

upira :

« Ce soir, elle ne luit pas pour tout le monde. »

FIN



Dear stranger,

This is a potential table of contents.

Irène Hamoir's *Boulevard Jacqmain* serves as the catalyst for a series of interventions. The format is for you to choose (unconventional is highly encouraged though). If you find yourself compelled to address any of these topics, or have other discussion topics in mind, this is an invitation for you to join the conversation.

Don't be shy. Happy to have you as an accomplice.

With liquid tenderness,

x

-ups
Belgian

présentations du
listes

reclaiming and

» et les jeux de langage

ne boulevard... Unraveling
the Brussels surrealist group

'Emblème Zébuth », « le New
Antartique » ou « le Breton » : un
semblable des hôtels, cafés et lieux de
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the flipping gaze: active scrutiny and 'To-be-
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/ The flipping gaze: active scrutiny and 'To-be-looked-at-ness' in Irène Hamoir's writings

/ Les faits divers dans la presse et le contexte littéraire belge de la première moitié du XXe siècle : entre narration documentaire, fantasmes et fictionnalisation

*

Feelings of déjà-vu trigger a series of questions. Coincidences and rumours are more meaningful than they are allowed to appear in history. I have to admit I let myself be guided by sensations of the guts, when one senses they are in front of a piece of evidence, or an enigma to be solved, something beyond the anecdotic. The perfect excuse to investigate as a visceral detective. I love archives and their contested authority. I fantasise about sniffing the powder of their crumbling brownish pages. Maybe one could have a psychoactive epiphany revealing its unspoken secrets. A dénouement pulsating through the veins as a vibrating morse-coded message. If you don't believe in embodied knowledge, if you salivate when listening to established erudition, if you have a blind faith in printed matter, come closer so I can whisper in your ears...

Hey Bastard

A misspelling followed by an ellipsis opens Irène Hamoir's parodic crime novel *Boulevard Jacquemain* – a fiction staging the members of the surrealist group as criminals in the city centre of Brussels. The typo sets a nonsensical and humorous tone: “Salud” could mean both “Salut” (hey) or “salaud” (bastard). The three dots accompanying “doud” serve as a narrative device indicating an interruption: a first bullet abruptly cuts off a man. After the third bullet, he drops dead letting go of the friendly hand he was shaking. The agonised, Paul Nouguié, alias Paul Nougé, leading figure of the Brussel's artistic troupe – still alive when the book was written in the 1930's and first launched in 1953. His killing remains unsolved until a rather predictable ending. Meanwhile, easily identifiable by scantily concealed pseudonyms, René Magritte, E. L. T. Mesens, Marcel Lecomte, Camille Goemans and other companions progressively appear in historically inaccurate misdeeds as clumsy thugs, second-rate hooligans and wandering sex workers. The narrative unfolds in a tumultuous romantic triangle, punctuated by mundane scenes, heated discussions and settling scores held against the backdrop of Brussels nightlife. In a direct and straightforward

« Salud Doud... »

style, tainted with acid humour, the book paints an inglorious portrait of the avant-garde artistic *milieu* in a provoking counterfactual and anti-heroic scenario staged in the vicinity of the avenue that gives the title to the novel.

Whether you are amused or skeptical, if you allow yourself to suspend disbelief, you may be surprised to note how uncanny the resemblance between the surrealists and their fictional counterparts are. The Brussels group was a “regular bunch of *zwanzeurs* (jokers), the oddest of ducks, writers, poets, subtle and untamed thinkers, independent by nature, holding down respectable jobs by day (biochemist, lawyer, office clerk) and leading their double lives off the beaten paths of existence. They were also a circle of friends, a pantheon of well-educated heads, of wrong-thinking accomplices, often split apart by squabbles and resounding exclusions, less often reconciled”.¹ Provocative misfits fighting, bullying, or cancelling each other while inventing protocols to regulate their relationships and to stimulate (collective) creation – only to undermine these methods again.² This incendiary and unsettling facet of the surrealists is echoed by their fictionalised selves in Hamoir’s *roman à clés*, establishing an intricate continuity between fact and fiction...

**PLIP PLIP PLOOP
PLIP PLIP PLIP
PLIP PLOOP
POOR REALITY
PIE IN THE SKY
POISONOUS TRUTH**

¹ Patrick Roegiers, *Magritte and Photography*, Aldershot, Lund Humphries, 2005, p. 34. Quoted in: Patricia Allmer, Jan Dirk Baetens and Hilde Van Gelder, “Introduction: Surrealism in Belgium”, in Patricia Allmer and Hilde Van Gelder (eds.), *Collective inventions: Surrealism in Belgium*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2007, p. 17 (Lieven Gevaert series).

² It is important to clarify that rather than a unified or coherent movement, there were multiple surrealist experiences in Belgium, and even the Brussels group eventually diverged. But considering that Irène Hamoir stages her colleagues as “les gens du milieu” – referring both to the crime world and the artistic milieu –, we’ll also address them as a *bande*. However, we are aware that it is a concept that has to be nuanced. See: Xavier Canonne, *Le surréalisme en Belgique 1924-2000*, Brussels, Fonds Mercator, 2006, p. 11.

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SUPER CONJUNTO COLCHÓN + SOMIER LÁMINAS



de 80 a 119 €
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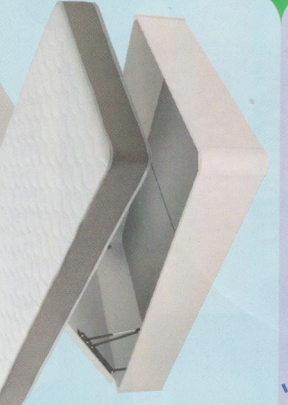
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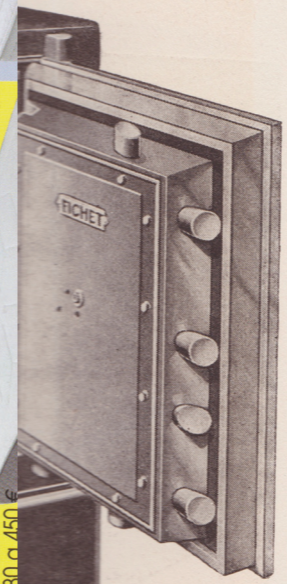
COLCHÓN VISCO DOBLE CARA + GRAFENO + ARCÓN MADERA VISTA ESQUINAS REFORZADAS



COLCHÓN VISCO LATEX SOFT + ARCÓN MADERA VISTA ESQUINAS REFORZADAS



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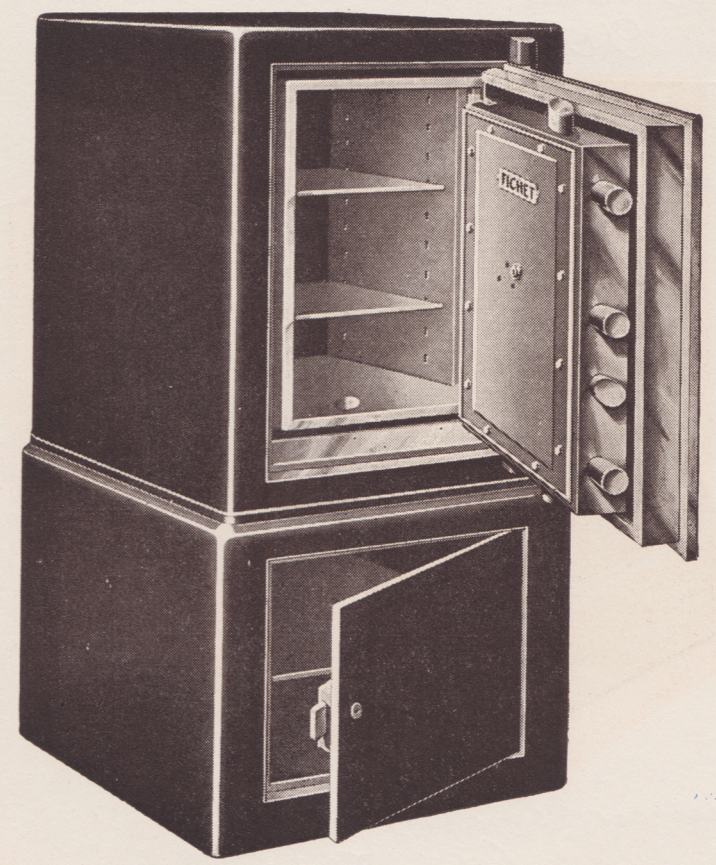
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tablettes sur tasseaux mobiles.
litres.



Coffre-fort antichalumeau blindé sur toutes ses faces
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ENCOMBREMENT EXTÉRIEUR DU COFFRE			DIMENSION INTÉRIEURES UTILISABLES			PASSAGE LIBRE LA PORTE OUVERTE	POIDS APPROXIMATIF
TOUTES SAILLIES COMPRIS	Haut.	Larg.	Prof.	Haut.	Larg.	Prof.	
1m40	0m69	0m61	0m65	0m45	0m35	0m44	630 kgs

A l'intérieur de ce coffre-fort se trouvent deux tablettes sur tasseaux mobiles. Dans le socle (de 0m55 x 0m68 x 0m55), se trouve une tablette mobile sur tasseaux fixes.

VOLUME INTÉRIEUR : 100 litres.



Hands up!

October 1926, Casino of Saint-Josse (present-day Mirano), Brussels: a group of hazardous troublemakers stormed in the middle of the performance of *Tam-Tam* by modernist poet-dramaturg Géo Norge, interrupting it and causing a riotous commotion. They handed out flowers found in the garbage and a daring tract to the audience stating their drastic disapproval of the play and professing an explicit warning in bold and capital letters: “*Messieurs, défiez-vous*”. A phrase with dual meaning: to challenge yourself, and a distrust and expression of suspicion towards something, or others.³ The premeditated intrusion – also referred to as “*bataille*” or “*bagarre*” de *Tam-Tam*, – caused such a disturbance that police had to intervene.⁴ This explosive debut not only stirred the conversation about the event and the Théâtre Groupe Libre Norge was part of, but was also Brussels surrealists’ first public appearance as a group.⁵ One month later, they performed a similar unruly intervention in a presentation of *Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* by Jean Cocteau, organised by the same theatre group. Again, they distributed a justifying tract to voice their rejection.

Now an anecdotic occurrence, these aggressive inaugural gestures come as no surprise as they are emblematic of a general contestation mode that is present both in surrealist’s literary production and in their real-life interactions. This is not an isolated episode nor is it a particularity of the Brussels group. In fact, the sublimation of violence among the surrealists is well-known and widely studied⁶, and was

³ Marcel Mariën, *L’activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, Brussels, Éditions Lebeer Hossmann, 1979 (Le Fil Rouge), p. 129-135; Bibiane Fréché, “Surrealism in Belgium between the Wars”, in Nathalie Aubert, Pierre-Philippe Fraiture and Patrick McGuinness (eds.), *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism. European Modernity in the Making*, London, Modern Humanities Research Association/Maney Publishing, 2007, p. 166 (Legenda).

⁴ An Paenhuysen, *De nieuwe wereld. De wonderjaren van de Belgische avant-garde [1918-1939]*, Antwerp, Meulenhoff / Manteau, 2010, p.165; and note 213, p. 359. Quoted in: Marie Godet, *Le poids du réel. Les surréalistes Bruxellois et l’objet dans les années 1940*, Doctoral thesis, Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences sociales, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 2017 (promotor: Denis Laoureux), p. 52.

⁵ José Vovelle, *Le surréalisme en Belgique*, Bruxelles, André de Rache, 1972, p. 19.

It was said that Paul Nougé, Édouard Mesens and Camille Goemans – some of the initiators of Correspondence in 1924, acknowledged as Brussels surrealist group’s first publications as such – had invited Norge to join them but he refused, judging their enterprise as too absurd or negative, and discredited the group in the theatrical parody *Tam-Tam*. Was this staged interruption a well-deserved settling of accounts? – Cf. Daniel Laroche, « Norge, le proférateur », *Le Carnet et les Instants*, n°195, 2017, [https://le-carnet-et-les-instants.net/archives/norge-le-proferateur/#_ftnref7].

⁶ Jonathan Eburne’s *Surrealism and the Art of Crime* is a key study about the surrealist’s engagement with violence: J. E. Eburne, *Surrealism and the Art of Crime*, Ithaca/New York, Cornell University Press, 2008.

famously promulgated by André Breton in his second manifesto published in 1929:

“the simplest Surrealist act consists of dashing down the street, pistol in hand, and firing blindly, as fast as you can pull the trigger, into the crowd”.⁷ If French and Belgian surrealists had their specificities and differences – that occasionally led to bar brawls and fights, by the way – they were both fascinated by real-life banditry and sensationalist accounts of murder, robbery or bank raids such as the ones performed by anarchist criminal group la Bande à Bonnot. Several surrealist works pastiched or were imbued with references to detective thrillers, their dandy villains and depictions of the illegal *milieu*.⁸ The Belle Époque hero Fantômas was one of their favourites for his ability to “slip in and out of role and appear in many different bourgeois identities; [as] the master criminal who subverts the everyday”.⁹

This intended stance against rationality, morality and societal norms is epitomised in disruptive artistic practices. Besides well-known methods to emulate the unconscious, unexpected associations and the random, they were partisans of polemic techniques such as cut-ups, appropriation and *détournements* up to parody and even plagiarism. Instead of reprehensible, the figure of the forger, thief, cheater or liar was somehow praised both concretely and figuratively.¹⁰ Being a surrealist was also, to a certain extent, and with all its contradictions, operating in a provocative, confrontational and reactive mode. In a twisted homage of sorts, Irène casts herself and her companions with malleable identities as the dual personas they embodied – living behind the masks of their daily lives and jobs to become the covert felons of surrealism. *Boulevard Jacqmain*, both in content and form, appears then as an

⁷ André Breton, “Second Manifesto of Surrealism (1930)”, in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1969, p. 125.

⁸ Hamoir’s volume is not the only crime novel-inspired surrealist book, nor is it the sole book incorporating real-life characters into its plot. Numerous contemporary authors parodied or drew inspiration from so-called minor literature and detective thrillers. Others, such as Max Servais, also featured members of the surrealist group in their novels. See: Paul Aron, « René Magritte et les détectives », *Le Rocambole. Bulletin des amis du roman populaire*, n. 78-79, spring-summer 2017, p. 269-271.

⁹ Patricia Allmer, Jan Dirk Baetens and Hilde Van Gelder, “Introduction: Surrealism in Belgium”, in Patricia Allmer and Hilde Van Gelder (eds.), *Collective Inventions. Surrealism in Belgium*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2007, p. 14 (Lieven Gevaert series).

¹⁰ The following quotes by Marcel Mariën are quite representative of this appraisal: « L’essentiel chez Nougé: la vertu du mensonge » (Xavier Canonne, *Marcel Mariën (1920-1993)*, Brussels, Crédit communal, 1994, p. 92 (Monographies de l’art moderne)); « Il n’y a pas de mensonge puisqu’il n’y a pas de vérité » (Marcel Mariën, *La Licorne à cinq pattes*, Les Lèvres Nues, Brussels, 1986, p. 44).





interesting document to address the group's fantasies and fixations with the underworld and the bellicose tactics evident in their works, interactions and public events.

Throughout the pages, violence appears as central to the role-playing of what is essentially a “male fraternity” and aggression a key attribute to their “theatrical, even performative [...] masculinity”.¹¹ But in stark contrast with the sophisticated dandy bandit Fantômas, the Brussels group is unapologetically depicted as clumsy and histrionic in their drive for contestation. In *Boulevard Jacqmain*, surrealist violence is unembellished and unromanticised, while provocation for the sake of provocation appears as a luxury not many can afford. Moreover, it is more likely to cause unnecessary harm, eventually failing to subvert the everyday. With somber humour, the novel portrays grim and hostile streets and bars of Brussels, justifying the generalised use of effective and verbal intimidation. For women, it seems as much self-defence, as it is a derisive replication to reclaim space and agency; while men, “unable as they are to find solutions to their problems, they resort to guns”.¹² Hamoir's fiction stages an abusive relationship, risks of a sexually transmitted infection, working conditions of prostitutes – embodied all by female characters in the book, including herself. Even considering Irène's binary approach to gender, her external gaze, prejudices and simplifications, it is a noteworthy case study of (mis-)representations of sex work and the crime *milieu* in the urban nightlife in the Alhambra district of the 1930's. Are the contemporary resonances mere projections or are they not so fortuitous anachronistic continuities?...

¹¹ Neil Matheson, “He Who Has Never Dreamt of Mae West: Surrealist Masculinity and the Late Collages of E.L.T. Mesens”, in Patricia Allmer and Hilde Van Gelder (eds.), *Collective Inventions: Surrealism in Belgium*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2007, p. 120,118 (Lieven Gevaert series).

¹² Irène Hamoir, *Boulevard Jacqmain*, Bruxelles, Didier Devillez, 1996, p. 57. Translation of the author.

BLUE HOUR, May 27th

Next Saturday,

An experiential event followed by a festive drink at nadine's office space.

Meet-up at Boulevard Jacquain 4 at 21:50.

VII

Dans la nuit fraîchissante, les filles frappaient le trottoir d'un talon plus sec que de coutume. Guère de monde sur le boulevard ; l'électricité brûlait pour pas grand-chose. L'air était à la fois métallique et agité, désagréable ; une courte bise soulevait par instants juste ce qu'il fallait de poussière pour gêner la gorge. Les mâles passaient, cols relevés, mains dans les poches. Ils ne songeaient point à l'amour rapide des hôtels, étreinte d'un corps froid et satisfaction brusque comme un coup de vent glacé. Une morne soirée encore, qui apporterait peu d'argent pour les poches, peu de pain pour le ventre, rien de nouveau pour l'esprit.

La terre est donc toujours la même. Les portiers des palaces feraient bien, à défaut de tête, de changer tout au moins d'uniforme, se disait la Crépue. Pourquoi les bas ne seraient-ils pas maintenant verts ou rouges, pourquoi les débitants de tabac n'exhiberaient-ils pas des bêtes exotiques plutôt que leurs éternelles cigarettes ? Une brouette ferait son effet à la devanture d'un tailleur. Un peu d'inattendu favoriserait le commerce, y songerait-on un jour ? La petite en venait à croire qu'elle était la seule à s'ennuyer dans cette ville résignée. Et le ciel ? Sans

Those interested in the inaugural presentation of the Boulevard Jacquain project were invited to meet in front of a house bearing number 4 at 21:50. The eager for extracurricular ventures were not the only ones who came. Despite the crepuscular time, many accomplices showed up at the unlikely meeting time and place. On the sidewalk – an extension of the traffic-free Place De Brouckère – an undeclared negotiation between cars and pedestrians unfolded. A monumental installation framed this liminal space, serving as a portal overseeing the splendid straightness of the urban artery. They quickly realised that the motive behind this indecent proposal was not to admire the architecture's sterile edges and disconcerting banality, veiled by the vanishing light. The sparse event description suggested a happening and collective experience, the prologue of an experimental project in the making, a performative trailer of a film to come.

The figurants' crossed greetings and shy smiles insinuated a scheduled gathering. To an inattentive observer, this could have been just another crowd in the city centre's incessant flow. Perhaps colleagues of Théâtre National meeting for a well-deserved after-work drink. Or tourists waiting for their nocturnal crime tour to begin. Coloured rimmed glasses, an asymmetric dress, a vintage patina jacket and other details gave up the group's socio-professional profile: 'creatives'. The increasing number of protagonists and their choreographed sociality became more noticeable on that busy spring evening, especially to mundane strollers scrutinising from afar. After a while, they formed a circle around a storyteller whose stylised gesticulations accompanied a brief declamation.

*

It is said that a certain Paul Nouguier was murdered here, on Boulevard Jacqmain. However, there are no traces or official accounts of this crime, except for some rumours circulating in the neighbourhood's gloomy bars and among sex workers. Rumour also says that sometimes, during the temporary twilight of the blue hour, as we gaze towards the northern end of the avenue with the adequate sound stimulation, some clues to solve this mystery might surface. As a collective of artists, we have been seeking hints together for months and we would like to invite others to join us in this attentive observation of the transition from day to night, hoping that some fleeting details discreetly emerge...

*

To the sound of binaural beats, the group positioned itself facing the northern end of the boulevard, embarking on a 15-minute concentrated observation during the blue hour. Those craving interactive experiences sharpened their vision, ready to capture irrefutable evidence and unravel small mysteries. Various dreamers entered the neighbouring night shop to buy an oneiric snack, while an elegant gentleman jotted down eloquent sentences inspired by the experience. Synaesthetic anti-socials with a certain aversion to narratives, simply admired the chromatic variations of that electric blue transitioning sky. Onlookers crossed the street to watch the group of improvised detectives from a safe distance, questioning the veracity of the reported crime and the very relevance of the event. A distracted flaneur walked in a straight line to the end of the boulevard only to return to her starting point. In her brief escapade through the last glimpses of the day, she witnessed lights switching on in a domino effect, and the flickering neon signs of the remaining strip bars in the adjacent alleys.

Though the group concentrated within a close perimeter, everyone seemed to experience its own vespertine reverie. If they happened to talk, they followed an unspoken etiquette; speaking quietly and containing more expansive bodily impetuses. As apparently nothing exceptional was happening on Boulevard Jacqmain, this discretion and contention amused bartenders and the night shop owner.

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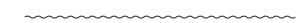


- What are they doing or looking at exactly? Weirdos...
- Something is about to happen. How much do you want to bet?
- Always finding an excuse to gamble...
- Well, you're no stranger to the thrill, are you?

The bystanders kept looking for the spectral epiphany they were all invited to witness among the otherwise bland setting of the boulevard – continuously pulsating with its stream of passers-by, cars, scooters, bicycles. The imminent darkness, the suggestion of an evocative dramatic plot and the soundtrack's bass line contributed to induce a state of uncanny phantasmagoria. Until the night fell in a celestial exuberance. The binaural beats progressively faded into the surrounding urban cacophony. The group was invited to head to nadine's office, located just a few blocks away.

- I hope there will be drinks
- Do you know that the River Senne was buried alive beneath this boulevard?
- How were the artists recruited?
- I'd never noticed the blue hour before...
- It's like an ephemeral spectacle suspended in time
- Can't really say if it's a half-full or half-empty glass
- **You may need to hold a door slightly open for a while, just enough to walk in and out...**

In the vitrine facing the street, an animated headshot of a woman greeted the audience with its persistent gaze. There was a buzz to enter the narrow office space. For people requesting some explanations to outline the happening they had just witnessed, just a few clues punctuated the space: pages of a novel were projected on the wall, some archives and books were unpretentiously displayed. Maybe the most intriguing prop was a riso printer nervously spitting out posters. Everyone wanted one of the hot-off-the-press leaflets.



Some eyes started to read the text printed out in blue letters before they were outpaced by the resolute voice of the orator reading the still humid lines.

Dreamers, storytellers, insomniacs, deviants, engineers, mundane voyeurs, gossipy bartenders: the narrator progressively surfaced the recognisable cast of real-life actors on and off the page. One could vaguely identify the micro-situations that took place during the blue hour experience. The witnesses exchanged complicit glances, now reassured by a certain aesthetic framing, some elements of context and ethylic stimulation.

– Everything was staged, and our part in this voyeuristic theatre was already written...

– **Plot twist or coup de théâtre ?**

– **How do you transcribe synchronically what is unfolding in the here and now?**

– Is it called improvisation or live composition?

– **Or rehearsed spontaneity**

– **Hermetic site-specificity masking an obscure story in just another silly artsy extravaganza**

– Evocative, subtle, mysterious, minimal.

– Surprisingly disappointing

– **The main protagonist of this performance was the sky and the changing luminosity was the central event. It reminds me of an account of one of Magritte's exhibitions. The night of the vernissage, the spectators were surprised to enter a dark gallery. At midnight, the lights progressively dimmed up, gradually 'revealing' the paintings on the wall.**

– Except here we don't have an exhibition to be revealed

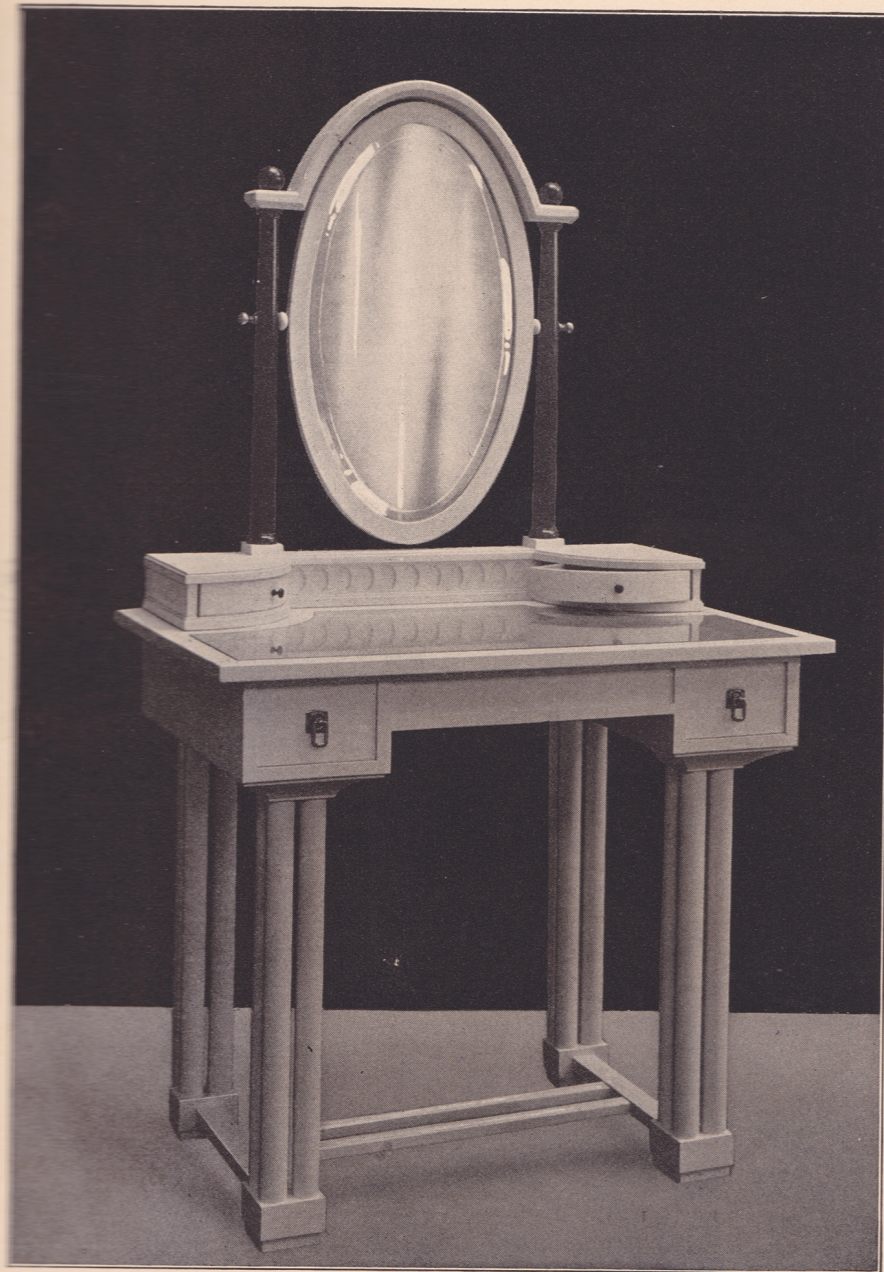
– Yet,...

***DIE EVERYWHERE  
LIVE SOMEWHERE  
DREAM ANYWHERE  
IN FULL HD QUALITY***

**AN AIR KISS  
HI  
AN AIR KISS  
BYE**

**IT IS MIDNIGHT  
CRYSTAL CLEAR  
OPTIC WHITE  
A CALL TO DARK PLEASURES  
CELLULOSIC DREAMS  
YOUNG MEMORIES  
MAYBE FLASHY PINK**

Nr. 5



Toilette

mit ovalem Facette-Spiegel, Tischplatten-Größe 90×55 cm,  
Höhe 1,55 m, mit Kristall-Glasplatte mit justierten Kanten





**No comments yet.**

Start the conversation.





Driven to know more about *Boulevard Jacqmain* and Irène Hamoir's role as a Brussels surrealist, but frustrated by the scarce information on her work in major studies on the movement, the collective came to the conclusion that the only way to proceed was to turn to unconventional methods.<sup>1</sup>

Taking into account the fact that Hamoir passed away on May 17, 1994, the only chance of getting in touch was through the help of a renowned medium. What follows is a report of the conversation between Delphine Somers and the medium on May 24, 2023 at 11:00, Brussels, in which the medium provides answers to the questions of the collective. Before starting the session, the medium walked through some specifics. She would not be speaking to Irène directly but she would get access to her information by consulting the Akashic records, a compendium of all universal events, thoughts, words, emotions and intent ever to have occurred in the past, present, or future, in terms of all entities and life forms, not just human. This access would be provided by her guides.

Quickly after having created a sacred space, information began to come through, and before answering any of our specific questions, the medium wanted us to receive the following information:

“Irène Hamoir did not want to die and therefore it took her a long time, seven months, before she passed over to the light. Once she did, she went fast and passed all necessary stages to reincarnate quickly. She is now a toddler living in France.”

# CHANNELING IRÈNE HAMOIR

24.05.2023





**(DS) CAN YOU TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT IRÈNE HAMOIR? HOW WOULD SHE HAVE DESCRIBED HERSELF?**

(M) She was a rebel and had a very hard time breaking through. Most of the obstacles she experienced in life were created by men, starting with her father and how she was raised. Her upbringing was very strict, she was ignored a lot. Apart from her mother, she did not get a lot of support from women. Men would admire her but not necessarily support her. She developed very masculine character traits and was a fighter. She created this shield mostly in order to make a place for herself in the male world surrounding her. She had a few contradictions in her character. She was a loving woman but had to suppress a lot of anger and bitterness, and could have anger explosions. She did not shy away from drugs. It was important for her to be very strict and strong but she also knew her place and could take a subordinate position, if needed. She was incredibly intelligent and would have loved to accomplish more in life. Her life was good but definitely not easy. She was very sociable, invited a lot of people into her house and organised gatherings. She was a bit of a snob. She took good care of herself, found it important to be beautiful, would smoke cigars and loved to act extravagantly but she also knew her place and could be quite humble. This contradiction came from her upbringing and the relationship she had with her father and society at large.

**(DS) WHAT DID SURREALISM MEAN TO IRÈNE HAMOIR?**

(M) She adored the surrealists because this group gave her the platform to do what she loved, but she did not consider herself to be one. She would have loved to take a more romantic direction, but as a woman wanting to be an artist during her time, she needed the surrealists and the support they

could provide for her. Dealing with a male dominated world was not easy and she developed a strategy in which she put herself on a pedestal, from this position she could look down on the men and take her position as the only woman. It worked – the men in the group admired her and put her on the pedestal she created for herself.

René Magritte in particular was a very positive influence in her life. A great friend and platonic love. He supported her and her work in ways that others did not.

**(DS) WHICH WOMEN WERE IMPORTANT TO IRÈNE HAMOIR?**

(M) She did not really have women she looked up to in her surroundings but she was a big admirer of George Sand (1804-1867), a French novelist, memoirist and journalist, and one of the most popular writers in Europe during her lifetime.

**(DS) WHAT IS THE MOST SURREALISTIC THING SHE EVER DID? WHY?**

(M) Marrying Scutenaire. She was comfortable, juridically and materially safe with him. This marriage gave her access to the group but it was not an easy marriage. To the outside world they looked like a good couple but behind the scenes he was a bully. Very authoritative, and tried to make her small and control her.

She also wrote a lot more than what is officially found under her name. She published some things under a male pseudonym and Scutenaire released some poetry of hers under his name. She helped him a lot with his writing. He loved her but was very pejorative towards her, probably because he was intimidated by her and knew her potential. She balanced the hardship of this relationship out by having four close

friendships with other men. René Magritte was one of these and the most important, he supported her on a profound level. These relationships were platonic, she did not have affairs.

We went through the list of poetry publications by Scutenaire. These are the ones either written by Irène or in collaboration with her:

‘Les Haches de la vie’ Irène Hamoir.

‘Les Secours de l’oiseau’ Irène Hamoir.

‘Frappez au miroir!’ collaboration between Irène Hamoir and Scutenaire.

‘Le Bâton de Jean de Milan’ a collaboration, but mostly Scutenaire.

‘La Santé’ Irène Hamoir. The medium adds that this one is important to look at if we want to understand more of Irène.

‘Les Jours Dangereux, les Nuits Noires’ collaboration between Irène Hamoir and Scutenaire.

**(DS) THERE IS A RUMOUR THAT IRÈNE HAMOIR DID NOT WRITE THE BOOK *BOULEVARD JACQMAIN* HERSELF, COULD YOU GIVE US MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THAT?**

(M) She definitely did write the book herself, it was a reference to her brothers and the group she was part of, it was very important to her and she was very proud of it. It was truth written as fiction, and it provoked quite some angry reactions at the time, some situations were too recognisable. The book was boycotted quite a lot. She had to fight to get it published.

**(DS) WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF MARIËN’S *OMBRELLE* TRACT ON IRÈNE HAMOIR, HER REPUTATION AND THE CRITICAL RECEPTION OF HER WORK?<sup>2</sup> HOW WOULD SHE DESCRIBE HER RELATIONSHIP TO MARIËN? AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO WOMEN IN GENERAL?**

(M) This was a destructive act. The tract was full of lies. The medium does not have answers about Mariën but says she gets a very dark energy, very negative. Irène was furious at him. The text should have been destroyed because it was absolute nonsense.

**(DS) WHAT KIND OF PRACTICES DID THE SURREALISTS USE? DID THEY USE HYPNAGOGIC, HYPNOPOMPIC OR LUCID DREAMING TO GENERATE IDEAS, VISUALS OR PLOT LINES?**

(M) They were using substances to enter into other realms, some got addicted. Irène was more experimenting and did not get addicted. She was also interested in the esoteric and in magic, she consulted someone a few times for inspiration, but this was not her main source. Most inspiration came from the group itself, their conflicts (which they loved and used as a way to grow) and from drugs.

**(DS) HOW WAS HER RELATIONSHIP WITH BRUSSELS AND ITS PERIPHERY (BOTH ARE IN THE BOOK)? WHAT WERE THEY TO HER AS A PERSON? DID SHE ENJOY SPENDING TIME THERE, WERE THEY STIMULATING? WHY (NOT)?**

(M) She loved certain places in Brussels and found them inspiring, but mostly she hated the city. She found it very unpleasant and dirty. The medium got no info about the periphery.

**(DS) HOW DID SHE EXPERIENCE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ART AND LIFE WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE? AND DOES SHE FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT IT NOW THAT SHE’S PASSED?**

(M) When she was alive, art was a way for her to find freedom, to escape the restrictions of being a woman in society and the group helped her a great deal with that.

<sup>1</sup> Irène Hamoir and her work have received little critical attention to date in main studies of surrealism in Belgium. The only monographic studies on her are two master’s dissertations by Angélique Bémelmans at the Université de Liège, 2008, and Elisa Pirotte at the UCLouvain, 2021, as well as the exhibition catalogue *Ce qui est attirant est beau*, 1996, at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium. Her work is discussed in chapters or articles by Achille and Christine Béchet, “Femmes, amour et surréalisme”, 1987, and by José Vovelle, “Des femmes et du surréalisme en Belgique”, 2005. She is present in Xavier Cannone’s reference work *Le Surréalisme en Belgique*, 2006, and Marcel Mariën’s important compilation of primary documents in *L’activité surréaliste en Belgique*, 1979. Her collaboration with her husband Scutenaire was also addressed in the articles by Séverine Orban and Arisa Sano.

Angélique Bémelmans, *Irène Hamoir, une écrivaine méconnue*, Master’s dissertation, Faculté de philosophie et lettres, Université de Liège, 2008 (promotor: Danielle Bajomée).

Elisa Pirotte, *La position ambiguë des femmes dans le surréalisme. Le cas d’Irène Hamoir dans l’expérience collective Bruxelloise*, Master’s dissertation, Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres, Université Catholique de Louvain, 2021 (promotor: Pierre Piret).

Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque (dir.), *Ce qui est attirant est beau. Irène, Scut, Magritte & Co.*, Exhibition catalogue, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, 13 September-15 December 1996, Brussels, 1996.

Achille et Christine Béchet, “Femmes, amour et surréalisme”, in *Surréalistes Wallons*, Brussels, éditions Labor, 1987, p. 107-132.

José Vovelle, “Des femmes et du surréalisme en Belgique”, *Europe*. n. 912, April 2005, p. 169-178.

Xavier Canonne, *Le surréalisme en Belgique 1924-2000*, Brussels, Fonds Mercator, 2006.

Marcel Mariën, *L’activité surréaliste en Belgique (1924-1950)*, Brussels, Éditions Lebeer Hossmann, 1979 (Le Fil Rouge).

Séverine Orban, « Irène Hamoir et Louis Scutenaire : Une symbiose en littérature plutôt qu’une imposture », *Études francophones*, vol. 29, Automn 2018, p. 87-99.

Arisa Sano, « Qui a écrit *La Cuve infernale* (1944) ? : question de l’écriture “à quatre mains” chez Irène Hamoir et Louis Scutenaire », *Cahiers d’études françaises Université Keio*, vol.22, 2017, p. 62- 77.

<sup>2</sup> One year after Scutenaire’s death in 1987, Mariën published one of his letters in the magazine *Les Lèvres Nues*. In the letter in question, he justified his absence in a meeting for confidential and personal reasons [motifs ‘personnels et strictement confidentiels’] and for not signing a tract against André Souris. The letter was published without the authorisation of Irène Hamoir. She began a juridical procedure against Mariën who reacts by publishing the tract *Ombrelle pour célébrer la fête des morts*, in October 1988. In the document, he reproduced the letter of Hamoir’s lawyer, and includes different misogynistic quotes against private propriety or about the perversity of the ‘abusive widows’. The next year, he published the same tract next to an article in the same magazine stating that Scutenaire actually wrote *Boulevard Jacqmain* and *La Cuve Infernale* (Marcel Mariën, “Les Vertus Sataniques”, in *Le Moment Venu, Les Lèvres Nues*, 1989, [p. 7-9]). This was a condemnation coming from an influential voice when it comes to Belgian surrealism, also acknowledged as its first historian. This episode would cast a permanent shadow on Hamoir as yet “another widow who is not very surrealist!” [“encore une veuve qui n’est pas très surréaliste!”]. See : Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque (dir.), *op.cit.*, p. 375.

For more informations on this episode and Irène Hamoir in general, see: Elisa Pirotte, *op.cit.*, and Angélique Bémelmans, *op.cit.*

CETTE PORTE  
PAR OÙ L'ASSASSIN  
ENTRE ET SORT  
N'EN GARDE

HONTE NI REMOR





## *Look around, you're here...*

The continuum between fact and fiction, as well as the ambivalence of the performed violence in *Boulevard Jacqmain* makes it a relevant entry point to address Brussels' past and present through the lens of the novelesque. This magazine is an inaugural gesture posing the initial questions and premises of a long-term interdisciplinary artistic project based on this book. The latter is conceived as a catalyst, a provocation that informs an experimental methodology to collectively explore the disruptive tactics of the surrealists as well as potential contemporary equivalents. Through periodical meetings, often in the same cafés and bars they used to go to, accomplices are invited to also engage in similar games, titling sessions, re-enactments, city walks, screenings. The project reactivates and actualises these methodologies not as relics of the past, but as dynamic tools and radical exercises in an attempt to engage with the story and with reality.

From the beginning, the lack of information surrounding Irène Hamoir's novel and its reception added an outlandish layer to the project. Until the moment this text was written, little information on *Boulevard Jacqmain's* context of production and reception were found. Regarding Hamoir's broader body of work, there are few critical studies and the only published book about her is the exhibition catalogue on the donation of the Hamoir-Scutenaire collection to the Belgian state, that would become an important nucleus of the Magritte Museum. After a more anecdotic and personal account on Irène, another article paints a bitter portrait of the author as an imposture, a mean and greedy wife that shackled her man for life but the only women of the group who was not an 'idiot' – to borrow Scutenaire's words. The author also replicates the accusations of renown misogynist Marcel Mariën that *Boulevard Jacqmain* and her short stories *La Cuve Infernale* were actually written by her husband. She supports her allegations on a correspondence between the couple not even available to specialists.<sup>13</sup> Studies by Angélique Bémelmans, Arisa Sano, Séverine Orban and Elisa Pirotte provide nuanced

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Daems, « Scutenaire-Hamoir et la Littérature » dans Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque (dir.), *Ce qui est attirant est beau. Irène, Scut, Magritte & Co.*, catalogue d'exposition, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 13 septembre -15 décembre, 1996, p. 126-134.

See also « Channeling Irène Hamoir », namely note on Marcel Mariën's tract *Ombrelle*, in previous pages of this magazine.

Il n'y a pas de mensonge puisqu'il n'y a pas de vérité.

perspectives by looking closer at her work or questioning the accusations by emphasising the explicit misogyny of central figures such as Mariën, whose enduring shadow still casts doubts on Hamoir's contribution.<sup>14</sup>

Assuming, on the one hand, that (art) history is a form of storytelling, and on the other hand, an acknowledgement of fiction and fabulation as means to address untold stories and archival gaps, this silence is embraced as an integral part of the project. The erasure or 'mnemonic annihilation' faced by Hamoir is understood as part of the violence being addressed, though not resolved. Instead of viewing these lacunae as obstacles, they become an invitation to speculate collectively – our own disruptive tactic to question official accounts and respectable historiography. When little to no answers are found in accessible documentation, we turn to Irène Hamoir's unapologetic portrayal of the surrealists and consider their confrontational strategies with their limits, contradictions and failures, beyond a categorical condemnation or nostalgic heroization. Ultimately, this also leads us to reflect on the problematics of our own artistic practices and performative masquerades in a broader perspective. As an irreverent homage to Irène and her book, this is an invitation to pull the trigger to pierce some of these question marks together...

Un autre pseudonyme [...] fut celui affecté au Boulevard Jacqmain que Scutenaire écrivit en 1938-1939 [...] le roman parut finalement aux Editions des Artistes, mais sous le nom d'Irène Hamoir, déguisement commode que Scutenaire avait déjà utilisé, neuf ans plus tôt, pour un recueil de nouvelles publié par P.-G. Van Hecke : *La Cave infernale*. 127

Enfin, et pour en finir, j'évoquerai une image cruelle, celle de Scutenaire sortant d'un vernissage, au soir de janvier 1978. Perclus d'arthrose il avance péniblement tandis que sa femme, gardienne vaillante de sa mémoire mime à mes côtés sa démarche douloureuse en riant aux éclats. 128

<sup>14</sup> Angélique Bémelmans, *op.cit.*; Arisa Sano, *op.cit.*; Séverine Orban, *op. cit.*; Elisa Pirotte, *op. cit.*

: encore un texte sexiste !



ENCORE UNE VEUVE QUI N'EST PAS TRÈS SURREALISTE!

---

Irène Hamoir

# Boulevard JACQMAIN

roman

TERRES ET VISAGES





*If we consider surrealism through the lens of violence the book highlights, what does surrealism mean or represent today ?*

*Can we consider all forms of self-referential provocation as surrealist or is this a distinctive title restrictive to certain aficionados of suits and bowler hats?*

*What possibilities do dream-like states, imagination and an unfiltered or unedited unconsciousness offer as potential of creation and resistance in our increasingly revolting and dystopic reality?*

*How can artistic practices respond to climate emergencies, urban violence, war, genocide and persistent occupation? Are there any possible artistic strategies to respond or subvert current-day turmoil?*

*What similarities could be drawn between the interbellum period – with the spectre of war and the Great Depression – and today's post-COVID crisis?*

*Who were the surrealists and who could be their modern-day correspondents?*

*Among the many covert crypted messages in the book, how does its fictional urban tale resonate with Brussels' past and present?*

*In which ways does it document a historical moment of the city while also echoing its contemporary realities? What can be said of the representations it conveys of sex work, crime, gender?*

*Who was Irène Hamoir?*

*In which context did she write Boulevard Jacqmain?*

*How was the book received?*

*What if Boulevard Jacqmain was an aside, a confession, an indirect commentary by author Irène Hamoir on her fellow colleagues and the group she was part of?*

*What if real-life situations, behaviours, characters and places were barely disguised or overlaid behind an assumed façade of fiction?*

*Beyond a provocative joke, what if her imagined inaugural shooting of a leading surrealist figure was also a psycho-magic and symbolic act, literally firing a bullet through the pages of time?*

*What if this was the ultimate surrealist act advocated by Breton?*

## *Dramatis personae*

>> **Delphine Somers** (°1956) was born in Bruges and did several jobs at which she all failed. Now she is a painter.

### >> **Liquidware 4.0 :mentalkLINIK**

Its non-operating, autonomous processing structure is the distinguishing characteristic of the **Liquidware 4.0 :mK** version. Befitting its particular purpose, it possesses a specific structure. It has human failings and irregularities. It does not have a defined mission, order, or timing. It belongs to no institution, nor does it bear any possibility of institutionalizing. It takes the initiative, yet it is not an initiative in and of itself. While enabling the adaptability of hardware devices, it may restrict the possible methods for its users' actions, or it may create yet unforeseen liberties. These liberties are stored within the concentration of pleasure smoke and are kept in permanent memory when the institution collapses. In fact, none of these are intentional attitudes.

>> **Olivia Ardui** is a storyteller. Her narrations unfold in different formats, spanning from critical essays to love letters, formal courses to tarot readings, exhibitions as well as speculative shows. In her recent work, she approaches exhibition making and art history through the prism of fabulation, dramaturgy or as potential theatrical scripts. Reception and mediation, as well as the interaction between form and content are key in her practice. For those wandering in the realm of biographical fictions, she assumes the persona of **Cecilia Manuel**, an innate doppelgänger adding an extra layer of multilingual ambiguity and infusing a touch of latino-flavored drama into her artistic repertoire.

>> **Oriol Vilanova** is a flea market person, you can find him in the Jeu de Balle in Brussels, or somehow, in any other flea market around.

### >> **Sofie Verraest**

>> **Various Artists**, an enigmatic and collective presence in the art world, represents a diverse amalgamation of creators from across genres and eras. With works spanning from classical to avant-garde, this entity embodies the collective spirit and creativity of numerous unnamed talents. Often seen in compilations or group exhibitions, Various Artists defies conventional boundaries, offering a kaleidoscopic view of artistic expression. Their portfolio, a tapestry of anonymous contributions, celebrates the universality and anonymity of art. Various Artists stands as a testament to the collaborative and ever-evolving nature of human creativity.

With the special appearance of **Loucka Fiagan** and **vinco.zone** in the happening during the blue hour on May 27<sup>th</sup>.

## *Les personnages*

Paul Nougier : Paul Nougé  
Édouard Massens : E.L.T. Mesens  
Gritto : René Magritte  
Monsieur Marcel : Marcel Lecomte  
Bergère : Georgette Magritte  
Crépeur : Irène Hamoir  
Maître Bridge : Jean Scutenaire  
Evrard : Gérard Van Bruaene  
Marquis : Paul Magritte  
Mouffin : Robert Goffin  
Marthe : Marthe Nougé  
Gossin : Roger Goossens  
Sourire : André Souris  
Delabysme : Denis Marion  
Carafe : Charles Poot  
Julot la Louve : Jules Wolf  
Le Grand Maurice : Maurice Wolf  
José la Souplesse : Joseph Stiernon  
Cubano : M. Préau

Rina, Joby Autrui, Samuel Rusko, Gitane, Gustin le Turfiste, Jack, Café, le Vieux : gens du « Milieu ».

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Front cover: Detail of: Irène Hamoir, *Boulevard Jacqmain*, Brussels, Didier Devillez, 1996, p. 154.

Back cover : Speculative intervention on a detail of the photograph of Irène Hamoir at the shooting stand, c. 1950, in: Gisèle Ollinger-Zinque (dir.), *Ce qui est attirant est beau. Irène, Scut, Magritte & Co.*, Exhibition catalogue, Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, 13 September -15 December 1996, Brussels, 1996, p. 20.

Inside cover: Het Goudblommeke in Papier/La Fleur de Papier Doré, February 2024.

p. 4: Detail of Irène Hamoir, *Boulevard Jacqmain*, Brussels, édition des artistes, 1953, p. 9 (Terres et visages).

p. 7 : :mentalKLINIK Lunatic Poems, 2016-2024.

p. 8-9: Oriol Vilanova, *Commercial break*, 2024.

p. 10 : Speculative collage with fragment of E.L.T. Mesens, *Comme nous l'entendons* published on page 5 of *Adieu à Marie* in 1926.

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p. 20: Documentation photograph of happening during the blue hour on May 27th 2023 by :mentalKLINIK.

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p. 38: Speculative intervention on a detail of a

photograph of Marcel Mariën at the Library *Miroir d'Elisabeth* in 1948, printed in: Xavier Canonne and Christian Bussy, *Marcel Mariën. 1920-1993. Le lendemain de la mort*, Brussels, Crédit Communal, 1994, p. 82 (Monographies de l'art moderne).

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p. 40: Speculative collage with aphorism by Paul Nougé, "Ce boulevard encombré de morts Regardez vous y êtes ».

p. 43 : Speculative collage with quotes by Marcel Mariën in: Marcel Mariën, *La Licorne à cinq pattes, Les Lèvres Nues*, 1986, p. 44 ; Marcel Mariën, "Les Vertus Sataniques", *Le Moment venu*, 1989 (drafts in the Archives et Musée de la littérature), [p. 8-9], quoted in Angélique Bémelmans, *Irène Hamoir, une écrivaine méconnue*, Master's dissertation, Faculté de philosophie et lettres, Université de Liège, 2008 (promotor: Danielle Bajomée), p. 41; and by Irène Hamoir in: Achille et Christine Béchet, "Femmes, amour et surréalisme", in *Surréalistes Wallons*, Brussels, éditions Labor, 1987, p. 110.

p. 44: Speculative collage with detail of photograph by G. Thiry, in: Achille et Christine Béchet, "Femmes, amour et surréalisme", in *Surréalistes Wallons*, Brussels, éditions Labor, 1987, p. 111; and quote of tract "Ombrelle pour la fête des morts", 1988, by Marcel Mariën, in: Angélique Bémelmans, *Irène Hamoir, une écrivaine méconnue*, Master's dissertation, Faculté de philosophie et lettres, Université de Liège, 2008 (promotor: Danielle Bajomée), p. 116.

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Poster : Detail of the introduction note of Irène Hamoir, *Boulevard Jacqmain*, Brussels, édition des artistes, 1953, p. 7 (Terres et visages) and performative text of the happening during the blue hour on May 27th 2023 by Loucka Fiagan & vinco. zone.

## Boulevard Jacqmain (dannie.k)

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*BJ: prologue – hey bastard/hands up!/Look around, you're here...* – Olivia Ardui

*Blue hour, May 27<sup>th</sup>* – Cecilia Manuel

*Channeling Irène Hamoir. 25.05.2023* – Delphine Somers

## Featuring visual interruptions by

Cecilia Manuel

Delphine Somers

:mentalKLINIK

Oriol Vilanova

.be.water.my.friend.

Various Artists

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**Editorial interruptions** Cecilia Manuel

**Editorial hunches** Phyllis Dierick & Loes Jacobs

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*L'action et les personnages de ce récit sont fictifs; toute ressemblance avec des contemporains vivants ou morts ne serait donc que pure coïncidence.*

BMW I see a white car besides me -One of them is flickering white light  
Two boys cross a group of artists -They stand in a circle  
A black car passes by parks behind them  
Door is open - Red shirt - Looking at the boulevard - Shes looking at me - Something is happening  
Bicycle rides towards proximus  
World trade flashlight - He touches his beard and shrug his shoulders until Los Angeles  
Three boys all active - Bubblegum bubblegum pinkflower façade says happy happy  
The light is slowly going from indigo to light blue no  
To darker blue shades noises around me  
Take away Two men; one smoking a ciggie  
The other one on his phone; the bright screen in his face  
A woman is touching her left knee while looking at the group of artists  
We walk forwards Exhaling vapour Shrug shoulders awkward smile  
Should we say hi or ignore each other  
Should we acknowledge each other's existence?  
Flickering green says you are free  
A man is sipping a cup of wine  
Silk light red and blue; he is walking alone  
He found someone  
No he didn't He is still alone  
Silence Shes washing her hands from something  
Scrubbing it with a lot of energy  
Keep scrubbing keep washing her hand They are holding each other hand  
A jester and an object He explains something She is looking at Emile  
A man with military shorts; far down the world trade centre  
Undisturbed He parks his bicycle He looks pretty rock n roll  
Sitting on the bench alone puzzled about the people in front of the Europa shop  
Tu es style; He walks seemingly unhappy  
Puzzled - She walks zig zag  
Explaining something Two men stand behind the BMW; One taking a picture of a dog  
The ceremony of the sunset but The sun is already set  
Light fades slowly  
Silence  
Dark Gatherer Indigo  
The two men are still looking at the group of people  
Are they artists?  
Sirens of the police  
Danny just came  
Hehe A butterfly doesn't notice the mice  
There are two bikes covered in the design of accident  
Theres a man dancing Hahahaha  
Look at the sixth floor  
The BMW is having a lot of recognition  
What is going on?  
Hey the scooter again  
Cigarette Smoke  
The mice have found confidence in the cigarette smoke  
Look at the sky as its growing darker  
A great white car; tries to park but then doesn't park and leaves  
stop stop stop  
UHH he is coming towards me  
He is walking very fast he has a shirt of amazon leaves  
10 years ago; the man who was dancing is not the same man anymore he is now his neighbour  
Its nearly night  
Nearly night  
Shaking my minute maid; they have bullet proof jackets: one puts his hands in his pockets  
he says I don't know - the cops leave  
Right: Glittering sparks on the shirt of this little girl;  
she is doing a handstand; hugs her mother; this is her sister:  
Bubble gum Bubblegum pink flower  
Happy Happy  
They seem to be walking running as happening around  
The little girl is now dancing; lean forwards as the night settles down  
The night settles; they wave goodbye - see you next time  
Happy Boulevard, noodle freedom street  
Squeek of insurance  
A gipsy woman walks past; the group of people standing  
Dude where they going?  
Don't say it  
A woman passes by the group - sipping sad soda  
a man sipping wine and flipping magazines looks at me  
BANGKOK - a family passes by speaking Flemish  
One was an acrobat  
I think it's over

