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# Léona Delcourt and Suzanne Muzard: A Gendered Perspective on Flânerie

Marylaura Papalas

The image of the urban stroller in surrealist narratives has emerged as one of the more important symbols of the movement. The male flâneur figure and his prolonged, aimless urban strolls signify rebellion against bourgeois values like work ethic, the accumulation of wealth, and punctuality. A number of prose pieces codify what became one of the more important surrealist practices of the interwar period, including Louis Aragon's *Le paysan de Paris* (1926), Robert Desnos's *Liberté ou l'amour* (1927), Philippe Soupault's *Les dernières nuits de Paris* (1928), and André Breton's *Nadja* (1928). The last-mentioned, written by the group's leader, describes his encounters over the course of a few months at the end of 1926 and the beginning of 1927 with Nadja, the pseudonym for a woman whom he randomly encounters on the boulevards of Paris. Breton chronicles their adventures in a first-person narrative, sometimes quoting and printing her letters and artwork, all of which illuminate his concept of meaningful city living. Another woman, referred to only once as the anonymous "X" at the end of the narrative, also inspires his definition of life and love, and embodies the mystery of urban beauty (Breton, *Nadja* 132; Bonnet 1500, 1507-08).

It is significant that Breton hides the real names and identities of the two most important women in his story, while naming and enthusiastically celebrating a number of male compatriots who have inspired him and whom he admires. Even in the revised edition of the text in 1964, when the surrealist leader makes a number of changes, he does not reveal the missing identities. This omission is symptomatic of the problematic absence of some women from the history of surrealism. In 1990, almost fifty years after the founding of the movement, Susan Suleiman maintained that female surrealists remain "invisible" women whose work, once discovered and published, promises to redefine the confines of the movement (28). Her prediction has begun to materialize, especially in the last fifteen years.<sup>1</sup> This article is part of that initiative, and examines in particular the

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<sup>1</sup> For recent work on the two women examined in this article, see Georges Sebbag's 2004 *André Breton, l'amour folie: Suzanne, Nadja, Lise, Simone*, which examines the writings of Léona

feminine perspective on urban surrealist practices. How, for example, do women practice flânerie? Do the advantages resulting from urban drifts benefit women? Looking at the work of Léona Delcourt (“Nadja”) and Suzanne Muzard (“X”), the two most important women in *Nadja*, this article examines the female portrayal of urban surrealism and the benefits and consequences for the women who practiced it. The following section focuses on these women’s identities, and the section afterwards analyzes urban tropes in their writing and artwork.

### Female Urban (Mis)Identities

Perhaps more than any other surrealist woman, Delcourt incarnates the invisible surrealist female referred to by Suleiman and others. For some sixty years after the initial publication of Breton’s book, her last name remained unknown and the silence surrounding her identity generated a great deal of conjecture and discussion. For some, she remained a fiction. For other readers who believed she existed and were keen to discover her real identity, Breton and his friends refused to indulge them, citing privacy reasons to protect her and her family. Even Marguerite Bonnet, the fastidious editor of Breton’s *Cœuvres complètes* published in 1988, refrains from revealing the heroine’s full name, citing her only as Léona-Camille-Ghislaine D. Bonnet, like Breton, explains these kinds of ellipses in her analysis as imperative for the protection of those involved in the real-life drama: “Seul le souci de ne pas raviver la blessure de ceux que le drame vécu de Nadja a touchés en plein cœur et de leur épargner des curiosités inopportunes imposera ici quelques silences” “Only the desire to not reopen the wound of those who were affected by the heart-rending misfortune Nadja suffered, and to spare them unpleasant inquiries, will dictate our silence” (1509).<sup>2</sup> But Mark Polizzotti, one of Breton’s American biographers, speculates that the secrecy surrounding Nadja’s real identity was self-serving. He argues that it encouraged the group’s inclination towards “occultation” (265n). Their “blackout,” as Polizzotti calls it, is emblematic of the surrealist tendency to cloak women in secrecy and mystery.

The silence shrouding Delcourt’s identity finally dissipated in 2002, thanks to the Centre Pompidou exhibit “La révolution surréaliste,” where the heroine’s last name appeared for the first time publicly on a bill from the hotel du Théâtre dated 28 November 1926 (Albach 50). The following year, the sale of Breton’s estate made most of her letters accessible to the public through their purchase by the

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Delcourt, Suzanne Muzard, and two other women associated with Breton and the surrealists. See also Hester Albach’s 2009 *Léona, héroïne du surréalisme*, a semi-fictional account based on thorough archival research. See also *Nadja et Breton: Un amour juste avant la folie* (2012) by Julien Bogousslavsky, a neurologist and chief physician at the Valmont Clinic in Montreux, Switzerland, who analyses the excerpts in Nadja’s letters that indicate mental illness. Finally, Rita Bischof’s 2013 *Nadja Revisited*, not yet translated from the German, compiles Delcourt’s letters (translated into German) all in one place, and provides an accompanying analysis.

<sup>2</sup> All English translations are mine except where noted.

Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet in Paris (Bogousslavsky 15 n. 18). The collector Paul Destribats sold his collection of journals and documents, also containing some of Delcourt's drawings, to the Bibliothèque Kandinsky at the Centre Pompidou in 2006 (Bischof 183). Although these letters, fragments of which appear in *Nadja*, are not published in their entirety, some of them are now accessible in a number of recent books, most notably those of Sebbag and Bischof, contributing to a more informed understanding of Delcourt's perspective, and also a more complete version of her biography.

The most exhaustive biographical work on Delcourt to date is available in *Léona, héroïne du surréalisme* (2009) by Hester Albach, a Dutch novelist living in Paris at the time of the Pompidou exhibit and Breton's estate sale, and inspired by the unveiling of this new information. Written in Dutch and translated into French, Albach's semi-fictional book incorporates a biographical section based on visits to multiple archives and on the exclusive testimony of Delcourt's biological granddaughter. Albach reveals that Delcourt was born on 23 May 1902 in Saint-André, a small town outside of Lille, to working class parents associated with the important textile industry there. Her father was drafted to fight in World War I, during which time the family suffered from hunger and stress, resulting in the death of Delcourt's eldest sister. Once the British troops liberated Lille, Delcourt went there to work at a butcher's shop and had an affair with a British soldier. At 17 she became pregnant and gave birth on 21 January 1920 to her daughter, Marthe Adrienne. Although her boss's son offered to marry her, she preferred to go to Paris under the supervision of a male *protecteur*, leaving her daughter to be raised by her parents in Saint-André (Albach 75-89).

In the beginning, Delcourt would return home twice a month, well dressed and bearing presents, but these visits become less frequent (Albach 94). Her *protecteur* eventually lost interest, and she moved on to find other ones, living in a series of hotels and benefitting from the help of a number of male friends before meeting Breton on rue Lafayette on 4 October 1926 (Breton, *Nadja* 51). A few months later, on 20 March 1927, the manager of the hotel Becquerel in Montmartre, where Delcourt was staying, called the police about Delcourt's nervous breakdown. The police record describes Delcourt as unresponsive: "Ne répond à aucune question. Crie, pleure. Voit des homes sur les toits" 'Doesn't respond to any questions. Screams, cries. Sees men on the roofs' (Albach 52). The record also describes Delcourt's belongings at the time and indicates that two drawings were found in her purse. She was taken to the police station, where she spent the night, and from there to L'asile d'aliénés de Vaucluse, in Epinay-sur-Orge, about a thirty-minute train ride from Paris. In 1928, she was transferred to an asylum in Bailleul, near the Belgian frontier, not far from Saint-André. She died there in 1941 at the age of thirty-eight (Albach 52-54).

The surrealist heroine's tragic and short life was in many ways different from that of Muzard's, the woman who would replace Delcourt in 1927 as Breton's latest passion. But there are a number of similarities that highlight the two women's

parallel experiences of surrealism and their understanding of its significance in the urban context. Like Delcourt, Muzard, who grew up in the working-class Parisian suburb of Aubervilliers, came from modest social origins (Sebbag 77). Born in 1900, she arrived in Paris at about eighteen years old as a boarder in a training school. But she escaped, choosing instead to work in a brothel called la Ruchette, on the rue de l'Arcade. During this time, she fell in love with a young aristocrat, whose family forbade him from pursuing a serious relationship with her. Disappointed and frustrated, she briefly left Paris for Lyon, where she had friends who introduced her to another male protector. She returned to la Ruchette a few years later, however, and soon met essayist Emmanuel Berl, who removed her from la Ruchette and took care of her (Sebbag 12, 16, 70, 78).

Berl, who had been introduced to the surrealists in October of 1927 by his friend Louis Aragon, decided to bring Suzanne to one of their regular meetings at the Café Cyrano on 15 November of that year (Sebbag 66, 78, 110; Bonnet 1507). The "blond, sensually beautiful" woman made a lasting impression on the group's leader, inspiring the well-known poetic ending to *Nadja*, which Breton was in the process of finishing (Polizzotti 287-88). Their tumultuous relationship, which did not end with Muzard's marriage to Berl in 1928, eventually fizzled out and transformed into a friendship (Sebbag 166).

Despite the enduring bond with its leader, there are few traces that attest to Muzard's association with surrealism. None of her letters to Breton, for instance, surfaced at his estate sale (Sebbag 50). Fortunately, a few pieces published in surrealist journals are still accessible. Her responses to a typical surrealist survey, for instance, can be found in issue number 11 of *La révolution surréaliste*, dated 15 March 1928 (p. 7). But her name is absent from the table of contributors found in the last issue, and it does not appear in the index of names compiled by the editor of the journal's complete collected issues. Breton exceptionally includes her entire name in issue number 12, quoting her answer to another survey on the meaning of love (15 December 1929, p. 71). But we see only her initials "S. M." for a collage she produced in the first issue of *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which replaced *La révolution surréaliste* in 1933 as the main vehicle for disseminating surrealist thought.

In addition to these ephemeral contributions during her association with surrealism, Muzard also left behind publications that look back on her experience with the avant-garde movement. In 1974, after more than forty years of silence, Muzard wrote a two-page autobiographical essay titled "La passagère insoumise" (The Rebellious Wanderer), where she nostalgically recounts her brief time with the surrealists. Marcel Jean published the translated piece four years later under her married name, Cordonnier, in an edited volume of surrealist documents entitled *Autobiographie du surréalisme*. Her unfinished memoirs, published in 2004 in an edited volume on surrealist women by Georges Sebbag titled *André Breton, l'amour folie*, span decades, including her childhood and her later adult life, and provide more detail on some of her surrealist experiences. Sebbag's book, which

assembles a variety of documents and related essays on four women associated with the movement, also includes an interview with Muzard from 1988.

All of the documents and publications listed above give a voice to overlooked female surrealists, and provide an alternative perspective on the movement and its tenets. Focusing on Delcourt's and Muzard's references to urban practices and themes, the following sections construct a feminine vision of surrealist city life and present an alternative kind of avant-garde flânerie.

## **Female Perspectives on Urban Practices**

The idea of a female flâneur, or flâneuse, is the subject of a number of books and articles, some of them recent, that question why women are largely absent from nineteenth- and twentieth-century chronicles of aimless urban strolling. A range of explanations, including those based on politics, society, economics, and sexuality, explain why urban strolling is different for men and for women.<sup>3</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, in her article "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," explains how walking without purpose can be a gender-biased practice that benefits men. As Buck-Morss points out, "the flâneur was simply the name of a man who loitered; but all women who loitered risked being seen as whores, as the term 'street-walker,' or 'tramp' applied to women makes clear" (119). There are numerous expressions in French as well, including "une femme de la rue," that underscore how associating women with the street can suggest prostitution. For Delcourt and Muzard in particular, whose challenging life circumstances rendered them vulnerable to the streets, these terms are especially problematic.

These issues, and others associated with the difficulty of living as a single woman in Paris, emerge in Delcourt and Muzard's writing, something that distinguishes their work from the chronicles of male flâneurs. Surrealist strollers, for example, benefitted from the urban lifestyle and in particular city strolling, which stimulated their imaginations and facilitated the writing process. Exemplifying this phenomenon is *Nadja*, which Breton was inspired to write after his experiences with Delcourt in the streets of Paris. His story romanticizes his urban adventure, and as critics have pointed out, glosses over the more serious problems plaguing Delcourt. In the tradition of nineteenth-century flâneur authors, Breton "divert[s] readers from [the] tedium of urban life" and the "true conditions" of reality (Buck-Morss 112).

Delcourt and Muzard, however, describe some of the hardships they experience in the urban environment. Some of these descriptions illuminate socio-historical conditions that burdened single women without a family or social network in interwar Paris. Like many uneducated women, neither Delcourt nor

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<sup>3</sup> See Balducci, Buck-Morss, Devereux, D'Souza and McDonough, Elkin, Friedberg, Kromm, Nesci, Parsons, Pollock, Wilson, and Wolff.

Muzard were eligible for the increasing number of white-collar jobs that required schooling. As a result, positions as a saleswoman in a charcuterie or bakery, two jobs offered to Delcourt, were some of the few options available (Breton, *Nadja* 57). Furthermore, these occupations were less desirable because of their stagnant wages and impossibility of promotion, and did not promise young women much of a future. Historian Siân Reynolds explains:

At a time when it was being perceived that women – mostly, but by no means all, young unmarried women – were employed in a whole range of new industries, their life-chances in no way paralleled those of young men of their own generation. Apprenticeship, the gateway to a pride in working-class identity, was virtually closed to them; the label of skill was not attached, either by themselves, their employers or their male colleagues, to the work they were doing. (104)

Rejecting the limited possibilities available to them, Delcourt and Muzard chose to seek out opportunities in the informal economy. Muzard's departure from the preparatory school for work in a brothel, and Delcourt's reliance on male companions, as well as a brief experience in the illegal drug trade, attest to both women's preference for alternative employment (Breton, *Nadja* 59-60, 74; Sebbag 57).

But the informal economy offers little job security for obvious reasons, a problem that afflicted both women. In a newly published letter dated 29 January 1927, for example, Delcourt tells Breton how she scoffed at a demeaning offer to be a stripper, and instead asks the surrealist leader if he or any of his friends might have housework she could do in exchange for wages (Sebbag 57). Although we do not have his response, we may guess, by her subsequent letters, that neither Breton nor his "connections," as she calls them, employed her, because a few days later she writes on 2 or 3 February. "J'ai horreur de votre jeu et de votre clique" 'I hate your game and your group of friends' (Sebbag 58). The growing tension between Delcourt and Breton, who was unable to provide her with the financial or occupational help she needed, underscores the precarious position of French interwar women and the inequalities they faced in the urban environment.

This vulnerability takes a toll on Delcourt's self-esteem and shapes the image she constructs of herself. In another letter to Breton, dated 23 December, she writes: "Il faut être malgré tout, un très fier voyou" 'One must be, despite everything, a quite consummate hoodlum' (Sebbag 54). The use of the word "voyou," which *Le Petit Robert* dictionary defines as a man of the people with questionable intentions, or an individual with condemnable or corrupted morals, underscores the surrealist heroine's state of desperation and moral exhaustion.

Muzard's presentation of herself in her writing is more positive, something that is likely due in part to its retrospective and nostalgic nature. She too refers to money and to the different approaches she and Breton have to spending it. As an example, she describes strolling through the St. Ouen flea

market with him, an activity the surrealist author portrays with text and photographs in *Nadja* (Breton 43-46). Muzard's description of the experience, however, does not focus on the serendipitous discovery of certain objects that trigger the imaginative process. Instead, Muzard talks in an interview about the financial consequences of buying at will, and she criticizes Breton's habit of heading straight for the market as soon as he obtains some money, and spending it just as quickly. Muzard acknowledges that this way of life is not feasible for her, and she even castigates herself a "bourgeois" to underscore her more practical approach to finances and flânerie (Sebbag 226). This is corroborated by Breton, who wrote that he feared his lack of money resulted in Muzard's leaving him (*Vases* 38).

Figurative depictions of financial differences between female and male surrealists emerge in Delcourt's drawings and echo themes examined above. Sebbag astutely compares two similar sketches, both of which embody the elements of naïve art typical of Delcourt's work, and suggests that they indicate a change in her priorities. The first drawing, sketched on 7 October 1926, presents several objects with accompanying words that elucidate the illustration. She draws a packed sack cinched with a rope, a rectangular mask, a star, and a heart. The mask, star, and heart are connected by a dotted line. On the right-hand side of the drawing, Delcourt writes four words in vertical order from top to bottom: "L'argent (money), L'amour (love), L'espoir (hope), L'esprit (spirit)." Sebbag theorizes that "money" is ranked at the top of the list because Delcourt had just received a confirmation from Breton for a gift of 500 francs (Sebbag 56).

But the next day, on 8 October, while waiting for Breton to deliver his promised gift, Delcourt re-sketches the previous day's drawing. It too has a knotted sack and a square mask out of which emerges a dotted line connecting a floating heart and star above (Breton, *Nadja* 86). The list of vertical words has changed. Delcourt replaces "hope" and "spirit" with "waiting" and "desire," and she changes the ranking of the words so that "waiting" and "desire" take precedence at the top of the list: "L'Attente, L'Envie, L'Amour, L'Argent" 'Waiting, Desire, Love, Money.' Even though Delcourt eventually receives from Breton three times the expected sum of money on 9 October, which allows her to pay for four months of hotel bills, the anticipation and wait, expressed instantaneously as she is drawing, highlights the surrealist heroine's awareness of and vulnerability to the passing of time (Sebbag 56).

Delcourt's understanding of time in this instance differs from representations in typical surrealist literary and graphic work, which often depict it as a continuum without logical markers. Paintings like *The Persistence of Memory* by Salvador Dalí and *Time Transfixed* by René Magritte visually captured and popularized the idea of time standing still and the notion that one can slow down and experience passing moments from an alternative perspective (Papalas 13-14). One of the more well-known literary renditions of this idea is Breton's definition of beauty at the end of *Nadja*, where he describes a train constantly switching

tracks at the Gare de Lyon, and always changing positions, but never leaving (*Nadja* 131-32). This emphasis on the duration of space and time and the suspension of passing moments contrasts with Delcourt's more immediate and desperate depiction of time running out.

Facing pressure to find more money before her rent is due again, Delcourt multiplies references to time in her letters and drawings. She writes on one of her undated sketches published by Breton in *Nadja*: "Vous devez être très préoccupé en ce moment? Trouvez le temps d'écrire quelques mots à votre Nadja" 'You must be very busy these days? Find the time to write a few words to your Nadja' (96). Less than two months before her nervous breakdown, on 29 January 1927, she continues to make similar allusions: "J'ai une prière à vous faire. Pourriez-vous m'aider encore une fois. . . . Croyez que c'est le besoin pressant qui me pousse vers vous, la date approche" 'I have a request to make. Could you help me one more time. . . . Believe me, it's the pressing need that pushes me towards you, the date approaches' (Sebbag 57). References like these highlight Delcourt's desire to control time. Her inability to slow it down for her benefit turns into a nagging frustration that emerges throughout her work, perpetuating the image of Paris as a mysteriously inhospitable and bewildering environment.

Delcourt's inability to exercise control over money and time, two necessary ingredients for classic *flânerie*, informs her descriptions of leisurely city strolling and colors them with negative connotations. Instead of evoking freedom and liberation, her poetic and surrealistic allusions to walking throughout her letters produce images of loneliness and isolation. In the following example, for instance, she describes a path and stairway, each of which lead to solitude: "Mon Chéri, Le chemin du baiser était beau, n'est-ce pas . . . et Satan fut si tentant. . . Mais je redescends toujours seulette l'escalier qui conduit au bonheur" "My Darling, The path of kisses was beautiful, wasn't it . . . and Satan was so tempting. . . . But I always descend again alone the stairs that lead to happiness' (Sebbag 52). Words like "chemin," "escalier," and "conduit" construct a lexical field of walking, extending the urban activity she practiced with Breton into metaphor. Employing another image of unhappy descent, Delcourt writes on 2 December, "dehors je suis automatiquement le trottoir qui conduit à la tombe" 'outside I automatically follow the sidewalk that leads to the tomb' (Bogousslavsky 72). Instead of a safe pedestrian passage, the pavement becomes a precursor to death, in many ways foreshadowing Delcourt's own untimely passing.

Muzard, who also employs metaphorical phrases that reference walking and passageways, uses the symbol to construct a more positive and independent *flâneuse* image. The title of her 1978 autobiographical essay, "La passagère insoumise," emphasizes defiance and empowerment. The opening line of this same piece also references walking. She writes: "Ma marche à reculons, pour remémorer mon passage dans le surréalisme des années 1927-1932, risque de ne pas être concluante" 'My walk backward, to recall my passage in the surrealism of the years 1927-32, may chance to be inconclusive' (Jean, *Autobiographie* 321;

*Autobiography* 190). Inextricably linked with memory and its imperfect recall, walking is a means of exploring the past and commemorating the subjectivity associated with the surrealist experience.

In a different reference to walking, Muzard continues to link the action with explorations into her personal history. She corroborates in an interview a story recounted by Breton in *Les vases communicants*, where he had described her fear of cars and her aversion to crossing the street (Breton, *Vases* 38). She confirms that memories of the death of her grandfather, run over by a meat truck, dictate her movements through the city, compelling her to circumvent the enormous Concorde intersection, rather than cross it (Sebbag 232). Instead of describing vague psychological compulsions like those that dictate Breton and his heroine in *Nadja*, Muzard clearly identifies internalized urban trauma and its effect on her city experience. She knows and explains why she cannot cross the Place de la Concorde, dispelling any romantic or metaphysical conjectures. Muzard's memory enables her to understand the dangers of the city, even if they limit her freedom and ability to navigate it effectively.

In both Delcourt and Muzard's work, real needs and fears temper accounts of city walking. References to mundane concerns distinguish their accounts from male surrealist authors', giving meaning to otherwise uncanny and mysterious descriptions of strange city experiences.

## Conclusion

Some critics, like Janet Wolff, have argued about the impossibility of a female flâneur. Friedberg explains that critics like Wolff rely on the definitions set forth by Georg Simmel, Charles Baudelaire, and Walter Benjamin, all of whom describe "the experience of men in the public sphere from which women are invisible" (Friedberg 37). Friedberg herself sees the emergence of female flânerie as linked to the expansion of the department store and the kind of "loitering" window-shopping encourages. But Wilson, in her article "The Invisible Flâneur," provides examples of women participating in public life beyond shopping, pointing out that working women and even prostitutes are potential flâneuses (74). Delcourt and Muzard exemplify this expanded view of female flânerie with their descriptions of financial issues, employment problems, isolation, and urban confusion.

Although Delcourt and Muzard do not provide the kind of polished, cohesive narrative that might clearly define the ambulatory gaze of the surrealist flâneuse, their fragmented contributions nonetheless illuminate how modernist women could engage with their urban context. Like their male counterparts, Delcourt and Muzard exploit their urban experiences for literary and artistic material, resulting in the publications examined here. But certain episodes in their narratives underscore the idea that surrealism exploited women (Orenstein 105). This is perhaps especially true in the city context, where male authors like Breton neglected to demonstrate much empathy concerning the urban plight of female

colleagues. A number of critics, including Muzard and even Breton himself, question the surrealist leader's role in Delcourt's mental breakdown (Breton, *Vases* 38). The fact that neither woman spent much more than four years associated with the movement underscores the ambivalent and sometimes detrimental relationship.

For Delcourt in particular, surrealism did not offer a lasting means to creatively express herself. In a letter to Breton dated 23 December, just after she was expelled from her hotel for being unable to pay the bills, Delcourt writes:

Je vous demande pardon de n'avoir pas pu faire d'autres dessins – je n'avais pas la main – c'est drôle d'être à ce point nerveuse – et ce n'est pas des images qui me manquent – oh non alors – ni – ni – ni – fini – (Sebbag 54).

I beg your pardon for not being able to make any more drawings – I didn't have the hand – it's strange to be this nervous – and it's not for a lack of images – oh goodness no – nor – nor – nor – finish –.

Although Breton had inspired her to write and sketch pictures, and claims that she did not draw before meeting him (*Nadja* 111), Delcourt's problems eventually impede this flow of creativity, the very thing surrealism, and urban practices like *flânerie*, intended to unleash. Her letter highlights the consequences for women surrealists without steady jobs, marriages, inherited money, or partners. It also questions the purported benefits of surrealist urban practices for women like Delcourt and Muzard.

Although the recently published documents examined here corroborate criticisms of surrealism as an aesthetic movement with imbalanced gender dynamics, they highlight women's roles in the production of important surrealist themes, including urban tropes and descriptions of *flânerie*, and suggest that there is room for a broader notion of the city in surrealist work. In the transition from nameless objects of wonder and enchantment in *Nadja* to the authors of their own accounts, Delcourt and Muzard provide important details that explain how their psychological states shaped their relationship with the city. They juxtapose references to the tedium of everyday life, the real unvarnished experiences of city living, with narratological metaphors of walking. They describe anxious waiting in cafes and fears of heavily trafficked intersections. They present the surrealist *flâneuse* as a stroller whose passion for ambulation propels both life and art, something made clear by Muzard at the end of her memoirs: "Je n'avais qu'un seul but de promenade" 'Walking was the only goal I had' (Sebbag 49). All this helps to construct a definition of female *flânerie* that is as fascinating and intriguing as Breton's metaphysical anecdotes in *Nadja*.

Surrealist women's narratives construct an alternate reality or dream realm, like the one described by Breton in his first manifesto, where accessing

unconscious mechanisms facilitates a rupture with the rational world and an appreciation for what lies beneath the surface of reality (*Manifestes* 22-23, 36). But Delcourt and Muzard also explore the hurdles they encounter that render their urban experience baffling and incomprehensible for different reasons. If anything, their accounts, instead of accepting the streets as a cryptic, ludic maze ripe for exploration, see the city as occasionally uninviting and inhospitable, but mysterious and surreal nonetheless.

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