almost incredible sense of loss his death occasioned - there is nobody else like him, with the same range of interest and enthusiasm combined with the same clear perception, humour, and honesty. I first met him at 4p. m. one afternoon, and our conversation did not finish until 6a. m. two days later. Even then, it didn't finish, but was simply interrupted and frequently resumed until his lamentable death here in Sidmouth. I had hoped that TRANSFORMAction would become a means for him to talk to the English public, in effect.

I don't know when the issue in his memory will appear - much depends upon the response I receive from the French friends I have written to. I hope to produce it in April. But beyond that special issue, I want also to continue to publish work by him in each subsequent issue of the magazine - there is a great deal of material at the BBC on many subjects; there is a lot of material in letters such as you have. His ideas, after all, are not dead, and need not be buried with him. In the special issue, I hope to print temoignages concerning his activities in cinema, the arts, writing, surrealism, Lewis Carroll, etc., with a little of his own work; but most of his own work will appear in later issues. In brief, I want all the Brunius material I can get, no matter how much there may be.

Naturally, I am particularly interested in his letters to you regarding the state of surrealism in England, because I'm trying to build up an archive here for our own purposes, and so far, everything written about surrealism in England has been written by arrivistes and academic imbeciles.

I have only issue of PHASES, which is in my Brunius file, and would like to acquire all of them. I'd also like to print in TRANSFORMAction an explanation by you of the history and aims of the Phases group, because I believe there are people here who would like an active interest in your activities. Also, I have an interest in making better known French writing

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painting of the kind which interests us: all the emphasis in England has been transatlantic - the English language has been a red herring for too long. In fact, there is far more to be gained by co-operation between England and France than between England and the USA, but the language has concealed this fact. It is almost impossible to believe, but there is in England no published work at all by Eluard, Desnos, early Aragon, Crevel, etc., not to mention others like Bataille, Chazal, Mansour, and all the present writers. Until a year ago, there was nothing of Breton's except a bad American version of Nadja. And yet, there is an immediate and strong response, especially among the young, to surrealist ideas. If Peret were known here, he would be a best-seller, for instance.

All the publishing that I mention suffers from lack of money - if I was not able to do the typesetting and printing myself, nothing would appear. . . and as it is, I don't know how long I can continue before going bankrupt. This means that we have to avoid half-tone plates as far as possible, and colour-printing is impossible. But we have a constant need for small drawings, and illustrations that can be reproduced by line plates and electrostatic plates. I would be glad to have copies of any such work of Brunius' that you may have. All his drawings and collages were destroyed when he died, except for those which were in frames.

I hope that, in addition to giving proper homage to J. B., we may find other areas of co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

*John Lyle*

P. S. Please tell me if you would prefer me to write in French.