

KING, ELLIOTT H., AND ABIGAIL SUSIK, editors. *Radical Dreams: Surrealism, Counterculture, Resistance*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022. ISBN 978-0-271-09135-8. Xi, 238 pages.

Radical Dreams challenges the notion of surrealism as a strictly *entre-deux-guerres* movement by tracing its undercurrents from the 1960s through the 1980s. Organized thematically, the book highlights four forms of surrealist-affiliated “counterculture” primarily in the U.S., France, and England. Here, “counterculture” builds on Theodore Roszak’s 1968 description of the “radical disaffiliation” between youth and “the old technocracy” (7). King and Susik expand “counterculture” to “[connect] the oppositional resistance of avant-garde factions linked to the “Old Left” causes with the disparate activities and aims of the New Left” (9). In Part 1, “Surrealist Solidarity,” such resistance manifests in surrealists’ support for Black Power, the American Indian Movement, and environmental activism in the U.S. Part 2, “Against the Liquidators,” focuses on the surrealists’ political activity, such as their denunciation of the Algerian War (1954-1962). Reclaiming “the right to insubordination,” as Part 3 is titled, surrealists and non-surrealists continued to agitate for social, racial, and sexual justice. A similar preference for pleasure over commercialism appeared in punk music and the magazine *Oz*, as the last part, “Passional Attractions” illustrates. This thematic approach thus brings surrealism into conversation with gender and sexuality studies, race studies, and music history.

After an introductory essay by King and Susik, Michael Löwy situates the cultural movement in relation to a pivotal moment in counterculture: May 1968. The transgressive spirit of those uprisings, Löwy asserts, mirrored the surrealist pillars of subjectivity, desire, and utopia (20). In the first chapter, Sandra Zalman builds on Löwy’s description of May ’68, but shifts the focus to the U.S., starting with the opening of the exhibition *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Protestors refused the historicization of the art movements and used the occasion to disavow the Vietnam War, which unintentionally echoed the surrealists’ own anti-war and anti-colonial positions. Zalman traces the protests as they followed the exhibition to Chicago, where, in Chapter Three, Penelope Rosemont shares her experience as a surrealist.

Rosemont’s non-linear, diaristic episodes contrast with the academic tone of the surrounding chapters. They likewise provide an important reminder that the surrealists were (and are) real people with real experiences, not just objects of study. In addition to recounting her particular experiences, Rosemont affirms the transcendent secret of surrealism: it is “ever changing, ever enchanting, ever creating – always in the spirit of poetry, love and freedom” (72).

The surrealist objective of eliminating exploitation necessarily morphed into environmental and labor activism in the 1970s, as Ron Sakolsky explains in Chapter Nine. Drawing on surrealists’ long appreciation for “primal peoples to tap into the poetry inherent in nature” and their consistent engagement against

commercial exploitation (160), Sakolsky provides a basis for an ecological reading of surrealism.

Mixed in with these issue-specific analyses are chapters dedicated to individual artists. Gavin Parkinson outlines the politicization of Robert Rauschenberg's work during the Algerian War in Chapter Five. Chapter Six by Alyce Mahon likewise evaluates art as an expression of political discontent in Roberto Matta's painting *Burn, Baby, Burn* (1965-66). Acknowledging the Black surrealist and jazz artist, Grégory Pierrot details the multi-faceted Ted Joans in Chapter Two. Joans frequently travelled from the U.S. to Africa and to Europe, and his friendship with avant-gardists enabled him to educate predominately white, bourgeoisie groups about Black liberation. Surrealists not only listened but acted on Joans' words, often translating his works, and Jonathan Eburne focuses on action in Chapter Eight.

Discussing Afrosurrealism more broadly, Eburne also provides a framework for thinking beyond "what an avant-garde *is*" and considering "what an avant-garde *does*" (142, original italics). By considering actions, it is easier to understand Afrosurrealism, which, according to Eburne constitutes a set of practices rather than any formal association.

In addition to these crucial reflections on race and anti-racist activism, *Radical Dreams* elucidates perceptions of sexuality in postwar counterculture. From its first manifesto, surrealism aimed to unleash desires, and such unbridled libido often fed misogyny. In Chapter Four, Claire Howard reframes surrealists' perception of women by delving into their admiration for Charles Fourier. Although Fourier argued that sexual liberation would facilitate social liberation, surrealists continued to essentialize women, as Simone de Beauvoir asserted in *The Second Sex* and on which Howard elaborates.

Notions of gender fluidity, as opposed to essentialism, appear in Marie Arleth Skov's chapter on the COUM Transmissions. Skov draws a fascinating correlation between punk and surrealism, emphasizing both movements as poetic, political, and spectacular. Although not the intent of this chapter, the focus on Genesis P.-Orrige provokes several questions about the place of trans people in surrealism and punk.

In the vein of sexual revolution, David Hopkins' chapter on *Oz* analyzes the magazine as a "popular take-up of a once avant-garde tendency" (191). Although the magazine catered primarily to heterosexual men, it did publish the feminist thoughts of Germaine Greer. Hopkins also references Fourier, which recalls Howard's chapter, and Martin Sharp's surrealist cartoons and collages, which corresponds to Ryan Standfest's chapter. In his discussion of *humour noir* (black humor), Standfest acknowledges that representations of sexual violence often symbolized attacks on the body politic, particularly in American cartoons of the 1960s and 1970s. Standfest demonstrates the continuation of surrealist ideas well after the Second World War.

Such vitality invalidated the assertion that surrealism had died, a claim that Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen addresses in Chapter Seven. Rasmussen paints an explosive encounter between Situationists and surrealists in Paris in 1958. This chapter resonates with the protests against *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* that Zalman describes. Although surrealism had lost some of the collective action that had defined its early days, the movement persisted through individuals and ideals.

Overall, the chapters in *Radical Dreams* complement each other to outline the ways surrealism manifested in the postwar decades. King and Susik happily conclude that the volume is “incomplete” (18), and *Radical Dreams* certainly lays the groundwork for ongoing research.

Emily Wieder
The University of Iowa