

## *Surrealism, Occultism and Politics. In Search of the Marvellous*

BAUDUIN, Tessel M., FERENTINO, Victoria y ZAMANI, Daniel (eds.)  
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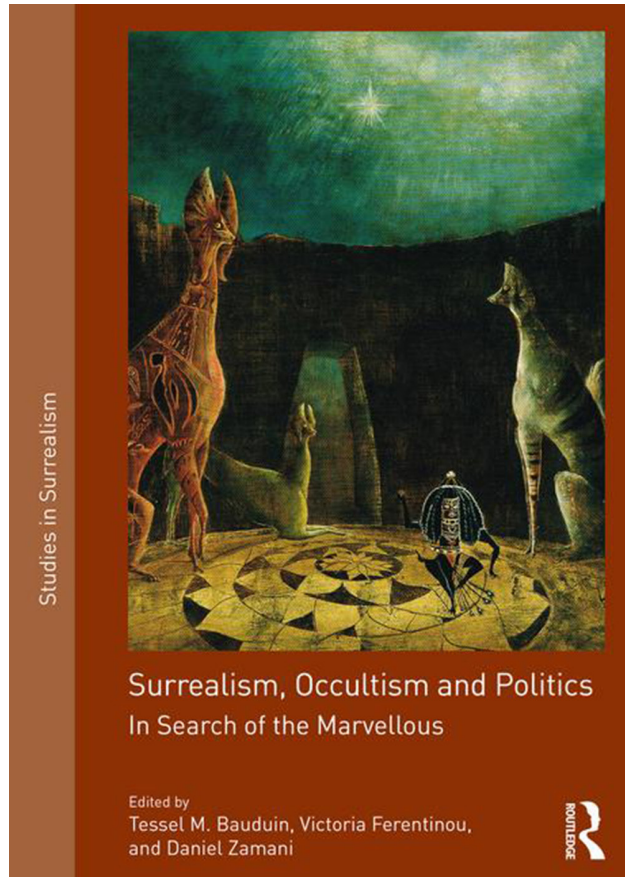
Over the past few years, several aspects have improved and enhanced our knowledge of the occult foundations of Surrealism. These gateways between the art movement and Esotericism should not be a complete mystery, since readers are sure to have already read well-founded analyses in papers and books, some written by the authors and editors of this work, such as Warlick's *Max Ernst and Alchemy*, Aberth's *Leonora Carrington. Surrealism, Alchemy and Art* and Bauduin's *Surrealism and the Occult*.

Esotericism is conceived as a system of thought and form (forms) of spirituality, differing from both orthodox religions and the ideals of rationalism deriving from the Enlightenment. As a common trend, occultism tried to maintain the enchantment of life, versus the process of disenchantment proposed by Max Weber. Associated with the occult, the 'marvellous' referred to in the title was a powerful feeling prevailing in the movement, which broke with discursive and logical thinking. This estrangement from factual reality, advocated by realism, proved to have political implications, a revolutionary current whose intention was to subvert capitalist society.

The book's main argument is that although Surrealism has been influenced by the occult since its very origins, these ideas, assumptions and intuitions evolved within the movement, peaking after the Second World War and the dramatic events relating to it. Esotericism implied a way of challenging the values of capitalist, socialist and fascist societies, i.e. those that had plunged the world into conflict.

This aspect might seem to be of secondary importance to anyone drawing hasty conclusions, but it has already been put forward as one of the reasons behind the alleged failure of the surrealist movement, as Maurice Nadeau did in 1945, when he accused Breton of trying to create a new form of mysticism.

The 12 chapters by 12 scholars, all world specialists in delving into these matters, are divided into three sections addressing a common topic: the first deals with a sort of specific epistemology of the movement, based on an alternative



to rationalism; the second considers magic and mythical thinking as ways of reenchanting the universe; and the third examines the gender dimension and influence of the occult on the movement's female artists such as Varo, Carrington, Colquhoun, Deren and Marjorie Cameron.

As a final remark, the book will not only be enlightening for lay audiences with only a slight knowledge of the subject, but also for scholars inquiring into these matters.

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