

Shadows of Femininity: Women, Surrealism and the Gothic

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Abstract

This paper addresses the literary influence of the Gothic on the Surrealists. It is particularly concerned with how the Gothic mode is employed and manipulated with regards to gender and sexuality by the women associated with the movement. Steered through a discussion of the work of Valentine Penrose my readings draw on both Queer theory and Feminist theory. Through contemplating Penrose's poetic collection *Dons des Feminines* (1951) in relation to Hélène Cixous' *Sorties* (1975) - specifically her concept of the 'gift' and the 'feminine', I aim to position Penrose's practice in relation to feminist discourse, establishing a continuum from the female Surrealists through to post-modern feminist writing. Furthermore, by interrogating the role of the Gothic in the work of the female Surrealists I aim to expand the parameters of Surrealism - further locating Surrealist legacies in contemporary art practices.

*- Roland, be sure there is something else than all these horrors! I cannot tell
you what inner joy the human heart in the midst of the most terrific sorrows
can still contain
Valentine Penrose ¹*

In his 1938 survey of Gothic fiction *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel*, critic Montague Summers lambasted attempts by authors aligned with Surrealism to appropriate the Gothic form. His main criticisms were levelled at André Breton and those who were officially bound up with the movement, yet Summers punctuates his tirade by deriding several poetic works by writers more loosely affiliated with the surrealist project, amongst which he cites the work of French poet Valentine Penrose. With reference to a poem taken from Penrose's 1935 collection *Herbe à la lune*,² Summers describes her work as 'gross meaningless jargon, without sense, suggestion, music, symbolism or beauty'.³ Summers argued that Penrose's interpretation of the Gothic offered nothing new or interesting—a criticism which reiterated aspersions at the movement's inception that it was the tail-end of Romanticism.⁴ As Hugh Sykes Davies put it in 1936, 'critics of Surrealism are in the habit of suggesting that

our movement is nothing more than the fag-end of romanticism, romanticism at its last gasp.⁵ Indeed, this particular viewpoint was later propagated by critic Clement Greenberg who characterised Surrealism as retrospective—arguing that ‘its very horrors are nostalgic and day dreamy, having associations with a more pleasant seeming past.’⁶ Throughout the course of this paper I aim to contest such impressions of Surrealism’s engagement with Romanticism and earlier narrative modes, arguing that Surrealism’s evocation of the Gothic was not merely a recycling of conventions but an active development and continuation of the genre.

Although Surrealism’s literary lineage and its relationship to the Gothic has always been apparent, the extent of this connection remains a largely neglected area of scholarship, with existing studies of the two modes restricted to excursus on the male Surrealists. The female Surrealists, however, much like their male counterparts, were similarly influenced by the Gothic mode. For the Surrealist woman the Gothic often presented a method of mediation or separation from the real. Dawn Ades, has attempted to articulate the appeal of the genre for women—with reference to Dorothea Tanning, Ades notes how Tanning employed the Gothic as one of the ‘imaginary dimensions’ she adopted to enforce distance from her own mirror image.⁷ Whitney Chadwick has similarly described how Tanning ‘escaped to a private world of fantasy nourished by her reading of Carroll, Andersen, Wilde, Radcliffe, and other nineteenth-century authors.’⁸ Such observations establish the Gothic as a site of fantasy and imagination for the female Surrealist. I wish to extend this notion of the Gothic as a fantasy space and propose that the Gothic, for the Surrealist woman, regularly operates as a locus of sexual exploration, an imaginary sphere in which to test out and explore unconscious desires and personal anxieties pertaining to both gender and sexuality. Indeed much of the Gothic’s appeal was that it presented both authors and readers with a realm of escapism within which they could inscribe their intimate, often repressed desires; where anything considered different, such as homosexuality, could be personified in monstrous others and ghostly apparitions.

This particular aspect of the Gothic is brilliantly exploited in Valentine Penrose's practice. In her collage and poetry piece, *Dons des Feminines* of 1951, it is clearly discernible from Penrose's text that a relationship exists between two women; Maria Elona and Rubia, yet that relationship is never affirmed. Drawing on Gothic conventions—such as concealment and revelation, throughout Penrose's poetry her gothic heroines never become 'consistently present'.⁹ In her study *The Apparitional Lesbian*, Terry Castle has addressed the phantasmagorical association between ghosts and lesbians, claiming that Gothic writers such as Henry James wrote in an 'effort to derealise the threat of lesbianism by associating it with the apparitional'.¹⁰ Penrose's often phantasmagoric treatment of lesbianism is evident in her collage compositions in which her heroines elide temporal and geographical determinacy. Moreover, Penrose's poetics reveal a similar disregard for narrative continuity, space and time; through verbal assemblages and metaphorical combinations, she conjures lexical shadows and silhouettes, in which meaning lurks and flickers. Borrowing from a characteristically Gothic repertoire of textual tropes and motifs, *Dons des Feminines* is laden with such examples:

Let us go to the frontiers where the sun is icy
Where we can no longer enter the passage.
Future events will be disconcerting or certain
They speak they wander
Nothing was ever so haunted. Farewell my beloved
Your clamouring woman belongs to the landscape
Farewell Rubia.

Through oxymoronic metaphorical constructs, such as sun and ice, Penrose constructs concepts, which, just as soon as they are established, melt away. This poetic 'phantasmagoria' is further compounded in her disregard for formal poetic stylistics.¹¹ In much the same way as the intricate narratives of Gothic fiction build suspense in order to haunt the reader, such hauntings can similarly be elicited through the poetic form. Daneen Wardrop has proposed that where the haunts of fiction occur largely at the level of narrative structure,

'the haunts of poetry occur on a traditional level of language slippage: appearance and disappearance of syntax, and exacerbated lexicon and punctuation.'¹² Penrose's disregard for syntactical arrangement certainly conforms to this model, yet her radical poetic experimentation concomitantly marks her as an artist who engaged with the techniques and motivations of the Surrealist movement. Reminiscent of the Surrealist flow of automatic writing, her verbal and stylistic elasticity bewitches the reader, exhibiting a lexical fluidity which also resonates with a queer rhetoric.

Dons des Feminines is situated at the nexus of the Surreal, the Gothic, and the lesbian or queer—it is a poetic work which openly declares, 'I am what I am.'¹³ Indeed, themes of lesbianism and female companionship underscore much of Penrose's work, and her relationships with other women who operated in the orbit of Surrealism have often been subject to speculation. With reference to the close friendship between Valentine and Max Ernst's wife, Marie-Berthe Aurenche, Antony Penrose (Roland Penrose's son), observed:

It seems that to Valentine the love of a woman was more deeply satisfying for her at every level. It was hardly surprising that this should be so. She was so intensely connected to the plane of female mysticism she had little use or understanding of deep intimacy with a man.¹⁴

Most significantly it is her relationship with Alice Rahon (Paalen), wife of Wolfgang Paalen, which has been subject to the most scrutiny. Vincent Gille describes how, in 1936, Valentine left Roland and went to India:

There she was joined by Alice Paalen (who had just had a brief liaison with Picasso) and for several months the two women had an affair. This is evidenced in their respective poetry collections, *Sorts de la Lune* by Valentine Penrose (1937) and *Sablir Couché* by Alice Paalen (1938). Love affairs between women were not all that rare within the various surrealist groups.¹⁵

Gille's observation is prompted by Georgiana Colvile's readings in which she explores the relationship between the two women. Colvile convincingly communicates a textual relationship between the two women by deconstructing and juxtaposing the two writers' lyrics to create a dialogue between the poetry. In what she terms 'mutually mirroring verses', Colvile manufactures a dialogical interplay between Penrose and Rahon.¹⁶

As Gille outlines, relationships between women within Surrealism were not altogether unheard of, and despite Surrealism's condemnation and intolerance of male homosexual relationships, this homophobia did not extend to the lesbian encounter. In fact, relationships between women were often fetishised—and in some cases manufactured by the male Surrealist. Man Ray's 1937 photographs of Nusch and Ady Fidelin, for example, are sexually charged compositions which rest on the slippage between friendship and lesbianism.

Images of female friendship with sexual overtones, however, were not entirely restricted to the male Surrealists. In Leonor Fini's illustrations for Sheridan Le Fanu's Gothic novel *Carmilla* (1872), Fini places the two protagonists in a similarly provocative pose. Her compositions tease out the underlying lesbianism in the text, in which a female vampire preys on her female victim. In Picasso's frontispiece for Penrose's *Dons des Feminines*, he similarly forgoes any ambiguity and uncertainty, opting to render the relationship between the two female protagonists as sexual. Placed on what is clearly delineated as a bed, with pillow, valance and crumpled sheets, which all operate to frame the bodies in the composition, entangled limbs and naked torsos create a highly eroticised image in which two women are intertwined. In Picasso's image nothing exists beyond their bodily union. In reducing the connection between the two central characters to a purely physical bond, he effectively eliminates any of the textual complexity and equivocality that Penrose establishes.

For Penrose the lesbianism does not constitute the primary drive of the narrative, or feature as the central theme of the image. Her visual representations are not sexually explicit; rather she chooses to adorn her women in restrictive Victorian costume, with any further suggestion of physical intimacy sheathed under a blanket or behind a curtain. Parodying Max Ernst's misogynistic collage compositions and rejecting his male/female sadomasochistic strategies, her images insist, by contrast, on a focus on exclusively female relationships based on equality and exchange. Indeed, Karen Humphreys argues that Penrose's visuals are contrived as a direct response to Ernst's project and that her collage work suggests 'a corrective gesture in relation to Ernst's bound and beaten women.'¹⁷

Both Ernst and Penrose combine facets of Surrealist practice—collage and found imagery, with nineteenth-century Victoriana, giving their visual compositions a distinctly Gothic complexion. Penrose's monochrome imagery, as Roy Edwards has suggested, can be seen as 'an homage to [...] Gustav Doré's woodcuts', exhibiting a tacit tribute to early Nineteenth Century Romanticism and the English Gothic novel through the emulation of their aesthetic principles.¹⁸ Ernst similarly took the Gothic as a motivating influence for his images, as Marina Warner has described with reference to his collage-novel *Une Semaine de Bonté*: Ernst, 'adopts with glee penny-dreadful commonplaces of women mauled, ravaged, and possessed by various winged and monstrous hybrids'.¹⁹ The penny-dreadfuls to which Warner alludes were often reprints or rewrites of Gothic thrillers, whose salacious content was rabidly consumed in weekly instalments, with nothing of the subtleties and intricate narrative development of the Gothic novel.

Their employment of the collage medium itself reveals a deeper correspondence with the Gothic mode. The basic formula of the Surrealist collage, which Penrose and Ernst follow, can actually be ascribed to the Romantics—specifically to Isadore Ducasse. The Surrealists adapted Le Comte de Lautréamont's phrase, 'as beautiful as the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella' as the premise for the formulation of their written and visual practice; celebrating the juxtaposition of

unlikely and unnatural forms and objects.²⁰ The lexical collages Lautréamont offered provided the Surrealists with a methodology, which they applied to both the literary and visual arts. Penrose explicitly engages with this process, but where Lautréamont and Ernst's reconfigurations are fabricated around phallic dominance, the sexual incarceration of the female, and the active/passive binary of the male/female configuration in Penrose's images alternatively establish an egalitarian female economy of exchange.

The juxtaposition of Penrose's collage and poetry in *Dons des Feminines* arguably bridges the often theoretical incompatibility of Queer theory and Feminist theory. Where queer writers often 'explore the deconstruction and fluidity of transient identities and feminists explore the materiality of the body and the things done to women's bodies such as rape and violence', Penrose's experimentation arguably resolves this separation.²¹ Her collage attempts to remediate the physical abuse to women propagated by Ernst, whilst her poetic fluidity constitutes a style of writing which prefigures an idiosyncratically French brand of post-structuralist writing—those which centre around flights and passages, creating a sense of movement which places emphasis upon the role of the subject as a process, rather than being fixed by various social structures:

I dream. Youth is beyond the rain she arrives.
But walking the long-drawn embankments
Made to fly a hundred times in love on skimming water you shall
 speak to me.
Put back the dream you wake me only you.

Under the eaves swallows glitter
Not yet the moment before dawn it is just leaving their town.

Connections between the female surrealists and French feminists have previously been established by Katharine Conley in *Automatic Woman: the representation of woman in surrealism*. Conley argues that Cixous' theory of *écriture féminine*, which set out to create a new language of the body, was

much like the Surrealists' espousal of automatic writing as something which was thought capable of releasing the unconscious and unlocking desire.²² Penrose's work also exhibits intimate connections to the work of Cixous. *Dons des Feminines* roughly translates as Gifts of the Feminine. The 'Gifts' and the 'Feminine' in Penrose's title are prefigurative of the concepts of the 'Gift' and the 'Feminine', which are central to Cixous' work. As Abigail Bray articulates, these terms are connected to what Cixous understands as the 'feminine libidinal economy.'²³ An economy which is centered around 'liberating a repressed female desire—about circulating that desire within language—and about recognising and encouraging an economy which moves beyond the strictures of phallogentric law.'²⁴ In such an exclusively female economy neither participant is constituted as the giver or receiver and the active/passive binary usually associated with heterosexual coupling is no longer appropriate.

Penrose's text, in addition to the striking similarity of the work's title to Cixous' concepts, arguably exhibits this libidinal exchange. In addition, flowers and fauna figure greatly throughout Penrose's practice—evocative of both the Victorian pastime of floriography and of French poetic floral symbolism. Bray has delineated how flowers are significant in the construction of Cixous' theory, contending that '[f]lowers are also metaphors for the materiality of the gift, for a feminine libidinal economy in which the gift circulates without debt.'²⁵ The literal giving of gifts in *Dons des Feminines* is made manifest through references to 'nosegays' and the weaving of a sensuous floral tapestry between the principle characters of the piece, Rubia and Maria Elona: '[m]y nosegay is passed on I reclaim it'. This exchange of gifts is similarly played out in the romantic trysts of the female protagonists in an earlier piece entitled *Martha's Opera* (1945) in which Penrose takes the ritual exchange of gifts, and of flowers particularly, usually passed between a man and woman and displaces it, thereby exposing the falsity of chivalric heterosexual courtship rituals which have been inscribed throughout male culture: 'Here, Emily, is a gipsy's rose. Grown under my balcony, I have held it in my mantilla veil, close by the heart of your Rubia.'

Written in 1945, *Martha's Opera* precedes the poetic work *Dons des Feminines* and is integral to interpretation of the latter work, as there is an apparent narrative continuity between the two. Reading *Martha's Opera* confirms any ambiguities between the characters Maria Elona and Rubia in *Dons des Feminines*, as the earlier characters Rubia and Emily that feature in *Martha's Opera* are unmistakably embroiled in a love affair:

I glanced at that pure bed of youth where for so many months I
have lain down to dream of you. And I prepared to rejoin you, for
our brief caresses. Au revoir as soon as I can, I love you.

Your Emily

Constructed in the epistolary mode—that of letter writing, which has often been associated with femininity because of its intimate, confessional and secretive nature, the narrative of *Martha's Opera* is communicated through an exchange of letters between two women, Emily and Rubia, and it is through this correspondence that their lesbianism becomes apparent. Georgiana Colvile has described the piece as a 'petit roman épistolaire néo-gothique',²⁶ whilst Renée Hubert noted how Penrose 'presents a fragmented horror story concluding with the death of almost all of the participants',²⁷ further reinforcing the proposition presented here that Penrose employs the narrative frameworks of both Romanticism and the Gothic, their techniques and conventions, in order to contemplate issues of femininity and homosexuality.

From *The Bloody Countess* to *The Bloody Chamber*

The Gothic, Surreal and the Lesbian recur as themes in Penrose's major literary work *La Comtesse sanglante* of 1962, later published in English as *The Bloody Countess* in 1970. The novel is a semi-historical account of the life of Erzsébet Bathory, a character described by Georgiana Colvile as a 'héroïne gothique'.²⁸ The novel has an idiosyncratic style; a combination of fact, fiction, fairytale, alchemy, astrology, Surrealism and the Gothic—prompting Karen Humphreys to suggest that the work produces the 'effect of a collage narrative' through weaving 'together poetic imagery, archival

documentation, and creative mythology.²⁹ This rich intertextuality, however, led to later complications when Penrose attempted to have the English translation published. In a letter to Roland Penrose, dealing on Valentine's behalf, from George Weidenfeld and Nicholson Limited, the company representative explains that the publishing house was unable to print the novel as several members of staff thought the work 'was in many ways altogether too unpleasant'.³⁰ In a letter to John Calder from Roland Penrose, Roland conveys that several publishers have 'taken a general line that the book is not easily published here because of the subject matter and the author's "amoral approach"'.³¹ Despite initial difficulties pertaining to the content of the novel, the work was finally approved by Calder and Boyars, with Calder asserting on acceptance that, 'I certainly see no moral objections to publishing the work.'³² Despite the lack of moral disapprobation, concerns regarding the content of the text were not altogether resolved as the publishers set out to radically modify Penrose's original manuscript. A selection of such editorial impingements can be identified in a letter to Valentine from Marion Boyars who suggests reorganising the text:

[I]n such a way that it reads more like a historical document than it does at the moment. As you know as the book stands at the moment there is no particular sequence of events, and when reading it we found ourselves slightly confused. We therefore thought it might be an idea to rearrange certain paragraphs so that the book reads more smoothly in terms of historical events. This makes the book perhaps a little more of a historical narrative, and it would be easier for the reader to follow the story all the way through.³³

Favouring a traditional narrative progression, Boyars also expresses the need to 'curtail some of the mystic suppositions and allusions which have a tendency to yank the reader away from a superbly interesting and well told story into a completely different realm of thought.'³⁴ Yet what arguably gives *The Bloody Countess* its overall affect are the very narrative dislocations and melding of genres that the publishers attempted to eradicate.

Penrose's depiction of Bathory, beyond that of documenting her violent crimes and her tortuous act of sadism, is an account of how her criminality and actions are both linked to and perhaps motivated by her lesbianism:

The ill-starred Countess had another secret which revealed her nature at its most profound, one she owed to her heredity and to her stars, a secret always spoken of in whispers but never definitely confirmed; something she may have admitted to herself or ignored; an equivocal tendency which didn't trouble her, or again, a right she accorded herself alone with all other rights. She was thought to have been amongst other things, a lesbian.³⁵

From the outset Penrose sets out to depict Bathory's unfettered and indulgent sexual exploits—going so far as to establish Bathory as 'the female Gilles de Rais'.³⁶ Georges Bataille states in his study *Tear of Eros* that Bathory was indeed seen as the feminine equivalent of the famed murderous psychopath, and postulates that if the Marquis de Sade 'had known of the existence of Erzsébet Bathory, there is not the slightest doubt that Sade would have felt the fiercest exaltation. . . . Erzsébet Bathory would have made him howl like a wild beast.'³⁷ Penrose cements this comparison throughout the course of the novel; aware of connections between de Rais and Bluebeard, Penrose similarly aligns Bathory with a fairytale figure, drawing on the alabaster skin of Snow White as representative of the virginal pallor of the girls which Bathory preys on and vampirically drains of blood in order to preserve her own beauty and youth. Assimilating Bathory with the Evil Queen from Snow White, Penrose writes:

Erzsébet would gaze in her mirror at the intractable set of her forehead, at her sinuous lips, her aquiline nose and her immense black eyes. She was in love with love, she wanted to hear that she was beautiful, the most beautiful of all.³⁸

The role of the magic mirror in the fairytale text is further adapted by Penrose:

she lived in front of her great gloomy mirror, the famous mirror for which she herself had drawn the model, and which was made in the form of a *pretzl* (a figure of eight), to allow her to slip her arms through it and remain leaning there without getting tired throughout the long hours, by day and by night, she spent in contemplating her own image. This was the only door she ever opened, the door into herself.³⁹

Throughout the novel Penrose 'transforms myth, reconstructs it, recreates it'—delighting in the construction of a character who is sexually predatory, resists female subordination, rejects the institution of marriage, and denies her maternal urges.⁴⁰ Significantly, Penrose's fairytale allusions to Snow White and Bluebeard anticipates the emergence of female writers, such as Angela Carter, who sought to modify phallogocentric narratives which often repressed women, such as fairytales and the Gothic.

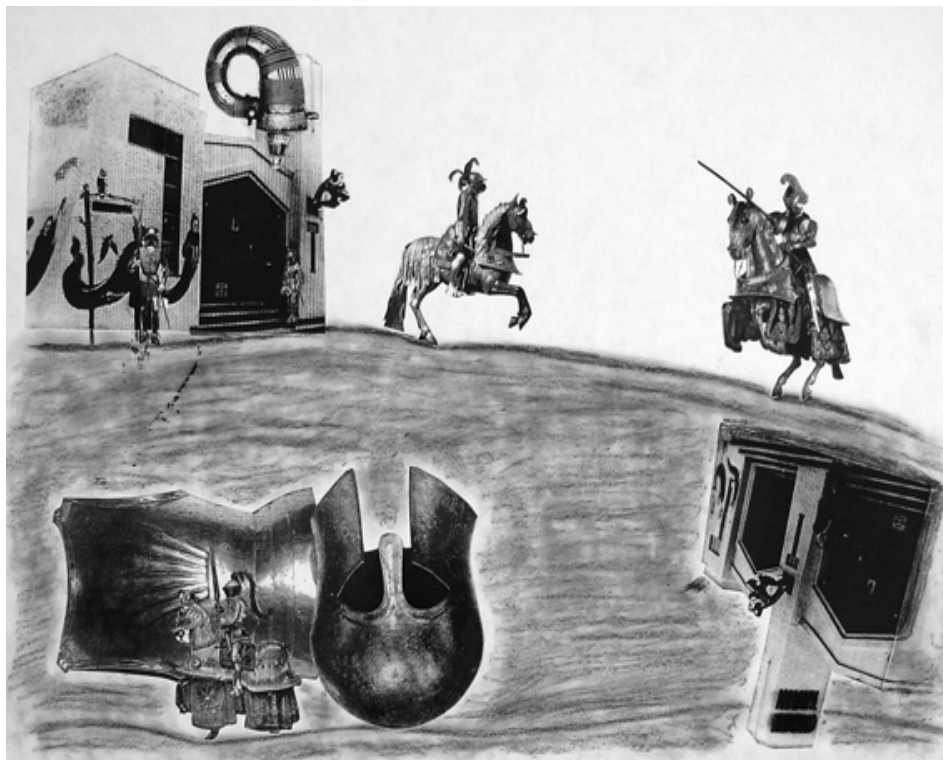
Contemporary Hauntings

Tracing developments in feminist avant-garde practice from Surrealism through to postmodernism, Susan Suleiman has charted the literary trajectory from Surrealism to contemporary Gothicism—a lineage which inevitably incorporates the writings of Angela Carter.⁴¹ Carter's works are postmodern feminist re-writings, works of fiction which often entail a re-writing of myth, fairytale and other traditionally male dominated forms. Carter's *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) is a collection of short stories which rework many traditional fairytale narratives; the title story 'The Bloody Chamber', for example, makes allusions to Charles Perrault's *Bluebeard* (1697). Throughout *The Bloody Chamber* Carter stages a critique of the institution of marriage, redressing the power relationships between men and women, specifically with reference to sexual relationships. Many of the themes Carter incorporates, such as sadomasochism and victimhood, the grotesque, the body and gender are similarly identifiable in 'The Bloody Countess'.

Arguably Penrose's engagement with the Gothic provided an early realisation of a feminist discourse which was to emerge in the 1970s, a 'postmodern gothic', such as that of Carter's, in which the Gothic mode was reanimated and combined with feminist concerns. Throughout the course of this paper I have aimed to illustrate how Penrose pioneeringly pre-empted several modes of feminist practice; her poetic collection *Dons des Feminines* exhibiting the female libidinal economy and celebration of femininity which Cixous was to espouse two decades later, through to the feminist amalgamation of the Gothic and Surreal in the work of Angela Carter. The alignment of Cixous and Penrose offers a new way to read her work in the context of both French avant-garde literature and feminism. Moreover, adopting French feminist discourse as a reading strategy is key to installing Penrose in a legacy of feminist engagement and intervention within patriarchal modes of discourse. In her study *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Natalya Lusty has similarly identified a continuum between the works of Surrealism and feminism arguing that the problems of contemporary feminism are not dissimilar to the work of Carrington or Cahun. Crucially, Lusty claims to be attempting to 'map the continuity between both the past and the present, not simply in terms of how the present revisits the past, for example in terms of Sherman's engagement with Surrealism, but how the past pre-empted the present.'⁴²

In line with Lusty's model, it may be argued that through incorporating the Gothic into their practice, Surrealist women, such as Penrose established a stylistic lexicon which was subsequently adopted by women artists, throughout Surrealism and beyond. For example, working in the 1970s, Francesca Woodman melded the Surreal and the Gothic in her ethereal black and white images. In *From Space* (1975-1976) Woodman stages Charlotte Perkins Gilman's hysterical visions in *The Yellow Wallpaper*⁴³: 'I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy. The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.'⁴⁴ Woodman enacts this delusion, presenting herself naked as an unidentifiable female figure pressed up against a wall with wallpaper obscuring her face and lower abdomen, merging with the patterned fragments on the walls and fusing her figure with the fabric of the building.

Recent work, such as that produced by Sarah Metcalf, an active member of the Leeds Surrealist Group, is similarly evocative of this Surrealist adaptation of the Gothic. Her collage *Ghost Train* was constructed as a 'contribution to a collective game around the image of a ghost train.'⁴⁵ The medieval complexion of *Ghost Train*, reminiscent of Penrose's compositions, also exhibits associations with Gothic literature. The large helmet in the foreground of the composition is suggestive of the 'enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for a human being' which takes the central premise of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Tale* (1764), a novel which incidentally held profound significance for the Surrealists.⁴⁶



Sarah Metcalf, Contribution to collective game, 'Ghost Train'.

Similarly, photographer Anna Gaskell 'often takes a literary starting point to explore the imaginary potential of the surreal.'⁴⁷ Taking influence from the spectral writings of Edgar Allen Poe and Henry James, her collection *Half Life* (2003) is loosely based on Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1948). An earlier series, *Resemblance* (2001) takes ETA Hoffman's novel *The Sandman* and

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as prompts. Combining literary influences with a surrealist impulse, Gaskell monopolises on the psychological resonances that both the Surreal and Gothic contain and amalgamates the two to create profoundly disturbing and haunting compositions. Gaskell's practice serves to illustrate how the confluence of the two modes provides the ideal artistic mechanism for the exploration of the unconscious and sexual desires.

In exploring the dark side of Surrealism and its correspondences to, and development of the Gothic, these contemporary women artists are following a tradition initiated by artists such as Valentine Penrose. Moreover, the continuing success of such thematic and stylistic experimentation with both the Gothic and Surreal serves to illustrate how the coalescence of the two modes creates a space in which to negotiate the intricacies of the female erotic imaginary, female companionship and sexual difference; a space which is exclusively feminine, a space in which to cast a 'shadow of femininity'.⁴⁸

¹ Valentine Penrose, Letter addressed to Roland Penrose on 27th September 1939, Box 714, Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

² Valentine Penrose, *Herbe à la Lune* (Paris: Editions GLM, 1935): 57.

³ Montague Summers, 'Surrealism and the Gothic Novel' in *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (London: Fortune Press, 1938): 390.

⁴ André Breton's retort was to declare Surrealism as the 'prehensile tail of Romanticism' in his lecture 'What is Surrealism?' in *André Breton: What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, edited and introduced by Franklin Rosemont, (London: Pluto Press, 1978): 132.

⁵ Hugh Sykes Davies, 'Surrealism at this Time and Place', in Herbert Read, (ed.) *Surrealism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936): 167-168.

⁶ Clement Greenberg, 'Surrealism', *The Nation* (12 and 19 August 1944). Reprinted in *Perceptions and Judgments 1939-1944*, vol. 1 of *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. by John O'Brien (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986): 229.

⁷ Dawn Ades, 'Orbits of the Savage Moon: Surrealism and the representation of the female subject in post-war Paris', in Whitney Chadwick (ed.) *Mirror Images: women, surrealism and self-representation*, Catalogue of an exhibition held at List Visual Arts Center (Cambridge, Mass.), 9 April - 28 June 1998; Miami Art Museum, Miami, 18 September - 29 November 1998; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 8 January - 20 April 1999: 109.

⁸ See Whitney Chadwick, 'The Muse as Artists' in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985): 93. See also Whitney Chadwick, 'Cycles of Narrative Fantasy', in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*: 221.

⁹ Renée Hubert, 'Lesbianism and Matriarchy: Valentine and Roland Penrose' in *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism and Partnership* (University of Nebraska Press; Lincoln & London, 1994): 95-96.

¹⁰ Terry Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, c1993)

¹¹ Paul Eluard, 'Preface to Dons des Feminiens', reprinted and translated in Roy Edwards, (ed.), *Poems and Narrations*, (Carcanet Press and Elephant Trust, 1977): 69.

- ¹² Daneen Wardrop, *Emily Dickinson's Gothic: goblin with a gauge* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996): XV.
- ¹³ Paul Eluard: 69.
- ¹⁴ Antony Penrose, *Roland Penrose: the friendly surrealist/ a memoir by Antony Penrose* (Munich; London: Prestel; Edinburgh: National Galleries of Scotland, 2001): 63.
- ¹⁵ Vincent Gille, 'Lives and Loves' in *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*, ed. by Jennifer Mundy, (Princeton, N.J.] : Princeton University Press ; London : Tate Publishing Ltd , 2001): 136-171 (p.162)
- ¹⁶ Georgiana Colvile, 'Through an Hour-glass Lightly: Valentine Penrose and Alice Rahon-Paalen' Accessed at mlpa.nottingham.ac.uk/archive/00000035/01/Rec_Colvile.pdf 02/12/08 [Also in R. King and B. McGuirk, *Reconceptions: Reading Modern French Poetry* (University of Nottingham, 1986): 81 – 112.]
- ¹⁷ See Karen Humphreys, 'Collages Communicants: Visual Representation in the Collage-Albums of Max Ernst and Valentine Penrose' in *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, Vol.10, No.4, December 2006, pp.377 – 387: 378.
- ¹⁸ Roy Edwards, (ed.), *Valentine Penrose, Poems and Narrations*, (Carcanet Press and Elephant Trust, 1977): 3.
- ¹⁹ Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairytales and their tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995): 383.
- ²⁰ Comte de Lautréamont, 'Maldoror' in *Maldoror & the Complete Works of the Comte de Lautréamont* trans. by Alexis Lykiard (Cambridge: Exact Change, 1994)
- ²¹ Diane Richardson, Janice McLaughlin and Mark E. Casey (eds.), *Intersections between feminist and Queer theory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006): 3.
- ²² Susan Suleiman, *Risking who one is: Encounters with Contemporary Art and Literature* (Cambridge MA and London, Harvard University Press, 1994)
- ²³ Abigail Bray, *Hélène Cixous: Writing and Sexual Difference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 53.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*: 52.
- ²⁵ *Ibid*: 147.
- ²⁶ Georgiana Colvile, *Écrits D'une Femme Surréaliste: Valentine Penrose* (Éditions Joëlle Losfeld, 2001):17. écrits, poèmes, collages / éd. Georgiana M.M. Colvile; préf. Antony Penrose.
- ²⁷ Hubert: 93.
- ²⁸ Colvile: 16.
- ²⁹ Karen Humphreys, *Collages Communicants*: 379.
- ³⁰ Letterhead - New Bond Street London dated 26th April 1962. Box 473, Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
- ³¹ Letter dated 9th Jan 1965/3. Box 473, Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
- ³² Response to Roland on 11th Jan 1963. Box 473, Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
- ³³ Letter dated 20 January 1969 from Marion Boyars of Calder and Boyars Ltd. Box 473 Roland Penrose Archive, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.
- ³⁴ *Ibid*.
- ³⁵ Valentine Penrose, *The Bloody Countess*, (Solar Books, 2006): 20.
- ³⁶ *Ibid*: 5.
- ³⁷ George Bataille, 'Gilles de Rais and Erszabet Bathory' in *Tears of Eros*, (City Lights Books, 1989):139.
- ³⁸ Penrose, *The Bloody Countess*: 53.
- ³⁹ *Ibid*: 20.
- ⁴⁰ Karen Humphreys, 'The Poetics of Transgression in Valentine Penrose's *La Comtesse Sanglante*' *The French Review*, 2003, Vol. 76: 749.
- ⁴¹ Susan R. Suleiman, 'A Double Margin: Women Writers and the Avant-Garde in France' in *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*, (Harvard University Press, 1992): 11-32.
- ⁴² Natalya Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Ashgate, 2007): 6.
- ⁴³ For a detailed discussion see Lui, Jui-Ch'i, 'Francesca Woodman's Self Images: Transforming Bodies in the Space of Femininity' in *Woman's Art Journal* Vol.25, No.1, Spring – Summer, 2004: 26-31.

⁴⁴ Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, (Bantam USA, 2006): 10.

⁴⁵ Sarah Metcalf, *Correspondence with the Author* (August 2009).

⁴⁶ Horace Walpole, *Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* (Longman, 2007): 18.

⁴⁷ 'Anna Gaskell: Half Life', White Cube Gallery 12 Dec 25 Jan 2003 Available on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.whitecube.com/exhibitions/half-life/> [Accessed July 2009]

⁴⁸ Paul Eluard: 69.

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