

BOOK REVIEW

What is Surrealism?

Selected Writings

BY ANDRÉ BRETON

An excellent, if partisan, introduction to surrealism from a Marxist point of view this volume consists of two parts. Part I centers on the historical situation of Breton's life and polemical writings, emphasizing surrealism's affinities with Marxist-Leninist tenets and present international revolutionary thought. Despite attempts at asserting that surrealism is very much alive today, Breton concludes that by 1959 "the surrealist international was no longer an organically centralized world movement." A few of the chapters read like radical pamphlets that culminate in the author's appeal for a "surrealist transformation of America"; but in general, this is a valuable study of surrealism and its aims with respect to life and language, the likes of which were previously not available in English. Part II contains English translations of Breton's writings heretofore unavailable or difficult to obtain. Each translation is preceded by a brief introduction. Translations of French surrealist documents conclude this volume. A useful glossary, separate indexes for the two parts and a selected bibliography of Breton's works complete the book. Recommended for college and graduate school libraries.