in the *Revue Européenne*. Works by Naville, Artaud, Eluard and others had also appeared. The intention of Surrealism was not, however, to be a mere literary movement, but a revolutionary cultural practice. To this end, later in 1925 the Surrealists took common cause with the Communist journal *Clarté*. This attempt to transcend the limits of a merely artistic practice is prefigured by the ‘Declaration’ issued under the imprimatur of the Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes on 27 January 1925. The Declaration had twenty-six signatories in addition to Aragon, including Breton, Eluard, Naville, Soupault, Artaud, Ernst and Masson. The present translation, by Richard Howard, is taken from Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism*, New York, 1965, pp. 262–3.

With regard to a false interpretation of our enterprise, stupidly circulated among the public,

We declare as follows to the entire braying literary, dramatic, philosophical, exegetical and even theological body of contemporary criticism:

1 We have nothing to do with literature;
   But we are quite capable, when necessary, of making use of it like anyone else.
2 Surrealism is not a new means of expression, or an easier one, nor even a metaphysic of poetry.
   It is a means of total liberation of the mind and of all that resembles it.
3 We are determined to make a Revolution.
4 We have joined the word surrealism to the word revolution solely to show the disinterested, detached, and even entirely desperate character of this revolution.
5 We make no claim to change the mores of mankind, but we intend to show the fragility of thought, and on what shifting foundations, what caverns we have built our trembling houses.
6 We hurl this formal warning to Society: Beware of your deviations and faux-pas, we shall not miss a single one.
7 At each turn of its thought, Society will find us waiting.
8 We are specialists in Revolt.
   There is no means of action which we are not capable, when necessary, of employing.
9 We say in particular to the Western world: surrealism exists. And what is this new ism that is fastened to us? Surrealism is not a poetic form. It is a cry of the mind turning back on itself, and it is determined to break apart its fetters, even if it must be by material hammers!

_Bureau de Recherches Surréalistes, 15, Rue de Grenelle_

5 André Breton (1896–1966) Surrealism and Painting

Surrealism originated as a literary movement and rapidly took on a revolutionary politico-cultural role. The question of its relationship to painting remained unclear, a difficulty little clarified by art histories which focus merely on the aspect of dream imagery seen as an idiosyncratic modern art ‘style’. The gist of Breton’s argument is that vision is the most powerful of the senses, and so the ability to fix visual images means that Surrealism does have an interest in painting. The problem was that art had hitherto concentrated on the outer world, but as such it could never compete with reality itself. However, by turning to focus on inner reality, painting could indeed be fruitful terrain for Surrealist work. Breton’s model for
this was Picasso. It is worth noting, though, that he maintained a mordant hostility to the conventional business of art criticism, as well as to other supposedly leading avant-gardists such as Matisse, Derain, and to a lesser extent even Picasso's original collaborator, Braque, not to mention those who had turned Cubism into a school. Early Surrealist visual work (the first exhibition of which took place in November 1925) experimented with collective authorship and automatic techniques adapted from literary production. Overall, as in other areas of Surrealist work, the aim was to produce a crisis in bourgeois consciousness, to use painting, in Breton's words, as an 'expedient' in the service of revolution. Breton's Surrealism and Painting was first published in full as a pamphlet in 1928, having previously appeared in episodes in La Révolution Surrealiste. The present extracts are taken from the translation by David Gascoyne, London, 1936.

The eye exists in its primitive state. The marvels of the earth a hundred feet high, the marvels of the sea a hundred feet deep, have for their witness only the wild eye that when in need of colours refers simply to the rainbow. It is present at the conventional exchange of signals that the navigation of the mind would appear to demand. But who is to draw up the scale of vision? There are those things that I have already seen many a time, and that others tell me they have likewise seen, things that I believe I should be able to remember, whether I cared about them or not, such, for instance, as the façade of the Paris Opera House, or a horse, or the horizon; there are those things that I have seen only very seldom, and that I have not always chosen to forget, or not to forget, as the case may be; there are those things that having looked at in vain I never dare to see, which are all the things I love (in their presence I no longer see anything else); there are those things that others have seen, and that by means of suggestion they are able or unable to make me see also; there are also those things that I see differently from other people, and those things that I begin to see and that are not visible. And that is not all. [. . .]

The need of fixing visual images, whether these images exist before their fixation or not, stands out from all time and has led to the creation of a veritable language, which does not seem to me more artificial than any other, over the origins of which I do not feel it necessary to linger here. The most I can do is to consider the present state of this language from the same angle as that from which I should consider the present state of poetic language. It seems to me that I can demand a great deal from a faculty which, above almost all others, gives me advantage over the real, over what is vulgarily understood by the real. Why is it that I am so much at the mercy of a few lines, a few coloured patches? The object, the strange object itself draws from these things the greatest amount of its force of provocation, and God knows whether this is a great provocation, for I cannot understand whether it is tending. What does it matter to me whether trees are green, whether a piano is at this moment 'nearer' to me than a stagecoach, whether a ball is cylindrical or round? That is how things are, nevertheless, if I am to believe my eyes, that is to say up to a certain point. In such a domain I dispose of a power of illusion whose limits, if I am not careful, I cease to perceive. If at this moment I turn to some illustration or other in a book, there is nothing to prevent the world around me from ceasing to exist. In place of what was surrounding me there is now something else, since, for example, I can without difficulty take part in quite another ceremony. . . . The corner formed by the ceiling and two walls in the picture can easily be substituted for the corner of this ceiling and these two walls. I turn over a few pages and, in spite of the almost uncomfortable heat, I do not in the least refuse to consent to this winter landscape. I can play with these winged children. 'He saw before
him an illuminated cavern,' says a caption, and I can actually see it too. I see it in a way
in which I do not at this moment see you for whom I am writing, yet all the same I am
writing so as to be able to see you one day, just as truly as I have lived a second for this
Christmas tree, this illuminated cavern or these angels. It does not matter whether
there is a perceptible difference between beings thus invoked and real beings, for this
difference can at any moment be made light of. So that it is impossible for me to
consider a picture as anything but a window, in which my first interest is to know what
it looks out on, or, in other words, whether, from where I am, there is a 'beautiful view',
for there is nothing I love so much as that which stretches away before me and out of
sight. Within the frame of an unnamed figure, land- or seascape, I can enjoy an enormous
spectacle. [...]

Now I declare I have passed like a madman through the slippery-floored halls of
museums; and I am not the only one. In spite of a few marvellous glances I have
received from women just like those of today, I have never for an instant been the dupe
of the unknown that those subterranean and immovable walls had to offer me. I left
adorable supplicants behind without remorse. There were too many scenes all at once; I
had not the heart to speculate upon them. As I passed by in front of all those religious
compositions and pastoral allegories, I could not help losing the sense of the part I was
playing. The enchantments that the street outside had to offer me were a thousand
times more real. It is not my fault if I cannot help feeling a profound lassitude when
confronted by the interminable march past of the entries for this gigantic prix de Rome
in which nothing, neither the subjects nor the manner of treating them, has been left
optional.

I do not necessarily mean that no emotion can be aroused by a painting of 'Leda', or
that no heart rending sun can set behind a scene of 'Roman palaces', nor even that it
would be impossible to give some semblance of eternal morality to the illustration of a
fable as ridiculous as Death and the Woodcutter. I simply mean that genius has nothing
to gain by following these beaten tracks and roundabout paths. There is nothing with
which it is so dangerous to take liberties as liberty.

But all question of emotion for emotion's sake apart, let us not forget that in this
epoch it is reality itself that is in question. How can anyone expect us to be satisfied
with the passing disquiet that such and such a work of art brings us? There is no work
of art that can hold its own before our essential primitivism in this respect. When I know
how the grim struggle between the actual and the possible will end, when I have lost all
hope of enlarging the field of the real, until now strictly limited, to truly stupefying
proportions, when my imagination, recoiling upon itself, can no longer do more than
coincide with my memory, I will willingly accord myself, like the others, a few relative
satisfactions. I shall then number myself among the 'embroiderers', whom I shall have
had to forgive. But not before.

The very narrow conception of imitation which art has been given as its aim is at
the bottom of the serious misunderstanding that we see continuing right up to the
present. In the belief that they are only capable of reproducing more or less fortunately
the image of that which moves them, painters have been far too easy-going in
their choice of models. The mistake lies in thinking that the model can only be taken
from the exterior world, or even simply that it can be taken at all. Certainly human
sensibility can confer a quite unforeseen distinction upon even the most vulgar-looking
object; none the less, to make the magic power of figuration which certain men possess
serve the purpose of preserving and reinforcing that which would exist without them anyway, is to make wretched use of it. There lies the inexcusable abdication. It is in any case impossible, under the present conditions of thought, when above all the exterior world appears more and more suspect, still to consent to such a sacrifice. The plastic work of art, in order to respond to the undisputed necessity of thoroughly revising all real values, will either refer to a purely interior model or cease to exist.

It remains to us to determine what is meant by the term interior model, and at this point it becomes a question of tackling the great problem raised in recent years by the attitude of those few men who have truly rediscovered a reason to paint – a problem that a miserable system of art-criticism is forced desperately to evade. In the domain of poetry, Lautréamont, Rimbaud and Mallarmé were the first to endow the human mind with what it lacked so much: I mean a truly insolent grace, which has enabled the mind, on finding itself withdrawn from all ideals, to begin to occupy itself with its own life, in which the attained and the desired no longer mutually exclude one another, and thereupon to attempt to submit to a permanent and most rigorous censorship whatever has constrained it heretofore. After their appearance, the idea of what is forbidden and what is allowed adopted its present elasticity, to such a point that the words family, fatherland, society, for instance, seem to us now to be so many macabre jests. It was they who really caused us to make up our minds to rely for our redemption here below upon ourselves alone, so that we have desperately to pursue their footsteps, animated by that feverish desire for conquest, total conquest, that will never leave us; so that our eyes, our precious eyes, have to reflect that which, while not existing, is yet as intense as that which does exist, and which has once more to consist of visual images, fully compensating us for what we have left behind. The mysterious path on which fear dogs our every step and our desire to turn back is only overcome by the fallacious hope of being accompanied, has for the past fifteen years been swept by a powerful searchlight. It is now fifteen years since Picasso began to explore this path, bearing rays of light with him as he went. No one had had the courage to see anything there before he came. Poets used to talk of a country they had discovered, where in the most natural way in the world a drawing-room appeared ‘at the bottom of a lake’, but this image was only a virtual one for us. What miracle has enabled this man, whom it is my astonishment and good fortune to know, to body forth all that remained, until his appearance, in the highest domain of fantasy? What a revolution must have taken place within him for it to have been possible for this to happen! [...] In order to be able to break suddenly away from sensible things, or with more reason from the easiness of their customary appearance, one has to be aware of their treason to such a high degree that one cannot escape recognizing the fact of Picasso’s immense responsibility. A single failure of will-power on his part would be sufficient for everything we are concerned with to be at least put back, if not wholly lost. His admirable perseverance is such a valuable guarantee that it dispenses with all need for us to appeal to any other authority. Shall we ever know what awaits us at the end of this agonizing journey? All that matters is that the exploration be continued, and that the objective rallying signs take place without any possibility of equivocation and follow one another uninterruptedly. [...] One would have to have formed no idea of Picasso’s exceptional predestination to dare to fear or hope for a partial renunciation on his part. Nothing seems to me more amusing or more just than that, in order to discourage insupportable followers or to
draw a sigh of relief from the beast of reaction, he has only from time to time to offer for their admiration the things he has scrapped. From the laboratory open to the sky there will continue to escape, at nightfall, divinely unwonted beings, dancers dragging fragments of marble mantelpieces behind them, adorably laden tables, beside which yours are mere turning-tables, and all that remains clinging to the immemorial newspaper: *Le Four*. . . . It has been said that there could be no such thing as surrealist painting. Painting, literature — what are they to us, O Picasso, you who have carried the spirit, no longer of contradiction, but of evasion, to its furthest point! From each one of your pictures you have let down a rope-ladder, or rather a ladder made of the sheets of your bed, and we, and probably you with us, desire only to climb up into your sleep and down from it again. And they come and talk to us of painting, they come and remind us of that lamentable expedient which is painting!

When we were children we had toys that would make us weep with pity and anger today. One day, perhaps, we shall see the toys of our whole life, like those of our childhood, once more. It was Picasso who gave me this idea. [...] We grow up until a certain age, it seems, and our playthings grow up with us. Playing a part in the drama whose only theatre is the mind, Picasso, creator of tragic toys for adults, has caused man to grow up and, sometimes under the guise of exasperating him, has put an end to his puerile fidgeting.

On account of these many considerations, we emphatically claim him as one of us, even while it is impossible and would be impudent to subject his methods to the rigorous system of criticism which we propose to institute. If surrealism has assigned to itself a line of conduct, it has only to submit to it in the way that Picasso has submitted to it and will continue to submit; I hope by saying this to prove myself very exacting. I shall always oppose the absurdly restrictive character of that which any kind of discipline would impose on the activity of the man from whom we persist in expecting more than from anyone else. The 'cubist' discipline made this mistake long ago. Such restrictions may be suitable for others, but it seems to me urgently desirable that Picasso and Braque should be exempted.

I believe that men will long continue to feel the need of following to its source the magical river flowing from their eyes, bathing with the same hallucinatory light and shade both the things that are and the things that are not. Not always quite knowing to what the disturbing discovery is due, they will place one of these springs high above the summit of any mountain. The region where the charming vapours of the as yet unknown, with which they are to fall in love, condense, will appear to them in a lightning-flash. Perhaps even there they will set up their wretched booths, will multiply and exterminate one another, and have no other desire than to return to earth after having plundered! If there then remains in the world, amidst the disorder of vanity and darkness, a single appearance of perfect resolution, of ideal reduction to a point, of all those things that swayed us during the distant epoch of our lives, I ask for nothing better than that this may be the twenty or thirty pictures that we made our thought's happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist. [...] happy shores — happy without knowing it, happy that after all shores should exist.

We shall see the Revolution, concerning the definition of which there can today be no more misunderstanding, and it will provide a reason for our scruples. It is only before the Revolution that I consider it to be efficacious to summon the best men that I know. The responsibility of painters, as of all those to whom it falls due in no small measure to prevent, in whatever form of expression is theirs, the survival of the sign for
the thing signified, seems to me at present to be both a heavy and an ill-supported one. Yet that is the price of eternity. The mind slips up on this apparently fortuitous circumstance as on a piece of banana-skin. Those who prefer to take no account of the moment when they expect the least to happen seem to me to lack that mysterious aid which to my mind is the only aid of any importance. The revolutionary content of a work, or merely its content, could not depend upon the choice of the elements which this work brings into play. This accounts for the difficulty of obtaining a strict and objective scale of plastic values at a time when a total revision of all values is about to be undertaken, and when clairvoyance obliges us to recognize only those values which are likely to hasten this revision.

Confronted by the utter bankruptcy of art-criticism, a bankruptcy that is really quite comic, it is not for us to complain that the articles of a Raynal, a Vauxcelles or a Fels surpass the limits of imbecility. The continued scandal of Cézannism, of neo-academism, or of machinism, is incapable of compromising the issue that is our real interest. Whether Utrillo is still or already a good 'seller', whether Chagall happens to be considered a surrealist or not, are matters for grocers' assistants. Undoubtedly the study of conventions, to which I will content myself with making a passing allusion, could be profoundly edifying if it were properly conducted, but it would be a waste of time for me to attempt it here, inasmuch as these conventions are in perfect accord with all those things which, in a more general domain, are now being denounced. From an intellectual point of view, it is simply a question of finding out to what causes can be attributed the incontestable failure of certain artists, which, in two or three cases, goes so far as to appear to us as resulting from the loss of a state of grace.

Now that Picasso, absolved by his genius from all merely moral obligations, he who unceasingly deceives appearances with reality, going so far as to defy, to a sometimes alarming extent, that which, as we see it, is forever unforgiving – now that Picasso, finally escaping from all compromise, remains master of a situation that except for him we should have considered desperate, it does in fact seem that the majority of his early companions are travelling a road that is the furthest apart from ours and his own. Those who, with such particularly prophetic intuition, called themselves ‘les Fauves’, no longer do anything now except pace ridiculously up and down behind the bars of time, and from their final pounces, so little to be feared, the least dealer, or tamer, can defend himself with a chair. These discouraged and discouraging old lions are Matisse and Derain. They do not even retain their nostalgia for the forest and the desert; they have passed into a tiny arena: their gratitude to those who mate them and keep them alive. A Nude by Derain, a new Window by Matisse – what surer testimony could there be to the truth of the contention that ‘not all the water in the sea would suffice to wash out one drop of intellectual blood’?² So will these men never rise again? Should they now desire to make honourable amends to the mind, they would find themselves forever lost, both they and the others. The air once so limpid, the journey that will not be made, the uncrossed distance that separates the place where one left an object from the place where one finds it again on waking, the inseparable eternities of this hour and of this place, are all at the mercy of our first act of submission. I should like to discuss so total a loss at greater length. But what is to be done? It is too late.

I cannot help being moved by the destiny of Georges Braque. This man has taken infinite precautions. Between his head and his hands I seem to see a great hour-glass
whose sand appears to be in no greater a hurry than the motes that dance in a ray of sunlight. Sometimes this hour-glass goes down on the horizon and then the sand flows no more. That is because Braque 'loves the rule that corrects emotion', while I myself do nothing but violently deny this rule. Where did he get it from? There must be some idea of God behind it.\(^3\) It's very nice to paint, and it's very nice not to paint. One can even paint 'well', and not paint well. In short... Braque is at present a great refugee. I am afraid that in a year or two's time I shall no longer be able to mention his name. But that is being a little hasty.

Apollinaire turned against him after 1918. When he himself was beginning to turn out so badly that death was about to stop him, he could hardly find strong enough terms - and he chose other pretexts - to attack those who were offering to give in. Braque already appeared to be one of them. I have not the same reasons for attacking him, and never shall have, and I shall not forget that for many years he followed on his own account the road on which he and Picasso stood alone. [...] But one day Braque took pity on reality. I cannot too often repeat that for every object to be in its place, every one of us must put something of ourselves there. Think of those interminable seconds of posing which last our whole lives long. Without fear of consequences, one can indefinitely repeat the gesture of offering a bouquet. But it is a lot to ask of the bouquet that it should reveal the hand which offers it and which is trembling. Braque's hand has trembled.

\(^1\) Even were that the 'surrealist' discipline.

\(^2\) Isidore Ducasse.

\(^3\) To speak of God, to think of God is in every respect to give him his due, and when I say that, it is very certain that I do not make this idea mine, even in order to combat it. I have always wagered against God, and I regard the little that I have won in this world as simply the outcome of this bet. The stake (my life) has been so ridiculous that I am conscious of having won to the full. Everything that is doddering, squint-eyed, infamous, sullenly and grotesquely is contained for me in this single word: God. [...]