

*From Dada to Infra-noir: Dada, Surrealism, and
Romania*

Trost's Journey from Reality as a Dream to the Dream as Reality

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Trost's Journey from Reality as a Dream to the Dream as Reality

Michael Finkenthal

D. Trost set out from the very beginning of his adhesion to surrealism to modify the deep structures of the dream-life.¹ Such a modification, if it could be achieved, was meant to transform human consciousness through a dialectical process and thus lead to a radical change of the diurnal life of the individual, which, in turn, would pave the way toward a fundamental modification of human existence at both the personal and social level. Trost did not consider the dream to be the source of a truth to be extracted by allegorical or any other kind of interpretation, but rather as a means toward the permanent Revolution that was required to significantly change the world in order to accede to the new reality the surrealist movement was seeking. This change could be accomplished, as André Breton had already pointed out long before him, only if both the social order and the individual structures were to change *simultaneously*. Trost believed that if individuals could free themselves of taboos and social interdictions and establish new kinds of relationships based on unconditional love and on a total renunciation of selfish considerations such as coercion and intense feelings for private property, the social structures would change as well. His three surrealist works discussed in the following pages, *Vision dans le cristal* (Vision in the Crystal, 1945), *Le Même du même* (The Same of the Same, 1947), and the long text addressed in 1951 together with a letter to André Breton ("L'Âge de la rêverie"), make explicit this vision. At first glance his views conform to the tradition of 'classical' surrealism elaborated in France by André Breton and his followers during the two decades after the first "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924); however, an attentive study of his work will show that Trost transcends this tradition, going far beyond its established confines. His ideas about dream, normalcy, and the relationship between diurnal and nocturnal human life are highly original and can sustain comparison with later developments in the fields of psychology and psychiatry. (Suffice it to mention in this context the names of W. Bion and Ignacio Matte-Blanco.) By

¹ I refer to the author under discussion sometimes as D. Trost and mostly as Trost, the latter being the way he signed all of his surrealist work starting in 1945. He was born Adolf and was known among his colleagues and friends as Dolfi. He is known to have rejected the name Adolf and its short form after the war and the Holocaust (Yaari 95, n. 1). The moment of Trost's adhesion to surrealism can be situated around 1940.

associating the idea of an *individual* permanent revolution with that of the social one, Trost transcends Trotsky's simpleminded political concept of "permanent revolution" applied to Soviet Communism, raising it to a level relevant even in the context of a complex post-modern world.

The preoccupation with the dream and its meanings is a very old one. From Chuang-Tsu to postmodern authors, the meaning, interpretation, and role of the dream in the life of the individual have been often discussed in verse and in prose, in philosophical and, more recently, in scientific works. Modern neuroscience tries to understand the complicated processes that occur in the brain during the dreaming phase as well as the nature of the connections between the emotional charge of the dream and the rational process of its interpretation by the dreamer. Wittgenstein, MacIntyre, and Grünbaum revisited and criticized Freud (Levy), and from Jung to Deleuze many tried to rewrite him entirely (although Freud might have been familiar not only with Nietzsche and the German romantic poets Hölderlin and Novalis, but also with Wittgenstein, particularly concerning their own ideas about the dream). In one of his lectures delivered in the United States at the beginning of the previous century, Freud observed that "the interpretation of dreams is in fact the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious; it is the securest foundation of psychoanalysis and the field in which every worker must acquire his convictions and seek his training. If I am asked how one can become a psychoanalyst, I reply: By studying one's own dreams" (33). Thus *dreams* and the *unconscious* are directly linked in classical Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. Both are dominated by properties that cannot be described or explained in purely logical terms; as a result, a huge intellectual effort was invested in various attempts to find specific concepts and reasoned formulations capable of enabling a comprehensive description of the unconscious and, as a result, the clarification of the hidden meanings of dreams. Some of these efforts came from literary or artistic quarters; as it is well known to the readers of this journal, a prominent source of ideas in this domain is the surrealist movement.² In other instances, psychiatrists looked for explanations and modeling in remote scientific fields. Matte-Blanco, for example, in his study of the unconscious described the structures of the unconscious in terms of abstract set theory, summarizing his attempt as follows: "My hope is that the precision that may be attained in this way will permit a formulation, in terms of Logos, of those aspects of man which, though not alien to Logos – to logic – go beyond logic as it is now thought of" (*Unconscious as Infinite Sets* 60).

² For the non-specialist I shall mention only the works of André Breton, the founder of the movement, who wrote extensively about the relationship between surrealism and psychoanalysis. See the two 'manifestos' (of 1924 and 1929) and his article 'Surrealism and Psychoanalysis.'

In an exhaustive 1974 study entitled *Le Surréalisme et le rêve* (Surrealism and the Dream), Sarane Alexandrian, a close follower of André Breton during the years following World War II, pointed out that Trost had attempted an interpretation of dreams based on the theory of “objective chance” (225).³ Moreover (continuing his comments on Trost’s *Vision dans le crystal*, 1945), Alexandrian highlights Trost’s suggestion that the dream itself must be free of any socio-cultural concepts so that the pure dream-like character of human thinking (“le fonctionnement onirique de la pensée” (Trost qtd. in Alexandrian 226)) could be arrived at in the process.⁴ Later, in *Le Même du même* (1947), Trost would continue this line of thought and state that only the manifest content of the dream is real, the latent content being merely a Freudian fiction. Moreover, all dreams are essentially of an erotic nature and, Alexandrian paraphrases, “les scènes oniriques sont des formes d’amour altérées par un double déterminisme subjectif et objectif” (226) ‘dream-scenes are forms of love modified by a double, subjective-objective determinism.’ Desire does not precede the dream, wrote Trost; on the contrary, “Le rêve crée le désir et en se créant lui-même, le désir crée le rêve en s’exprimant” (qtd. in Alexandrian 226) ‘the dream creates the desire in the process of creating itself and the desire generates the dream while expressing itself.’ Trost concluded that “rêve et désir se confondent” ‘dream and desire overlap.’ Therefore, the dream is not a reflection of some reality but represents reality itself; its strange character stems from the censorship imposed upon it by diurnal logical thought. I shall return to discuss in more detail some of the points brought up by Alexandrian and bring forth and comment on some new ones. But first I would like to briefly present the background of this relative latecomer to the avant-garde in general and to surrealism in particular.

Trost passed through the late surrealist movement like a comet. He came from far away – engaged as he was in left wing literary and philosophical currents before World War II – only to disappear beyond the horizon when he left Paris during the mid-fifties after having rejected his surrealist past. Indeed, in a letter to Mirabelle Dors, just before he departed for the United States (where he would die about ten years later), Trost announced—that he was getting rid of all surrealist material he still possessed (“je ‘liquide’ tout mon matériel surréaliste”)⁵. Did he indeed *liquidate* his surrealist persona when he left for the New World, after more than a decade of strong involvement with this movement? While the mystery surrounding Trost’s life in America makes this an interesting question, in the present article I shall limit the discussion to his personal contributions and the specific weight his ideas had during the late phases of the surrealist movement in

³ Originally to be found in Engels’ *Dialectic of Nature*, the concept was adopted by the surrealists to establish a connection between natural laws and those governing human behavior.

⁴ All translations from Romanian and French are mine.

⁵ Private communication, Catherine Hansen.

general as well as within this 'radical' branch of the second wave—of Romanian surrealism that came to the fore briefly in the immediate post-war period. Of course, such an attempt would require drawing a map of the post-World War II surrealist intellectual landscape and positioning Trost on this map: how did he get there, what did he find of interest in it, and where did he try to go once he felt comfortably established in the surrealist realm? Moreover, one would like to understand also the reasons for Trost's final rift with the movement and his departure from a place that seemed, just a few years earlier, a new Promised Land or Wonderland. Even for specialists, questions like whether surrealism was a literary-artistic movement or rather a social-revolutionary one, whether it tried to change the human *individual* or rather *the world* in which he or she lived, or to what extent this movement had a universal (global) character and to what extent it was shaped rather by the history of Europe between the two World Wars, remain open. Many in-depth studies, from Maurice Nadeau's history of the movement to Alquié's *Philosophy of Surrealism* (to mention only two of the "classic" ones for the benefit of the general readership), as well as many memoirs and recollections, from those of its founder, André Breton, to those of his close followers such as Alexandrian, not to mention an endless number of articles, books and Ph. D. theses, all try to answer these questions (often with limited success). In this brief essay I shall concentrate only on the very specific issue of the literary production of this one member of the "second wave" surrealist group in Romania, considered by some one of its two main "theorists," between 1940 and 1955. From Trost's intricate body of works, I have tried to extract and to present some of his central ideas, his specific contributions within and perhaps beyond the confines of surrealism itself (such as his notion of the role of dialectics in the emergence of new concepts and patterns of behavior). I shall touch also upon Trost's theories concerning the nature of the dream world and their possible impact on the collective existence of individuals. (I am fully aware that "nature," "essence," and other such concepts are banned from postmodern discourse; I use them here fully conscious of their temporal and socio-cultural variability.) His intuitions concerning the social aspects of the psychological make-up of the individual, or those concerning the essence of the "unconscious" and its relationship with the rational intellectual activity of the human consciousness as well as his ideas about the nature of the dream and its relationship with the subliminal activities of the human psyche are surprising, and I shall claim that some of his insights in these domains were novel and quite original.

I shall begin with a few biographic details: according to dictionaries and encyclopedias, D. Trost was born in 1916 in Brăila, Romania, and died in 1966 in the United States. The dictionaries give his place of death as Chicago; it seems that this information originates with the poet Stefan Baciu. Trost's niece (the daughter of the writer's sister, who lives in Israel) claims however that the last letters to the family arrived, shortly before his death, from New York. Trost was the son of a champagne maker (and/or importer) who moved to Brăila from Botoșani

sometime before World War I; his mother, whose maiden name was Reiss, was of German or Austro-Hungarian origin. Even though the parents were secular Jews, some religious traditions were still kept in the family: one story has it that one of the author's grandfathers died of a heart attack in the Synagogue during the Yom Kippur service. Practically, all we know about the youth of the future theoretician of the second wave of Romanian surrealism is that he had a younger sister and that the family left Brăila for the capital city of Bucharest when the two children reached high school age. Education represented a very important issue for acculturated Jewish families in post-World War I Romania; we do not know what language young Dolfi spoke at home, but all the commentators have pointed out Trost's very good command of French, and it is possible that he acquired the French language at a very early age. He attended Romanian schools in spite of the family's German connections, since, with the creation of Greater Romania after the 1919 Peace Agreements, a large Jewish minority was included within its confines, and it was very important to "assimilate" culturally in order to obtain a respectable and secure social and economic position. This, at least, was the prevalent perception among the acculturated Jews who were on their way to becoming citizens of a country that was very slow to recognize their civil rights.

Trost enrolled in the University of Bucharest to study literature and philosophy, probably in 1934; according to some sources, he studied law as well.—His first published articles in the cultural-literary press seem to appear around that date. In addition, young Trost's writings featured in *Reporter*, *Era Nouă*, and Zaharia Stancu's *Azi*, all left wing publications. By 1937 we find him in the pages of *Meridian*, a review with avant-garde tendencies that appeared between 1934 and 1938.⁶ *Meridian* had as collaborators, among others, Gellu Naum, Geo Bogza, Sașa Pană, and Stephan Roll. During the late thirties he wrote for *Cuvântul Liber*, *Rampa*, and *Lumea Românească*, all publications that opposed the rising number of right wing, nationalistically oriented reviews. Surprisingly, perhaps, in 1940 we find Trost contributing to the very mainstream *Viața Românească* as well. The years before the outbreak of World War II were therefore years of studies and of work as a journalist and literary critic; it remains to be established to what extent he was personally involved with avant-garde authors in Bucharest or elsewhere. He might have encountered in any of the above venues Paul Păun or Gherasim Luca before the latter's departure for Paris in 1938, but it is not clear whether he knew Gellu Naum before he too departed for France, that same year.⁷

⁶ Michael Ilk (32) mentions his name as a contributor to *Meridian*, published in Craiova by Tiberiu Iliescu, already in 1934. However, Pricop's *Dicționar de avangardă literară românească* (106) does not mention Trost among the early collaborators in this publication.

⁷ Gellu Naum published his first work of poetry, *Drumețul incendiar*, in 1936; Gherasim Luca, in addition to his activity at the avant-garde review *Alge*, published *Fata Morgana* in 1937. Paul Păun, who also collaborated in *Alge*, published his first volume of poetry, *Plămânuț sălbatec*, in 1938. (For details see Pop 167 et passim.)

Whatever his involvement with avant-garde literature might have been, Trost kept his distance from dadaist or surrealist ideas and even more so from their writing styles. The articles published in 1937, which I shall very briefly discuss here, reveal a young *engagé* journalist concerned mainly with the role of the writer and the artist in a society torn between two extreme ideologies: the fascist on the right and the communist on the left. In the article published in the above-mentioned *Meridian*, the author identified the problem contemporary Romania was facing as one related to socio-economic issues generated by a declining capitalist society that cannot but perpetuate injustice and inequality. (In fact, this was not far from Breton's political assessments at the time.) Under these conditions, the writer must take sides; being the product of the times he lives in, he has a choice only between joining either the reactionary or the revolutionary side. Trost's discourse at the time was openly Marxist; the rhetoric was reminiscent of Communist Party propaganda as it often used direct and simplistic revolutionary slogans: "Rolul scriitorului este, atunci, de a înțelege epoca sa . . . să ajute forțele revoluționare . . . prin scris sau prin acțiune fățișă" ("Trădarea intelectualilor") 'The role of the writer is to understand his times . . . and help the revolutionary forces . . . through his writing and through direct political activities.' After giving a few "positive" examples, among them Ilya Ehrenburg, André Malraux, and Aldous Huxley, Trost condemns the authors and the artists who have misunderstood their revolutionary role in society. At best, these well-intentioned but badly positioned writers remain entangled in a literature of romances or of sensationalist prose, extolling the virtues of "introspecției exacerbate pentru a găsi reacțiunile unor indivizi descompuși și diluați în contradicții" (8) 'the obsessive introspection oriented toward the analysis of characters marred by dissolution and torn by endless inner contradictions.' It is a long road that D. Trost will embark on, to travel from this worldview to that expressed a few years later in *Vision dans le cristal* and in his post 1947 writings, *Visible et invisible* (1953) and *Librement mécanique* (1955).

The ethical preoccupied Trost as well, but this issue too was linked in his mind to that of social struggle. In a special issue of the journal *Azi* dedicated to "Art and Pornography," occasioned by the arrest of a fellow avant-garde writer, Geo Bogza, he answered the question of whether to "introduce o operă de artă într-un system de reguli morale" 'whether the artistic work can be confined to a pre-set system of values' this way: "o imixțiune a moralei în artă, ar fi intolerată, fiindcă—astăzi morală înseamnă pur și simplu morală de clasă" ("Arta și pornografia") 'an intervention of the ethical in matters of art would be unacceptable for the simple reason that today morality is synonymous with class morality.' A second question of the editors addressed the origin of the authority that defines the value-system in society and who should be in charge of its implementation. Here, the young Marxist surprises somewhat by indicating an inclination toward a radical approach, which will characterize his attitudes and writings in later years. "Nici o instituție juridică, politică sau legislativă, în actuala societate, nu poate defini

cadrele în care să se dezvolte arta” ‘There is no institution, judiciary, political or legislative, that has the authority to impose boundaries on artistic activity.’ Finally, to a third question, “is the accusation brought against a given work of art based on some intrinsic negative attitude/value which would make it or its author legally responsible?”, Trost answered invoking the famous slogan about class warfare: to bring an author to justice for a work of art is an aberration, “aberație explicabilă astăzi ca fiind încă unul din mijloacele prin care o clasă vrea să închidă posibilitățile unei noi culturi” ‘an aberration which can be understood in terms of the pressure through which a given [social] class tries to prevent the development of a new culture’ (the implication being, presumably, a “revolutionary culture” in the Marxist sense).

In the same issue of that journal we find another article of the author titled “Eri, azi, mâine: Destinul gândirii științifice” (Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: The Destiny of Scientific Thought), which gives a better measure of the young revolutionary’s intellectual abilities and, more importantly, some insight into his philosophical readings and reasoning. It is still a Marxist rendering of the evolution of Western scientific thinking from the Renaissance to his days, which quotes Engels (*Anti-Dühring*) and Lenin (*Materialism and Empiriocriticism*) but also a few modern commentators of leftist orientation, such as Prenant, Nizan, and Georges Friedmann). However, Spengler and Keyserling are also mentioned (in connection with Berdiaev’s *The New Middle Ages*). Trost writes about *objective reality*, about dialectical materialism (which explains science) and about science (which in turn re-enforces the tenets of dialectical materialism). The twenty-one year old author is optimistic and believes that a new world will come into being following a revolution built on Marxist-Leninist principles; in this world a new *Weltanschauung*, unbound in its breadth and its scope, will be born. On the surface, nothing seems to predict the future change in philosophical and artistic outlook of the young revolutionary. However, in a quote from no other than Lenin one finds mentioned *the dream* and its relationship with waking reality: “Dezacordul între vis și realitate nu are nimic primejdios dacă ființa care gândește ce comportă în chip serios cu visul său. . . . Când există contact între vis și viață, totul este bine” (2686) ‘the disagreement between the dream and waking reality is not dangerous for a thinking human being who takes the dream seriously. . . . When there is contact between dream and life, all is well.’ Trost indicates the source of this quote as Jean Guéhenno’s *Jeunesse de la France*, a book published in 1936 in France. Considering the writings of the French author one may surmise that Guéhenno, more than Lenin, was the real spiritual guide of young Trost during the thirties.

Psychology and its relationship with the artistic act became also a topic of interest for Trost as he matured. In an article titled “Starea melodramatică” (The Melodramatic State), published in 1940 but written probably just before the start of the war, he discusses the psychological and artistic underpinnings of a specific theatrical-literary form. The guiding Marxist concept of the cultural-artistic superstructure as an emanation of the material-economic base is recognizable in

Trost's argumentation; the author tries however to find a subtler mechanism linking the "material" with the "spiritual." The melodrama, he writes, is linked to a certain social attitude; as the author attempts to prove in his article that modern art in its entirety is penetrated by a melodramatic spirit, it would follow that one can uncover a prevalent social situation at the origin of contemporary artistic output. The fatality of a destiny dominated by the accidental, by separation, and by coincidence (objective chance?), underscores the characteristics of the melodramatic work. The pain inflicted by a destiny dominated by pure contingency can only be contemplated in a passive way; this fact has as corollary an enhancement of the value attributed to a romanticized past. At present, Trost argues, cultural forms that express the melodramatic feeling are given preference. Still, there is a difference between romanticism and melodramatic artistry: the former is lacking the excessive sentimentalism of the latter, precisely because of its "controlled," self-reflexive character. As with the mention of dreams in "Eri, azi, mâine," here too, one finds an allusion to a hermeneutical construct that will be used by the author in his upcoming surrealist theoretical work. The author changes intellectually, but at the same time he remains consistent with himself: the conclusion of the article is in keeping with many of his previous ones. The "melodramatic state," which dominates contemporary artistic production, is "negative" and might have deleterious effects: it helps to hide new realities and, as a consequence, novel ways and means of expression are made impossible. However, the radical Marxist rhetoric is toned down and the author concludes that this regressive attitude opposes not the revolutionary attitude, but rather the Faustian. Could such a conclusion be the result of pressures induced by the political and social constraints of the time, or does it hint at the beginning of a deep change in D. Trost's own *Weltanschauung*?

The activities of Trost and his surrealist friends Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Gellu Naum, and Virgil Teodorescu during the war years remain a difficult territory to explore, and further research is needed.⁸ After a long silence between 1940 and 1944, their works began to appear after the end of 1944, which is when the pro-German government in Bucharest was replaced through a military coup

⁸ In French, there are several recent monographs devoted to Gherasim Luca, by Dominique Carlat, Petre Răileanu, and most recently, Iulian Toma, as well as one by Rémy Laville on Gellu Naum. Information and scholarship about Paul Păun and Trost is unfortunately quite scarce, but see for example recent articles on the surrealist group of the 1940s by Monique Yaari, "The Surrealist Group of Bucharest" and "Le Groupe surréaliste de Bucharest entre Paris et Bruxelles, 1945-1947." See also, in this volume, Catherine Hansen's article, "Dialectical Despair: Gherasim Luca, Gellu Naum, and the Hazards of a Non-Oedipal Life" and other articles on members of the group.

with a new one, open to collaboration with the democratic forces fighting Nazi Germany. During the years 1945-1947, before the installation of the Communist regime in Romania, the five members of the group published a large number of works and held several art exhibitions in Bucharest.⁹ Together with his friends (with the exception perhaps of Gellu Naum who was mobilized part of this time in the Romanian army on the Russian front but who also finished a long essay, *Medium*, in 1940-1941), Trost began writing surrealist texts during the war years, but he would not have the chance to present publicly his first ideas about the nature of the dream-world until 1945 in *Vision dans le cristal* (subtitled *Oniromancie obsessionnelle*). Here, from the very beginning, he restates one of the fundamental ideas of "classical" surrealism: "Le mouvement surréaliste, dès son apparition, s'est opposé à la division artificielle de la vie en aspects diurnes et nocturnes, en affirmant pour la première fois la nécessité matérialiste et dialectique de mettre le rêve en accord avec l'état de veille" (9) 'the surrealist movement opposed from the very beginning the artificial division of life into separate diurnal and nocturnal aspects, claiming for the first time the materialist and dialectical necessity of attuning the dream to the waking state.' To bring the dream-life and diurnal reality into agreement requires an "objectivisation" of the former; the latter can be analyzed and understood in logical terms assuming that the external reality is independent of the subjective observer. Freud believed that such a process is realized through the distinction between the *latent* and the *manifest* content of the dream; Trost, however, claims that this approach is not only intellectually flawed but also (and worse) meaningless, since the true meaning of the dream-world is lost while the deep structures of reality remain veiled in the process. Since the laws of dialectics rule the external world as well as our interpretations of it, once a statement is uttered, its negation becomes valid as well; a synthesis of the two follows and in the process a new meaning/reality is obtained. The fact that Freud neglected this aspect severely limited his interpretations even though some of them might still be valid. A similar argument led the author to the rejection of the Oedipal interpretation of the *psyche* proposed by the founder of the psychoanalysis. Freud's "science" represented merely a list of remedies meant to heal another list of *a priori* defined mental health problems: "On pouvait voir dans les sublimes descriptions des malades, dans leurs rêves obsessionnellement érotiques, dans leur irrésistibles manies que la réalité sociale s'opposait à la satisfaction de leurs désirs" (11) 'One could infer from the sublime descriptions of the sick, from their obsessively erotic dreams, from their irresistible maniacal behavior, that social realities prevented the satisfaction of their desires.' In what follows, Trost attempts to go beyond the analysis of such basic Freudian concepts as *repression* and *condensation*; he attacks the validity of the 'reality' underlying

⁹ See my articles in Romanian on this subject, "Note pentru o re-poziționare a 'valului' suprarealist din România: 1945-1948" and "Ce s-a întâmplat cu avangardiștii celui 'de-al doilea' val în anul de grație 1947?"

such concepts and the methods used in the elaboration of a discourse based on them: “à la nécessité de modifier le monde extérieur, conclusion qui s’imposait, se substitua pour des raisons de sécurité un essai de guérison” ‘to the need of changing the external world, which would have been the obvious conclusion, an attempted cure was substituted for reasons of safety.’ Long before Foucault – but later than Eugen Bleuler, who before World War I had already opposed a state of normalcy essentially different from that of the supposed *mental sickness* manifest in psychotic individuals – Trost explained the so-called *abnormal state* in terms of the rejection of a broader concept of normalcy based on social and cultural interdictions: “[les malades] auraient voulu rencontrer d’une autre façon le monde objectif et pour eux les symptômes pathologiques restaient l’unique possibilité d’*aimer*” ‘the sick would have wanted another kind of encounter with the objective world, and for them the pathological symptoms were the only way to express *love*.’ That is why he will claim that one needs to re-define the nature of the reality one lives in.

To counteract the fallacious Freudian analysis – (“l’analyse de tous les rêves par cette méthode symbolique (la méthode d’interprétation freudienne), réduit les contenus manifestes différents à un contenu latent unique, voire à une unique possibilité. Toutes les analyses existentes du contenu latent ne sont que des résumés plus ou moins simplifiés du complexe d’Oedipe” (33) ‘this symbolic, Freudian method of dream analysis reduces the various manifest contents to a unique latent one, even to a single possibility. All the existing analyses of the latent content of dreams are more or less simplified renderings of the Oedipus complex’) – the author interprets seven dreams in terms of his own ideas. These constitute the starting point of his in-depth criticism of Freud and allow him to present an original surrealist alternative: “La méthode d’interprétation choisie . . . s’adresse pour la première fois au hasard objectif en tant que fonction cryptesthétique,” he writes, and explains that “dans l’analyse, je reprenais chaque phrase symptomatique, mais au lieu de la mettre en association mnésique d’idées, j’ouvrais au hasard, à l’aide d’un couteau, un manuel de pathologie érotique, en considérant le texte qui me tombait sous les yeux comme interprétant la phrase lue auparavant” (13-14) ‘The chosen method of interpretation . . . turns to objective chance as a cryptesthetic function for the very first time. . . . in the analysis, I took each symptomatic sentence and, instead of trying to associate it to some memory, I opened randomly, with a knife, a textbook on erotic pathology and took whatever passage my eyes fell upon as my interpretation of the initial sentence drawn from the dream.’

This is the essence of the *oniromancy* Trost described in his 1945 essay, *Vision dans le cristal*: it represents an intellectual construct in which the use of the concept of *objective chance* as he has redefined it is integrated into a new method of interpreting dreams. Seen from outside the surrealist frame of reference, such a “method” might appear arbitrary; from “within,” however, while quite daring in its novelty, the proposal is entirely consistent with the basic tenets of a surrealist

psychological analysis. In spite of its radical character, it retains some basic Freudian ideas: for instance, Trost retains the fundamentally erotic character of the dream-life (“l’aspect foncièrement érotique de tout rêve” (33)) postulated by Freud. At the same time, the postulation of a direct link between the manifest content of the dream and the symptoms of a pathological eroticism frees the interpretation in Trost’s version of its therapeutic finality and makes it “scientific.” (This concern with the “scientific” character of his theories is a constant in Trost’s work.) One should not be afraid of the seemingly absurd implication of such a conclusion: the absurd, Trost reminds us, is the main ingredient of dream-life: “Par le hasard, nous nous trouvions d’emblée placés dans l’absurde, que nous n’aurions jamais voulu quitter et dans le domaine duquel nous nous mouvions dans le rêve même” (34) ‘Chance would place us at once within the absurd, a state we never wanted to leave, the site of the dream itself.’ The procedure proposed by Trost assigns to the manifest content of the dream an erotic nature; that way, the hope invested in the dream-world (“cet ‘espoir du rêve’ qui persiste en nous”), a hope given up by the usual (“normal”) relationship we have with it, is renewed. As the dream frees itself of the tyranny of memory and of symbolic interpretation, it approaches a delirious state dominated by the creativity of the unfettered dream. In Trost’s interpretation, the “oneiric function” of the dream is to establish a real, authentic link between the dream-world and the “real” world. This new, purged dream-world will enable new telepathic and predictive potentialities, liberating the human being from the prison of repressed memories. An existence freed of hidden complexes has unknown, mythological dimensions, among them the potential to bring together people who do not know each other, everywhere (“sur toutes les latitudes”); these people “poursuivent avec acharnement le même amour de la folie et de la révolution” (35) ‘pursue relentlessly a shared love of madness and of revolution.’ This excess of “madness” and revolt, through which the true oneiric function of the dream is realized, will represent the new “norm”; a new human being will thus emerge through the seemingly absurd procedure of introducing objective chance in the interpretation and understanding of the dream-life.

The world we live in is full of mysteries: our hidden desires and explicit wishes are hard to reconcile with external reality, that difficult *monde objectif*; transcending erotic symbolism has the potential to make the dream-world “real.” While communication between the dream-world and diurnal reality is the great promise, it cannot be realized unless one redefines the nature of the dream; through such a redefinition one modifies also qualitatively the nature of the dream-world. This simultaneous transformation in both the epistemic and ontological realms is made possible by the use of dialectical materialism (as shown in another work,

Dialectique de la dialectique, published the same year by Trost together with Gherasim Luca¹⁰).

If one takes a more general view, in his *Vision dans le cristal* Trost attempted to sketch a new vision of surrealism, one that corresponds to the world born in the traumatic experience of World War II, the war in which tens of millions of human beings were killed, a world that generated the Holocaust and witnessed the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As we mentioned already, André Breton always believed that deep social and political changes would be possible only if and when radical changes were to occur in the deepest structures of the individual soul. The totalitarian societies that dominated the pre-war world seemed to promise social and political changes, but they proved to be totally ineffectual at implementing deep, structural changes in the individual *psyche*. Granted, hatred, nationalistic instincts, envy, and cruelty were manipulated by the right as well as by the left, but there was nothing really new in that. The members of the surrealist group in post-war Romania were all animated by a deep desire to participate in a truly radical and genuine remaking of the deep structures of the human soul. It was of course a utopian idea, but their efforts were entirely consistent with the great surrealist desideratum. Trost's essay is a perfect illustration of this effort.

How can one modify the basic psychological mechanisms governing the individual? In both the "automatic writing" proposed by Breton at the outset of the surrealist movement and in the later practice of transcribing directly, without any intervention, the manifest content of actual dreams, one finds traces of "des éléments diurnes antithétiques" (37) 'antithetical diurnal elements,' as well as other parasitic images. The unpleasant memories are linked to disagreeable names. If automatic writing and the dream represent pure manifestations of an intellect believed to be isolated from negative interferences, the "perturbations" mentioned must have their roots in the external social reality of the individual. Those are the "negatives" one must fight: "nous devons les considérer comme des interruptions défavorables, reprochables à notre appareil psychique, surtout dans ses aspects mécaniquement mnésiques" 'we must consider them as undesired interruptions due to our psychic apparatus, especially in its mechanically mnemonic aspects.' The deleterious role played by the social in the structure of the dream makes liberation from the shackles of the Oedipus complex difficult and thus tends to slow down – if not render impossible – any radical modification of the human personality. Since that is often the case ("la plupart des rêves que nous connaissons nous offrent ces interruptions décourageantes. . . . Mais toutes ces terreurs opprimantes ne peuvent appartenir au rêve, comme elles ne peuvent appartenir au texte automatique" (38-40) 'most of the dreams that we know present these discouraging interruptions. . . . But these oppressing fears cannot belong to the dream, just as they cannot belong in automatic writing'), dreams that include such

¹⁰ For further discussion of these concepts in *Dialectique de la Dialectique* see Finkenthal, "Dolfi Trost între vis și realitate" and Toma, "Récit de rêve et schizophrénie."

negative residuals must be eliminated. Otherwise, the subversive potential of the dream is jeopardized: “à cause de la persistance de certains éléments moraux et sociaux, les rêves perdent une grande part de leur valeur subversive” (41) ‘because of the persistence of certain social and moral elements, dreams lose a large part of their subversive value.’ Once the dream is freed of these residuals, it will truly begin to affect diurnal reality. If for Freud and his followers actual life was to be found in modified forms in the dream, for Trost things work in precisely the opposite manner: it is the actual, diurnal life that must be influenced and modified by the dream. There is however a conceptual difficulty inherent in this reasoning: the causal connection linking the latent and the manifest content of the dream precludes the inclusion of “reactionary” characteristics in the genuine affective elements of the dream: “impossible d’exprimer des désirs réels par des images réactionnaires” (42) ‘it is impossible to express real desire through reactionary images.’ Trost tried to overcome this difficulty, at the time, with a relatively weak argument: “Je ne puis croire qu’un rêve à contenu manifeste régressif puisse avoir un contenu latent qui ne lui ressemble d’une certaine manière” ‘I cannot believe that a dream exhibiting a regressive manifest content can possibly harbor a latent content that would not be similar to it in some manner.’ This hints at the fact that the relationship between the latent meanings and the manifest description of the dream must be determined by the structures of the unconscious, where the negative images of the socially dependent residuals mentioned above are conserved. In order to establish a genuinely free exchange between diurnal and nocturnal realities, the structures of the unconscious have to be uncovered together with the coupling mechanisms between these structures and those of the dream-world. (Thus in a way he returns here to Freud’s statement mentioned above, but at a different level of understanding of the phenomena involved.) The theoretically minded Trost was quite aware of the intellectual difficulties implied by his explorations; he would revisit and attempt to address some of them in the works he published in 1947 and during the first years of his French sojourn, after 1952. In this essay of 1945, however, once these difficulties are acknowledged, the author prefers to set them aside and channel his thoughts in a different direction: “après avoir ainsi parlé du rêve, je voudrais parler du ‘songe’, pour ne pas oublier ce que nous recherchons dans la sublime activité onirique, pour pouvoir parler de son inégalable valeur révolutionnaire qui doit être trouvée surtout dans ses éléments encore insaisissables” (43) ‘having spoken so far of the dream, I would like to speak now of the “songe” in order not to neglect what we ultimately seek in this sublime oneiric activity, and to bring to the fore its exceptional revolutionary value, which should be found in some of its so far hidden elements.’ This “songe” is a dream purified of the diurnal residuals one should eliminate from the conscious, daily life. In a way, one could define it as a second-order dream or *meta-dream*, which, being “clean” now, induces a higher reality through a dialectical move. Once this is achieved, the contaminated dreams become

ineffective; however, to be on the safe side, the author proposes to eliminate them from the system through induced nightmares.

In *Le Même du même*, published in 1947 as part of the *Infra-noir* series, Trost reconsiders his earlier thoughts about the nature of the dream and the relationship between the dream and diurnal life proposed in the 1945 essay. He begins by stating again the lack of legitimacy of the latent content of the dream: “il n’y a pas de rêve latent sinon dans la conscience ultérieure et ce que l’on nomme contenu latent n’est qu’une réduction logique, abstraite et arbitraire d’une suite d’images toujours brillantes et complexes” (2) ‘there is no such a thing as a latent content of the dream, other than in an ulterior consciousness, and what is called latent content is merely an abstract and arbitrary logical reduction of a multitude of brilliant and complex images.’ In fact, these complex and brilliant images represent the *unfiltered*, manifest content of the dream. This time, however, the discussion does not stop at the level of general principles: Trost states directly that the basic fallacy underlying the Freudian-Oedipal interpretation of dreams is due to the erotic quality added *ex machina* to the latent content of the dream. The truth is, he argues, that the dream has an inherent erotic character – “le rêve manifeste est érotique par lui-même” ‘the manifest dream is in itself erotic’ – and as a result, its fabric, its composition, the stuff dreams are made of, is directly related to love: “toutes les scènes qui le composent sont directement des forms d’amour” ‘all the scenes of which it consists represent various forms of love.’ The corollary of all of the above seems to be that the unconscious becomes a structure reflecting that part of our affective life that is related to Eros and the erotic in all its manifestations. These being of an affective nature, it is obvious that their “logic” is different from that of conscious thinking. That is why the unconscious, which hosts the dream-life, must have a very different structure from that of the conscious mind. Later on, Matte Blanco will show that indeed this was the case.

Another implication of Trost’s reasoning is that the mechanism of censorship is located in the conscious: “la répression est incorporée intimement au fonctionnement actuel du conscient.” Repression exists (‘is intimately incorporated’ into the conscious realm) but its role is not to make the dream “acceptable” to the consciousness; its censorial activity is oriented toward a blurring of the real meaning of the manifest content of the dream. Human consciousness, very much influenced by the social pressure exerted on the individual, refuses to acknowledge the truth of the universal character of the erotic, “l’érotisation générale de la matière” (3), in Trost’s words. In order to overcome this hurdle, the dream-content must be established directly and not by analogies; the erotic aspect being essential in the dream as well as in the Universe, the dream is re-defined by Trost so as to represent an exclusively erotic modality of objective chance! Thus, the circle is closed. The desire precedes the dream,

representing thus an *objective* value no matter what its origin. Moreover, a symmetrical relationship is realized between the two: the dream creates the desire and the desire creates the dream by the mere act of expressing itself. Again, many years later, Matte Blanco will indeed establish the “law of symmetry” as the essential law of the unconscious!

At this point, Trost returns to his strong assertion of the need to purify the dream-world of all residuals of diurnal life dominated by social interactions: because negatives are transferred into the dream experience through “souvenirs-clichés” (5) ‘stereotype-memories,’ they interfere and prevent the purity of the dream. But this means that the “cleansing” process must be an individual one since the degree of “contamination” by the social varies from case to case. Trost considers this observation thoroughly scientific,¹¹ and this poses a problem, since it seems to contradict the universal validity of the dialectical materialism that he and Gherasim Luca embraced in earlier works. If one sets aside this inconsistency, the argument leads to a surprising conclusion: *a dream reflects itself in itself*, therefore it must be considered (and interpreted) in a tautological way; more exactly, the dream is “dialectiquement tautologique, par un retour éternel sur lui-même, qui entraîne successivement des couches de plus en plus vastes de réalité” (6) ‘dialectically tautological in a process of eternal return which implies the addition of more and more layers of reality.’ Such a process is by its nature infinite, which reminds us of the essence of the crystal (!). Moreover, it is by nature poetical, and thus “seule la considération poétique du rêve est objective et scientifique” ‘only the poetical interpretation of the dream is objective and scientific.’ Poetry is therefore the only accurate tool for analysis of the dream-world, and the poetical approach turns out to represent, paradoxically, the only truly *scientific* approach to the understanding of the dream-life.

Toward the beginning of 1950, Trost immigrated to Israel; Gherasim Luca followed him a few months later and the two lived in Tel-Aviv for more than one year before their rift and separate departures for Paris, where Trost arrived first. At the start, things seemed to work out well between the friends. (Paul Păun, from Bucharest, where he would be forced to remain for another decade, participated with the two in an experimental telepathic encounter – a *rendez-vous mental* – on 18 March 1951 (Finkenthal, *D. Trost* 95)). Luca and Trost probably kept working on their surrealist oeuvre, which at this point seemed to focus mainly on the need to establish a new *modus operandi* which would allow a renewal of the movement and avoid relinquishing ground to the existentialists who were taking over the intellectual life not only in Paris but seemingly everywhere in the world. But it

¹¹ “Chacun doit interpréter ses rêves soi-même, et cela est affirmé dans un sens strictement *scientifique*” (6) (italics Trost’s).

soon became clear that their respective approaches to similar goals were widely divergent.

It seems that Gherasim Luca was inclined to think that the solution would come from some esoteric attempts to overcome the need to free each individual separately through a lengthy and painful process of eliminating the negative residuals of the social, as Trost had proposed. In point of fact, when Luca arrived in Paris soon after, even a well-versed surrealist of the new wave like Sarane Alexandrian was astonished by the ideas of this 'strange' personage. In his memoirs Alexandrian recalled that as soon as he arrived, Luca "me lut son manifeste sur 'le grand symbolisme du trou,' concernant les seize 'aubes et jets,' seize objets qu'il avait fabriqués avec deux cent quatre-vingt-quatre plaques de cuivre percées de cinquante-deux mille huit cent quatre-vingt-douze trous, afin d'illustrer 'la morphologie de la métamorphose'" (325) 'read to me his manifesto on "the great symbolism of the hole" concerning the sixteen "aubes et jets,"¹² objects he put together using two hundred eighty-four copper plates pierced with fifty two thousand eight hundred ninety-two holes, meant to illustrate "the morphology of the metamorphosis.'" Luca was no doubt talking here about a process he defined as "transpercer la transparence," which he had developed already in Israel.

In a letter sent to André Breton from Israel in August 1951,¹³ Trost expressed his total disapproval, complaining about Luca's betrayal of the basic principles of the surrealist movement: "mon ancien ami Gherasim Luca a pris une position absolument opposée a mes thèses" 'my former friend Gherasim Luca took a position absolutely opposite to mine.' A long programmatic text titled "L'Âge de la rêverie" (The Age of Dreaming) was attached to the letter, and the opening statement was loud and clear: "au point où nous en sommes il est évident qu'une nouvelle mise en question des moyens et des fins de notre action est devenue nécessaire" 'at this point it is evident that it has become necessary to reconsider the means and the ends of our activities.' The surrealist movement could be saved only through a radical re-thinking of its aims and means; this, because a few fundamental errors had penetrated its ideology, while at the same time, new ideas which could have counteracted these deleterious effects were late to emerge. One of them – and Trost would place it at the top of his priorities – was to ceaselessly remind everyone that the *raison d'être* of the human life is the search for that which is hidden in an existence that transcends instrumentality and utilitarian values ("nous ne pouvons plus trouver de nouvelles sources d'action que dans l'invisible" 'we can no longer find new resources for our activities, but in the invisible'). Trost's programmatic text of 1951, seventy-six pages long, differs from

¹² An untranslatable play on the sound of the French word for "object."

¹³ The long manifesto-letter can be found on the site <http://www.andrebretton.fr/en/?GCO1=56600100453810>. I thank Yigru Zeltil (Selenaru Negrea) of Constanța (Romania) for bringing it to my attention a few years ago.

the ones discussed above in many ways; one senses however that while the tone and the tenor of the rhetoric might have changed, some of the fundamental ideas have been retained. An interference between the material, the social, perhaps that which Breton called in his second manifesto *la vie 'substantielle,'* and the subjectivity of the individual is still at work. However, Trost emphasizes that this state must be surpassed: "cette manoeuvre dans l'invisible pour décider du visible est à conduire maintenant avec hardiesse, en dehors de tout l'appareil philosophique monstrueux qui en barre la diaphane transposition" ("Âge de la rêverie" 9-10) 'this activity in the invisible, meant to decide about the visible, must be conducted now with audacity, outside of the whole monstrous philosophical apparatus that blocks its diaphanous transformation.' The new tool proposed by the author for the exploration of this space of the 'invisible' is that of the "rêverie active"; in the normal world ("le monde de la méthode," the logical world of the consciousness) the concept of dream leads to antinomies (as we have seen above). In this new sphere, one generates the world in the act of dreaming, "*rêver c'est créer le monde en même temps*" (11) 'dreaming means to create the world at the same time.' Love remains the surrealist method of choice for the new revolution ("la méthode générale du surréalisme dans l'action est l'amour" (19) 'the general surrealist method of action is love'). Needless to say, love, poetry, and the revolution are the facets of the prism which represents the inner life, the hidden invisible life within the visible one, "la vie dans la vie" (23) 'life-within-life.' Concepts such as "l'occultation surréaliste" are discussed, basic ideas and tenets of Judeo-Christian civilization, such as humanism, humanity, and evolution, are rejected upon analysis; the socially motivated revolution must be overcome and replaced by love. The present state of affairs must be rejected in a very radical way: "Pour que puisse triompher le rêveur dans l'action, il faut premièrement affirmer le pessimisme absolu du mouvement" (33) 'to ensure the victory of the dreamer in action, first an absolute pessimism within the movement must be affirmed,' the author concludes, and in the following he seems to have fallen prey to his own desideratum. Trost again discusses "la connaissance poétique" 'poetic knowledge,' touches upon concepts such as the *nova* ("l'attente fiévreuse de la nova" 'the feverish awaiting of the nova') and "l'androgynie idéologique" 'the ideological androgynous,' and he calls for a total imposition of the erotic "tout érotiser"; but none of this can save him from the menace of pessimism and depression. The reader has the feeling that in this document Trost tried hard to convince himself – rather than his correspondent or a possible audience – that there is hope at the end of the surrealist tunnel. He even compares the energy released by the liberation of the dreamers to that of a nuclear explosion. But

Pour cela, il faut aussi qu'une forme inédite d'amour-amitié calme la blessure affective des rêveurs, blessure dont on ne pourrait situer exactement l'origine et les débuts, mais qui doit provenir, sur la ligne biographique, des premiers phénomènes de séparation du moi et du non-moi, entre le principe de plaisir et le principe de réalité; blessure affective

que rien n'a pu calmer jusqu'aujourd'hui, ce qui la fait entrer justement dans la ligne du rêve. . . . L'alliance de l'amour et de l'amitié est la seule protection contre la séparation du moi et du non-moi sur le plan affectif, et elle est recherchée selon la verticale cosmologique [de] l'endroit. (69)

For this, it is also necessary that a new form of love-friendship may soothe the affective wound in the dreamers, a wound whose origin and beginnings cannot be accurately situated but that likely originates, on the biographical line, in the first instances of separation between the self and the non-self, between the principle of pleasure and that of reality; an affective wound that to this day nothing could heal, which is precisely why it joins the dream line. . . . The alliance between love and friendship is the only way to avoid the separation between the self and the non-self on the affective plane, and it must be sought in the cosmological vertical [of] the place.

Why was Trost a pessimist at this point in his life? Perhaps because he knew that the moment he arrived in Paris he would have to try to make his ideas public, to put this newly proposed surrealist ideology to the test. It is one thing to state that "Proclamer l'inadaptabilité totale entre penser le monde et le monde même, dans ce siècle d'horreur généralisée, est une de nos tâches *modernes*, et c'est au surréalisme d'en assurer l'impunité" (70) 'Proclaiming a total inadaptability between thinking the world and the world itself, in this century of horrors, is one of our tasks within *modernity*, and it is surrealism's role to ensure this be done with impunity' and another thing to conclude that "le refus de tout idéalisme ou de tout fideïsme commence par le refus de l'effort biologique de persévération et d'intrication, du maintien de la vie pour toute raison particulière, de l'abêtissement donné par la participation aux diverses activités partielles qui maintiennent, à notre insu, la stabilité instructive à travers la lutte sociale de tout genre" 'the rejection of all idealist or fideist solutions entails the biological refusal to persevere and to pursue intrication, to maintain life for any given reason, and to continue the dumbing resulting from participation in the various partial activities that maintain, unbeknownst to us, the instructive stability by means of all manner of social struggle'¹⁴; or to proclaim that "Le fait même de vivre ne peut qu'apparaître par le retournement du suicide et nullement par l'abêtissement provoqué par la participation à une formule vitale qui n'a pas été fondamentalement niée" (70-71) 'The fact itself of living can only fully come forth through its reverse, the suicide, and not through the dumbing brought about by partaking of a vital formula that has not been fundamentally negated.' In order perhaps to encourage himself, the author stated that to the opacity of all intellectual interpretations of the world surrealism opposes, today more than ever,

¹⁴ Editors' note: Concerning the realm of the social, Trost seems to suggest here that social struggle to correct the society's wrongs is but futile agitation that maintains the status quo.

its poetical versatility. Instead of a meaningless contemplation of life, it opens itself to the contemplation of something further removed, an 'elsewhere' ("la contemplation de l'ailleurs" (74)). To a dialectic of recessions, which moves toward the concrete and the visible, it opposes poetical disinterest "la gratuité poétique qui le met en dehors de toute déception" 'poetical gratuitousness which protects it from any deception.' At this point however, the former leftist thinker recognizes, perhaps, his own "idealism" and writes, fearfully:

Mais en même temps, cette activité ne peut s'exercer sur un territoire de plus en plus réduit, prêtant au conformisme ou au confusionnisme, ...voyant se contracter sa sphère collective dans une spécialisation artistique, ésotérique ou autre. Les crises intérieures qui l'ont déchiré sont salutaires, car toute la vie étant en crise à l'époque de la pensée retournée sur elle-même, il devait réfléchir cela à sa façon. Mais comme il est aussi la vie qui transgresse dialectiquement la mort, il ne doit pas réagir devant ces déchirements par des compromis, par l'effort de masquer les symptômes ou par l'explication positiviste des déviations. À la différence de tous les mouvements, qui de par le seul fait qu'ils veulent arrêter leur déclin dans la sphère du visible, trahissent une préoccupation "politique", il n'a qu'à observer que dans les crises produites des motifs extrinsèques à sa finalité ne se mêlent pas. (74-75)

But at the same time, this activity cannot occur on a more and more reduced territory, leaving way to conformism and confusion mongers, . . . accepting this shrinking process and limiting its collective activity to artistic and esoteric activities. The internal crises that ripped through it [the surrealist movement] were salutary, since crisis pervaded life at the time, the epoch of thought turned inside out, and surrealism had to reflect this in its own way. However, since surrealism is also life that transcends dialectically [!] death, it must not react to these crises through compromises and efforts to hide the symptoms or by explaining the deviations in a positivist manner. Unlike all the movements that, seeking to arrest their decline within the "sphere of the visible," exhibit "political" concerns, surrealism must see to it that, in such crises, no stakes external to its finality are ever involved.

Yet one must remain a believer; the rebirth of the movement will occur through "avoir accepté son cycle évolutif" (75) 'having accepted its evolutionary cycle.' Ultimately, it is precisely by embracing and even enhancing this pessimism that the surrealists will rid themselves of the "corde pourrie de l'histoire" (76) 'the rotten rope of history' in order to trade it for "un baiser nuptial [qui] nous attire, derrière une vitre d'ombres insoupçonnées" 'a nuptial kiss hidden [that] attracts us behind the glass of invisible shadows.' After abandoning surrealism, Trost was to take his belief to other, more remote places.

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