

Franklin Rosemont

**JACQUES VACHÉ**  
*and the Roots of*  
**SURREALISM**

including Vaché's  
*War Letters*  
& Other Writings



*Profusely Illustrated*



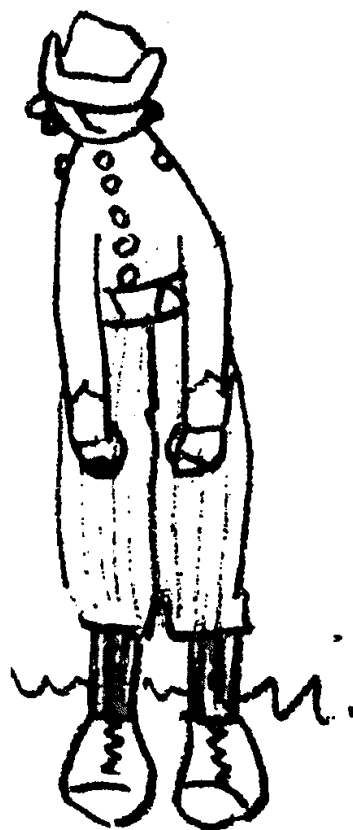
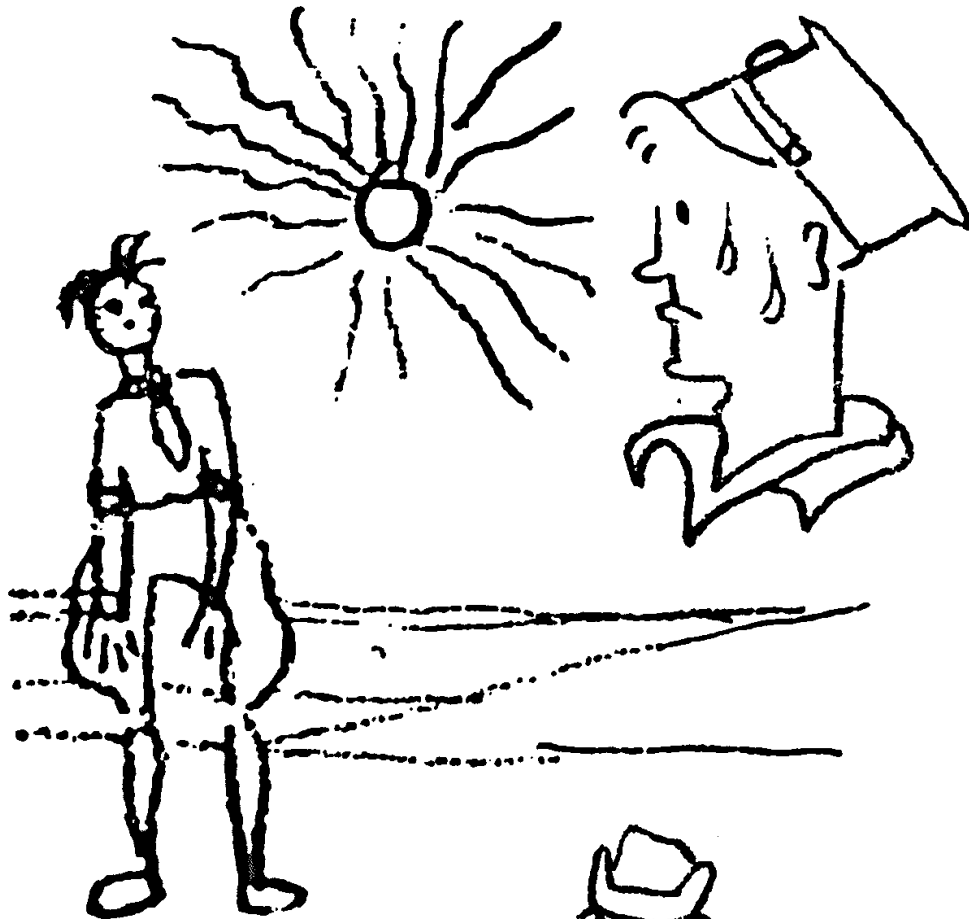
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Jacques Vaché

# THE WAR LETTERS

Translated by  
Guy Ducornet





## PREFACE BY ANDRÉ BRETON

The rolling snowballs of centuries gather but tiny human footsteps. One finally finds a place in the sun only to suffocate under a pelt. In the frozen countryside, fire attracts nothing but wolves. And no one knows the value of premonitions if those gambles on the Stock Exchange (the thunderstorm Baudelaire speaks of) let an angel be seen from time to time at the spyhole.

And so it was that in 1916, this poor clerk who was watching late, allowed a moth to remain in the reflector on his desk. In spite of his handsome visor—this took place out West—all he seemed to think of was a Morse alphabet. He spent his time remembering the cliffs at Etretat and leap-frogging with clouds. He thus warmly welcomed the airforce officer. The truth is that it was never known in which branch of the service Jacques did serve. I saw him cast in a cuirass—cast is not the right word, as he was pure sky. He glowed with that river around his neck the Amazon, I believe, which still waters Peru. He had set fire to large tracts of rain forest—one could see it in his hair and because of all the lovely animals that had taken refuge in him. The rattlesnake never stopped me from shaking his hand. He feared above all certain experiments with the expansion of bodies. If only, he said, it merely caused derailments! So, the red-hot metal bar in *Michel Strogoff* was not meant to blind him. I often saw him attack the *Maître des Forges* which he had not read.

Razor bum can be caught by two or three egg-shaped roomettes in a nest. Perhaps you ought to come again. The horseshoe is a lovely invention for sedentary people and it is explained by Alfred de Musset's verse. In the days of the Greeks, the "vase of Soissons" (he points to his head, the mantelpiece ornament); and so forth.

Masculine elegance is out of the ordinary. The cover of *Mirror of Fashion* has the color of the water around the skyscraper where it's printed. Human bellies, built on pile foundations, also make excellent parachutes. The sake from those top hats makes a black border around the honorary diploma we wanted to show to all our friends. One day, medals will climb our legs like kittens. If we still kneel in front of woman, it is to lace her shoe. When seriously reflecting upon one's conduct, one

ought to take paved roads. Madame's carriage is at the door since the horses have fallen into the sea. Loving and being loved, run after each other on the jetty; it is dangerous. Be sure that we gamble more than our fortune in the casinos. First of all, one must not cheat. You know, Jacques, the pretty movement of the mistresses on the screen when *at last* we have lost everything? Show me those hands of yours under which the air is a great musical instrument: too lucky; you are too lucky. Why do you like to bring a blue flush to this girl's cheeks? I once knew an apartment that was a marvelous cobweb.

In the center there stood a rather large bell which emitted an annoying sound every year or every fifteen minutes. According to it, war has not always been on, and one would never have known what could happen in this weather, etc. Of course that was laughable. And the stevedore did laugh, and his girlfriend was piling up debts like bolts of lace. The former pupil of Mr. Luc-Olivier Merson must have known that, in France, counterfeiting is severely punished. What do you expect us to do? The fine playbill: *They are back Who? The Vampires*, and in the dark auditorium, those red letters for *That very night*. You know, I no longer need to hold the rail when I go down, and under soft plush soles the staircase is no longer an accordion.

We were good-humored terrorists, just a bit more sentimental than we should have been; scoundrels with a future. Everything and nothing smiles on us. The future is a beautiful veined leaf that absorbs dyes and shows remarkable lacunae. It remains entirely with us to put out our hands in the shipwrecked hair.

The next meal will be served on a sheet of petroleum. The factory engineer and the farmer general have grown old. "Our tropics are our hearts. We have lived at a lively march. My dear André, diagrams leave you cold. I had this rum imported from Jamaica. Cattle raising, you see, stiffens the grass; on the other hand, I count on sleep to shear my herds. The morning lark is one more of your parables."

Equilibrium is unusual. The earth coming fall circle in twenty-four hours is not the only pole of attraction. In glittering Colorado, girls ride horses and superbly ravage our desire. The star-studded shirts of water carriers are our approximate calculations. The crusaders used to stop to drink from poisoned wells.

The famous baptism of fire enters the night of adorable superstitions where I see the two fishes strung on a rope. I leave

you to that night. Fruit is rotting in the black foliage. I don't know if corn is being threshed or if a beehive should be sought near by. I think of a Jewish wedding. A Dutch interior is what 's farthest. I see you, Jacques, as a Land as a shepherd on big chalk stilts. The bushel of feelings comes cheap this year. One must make a living somehow and the pretty relief sentry in her muddy overcoat is a milkmaid in the fog. You deserved better— penal servitude, for instance. I thought I'd find you there with me when I saw the first episode of *The New Dawn*, my dear Palas. Forgive me. Ah! We are both dead.

It is true that the world succeeds in blocking all the infernal machines. Is there no time lost? Time—one means seven-league boots. The boxes of watercolors are deteriorating. The sixteen summers of William R. G. Eddie. . . let's keep this to ourselves.

I once knew a man more handsome than a *mirliton*. He wrote letters as serious as those of the Gauls. We are in the XXth century (of the Christian era) and the caps detonate under the child's heels. There are flowers that bloom in the inkpots specially for obituaries. This man was my friend.

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**Translator's Notes:** The "Vase de Soissons" refers to a famous bit of French history all students in France learn about in grade school. It concerns Clovis, King of the Franks, etc.

The word "mirliton," in Breton's preface, has no satisfying translation. It can be a kind of cylindrical kazoo that children sing into, or (in pastry) a cream puff. It also sounds like Mirliflore and Mirmrydon (a Dandy, or a theater). The dictionary also gives: "U.S.: "hewhag." The U.S. Kazoo can be as odd as the French Mirliton, except that the latter looked more like a candy cane.—G.D.

To Mr. André Breton  
La Rochefoucauld—the 27th.  
13 Rue des Tanneurs.

Dear friend,

Managed—with some trouble—to obtain a furlough from a small  
bristling and important Medical Officer—And arrived—after  
numerous wheel turns and freezing compartments—here—the  
usual obsolete hole—such as those described by academicians  
when they dabble in “studying customs.” I got here only last  
night—but I am already convinced that the lady tobacconist is a  
fat brunette—because of the N.C.O.’s—and that the café is called  
“du Commerce”—because that’s the way it must be—At least  
here I finally enjoy my freedom and I feel approximately at  
home.

What a hole—what a hole—what a hole! It always puzzles  
me for a moment that there are people in such a hole who. . . live  
there—a whole life long—To the end!—They also are “sane  
people”—“old morons”—“who don’t understand a thing”—  
Bunch of poor devils dismally humoristic—with an alimentary  
canal and a belly—my brethren—*Nom di Dio!*

Ah! Ah! as Dr. Faustroll’s Hydrocèpale would add.

So, I am in my family.

I would be grateful to you—Dear friend—to write me a  
note—I should tell you that I shall leave this address next  
Sunday.

Say hello to my neighbor the stone cutter—and to the Polish  
people.

I shake your hand.

J.T.H.

P.S.—During the journey, I realized—as I went through it—that  
*Saintes*—is not in the South near Hyères as I thought it was—I  
must tell you this—traveling is good for young people.

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To Mr. André Breton  
X. July 5, 1916.

Dear friend,

I suddenly vanished from the scene in Nantes and I do apologize—But Mr. Minister of War (as they say) found my presence at the Front indispensable and without further delay. . . and I had to comply.

I am an interpreter with British troops—a rather bearable position in these times of war, as I am treated as an officer—a horse, various sorts of baggage and an orderly—I begin to smell very British (lacquer, tea and Virginia tobacco).

But all the same, all the same, what a life! Nobody to talk to (naturally), no books to read, no time to paint—all in all: redoubtably isolated—I say, Mr the Interpreter—Will you. . . Pardon, la route pour? Have a cigar, sir? Supply train, inhabitants, mayor, billeting orders—An artillery shell that says yes—and rain, rain, rain, rain—rain—more rain— two hundred motor lorries in a row—in a row. . .

Altogether, I am again in the grip of the *redoubtable* ennui (see above) of utterly uninteresting things—To amuse myself—I imagine—the British are in fact Germans—and I am at the Front with them, and for them—And I surely smoke a bit of touffiane, and this officer in His Majesty's service—is about to become a winged androgyne and to do the vampire dance—while driveling tea-with-milk—And then I shall wake up in a familiar bed and I shall unload ships—with you beside me—brandishing the electricity-making stick. . .

Oh! enough—enough! and even too much—a black suit, well-pressed trousers, correct shoes—Paris striped cloth—pyjamas and books with pages left uncut—where do we go tonight? . . . nostalgic things that died before the War—And then—What next?? We are going to laugh, aren't we?

“ . . . We shall go towards the city. . . ”

“Your soul is a chosen landscape. . . ”

“His puce-colored frock coat used to have baggy pockets?”

“I went up, with a happy heart. . . ”

The afternoon of a faun and Cesaree. . . Elvira's eyes are down and Narcissus's sister is naked.

Oh! enough! Enough! and even too much.



Sidney, Melbourne—Vienna—New York and back—Hotel lobby—shiny liner, luggage slip, Hotel Manager—Flashy South adventurers—and Back.

I am bored, dear friend—you see—but I am also boring you and I think I shall stop here.

Remember that I feel (and I beg you to accept this) a very good friendship for you—which I shall kill, by the way (without scruples, perhaps)—after having unduly robbed you of uncertain probabilities. . .

I now ask you seriously to write me. . .

Mr. Vaché—interpreter—  
H. Q. 517th Div. Train A.S.C. B.E.F.

I ritually salute the Polish people and I send you the best wishes of

J.T.H.

P.S.: rereading this letter—I find it—over all—incoherent— and poorly written—I politely beg your forgiveness.

Right here.

J.T.H.

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To Mr. André Breton.  
X. October 11th 1916. 3 P.M.

Dear friend,

I write you from a bed where I've been laid down at midday by an annoying fever and a whim.

I received your letter yesterday—It is Obvious that I haven't forgotten our friendship which, I hope, will last— mimes and

sars are so rare!— and despite your approximate conception of Umour.

And so I work as an interpreter for the English—and I do so with a total indifference and the quiet lack of seriousness with which I like to adorn very official matters—I walk from the ruins with my Crystal monocle and a theory of disquieting paintings.

I have successively been a crowned *littérateur*, a known pornographic draughtsman and a scandalous cubist painter.

Now I stay home and I let others explain and discuss my personality according to the examples quoted above. The result is of no importance.

Furthermore, I imagine I am in the German Army and I succeed—It's a change, and I have managed to convince myself that I served against the Allies—Isn't that something?!. . .

I am going on leave later this month and shall spend some time in Paris—to see my very best friend whom I completely lost sight of.

An impending letter will contain—be sure of it—a War effigy—according to a Post-scripture carefully crossed out. Where is T.F. ?—I wrote to the Polish people once, I think, in answer to two amusing letters.

Could I also ask for a correspondence with you? Having taken—I suppose—I shall use it more readily in the future; anyhow—I wrote you once already, if I recall?

Aside from this—very little indeed—Nothing. The British Army, however preferable to the French, is without much Umour.

I warned several times a colonel who is with me that I would stick a small piece of wood in his earens—I doubt that he entirely understood me—not knowing any French in any case.

My present dream is to wear a short-sleeved red shirt, a red scarf and high boots—and to be a member of a purposeless Chinese secret society in Australia—I shan't deny that there may be some vampire in all this.

Are your illuminati allowed to write?—I wouldn't mind corresponding with a persecuted one, or some "catatonic" one also.

Meanwhile I am rereading St. Augustine (to imagine a smile from the Polish people) and trying to see something more in it than a monk ignorant of Umour.

With this, dear friend, I start awaiting a response to my incoherence that contains no answer, and I wish you my very best,

J.T.H.

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To Mr. André Breton.  
X.-29-4-17

Dear friend,

Your letter just arrived.

It is unnecessary— isn't it?—to assure you that you have been often on the screen—You sent me a “flattering” missive—No doubt in order to extract from me an answer which my comatose apathy kept postponing—how long do you think it was, according to the others?

I write you from an—ex-village—a very narrow pigsty draped with blankets—I am with English soldiers—They have advanced much onto the enemy around here—It is very noisy—That is all.

I am happy to know that you are sick, my dear friend, a little—I received a letter from T.F. almost non-worrisome—this young man saddens me—I am very tired of mediocrity and I have decided to sleep for an unspecified time—the very effort to keep awake for these few pages is trying; perhaps it will be easier next time—Pardon me—all right? all right? Nothing kills a man like the obligation to represent a country—that too.

From time to time—so that I cannot be suspected of having died sweetly, a swindle or a hamicable pat on some familiar skull assures me that I am a nasty character—Today I was introduced to a Lieutenant-General and to Headquarters as a famous painter—(I believe that the said painter is 50 or 70 years old—or perhaps he is dead—but the name remains)—They (the General and the Headquarters) have me in great request—it's strange and I begin to foresee how all this will fall flat—At any rate. . .

Anyhow. . . And none of this matters much—it is not funny—not funny at all. No.

Are you sure Apollinaire is still alive, and that Rimbaud ever existed? I myself do not think so—I see hardly anyone but Jarry (At least, you know, at the very least!—UBU)—It seems certain that MARIE LAURENCIN is still alive: certain symptoms authorize this—Is it absolutely sure—yet I think that I detest her—yes—there it is, tonight I detest her, what can I do!

Also—you ask me a definition of umour—just like this!—IT IS IN THE ESSENCE OF SYMBOLS TO BE SYMBOLIC has for a long time seemed to me to be worthy of being one, susceptible as it is of containing a host of living things: EXAMPLE: you know about the horrible life of the alarm-clock—it is a monster that has always frightened me—because of the numerous things projected by its eyes, and because of the way this honest man glares at me when I enter a bedroom—why on earth does it have so much umour? Yes, why?

But so it is: this way and not any other—There is much formidable UBIQUE in umour also—as you shall see—But naturally this isn't—final, and umour comes too much from a sensation so as not to be extremely difficult to express—I believe it is a sensation—I was going to say a SENSE—also—of the theatrical (and joyless) uselessness of everything.

#### WHEN ONE KNOWS.

And this is why the enthusiasms of the others—(because they are noisy!)—are detestable—Because—Isn't it?—we have Genius—since we have UMOUR—and therefore every thing—Had you ever doubted it?—is permitted—All this is quite boring however.

I enclose a figure—and that could be called an OBSESSION—or else—yes BATTLE OF THE SOMME AND THE SUM—yes.

It has followed me everywhere and looked at me countless times in unnameable holes—I believe that it tries to mystify me somewhat—I am quite fond of it, among other things.

J. T. H.

Be sure you tell the Polish people that I want to write him—and that he must not leave without giving some addresses.

To write on the same paper with a pencil is a bore.

To Mr. T Fraenkel

X. 29-4-17

Dear friend I was happy to hear from you—And also—to know you were safe—I am bored to death behind my glass monocle, I dress in khaki and I beat the Germans—The debraining machine is going full swing and noisily and I am near a stable for TANKS—a very VBIQUE animal, but joyless

I wrote Reverdy about NORD-SUD—perhaps it is not a mystification—I would love it if you would send me clippings showing drawings and other line processes—I do hope that you will pity one who is isolated within a foreign nation waging war—and general Pau who is not dead yet—All the same! All the same! Expecting a letter, I salute you in various demiurges.

[no signature]

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To Mr. André Breton

4-6-17

Dear friend,

I hope, as I am about to come to Paris—(around the 15th or 20th)—to see you there—I wrote the Polish people about it just in case a fallacious postal service would lose a letter—can you tell me whether Paris will contain you ever so little around that time?

It is very hot, very dusty, and sweating—but what do you expect, it must be on purpose—The wagging rows of tall motor lorries shake up the dryness and powder the sun with acid—How funny it all is—Apollinaire—No matter! glossy magazines with blonde girls and the shaved nostrils of the detective-horse are truly handsome. . . *“the girl I love is on a magazine cover”*—Too bad! Too bad!—And what difference does it make if that’s the way it is—All the same from the shell case white lilacs are sweating and old solitary delights annoy me much—vacationing florists of asphalt where watering hoses pulverize Sunday

outfits—It's very warm and bespectacled persons discuss the Stock Exchange I believe, with the airs of housewives—all the same still, the smell of old scraped melons and of sewers does not delude me much!... And then that young whore with her baggy linen and her wet smell—!—A round green fly swims in the tea, its wing flat out—O well who cares!—*Well*

—*Well*—I expect a letter from you, if you accept however that the banal buzzing of aeroplanes be glorified with white puffs of powder; and that this horrible bird flies straight ahead into the dazzling, pissing a streak of vinegar.

Your friend,

J.T.H.

P.S.: enclosed a letter for the Polish people whose address I simply can't find.

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To Mr T. Fraenkel.

I have just received your *Journal des Praticiens* for which colleague dear, I must thank you. But no matter...! Is it that the collaborators of SIC all mystify Mr le Birot?

It is not over, you know—and the Germans sent us more cannon balls this morning although we are 12 kilos, from the line—I'd be sorry to die so younggggg

Ah! And SHITTR.

I shall have the bother of stopping by Paris and of seeing You—for I expect there your presence around the 15th or the 20th of this month. Write me a word if you deign to tell me all this—and try to arrange for a spectacle with great effects so that we may kill a few people together before I go—Write as soon as you get this note for they take, on the average 6 to 7 days to escalate to me.

Did I tell you I received "LES CAVES. . ." and "LE POETE"—Apollinaire—It is still funny at times—He must be in need of Phynances—GIDE—Ah well—Gide—What a happy

chance he did not live ROMANTICISM—What a sad Musset he would have been, I think—He is already nearly cold, isn't he?—At any rate I thank you—I really could no longer read "ALLAN MASON-DETECTIV" or "THE INN OF THE GUARDIAN ANGEL" and bad jokes do kill me at times.

However I count on seeing you—I expect a word?

Your devoted

J.H.T.

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To Mr André Breton  
X. 16-6-17

My dear friend

I received your note last night. Allow me to include in this sort of letter a sort of drawing. For I really no longer paint except with colored inks.

As I am telling Mr. Jean Cocteau, I make pleasure to see you almost soon. Believing that I shall be allowed to land in Paris on the 23rd in the afternoon. And in this way I shall be able to see "Les Mamelles de Tirésias" by Guillaume A.—about whom—and this is another Story—I maintain this afternoon my judgement—have I told you that Gide was truly cold?

Third time I use that word—IT IS GETTING ON MY NERVES—Appearances of breakable puppets who worry or please you!—I shoot the fourth one. *Well.*

Have you about a month ago, it seems to me—welcomed a smiling individual, very irritating, with figures all around which made me often—burst into tears of laughter—of anger?—It had presided, think, for a while, over my martial gambols and I would, I confess, be disappointed should it get lost— Bien—now the stump of pencil is getting shorter—and breaks—And the heat is terrible and full of flies and the smell of half-open food tins.

I am your servant.

J.T.H.

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To Mr. T. Fraenkel  
X. 16-6-17

My friend, it is very hot but I answer you. It is very nice of you to adorn me with sunrays, and I hope to be in Paris— (naturally, my furlough was delayed) for the surrealist performance of Guillaume Apollinaire whom I suspect to be a little bit late, perhaps.

Have you bought yourself 2 francs worth of golden string which so elegantly braids a uniform—or is that—(everything is possible after all)—a gift from the State. And also when are you going to tidy up your kingdom?—At any rate I hope to see you when I pass through?—My goodness, it is hot— Never shall I be able to win so many wars!!!

I probably will arrive in Paris on the 23rd in the afternoon. How about an apéritif at “La Rotonde” around 6:30 ?—or answer me if you can when you get this mess and tell me where, with a bit of chance, I can meet either you or the poet—or both? but please do not plot an unpleasant encounter—pleasantry—it would naturally be amusing—but please consider that I shall stay so little in the city-of-LIGHT—I shall arrive—Quai d’Orsay—coming from A. . . around 4:30. . . 6:00—on the 23rd p.m

I am your devoted

J.T.H. !

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To Mister André Breton  
18-8-17

Dear friend,

I have often thought of writing you since your letter of July 23—but I never found a definitive form of expression—and still haven't—I think it preferable after all to write you at the risk of an immediate improvisation—on a text almost known, and even a bit deliberate.

We shall worry about producing when we stumble, in our random conversations, upon a series of axioms adopted by both and in “umore” (pronounce: umore because, all the same, *umoristic*!) the theme of your play pleases me, all in all.

Don't you find it necessary to introduce (I am not essentially keen on this at the moment) an intermediary bloke between your customs-house officer and your “modern” no. 1—a sort of pre-war École normale student, without much bearing, not quite free from various superstitions but nevertheless very egoistic in fact—a sort of greedy barbarian slightly amazed—However. . . And then, the whole TONE of our action remains to be determined almost—I would like it dry, without literature, and certainly not in the sense of “ART.”

In any case,  
ART does not exist, no doubt—it is therefore useless to sing about it—and yet we make art—because that's the way it is—*Well*—what are you going to do about it?

And so we like neither ART nor artists (down with Apollinaire) AND how RIGHT TOGRATH IS TO ASSASSINATE THE POET!—However since it is necessary to disgorge a bit of acid or old lyricism, let it be brisk and jumpy—for locomotives go fast.

Modernity therefore also steadfast and killed every night—We ignore MALLARMÉ, without hatred—but he is dead— But we no longer recognize Apollinaire or Cocteau— Because—We suspect them of making art too knowingly, of patching up a bit of romanticism with telephone wires, and of being blind to dynamos. THE stars still unhooked!—it is annoying—and they sometimes do not speak seriously! A man who believes is a curiosity. BUT SINCE A FEW OF THEM WERE BORN QUACKS. . .

And so—I see two ways to let all this run—To form the personal sensation by means of a flamboyant collision of rare words—not often, say—or to draw angles, or squares free from feelings—at the right moment, of course—We shall leave logical Honesty—at the risk of contradicting ourselves—like everyone else. —O ABSURD GOD—for everything is contradiction—isn't it? and will be umore the one who will never get caught in the hidden and sneaky life of everything.—O My alarm-clock—eyes—a hypocrite—that detests me so much!—and he who will sense the lamentable trompe-l'oeil of universal simili-symbols

—It is in their nature to be symbolic.

Umores should not produce—But what can we do about it?—I grant a little UMOUR to LAFCADIO—for he does not read and produces only amusing experiments—such as assassination—and without satanic lyricism—my old rotten Baudelaire!!! There was a need for our slightly dry art : machinery—Rotary presses with stinking oils—vrombis— vrombis—vrombis. . . whistle!—Reverdy—amusing the pohet, boring in prose. Max Jacob, my old practical joker—PUPPETS—PUPPETS—PUPPETS—do you want lovely colorful wooden puppets?—Two eyes—a dead flame and the crystal disc of a monocle—with an octopus typewriter—I like this better.

All this annoys you at times—but answer me—I come back through Paris in the first days of October perhaps we could arrange a preface-conference—What beautiful noise!—I hope to see you in any case.

With my best wishes.

J.T.H.

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To Mr. André Breton  
9-5-18

Dear friend

It is true that—according to the calendar—I haven't written in a while—I do not understand Time, all in all—I have often thought

of you—one of the very few—who wish to tolerate me (I suspect you, a little, of mystification)—*Thank you*.

My multiple peregrinations—I am aware, vaguely, that I am storing all sorts of things—or rotting a little.

WHAT WILL COME OF ALL THIS, FOR GOD'S SAKE—I no longer want to be a store-keeper—the test was not a success. I tried something else—(did I try? or was I tried. . .)—I can't really write about this now—One has the fun one can—that's it.

I am resolutely very far from a host of literary people—even Rimbaud, I am afraid, dear friend—ART IS A SILLINESS—almost nothing is a silliness—art must be a funny thing and a bit boring—that is all—Max Jacob—very rarely could be UMOROUS—but the trouble is, isn't it, that he ended up taking himself seriously, which is a curious intoxication—And then—to produce?—“to take aim so carefully in order to miss the target”—naturally, written irony is unbearable—but of course you knew that Umour is not irony, naturally—this way—so what—that's the way it is—how amusing everything is—very funny, it is a fact—how funny it all is!—(and what if we killed ourselves, too. instead of going away?)

THIRST FOR THE WEST—I rubbed my hands, reading a few parts—perhaps better still a little shorter?—André Derain of course—I don't understand. . . “the first born is the angel”—However it's ready—much readier than a certain number of things that are shown around the Hospital in Nantes

Your synthetic criticism is very enticing—very dangerous also; Max Jacob, Gris, escape me a bit.

Excuse me—my dear Breton, for the lack of precision in all this. I am not feeling well, I live in a forsaken hole amidst stumps of charred trees and, periodically, a sort of shell drops in, parabolically, and coughs—I exist with an American officer who studies war, chews “gum” and amuses me, at times—I very narrowly escaped—at this last retreat—but I object to being killed in time of war—I spend most of my days taking walks in forbidden places, from where I see beautiful deflagrations—and when I am to the rear, often, in the public house, where I like to have my meals—It is rather awful— But what is to be done?

No—Thank you—dear friend, a lot—I have nothing ready at the moment—Would NORD-SUD take something on poor sad Apollinaire?—I do not deny him a certain talent—and he would

have succeeded, I believe—something—but he only has some talent—He writes very good “narrations” (do you remember grammar school?)—sometimes.

And T.F? Thank him, when you write—for his numerous letters, so full of amusing observations and common sense—

*Well.* Your friend,

J.T.H.

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To Mr T. Fraenkel  
12-8-18

Dear friend,

I would have liked to answer your letter from afar with a visit but, naturally, you chose that time to disappear—I am almost always in jail, it is for this Summer, cooler—I have many amusing assassinations to tell you about still—But there you are

....

I dream up some good Eccentricities, well thought out, or some good and droll imposture that would result in many deaths, the whole thing in tight sporty, light-colored suits, and look at those beautiful open garnet-red shoes?

But I must let myself go—I am in confinement here—awaiting I know not what new adventures?—I only hope they don't kill me as long as they have me! . . . poor people. . . I hope this document will reach you while you are still alive, and much occupied in cutting off limbs with a saw, according to tradition, dressed in a pale apron on which one sees the mark of a hand, greased with fresh blood.

I am, it seems to me, in good health, although I know little of such things—but I neither spit—thank you—nor cough!

J.H.T.

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To Mr Louis Aragon

Dear friend and Mystifier

I receive your letter this instant, dated July 9th—and your poems. I am in jail, naturally, and yet not very able to express visible things on your work: do you mind excusing me?

I am quite content to live in beatitude in the manner of 13 x 18 cameras—It is as good a way as another to wait for the end. I gather strength and preserve myself for future things. What a fine jumble it will be, you see, in these days “to come,” and we’ll be able to kill so many people!!!. . . I also, experiment so as not to lose the habit, right?—but I must keep my intimate jubilations to myself, because the emissaries of Cardinal Richelieu. . .

I was right to say that poor Apollinaire was writing, at the end, in *La Bayonnette*—here is one more who did not “hang himself from the espagnolette of the window but he was already a trepanned lieutenant, wasn’t he, and they decorated him—*Well*.

Perhaps he will be given the title of precursor—we are not opposed to it.

Most of all there are flies all over in the sun, and questionably buzzing mess—kettles—I’d love to have a good suit made of water—green dish-cloth, a white bartender waistcoat—and those women with their dissolving smell of dirty perfumed linen  
. . . .

And you, dear friend?

J.T.H.

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To Monsieur André Breton  
14-11-18

Very dear friend,

What exhaustion your letter found me in!—I am empty of ideas, and not very sonorous, more than ever perhaps the unconscious recorder of many things, all at once—What crystallization?. . . I

shall come out of the war sweetly senile, perhaps, like those splendid village idiots (and I hope so). . . or. . . or. . .

What a film I shall make!—with crazy motor-cars, you know, crumbling bridges, and enormous hands crawling all over the screen toward some document!. . . Useless and inappreciable!—With colloquies so tragic, in formal attire, behind the listening palm-tree!—And Charlie of course, who rictusses, his eyes peaceful. The Policeman is forgotten in the trunk!!!

Telephone, shirt-sleeves, with people hurrying, with those bizarre split-up movements—William R. G. Eddie, who is sixteen, billions and liveried Negroes, such gorgeous ash-white hair, and a tortoise-shell monocle. He will get married.

I shall also be a trapper, or thief, or a prospector, or a hunter or a miner, a welder—Arizona Bar (*Whisky—Gin and mixed?*) and beautiful explorable forests, and you know those fine riding-breeches with submachine-guns, with, so close-shaved, such beautiful hands with diamonds—All this will end in a fire, I tell you, or in a salon, fortune made—Well

How am I going, my poor friend, to put up with the last months in uniform?—(I have been told that the war was over)—I am truly tired out. . . and THEY are suspicious. . . They suspect something—As long as THEY don't debrain me while THEY still have me in their grip!

I read the article on the cinema (in Film), by L.A. with as much pleasure as I may, for the moment. There will be some amusing things to do, when unleashed and free.

AND

BEWARE!

Will you write me?

Your good friend

Harry James

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To André Breton  
19-12-18

My dear André,

. . . I too would like to see you again—the number of the *subtle* ones is, in truth, very tiny—How I envy you to be in Paris and able to mystify people who are worth the trouble!—Here I am in Brussels, once again in my dear atmosphere of tango around three a.m., of marvelous industries in front of some monstrous double-strawed cocktail and some bloody smile—I work at droll drawings with colored pencils on heavy-grained paper and I scribble pages for something—I do not know what.

Do you know that I no longer know what I am about: you were telling me of some scenic action (the characters—remember—you were defining them)—and then drawings on wood for poems yours—has it been delayed?

Excuse me if I do not understand your last sibylline letter: what do you expect from me—my dear friend?—HVMOUR—my dear friend André. . . it is no small thing. It is not some sort of Neo-naturalism—Will you, when you can, enlighten me some more?

I seem to remember that we had agreed to leave the WORLD in an astonished semi-ignorance until some future satisfactory (and perhaps scandalous) manifestation. However, and naturally, I leave it to you to prepare the ways for that deceiving God, who snickers a bit and who is terrible always—How funny it will be, you see, that true NEW SPIRIT is unleashed!

I received your letter with its multiple glued clippings which filled me with delight—It is very beautiful but it could use some excerpts from a railway time-table, don't you agree? . . . Apollinaire has done a lot for us and he is certainly not dead; he was right to stop just in time however—It has been said but it must be repeated: HE MARKS AN EPOCH. The beautiful things we'll be able to do—NOW!

I enclose a piece of my present notes—perhaps you will want to put it next to the poem yours, somewhere in what T.F. calls the infamous gazettes—What is becoming of the latter people?—tell me all this. See how he won us this war!

Are you in Paris for a while?—I plan to come in about a month, and to see you at all cost.

Your friend

Harry James

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**BOOK REVIEWS**  
**BY JACQUES VACHE**  
(*Le Canard Sauvage*, No. 2, 1913)

**G. de Pawlowski**  
***Voyage to the Land of the Fourth Dimension***  
(Voyage au pays de la 4e dimension)

**M**r. de Pawlowski is both a humorist and a sociologist. His new novel studies the hypothetical development of society in a very distant future. This is a futuristic essay, quite naturally evolving out of a scientific study of the "Fourth Dimension," whose discovery is said to have allowed its author to escape our age-old notions of time and space. The first part of the book recounts the discovery of the fourth dimension, the second is an account of several "momentary voyages on site" in what we call, by default assumption, the Future. The style is a curious mixture of scientific tone and the most discreet, at times imperceptible, irony—so subtle that when we start to take the author completely at his word, we soon catch him red-handed with blatant humor. Take, for example, the episode of the rat and the "sample woman." *The Voyage to the Country of the Fourth Dimension* is at the same time a novel that intrigues us and a book that makes us think.

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