IN SURREALISM'S WAVE: DRIFTING FROM THE REAL IN DORA MAAR'S PHOTOMONTAGE

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Introduction

In Dora Maar's 1934 work *Untitled (Hand-shell)* a disembodied hand protrudes from a conch shell on a bed of sand (Figure 1). A cloudy sky made up of many shapes and densities fills the background. A break in them allows for some sun to filter through and shine upon the hand-shell creation. The hand fits flawlessly in the seashell. Where it joins the shell, a clean line runs from the shell's lip to the index finger of the hand, leading down to the sand where this construction rests. Although at first glance the hand may appear to belong to a real person, the mannequin hand's artificiality creeps into our consciousness. The fingernail painted in a dark color against the smooth alabaster surface makes plain that the body part mimics but does not refer to any hand from "real life." With a tension similar to this apprehension of the hand, the sky behind the hand-shell is at odds with the horizon line established by the sand and the object. The cloud coverage that constitutes the sky does not taper off as it meets the sand's horizon, like it would in nature. In Maar's constructed image, hand and space create *and* interrupt the illusion that the image is in fact a singular moment captured in a "straight" photograph.

Given these elements, one could, perhaps, easily say that *Untitled (Hand-shell)* falls neatly under the wide umbrella of what can be considered Surrealist art. The work is a photomontage, whereby Maar manipulated multiple photographs and arranged them to generate a composite image. Broadly speaking, the photomontage strategy fragments, rearranges, and re-presents existing photographs into a new whole.[1] How artists achieve these manipulations can vary, from darkroom techniques to physical cutting and pasting of photographs. It was this

[1] Elza Adamowicz, "Pasting," in *Surrealist Collage in Text and Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 46. Adamowicz points out the signaling potential in the combinatory process of collage (and by extension photomontage): "the collage process is visibly inscribed when the material heterogeneity of its elements is foregrounded in the contrasts of media and surface textures used."

transformation of otherwise "straight" photographs that made photomontage especially useful to the Surrealists.

The straight or "specific" photograph, in the words of Roland Barthes, "is never distinguished from its referent (from what it represents), or at least is not *immediately* or *generally* distinguished from its referent."[2] Here, Barthes underscores how the photograph promises to offer an objective truth in the mechanical and immediate capture of a scene. The image's sense of perspective, depth, and scale all help create the illusion that what the viewer beholds is straight from life. These elements, all of which Maar sensitively manipulated, give the image an apparent authenticity that allows us to believe we are seeing something as we would in reality.[3]

Through its reconfigurations of photographed reality, then, photomontage challenges the photograph's promise of objective truth. In *Untitled (Hand-shell)*, Maar's absurdist subject is constructed from the disembodied mannequin hand and its pairing with a mystical sculpture from the sea. Moreover, the newly imagined creature is framed in a dreamlike atmosphere, made of images Maar specifically chose and oriented. The evidence that Maar made and constructed the image is subtle. The composited image originally does not present itself as such—there is a doubtless sense that what the image gives is a truthful "straight" photograph. For example, the clouds' disproportionate size relative to the ambiguous horizon and ground of the sand look real enough at first. However, our certainty of the scene's reality slowly comes undone as we notice that what we see—what Maar constructed—can't actually be.

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[2] Roland Barthes, "The Photograph Unclassifiable," in *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Horward (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 5.

[3] Edward Weston, "Techniques of Photographic Art," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1941, as cited in Rosalind Krauss, "Corpus Delicti" in *October* 33 (Summer 1985): 68.

For initial comparison of what Maar is doing, consider an untitled 1929 photomontage by Maar's friend and contemporary Paul Eluard (Figure 2). Set against a backdrop of stairs, masked figures hold two naked women captive at the bottom of the composition. Near the top of the steps, another unclothed woman poses on one knee, and a large bird looms to her right. Eluard eschews internally coherent scale or perspective in this work, generating an almost comical inversion of size between the kneeling woman and the bird. His photomontage borders on the theatrical, dramatic in its corporeal gesture. Moreover, Eluard's process of cutting and layering is easily discernable, as evidenced by cut marks along the image fragments and the portion of stairs that peek through the white of the layered circular element. Altogether, Eluard's strategy produces a photomontage drenched in the uncanny that announces it as such, rather than attempting a rendition of the real as perceived through the naked eye.

Indeed, unlike Eluard, Maar creates a space that gives the hand-shell a convincing setting, however imagined both montage and subject may be. The other various elements in her photomontage come together to create the impression of logical depth, space, and scale, despite engaging in a similar cutting-and-pasting process. In other words, Maar's photomontage generates at first a scene that seems less like a constructed image and more like a reflection of something that comes from real life. It is only after this illusory beholding of the "real" that the photomontage become apparent. The false or constructed nature of Maar's photomontage belatedly emerges, to be perceived after, alongside or paradoxically with a sense of the real.

In the following thesis, I propose a reading of Maar's photomontages and situate them in dialogue with the issues of reality, representation, and the marvelous that were at the center of Surrealist thought. As my introduction has initially laid out, Maar worked in Surrealism's paradigmatic problem of the real and unreal. Rather than pitting reality and construction in

opposition of each other, blurring them, or transposing them, I will argue that Maar's photomontage shifts between the real and unreal.

Instead of wholly reimagining the world through photomontage, Maar makes the viewer drift from the world we perceive to its construction. I elaborate how this drift back and forth from the real is put in motion by Maar's strategic use of the photographic image's pictorial space and the Surrealist signs that appear in her photomontages. These formal elements shift not just the believability of a photomontage, but also their associations within the larger context of the Surrealist project. Namely, I argue that the motif of the ocean's edge which she so often employed is a structuring metaphor for Maar's photomontage and her Surrealism more broadly: a place caught between land and sea, surface and depth, the logic of reality and the absurdity of the unconscious. It is like the drift of the ocean's edge that we drift back and forth from the real, encountering Maar's Surrealism in the process.

Before my main analysis, I begin with an introduction into Maar's life and career, kept brief in acknowledgement of biography's role in overshadowing her achievements. I then move into an overview of the present state of discourse on Maar, particularly her participation in an active period of Surrealism's existence. This review of relevant literature ends with a consideration of the prevailing claims that have been made regarding photomontage in Surrealism.

My main analysis focuses on five photomontages created between 1934 and 1936. I first examine Maar's use of space and then turn to her use of signs. Finally, in light of my interpretation of Maar's manipulations of space and sign, I explore how the ocean's edge provides a model for how Maar's photomontage shifts between the real and unreal, and what this model of ocean and drift can tell us about her Surrealism.

(Mis)recognizing Dora Maar

Dora Maar, née Henriette Theodora Markovitch, was born in Paris on November 7, 1907 to a French mother and Croatian father. The Markovitch family moved to Buenos Aires in 1910, and so Maar spent much of her childhood between France and Argentina, ultimately returning to Paris more definitively with her mother in 1923. At the age of nineteen, Maar began her formal art education. She received her formative training in programs of the École des Beaux-Arts and the Académie Julien. Her passions centered around painting and photography, a foreshadowing of what was to come over the course of her decades-long career. These early years also led to friendships and collaborations with individuals like Jacqueline Lamba, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Brassaï.[4]

Maar's first published works were photographs included in a 1930 edition of *La Revue nouvelle*, signed "Dora Markovitch."[5] In 1932, she and her friend Pierre Kéfer launched a combined studio practice.[6] The Kéfer-Dora Maar studio comprised what she called a "worldly period," wherein Kéfer's connections yielded numerous portrait commissions from high-profile individuals and editorial shoots for magazines like *Le Figaro illustré, Femina,* and *Excelsior modes*.[7] Maar also took on more commercial and advertising projects independently, working on a campaign for hair care brand Pétrole Hahn in 1934 and showing her work in photography and advertising shows. She also published a street photography series from trips to Spain and

[4] Naomi Stewart, "Le cadre déborde: framing Dora Maar's photographic works in dialogue with surrealism" (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2019), 9-13.

[5] Athina Alvarez, Damarice Amao, Victoria Combalía, Amanda Maddox, and Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska "Chronology" in *Dora Maar*, ed. Damarice Amao, Amanda Maddox and Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska (Paris: Editions du Centre Pompidou, 2019), 186.

[6] Stewart, "Le cadre déborde," 10.

[7] Amanda Maddox, "What's in a Name: The Invention of Dora Maar," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 12.

England in 1933 and 1934, both of which revealed the effects of the two countries' respective economic crises.[8]

After closing the Kéfer-Dora Maar studio in 1934 Maar moved into the address she would become long associated with: 29 Rue d'Astorg in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. Her political activism and photographic work attracted the attention of several artists with the Surrealist movement, and by 1936, Maar was showing works in associated exhibitions and publications. It was also in 1936 that Maar published *Père Ubu,* one of her most famous works and incidentally a "straight" photograph.[9] After 1940, she began to produce and exhibit more paintings, mainly landscapes. Also around this time, Maar began her romantic and creative relationship with Picasso, which would come to a definitive end in 1946.[10]

Despite her prolific artistic activity after 1946, Maar's relationship with that artist has determined the limited understanding of her. Her reputation as *Weeping Woman,* dark muse, lover, and friend forgets her own training and creative prowess. To reduce Maar's life and work to just one of her artistic and romantic relationships is to ignore the impact she made on those within her immediate circle and beyond, be it artistic or otherwise. Recent biographies have elaborated more fully on the rest of her narrative. However, as biography, their art historical analysis remains limited.[11]

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[8] Victoria Combalía, "Dora Maar, Street Photographer: Barcelona and London," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 54. Maar would later adapt some parts of these images into her future works, assuring the continued marriage between her artistic process and politics.

[9] For a discussion of Maar's participations in Surrealist exhibition, see "Chronology," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, Dora Maar.

[10] Alvarez, Amao, Combalía, Maddox, and Ziebinska-Lewandowska "Chronology," 190.

[11] Examples of these biographical studies include *Dora Maar with & without Picasso: a biography* (2000), by Mary Ann Caws; *Picasso's Weeping Woman: The Life and Art of Dora Maar* (2000), also by Mary Ann Caws; *Dora Maar: la femme invisible* (2013), by Victoria Combalía; *Dora Maar: Fotógrafa* (1995), by Victoria Combalía and Mary Daniel Hobson.

Against the grain of her overshadowing and relative obscurity, the research and publication produced for the 2019-2020 exhibition *Dora Maar* (Centre Pompidou Paris, Tate Modern London, and J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) has advanced new analysis. Curators Amanda Maddox, Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, and Damarice Amao sought to recuperate Maar by framing her entire body of work according to medium and genre. The exhibition was organized around the major tendencies in her practice, such as street photography, portraiture, photomontage, Surrealist photography, and painting. For example, in a discussion of her painting, Amao not only fills the scholarly gaps in Maar's oeuvre, but also considers her half-painterly, half-photographic experimental works from the 1980s.[12] Studies of her fashion and portrait photography isolate Maar experimentation with representation, be it through early iterations of photomontage or the erotic gaze.[13] Other contributions explore Maar's street photography, which were charged with her left-leaning politics and ability to capture the everyday marvelous.[14] Altogether, the exhibition expanded Maar's legacy by situating her exemplary works across mediums inside major narratives of twentieth-century art history.

The exhibition placed special focus on Maar's intersection with Surrealism. While Maar identified with the movement only briefly, the popularity of *Père Ubu* underscores her embeddedness in Surrealism, especially during the early 1930s. She was first introduced to the Surrealist milieu through pre-existing social connections to certain members. In 1930, she established a friendship with Man Ray after she approached him to be his assistant. Maar did not

[12] Damarice Amao, "Obligatory Painting," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 155-185.

[13] Amanda Maddox and Alix Agret, "What's in a Name: The Invention of Dora Maar" and "The Audacity of Erotic Gazes," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 11-41; 42-48.

[14] Patrice Allain and Laurence Perrigault, Victoria Combalía, and Dawn Ades, "Dora of the Varied, Ever Beautiful, Faces;" "Dora Maar, Street Photographer: Barcelona and London;" "Chance Encounters and the 'Modern Marvelous,'" in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 49-51; 52-76; 77-98.

end up becoming his assistant, but their meeting began a mutual support between the artists.[15] Her romantic relationships with quasi-Surrealist Georges Bataille in 1933 and Georges Hugnet in 1934 led to friendships with key figures of the movement, including Paul Eluard and André Breton.[16] She also co-signed an antifascist political manifesto penned by Breton in 1934 and served as the spokesperson for antifascist group *Contre-Attaque* founded by Bataille and Breton.[17] Her close friendships with other women in romantic relationships with Surrealist artists such as Jacqueline Lamba (married to Breton) and Nusch Eluard (married to Paul Eluard) offered another connection to the movement that transcended politics and intellectualism. All of these ties embedded Maar into the ideological and social fabric of Surrealism as artist, political actor, muse, and friend.

Photography, and photomontage in particular, served as Maar's primary medium for engaging with Surrealism's figures, publications, and thinking.[18] Broadly speaking, Surrealists took up photomontage in a variety of ways, including solarization, layering negatives in a darkroom, or physically cutting, arranging and pasting images. Maar's own process usually employed the last strategy, sometimes using photographs taken by the artist herself.[19] While the earliest photomontages in Maar's larger oeuvre were in fact for commercial and editorial purposes, she created at least twenty known photomontages beginning in 1934 that bear a strong

[15] Alvarez, Amao, Combalía, Maddox, and Ziebinska-Lewandowska "Chronology," 186.

[16] Alvarez, Amao, Combalía, Maddox, and Ziebinska-Lewandowska "Chronology," 187-188.

[17] Combalía, "Dora Maar, Street Photographer: Barcelona and London," 54.

[18] Maar's romantic relationship with Georges Hugnet in 1934 is an interesting overlap with her increased creative output in the medium. Hugnet also made photomontages during this time and beyond. Forthcoming comparanda in this thesis include such works.

[19] Karolina Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real: The Photomontage Period," in Amao, Maddox and Ziebinska-Lewandowska, *Dora Maar*, 99-102.

Surrealist orientation.[20] *Untitled (Hand-shell*) (1934) and *Les Yeux* (1932-1935), for example, incorporate imagery and concepts that correlate to theories developed by Bataille and Breton respectively.[21]

In her exhibition catalogue essay "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," Ziebinska-Lewandowska positions Maar's photomontages as ideal vehicles for Surrealist sublimation of the representational and the real. "Maar's photomontages correspond both to the increasing production of montages in Surrealism over the course of the 1930s and to the questioning of realism," establishes Ziebinska-Lewandowska.[22] The curator's study aligns Maar's early photomontages with Surrealist concepts and iconographies, offering direct textual connections to the writings of Breton.[23] By examining setting and landscape, Ziebinska-Lewandowska further argues that Maar's photomontages were "scenes that could practically have taken place."[24] According to Ziebinska-Lewandowska, these strategies express an "effect of the real" and indicate Maar was "central to the debate on realism and the recovery of the real led by Breton in the 1930s."[25] With her primary attention to the realism of Maar's scenes, however,

[20] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 99-102. One of Maar's earliest photomontages was published in 1931 in collaboration with the magazine *Bravo* and the *Exposition coloniale internationale.* She also published some photomontages editorially in *Le Figaro illustré* and *Navires*. By 1935, Maar was showing work in Surrealist exhibitions in Spain and Belgium. Of her selection of photomontages, *Le Simulateur* was the only one included in these shows.

[21] Stewart, "Le cadre déborde," 251-296**.**

[22] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 104. The author also connects Maar to other Surrealists partaking in the increased production of photomontages at the time, such as Georges Hugnet, Nusch and Paul Eluard, and Max Ernst.

[23] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 100.

[24] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 102-103.

[25] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 104.

Ziebinska-Lewandowska's study arguably does not fully attend to how Maar's photomontage also makes the real unstable.

Other recent scholarship has analyzed the predominant Surrealist iconographies in Maar's photomontages. In an unpublished doctoral dissertation titled "Le cadre déborde: framing Dora Maar's photographic works in dialogue with surrealism," Naomi Stewart examines Maar's use of hands and eyes across her oeuvre. Stewart argues that Maar's recurring use of hands signifies the artist's combined interest in its latent associations with labor and the sensuous.[26] The incorporation of eyes in works like *Les Yeux* (c. 1932-35) and *Aveugles à Versailles* (c. 1936) reconfigures erotic and objectifying associations with the eye and viewership as defined by Bataille, consequently making woman an active rather than passive subject in her art.[27] Stewart's study briefly touches on the water and sea motifs in Maar's oeuvre indicating the need for more work to be done on these elements. Focused overall on iconography, Stewart's study addresses the content of Maar's photomontage, but not the strategies themselves.

Indeed, for art historians Rosalind Krauss and Dawn Ades, photographic strategies are at the heart of Surrealism and its pursuit of the marvelous. In her important essay from 1981, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," Krauss sought to recover Surrealist photography, to bring it from the margins of the movement to its center. Citing early writings by Breton, as well as other publications and periodicals, Krauss observes how "surrealist photography exploits the special connection to reality with which all photography is endowed."[28] As a medium which itself turns on reality and construction, perception and representation, vision and writing, Krauss

[26] Stewart, "Le cadre déborde," 311-358.

[27] Stewart, "Le cadre déborde," 251-296.

[28] Rosalind Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism", *October* 19 (Winter 1981): 26.

argues that what Surrealist photography does at its core is to constitute "reality as representation."[29]

Furthermore, Krauss's theorization of "reality as representation" supports the Surrealist concept of the marvelous. "It is precisely this experience of *reality as representation,*" she writes, "that constitutes the notion of the Marvelous or of Convulsive Beauty—the key concepts of surrealism."[30] The marvelous was defined by poet Louis Aragon as "the eruption of contradiction within the real" in his 1926 novel *Paris Peasant*.[31] More recently, Hal Foster has described the phenomenon as a "'negation' of the real, or at least of its philosophical equation with the rational."[32] More generally, the marvelous was a core belief of the movement that rejected rationality and privileged moments of rupture with reality. Breton and the Surrealists saw a moment of encounter with something beautiful as one such rupture, hence the interchangeable use of "convulsive beauty" with "marvelous."[33] The marvelous is aleatory, serendipitous, and to an extent uncanny, requiring nature, space, and time to work in tandem and yield these moments that transform the experience of reality.[34] For Krauss, at the crux of the Surrealist's manipulations of the photograph, such as photomontage, is rupture or the making of the marvelous.

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[29] Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism," 29.

[30] Krauss, "The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism", 28.

[31] Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant,* trans. Simon W. Taylor (Cambridge: Exact Change, 2004).

[32] Hal Foster, "Compulsive Beauty," in *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 20.

[33] André Breton, "La beauté sera convulsive…," *Minotaure* no. 5 (May 1934): 11. Breton's essay "La beauté sera convulsive" in *L'Amour Fou* offers three such experiences of convulsive beauty. The first is mimicry, specifically when it occurs in nature as it is an organic transformation in representation. Second is "expiration of movement," a disruption from the natural progression of a subject that divorces it from its intrinsic reality. The final experience of convulsive beauty lies in the found object, where objective chance and external desire manifest themselves in the encounter between the person and the found sign-object.

[34] Hal Foster, "Compulsive Beauty," 19-56.

In a similar vein, Ades frames Surrealist photomontage and the relationship between real and representation according to a marvelous-commonplace dialectic. "It is the transformation of materials, the juxtaposition that alters the nature of the original object photographed, that often provokes the disorientation that leads to what the surrealists call the marvellous," Ades argues.[35] Photomontage reflected the interest in the dream image and the Surrealist object, which were often composed of found objects pulled from the experience of quotidian life. The photomontage, with its arrangement of photographs, also worked with the everyday in the scenes and subjects it depicted.[36] The finding and arranging of pictorial elements in a photomontage ensures their ties to the real world, while also generating new and dreamlike scenes to produce what Ades calls a "further reality."[37] To achieve this, Ades stresses that the best photomontages used moves rooted in the "reality" of a scene.[38] Disruptions in scale were rare or well-hidden, and visual disjunctions followed the established logic of a new scene to strategically mask its construction. By navigating the everyday and the marvelous, Surrealist photomontage "[attained] two widely separate realities without departing from the realm of our experience… bringing them together and drawing a spark from their contact."[39]

Altogether, recent work on Maar and key claims regarding photomontage and Surrealist photography help clarify how to approach Maar's own photomontage and Surrealism. On one hand, Ziebinska-Lewandowska's chapter points to the significant interest in realism by Maar, isolating some of her strategies and describing their visual qualities superficially. On the other

[35] Dawn Ades, "Chapter 3: The Marvellous and the Commonplace" in *Photomontage*, 3rd ed.(New York: Thames & Hudson, 2021),145-147.

[36] Ades, "Chapter 3," 153.

[37] Ades, "Chapter 3," 145-147.

[38] Ades, "Chapter 3," 169.

[39] André Breton, preface to the Max Ernst exhibition, Paris, May 1921, in *Max Ernst*, exh. cat. (Paris, 1975), 177.

hand, how Maar's images undo that very illusion and reality demands further examination. Krauss and Ades' foundational work established the paradigmatic negotiation between reality and representation in Surrealist photography. But in what ways does Maar's drifting back and forth between the real and unreal actually exceed the transformation of "reality as representation" and connect the real and unreal differently?

Space and Signs in Maar's Photomontage

Broadly speaking, Maar's photomontage strategy resists overt manipulation of any given image. Instead of jagged cuts or arbitrary collage of differently sized elements, for instance, the montaged images in Maar's work are subtly handled to present and then distort the reality of an assembled scene. The artist manipulates the photograph's pictorial space, using landscape and background to anchor her pasted figures. Elements in a Maar photomontage respect scale and proportion. At the same time, small disjunctions embedded in this space reveal the construction and unreality of her images, often only after the image has provisionally convinced the viewer of its proposed reality.

The signs Maar uses in her works function in a similar fashion. Her use of developing Surrealist iconography such as fragments of the body or the ocean indicate her historical connection to imaginations and projects of the movement. At the same time, she deploys this iconography while attending to the established space of the photomontage, as well as other signs that may further construct the image. These considerations complicate the conventional notions of these signs' meanings and, in turn, the image's overall sense of reality.

Space in Maar's Photomontage

Maar's *Monstre sur la plage* (*Monster on the Beach*) from 1936 exemplifies the significance of space and spatial organization to the artist's photomontage (Figure 3). The titular monster is an ambiguous figure which turns away from the foreground, standing on the sand of a beach and facing towards the water. What this figure might be is difficult to say. At a basic level, the monster is composed from an amalgam of photographic fragments. Its uprightness conveys a sense of altered anthropomorphism which permeates the photomontage and asks viewers to embrace Maar's appellation of the figure as a "monster." Waves lap against the shore, cresting farther back towards the horizon and drawing the eye up with it. Light reflects off the surface of the body of water, opening up to a sunless sky. Altogether, Maar's scene feels familiar but strange, uncanny in subject matter but situated in a setting that invites a seemingly uncomplicated initial reception.

The shoreline organizes elements in the work's pictorial space. Maar grounds the monster in the landscape of the beach, not unlike the familiar trope of a figure at the water's edge. The horizontal lines of the surf, water, and sky accentuate the monster's verticality. This contrasting orientation between background and subject isolates the figure, cementing its position as the focus of the photomontage. Maar's placement of the creature relative to the waves and horizon further back make it possible to perceive the scene as if it is real. By situating the "monster" on the sand instead of, for instance, layered on the water, the artist gestures toward an illusion of reality. Maar's figure-ground choices give the image a believable proportion and scale, adhering to formal conventions of straight photography and effectively playing up the montage's supposed truth value. In other words, rather than use a background image passively, Maar uses the space of the beach to determine the development of her composition and effectively absorb viewers into the space of the photomontage.

Maar was not alone in her use of shorelines and beaches. Consider the beach landscape in *Untitled,* a work by Georges Hugnet from 1935 (Figure 4). On the right, a person surrounded by seagrass faces away from the camera to look out onto the shore. A fragmented arm and hand float just over the figure's head. An upside-down pair of hands with uplifted palms descends from the top of the composition to frame the sky. Even though both settings present a similar image of a beach, Hugnet employs this landscape differently from Maar. On one hand, the figure looking out onto the water is part of the original photograph. This means Hugnet did not use the same meticulous process as Maar to integrate this particular element into a new setting. On the other, Hugnet's cut-and-pasted insertions float freely in pictorial space, ignoring the governing rules of reality altogether. The placement and scale of Hugnet's montaged images immediately interrupt the perception of the scene as a plausibly real image. For Hugnet, the photograph's space and landscape are a passive flat surface reduced to a mere visual ground on which the artist can add foreign signs.

Monstre sur la plage does include discontinuity between depicted figures and space, but they are not immediately apparent. The monster, for example, appears first like a whole, albeit grotesque, figure. Closer looking reveals the figure is a montage itself, consisting of numerous photographic fragments. Maar does not hide her subject's status as such, but arranges its elements so that our eyes initially skip over the construction of the "monster." Moreover, while her placement of the monster on the shore adheres to the scene's spatial logic, the monster lacks a shadow and, thus, interrupts our sense of its groundedness on the beach. Maar's layering and construction is not invisible or completely erased by illusion. Rather, the fact of the montage gets deferred, emerging only as the illusionistic reality of the scene comes undone. As viewers continue to discover these disruptions, the experience of the photomontage drifts away from the real.

The way Maar plays with the landscape and the sun further shows how her drift from reality creates a sense of instability and doubt. Many of the elements of *Monstre sur la plage* allude to the presence of the sun: rays reflect in the wet sand near the very bottom of the composition or on the water towards the horizon. These reflections fall along the central axis of the composition and imply that the sun would as well. However, an image of the sun is resolutely absent. Instead, Maar has pasted the monster slightly off-center to line its head up with that axis established by the supposed sun reflections. In turn, the monster eclipses the sun and removes it from the scene. While it cannot be assumed that Maar directly covered her background image's sun in the photomontage, the positioning of the creature's head replaces or at the very least alludes to this natural phenomenon, functionally standing in for the sun (recall how the monster has no shadow). This alignment between image and nature is constructed, in turn destabilizing the overall impression of the work as a believable scene.

In the work *Danger* (1936), Maar similarly handles the space and interaction between figures and landscape to create a shifting sense between the real and unreal (Figure 5). She captures two figures on the beach. One kneels on the sand, facing the other figure with his hands up in surrender. The other faces off to the left, his arms raised up to shoulder-level and standing in the way of the waves on the beach. Like she did in *Monstre sur la plage*, Maar situates both figures within the space of the scene, respecting the internal scale of the composition and relative ordering of the picture's elements.

At the same time, discontinuities undo the appearance of the real in this work. Both figures lack shadows. Their tonal differences also disrupt the connection to the space and to one another. While the figure near the bottom of the composition matches the tint of the beach image, the other figure near the top is considerably darker. Their difference in tone increases the contrast between the subjects and betrays how Maar pulled the images from other sources. This tonal

difference especially draws greater attention to the figure who stands on the water and appears more and more foreign to the photograph's scene. Space delineates the figures' placements in this work, but their uncertain positions relative to each other and to the tonality of the depicted space intensifies the uncanny and disconcerting interactions presented in *Danger*. In this work and in *Monstre sur la plage*, pictorial space is crucial to the construction of Maar's photomontage as a provisionally real image, but also provides moments that later reveal its construction.

Signs in Maar's Photomontage

If space in Maar's photomontage is an equivocal element that constructs and undoes the image's sense of reality, the artist's use of Surrealist iconography is similarly equivocal in status and signification. *Untitled (Legs)* (1935) features a shapely pair of legs resting between the thumb and index finger of an outstretched hand (Figure 6). In the background, a bridge runs over a river (most likely the Seine in Paris), with twin bell towers standing tall in the distance. There is just enough information in this scene to entice viewers to attempt an identification of this setting.

At the same time, Maar's insertion of the legs and its framing by the urban landscape hinders the tempting process of identifying the overall scene. The image's close framing and depth of field makes it difficult to piece together which exact bridge, which exact monument, which exact neighborhood is captured in the photograph. In so doing, Maar defamiliarizes the most familiar aspect of the photograph.[40] This defamiliarization is thrown into greater relief by the picture's most focused element: the superimposed legs. Although these legs are fragments of a body, Maar's handling of their cutting and placement within the composition lends them a

[40] Defamiliarization is elaborated upon later in this section, under the term *dépaysement.*

presence of their own. The place we think we know moves farther from the reality by the explicitly appropriated fragment that should seem out of place.

For comparison once more, consider the fragmented body on offer in another of Hugnet's works, *Untitled* (1935) (Figure 7). A pair of legs emerge from the water's horizon, with a figure in the foreground looking discreetly at it. The legs are pictured from behind, bent over suggestively. The erotic nature of the fragmented body permeates the photomontage, speaking to a tendency beginning in the 1930s that, as art historian Hal Foster puts it, "focused on women, but as *sites* of desire more than as *subjects* of desire."[41] Foster had in mind figures such as Man Ray and Hans Bellmer who mutilated, manipulated, and fragmented the female body in their art. Foster contends that the cropping of a female's legs and/or head in such images "suggests that the woman is cropped of subjectivity."[42] In Hugnet's *Untitled* the fragmented body connotes eroticism, made to participate in a desirous, patriarchal representational practice. The feminine body was deliberately sexualized by its fragmentation and so positioned to be a passive target of desire rather than an actively productive source of it.

In her own handling of the fragmented body, Maar negotiates this distinction between the feminine body as the site and subject of desire. The close cutting around the edges of the legs—namely the tops of the thighs—leaves a dark, almost painterly contour line around them. Compared to the softer gradients of the overall image, the legs are clearly defined in a visual sense, implying a boundary Maar establishes for how to perceive this fractured body. Her treatment of these legs does something similar to what art historian Lora Rempel has analyzed in Hannah Höch's *Never Keep/Put Both Feet on the Ground* (1940). Rempel observes how Höch

[41] Hal Foster, "Violation and Veiling in Surrealist Photography: Woman as Fetish, as Shattered Object, as Phallus," in *Surrealism: Desire* Unbound, Jennifer Mundy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 203.

[42] Foster, "Violation and Veiling," 216.

"sever[s] legs just below their biological sex," denying the (male) viewers' pleasure from an unobstructed and sexualized visual experience of the female body's genitalia.[43] Similarly, Maar cuts a clear line of demarcation on the legs to exclude not just reference to the source photograph, but also the body pictured in it, and its genitalia, by extension.[44] Maar's fragmented body might look at first like another expression of a Surrealist patriarchal representation of desire, but how she presents the fragmented body turns those significations away.

With another work titled *La Liberté*, or *Liberty* (1935/36), Maar moves from foregrounding the fragmented body part to foregrounding a whole artificial body (Figure 8). In it, a manicured hand holds a small statue that occupies most of the composition. This figurine's right arm is raised, and the human hand holding it accentuates its curved lines. Both hand and figurine are pasted atop a body of water that stretches beyond the left and right sides of the image. A peek of a little boat bobs on the water from the left side of the frame, slightly behind the figurine. And along the horizon line to the right, a smaller image of the Statue of Liberty is affixed at the horizon, exactly where sea and sky meet.

Maar's incorporation of a found object sublimates an experience of the commonplace that Surrealism so often seeks out. The figurine is indistinguishable by features, but undoubtedly alludes to a female form. It is a kind of found object, like mannequins, that often attracted Surrealist artists. The encounter between mannequin and viewer yielded an experience of *dépaysement*. In her discussion of *dépaysement*, or estrangement, art historian Briony Fer has specifically discussed how these repeated encounters with shop windows became a significant phenomenal moment for artists such as Man Ray and Giorgio de Chirico. "It was the uncanny

[43] Lora Rempel, "The Anti-Body in Photomontage: Hannah Höch's *Woman without Wholeness*," in *Genders* 19 (June 1994): 161.

[44] Rempel, "The Anti-Body in Photomontage," 167.

effect of [mannequins] that interested the Surrealists," explains Fer, "especially here in the old-fashioned, lost corners of the city."[45] Translated to "change of scenery," *dépaysement* refers to a disorientation or defamiliarization that disrupts the experience of everyday life. Fer argues that mannequins produced the uncanny in this *dépaysement*. The mannequin, rendered indeterminate in its reproducible, repetitive representation of the female body, thus simultaneously appealed to male Surrealist ideals for women and for projections of dream narratives.[46]

In the case of *La Liberté* the figurine—both as found object and as a representation of the female form—delivers on the indeterminacy of *dépaysement* and disrupts the mannequin's usual projection as an object of patriarchal desire. [47] Maar positions the figurine to take up almost the whole left side of the composition, allowing for close viewing. The figurine's form is easy to discern, but its specific identity is not. The figurine's modeling shows an attention to the female form, so much so that even a navel at the middle of its stomach can be identified. Yet other parts of the figurine like its face lack any defining features, connoting a non-specificity that echoes that of a mannequin. The figurine's elusiveness disorients us, prompting an impulse for identification without successfully yielding one. Moreover, the modelling of the figurine's anatomy is given more attention than its face, which reinscribes desire within the female body rather than the visage. Maar has also cut meticulously around this subject, ensuring it melts into the new setting. This confuses the reception of the object as "found" versus native to the photomontage, in turn complicating the perception of the overall image as real or constructed.

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[45] Briony Fer, "Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis," in *Realism Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars*, eds. Briony Fer, David Batchelor, and Paul Wood (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994), 190-191.

[46] Fer, "Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis," 189-191.

[46] Fer, "Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis," 193-196. Fer also connects Freudian theories of memory and repression with the mannequin, locating a tension between the strange and the familiar.

[47] Fer, "Surrealism, Myth and Psychoanalysis," 193.

Importantly, Maar distances the iconic figure of the Statue of Liberty in *La Liberté,* pushing it to the very back of the work's composition and subverting its familiarity. The image's scale, color and placement make it seem far away and nearly inscrutable. It is small compared to the pasted element of the hand holding the figurine and has also been more crudely cut, signaling its intrusion into the photomontage more overtly. Additionally, the photographed statue's tone is much darker than its figurine counterpart. This not only makes it difficult to identify small details that might hint at what the subject *is*, but also calls attention to the disjunction between this fragmented image relative to its new surroundings. Finally, its position on the horizon line is shaky and unsteady, appearing to dip into the water at an angle. The small boat on the opposite side of the composition sits comfortably at the horizon and exacerbates the Statue of Liberty's precarity in this constructed scene. Compared to Maar's treatment of the figurine, the imaged statue's place in this image is uncertain, perhaps even discordant. The tension Maar sets up between figurine and Statue of Liberty produces a visual bait-and-switch: the former is presented as the most familiar, sensible and therefore real object, and the normally recognizable, iconic Statue of Liberty is made unfamiliar and uncertain as another montaged element.

Maar's use of a disembodied hand brings together the mediations, depictions, and framing of Surrealist signs in these last two photomontages. Notice that in both *Untitled (Legs)* and *La Liberté,* a disembodied hand holds the bodily image fragments. In the first work, body part holds body part, while in the second work body part holds artificial and objectified body. The out-of-focus arm stretching out to the horizon in *Untitled (Legs)* might imply a yearning, what other commentators have read as a Surrealist sign for freedom.[48] But consider how the legs are held between the hand's pinched fingers. The outstretched hand from the frame's edge

[48] Ziebinska-Lewandowska, "The Imaginary is What Tends to Become Real," 100.

actively keeps the legs captive. In *La Liberté,* the hand that holds the figurine is depicted in clear focus. This clarity shows how the hand twists to curve around the object and accentuate its contours. In this work, the relationship between hand and found object fragment is more complementary, as the hand's uncomfortable positioning appears to enhance the figurine's curves.

Maar foregrounds the disembodied hand as a *repoussoir* device. The hand extends beyond the image's bottom frame in both works. The artist implies a continuity between photographed space and our exterior position as viewers beholding the photomontage and the signs contained in it.[49] Rather than make signs appear in the artwork as if they emerged from a universal psyche or abstract cultural context, Maar consistently locates the reading of those signs with a specific subject position whose gestures also mediates, and therefore frames our significations and encounters with her images.

The work I opened my thesis with, *Untitled (Hand-shell),* finally refracts the artist's plays with signs and their mediation by the (artist's) hand. Made before *Untitled (Legs)* and *La Liberté, Untitled (Hand-shell)* used a mannequin hand instead of a human's. With painted nails that evoke the kind Maar was known to do on her own hand, several commentators have speculated that the mannequin hand was meant to be a reference to Maar herself.[50] As the mannequin hand emerges from shell, you could say it is held. Compared to the later works, the relationship

[49] Adamowicz, "Pasting," 58; Stewart, "Le cadre déborde," 31-34. Adamowicz argues that "the use of framing devices in pictorial collage both simulates and parodies the unified space of traditional visual compositions by bringing together divergent images, as in the hypotactic syntactic frames of surrealist games." Stewart's introduction in her dissertation speaks further to the boundary the "frame" establishes pictorially and psychologically.

[50] Mary Ann Caws and Alyce Mahon have both argued for a self-referential reading of the human hand in *La Liberté* and *Untitled (Hand-shell)* respectively; Caws argues this in *Dora Maar: With and Without Picasso: A Biography* (2000) and Mahon argues this on page 212 in "The Assembly Line Goddess: Modern Art and the Mannequin," in *Silent Partners: Artist and Mannequin from Function to Fetish* (2014). Stewart argues against this reading in her dissertation, citing limitations in the interpretive quality of the work ("Le cadre déborde," 342.)

between the organic shell and the artificial mannequin hand in this photomontage inverts the relationship between holder and part as well as natural and unnatural. Across the three photomontages, we see that the hand sign shifted from passive to active, integrated into Maar's complex play with Surrealist iconographies and how the use of signs creates our drift back and forth from what is real.

At the Ocean's Edge: Maar's Surrealism

Throughout the works I've analyzed, one recurrent motif to finally consider is the ocean. Maar's works not only depict but are also structured by the aquatic and physical landscape of the ocean, in particular its beginning and ending at the shoreline. In works like *Danger* and *Monstre sur la plage*, Maar placed her figures on a beach facing the ocean. *Untitled (Legs)* and *La Liberté* were both situated on or near water, and *Untitled (Hand-shell)* evoked the oceanic through the shell and sand featured in it. Maar's photomontages repeatedly allude to the ocean and its waters. As she uses water as a compositional device and conjures a place we all know, Maar's ocean simultaneously creates a sense of the familiar and mysterious. The water's edge becomes a liminal space where the real and the marvelous converge.

For the Surrealists, the unknowable depth of the ocean's waters made it an ideal metaphor for the mind. Art historian Sean O'Hanlan argues that the sea allowed for a dialectic between surface and depth that Breton employed in visualizing "an image suspended between the individual and collective unconscious," particularly through the image of the diver and the

shipwreck.[51] The limited exploration of the sea at this point in the early twentieth century shrouded the ocean-space in anxiety-provoking mystery, further exacerbated by the uncertainty of the interwar period.[52] "At once living and dead, the psychologized sea was both a space of potentiality governed by the imagination and a site of lost possibility," O'Hanlan explains. "If it was a mirror that reflected the Surrealist subject, its depths contained worlds."[53] In turn, the Surrealists held the deep-sea diver in high regard, likening their automatic writing projects to the kind divers might make to explore a shipwreck in the ocean's depths.[54] Deep-sea divers braved this "new" aquatic frontier by immersing themselves in the sea, resonating with a Surrealist drive to abandon the rational in pursuit of the unconscious.

Maar clearly shares the Surrealists' interest in the ocean, often situating her scenes at or on the water. At the same time, her work articulates a different orientation to the plays of surface and depth. *Danger* and *Monstre sur la plage* both depict the ocean in a state of activity, with waves coming up on to the sand. Maar incorporates feats of civil engineering and architecture alongside water landscapes in *Untitled (Legs)* and *La Liberté*. In these two as well, Maar offers a more aerial view of the water, collapsing the space between viewers and deep water without diving into it. Across all these works, the water's surface is emphasized in one way or another.

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[51] O'Hanlan, "The shipwreck of reason: The Surrealist diver and modern maritime Salvage," in *The aesthetics of the undersea*, eds. Margaret Cohen and Killian Colm Quigley (New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 137.

[52]Ann Elias, "Sea of Dreams: André Breton and the Great Barrier Reef," in *Papers of Surrealism* 10 (Summer 2013): 4-5. Elias writes, "In the first decades of the twentieth century the Pacific, and the sea in general, was still surrounded by mystery. Ocean-space was not a space of society as it later became; instead, it stood for the unknown."
O'Hanlan, "The shipwreck of reason," 139. O'Hanlan argues that World War I's technologies and horrors had a hand in these Surrealist themes: "Given the unprecedented carnage inflicted by newly developed militarized submarine technologies during the conflict, the shipwreck and diver were emblems of the collective trauma of modern sea power."

[53] O'Hanlan, "The shipwreck of reason," 138.

[54] O'Hanlan, "The shipwreck of reason," 141.

Waves or scattered reflections from the sun also texture these waters, calling attention to the surface itself.

Rather than immerse the subject in the deep sea, Maar typically plants both subject and viewer firmly on the beach, in the liminal space between ocean and land. Cultural theorist Peter Osborne argues in his book, *Travelling Light*, that the beach's significance lies in its liminality. "[The beach] stands littorally, literally at both the social and geographical edge," Osborne writes. "It is fluid, part in nature and part out, spaced-out, a slip of land where society leaves its slip showing, where things slip out to be seen."[55] The water's edge allows for topographical and social ambiguity, where things are shifting constantly in the physical and psychological sense. These shifts ascribed to the beach offer a way to frame Maar's photomontage, including the nature of her artwork's space and use of signs.

To stand littorally, as Maar's works imply, is also to resist the penetrative dive characteristic of the (male) Surrealists' dominant interest in the oceanic. O'Hanlan cites a passage in Breton's *Surrealism and Painting* that explicitly calls on a "penetrating sight" to achieve the experience of perception instead of mimetic representation. [56] In this case, the (male) Surrealist is the diver "penetrating" the female-coded ocean, diving through its inscrutable unconsciousness. Visual and literary obsessions with mythological creatures like sirens and mermaids also persisted throughout the movement, further underscoring the erotic undercurrents of the aquatic realm in the Surrealist imagination.[57] Maar's strategic use of the beach and

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55 Peter D. Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visa Culture* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 93.

[56] O'Hanlan, "The shipwreck of reason," 140.

[57] Victoria Carruthers and Catriona McAra, "Mermaids and Metaphors: Dorothea Tanning's Surrealist Ocean," in *Framing the ocean: 1700 to the present: Envisaging the sea as social space*, ed. T. Cusack (Farnhan Surrey; Burlington VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014), 212. A number of Surrealist works include eroticized representations of mermaids and sirens, such as Rene Magritte's *A Mermaid* (1935) and *Collective Invention* (1934), Dali's *Dream of Venus* installation (1939), and Ithell Colquhoun's *Scylla* (1938).

shoreline, both sea-adjacent landscapes where we are before the ocean's depth but not in it evokes the metaphor for the unconscious, but never moves into its waters. With the liminality of the beach, Maar structures a different connection between ocean and land, dream and reality, surface and depth, reaching the unconscious without having to penetrate it, and without fully abandoning the real.

Even when the photographic image itself contains a deeper recession into space, Maar subverts the experience of that depth. In the 1936 photomontage *Untitled (Arcades et morts)* we move from the outside into the long and seemingly endless corridor of an arcade (Figure 9). In the work's foreground, a figure lies presumably on their death bed propped up on the wall of a colonnade. A gloomy cloud-filled sky fills the tiny background, deep into the photomontage and at the limits of our perspectival depth. An active wave of water streams through the tunnel's ground, emulating the line of a wave as it hits the shore and subsequently drawing us up into the image.

The shoreline has no logical place in the photomontage. It floods the architecture of the colonnade, imagining an unstable setting that could go underwater at any moment. More importantly, the shoreline clearly activates the space of the scene. Where the shoreline was depicted on a horizontal axis in previous works and separated foreground and background, Maar turns and reorients it in *Arcades et morts* to indicate depth. Somewhat paradoxically, the shore that always guides one's entry into the water recedes into this image's vanishing point, behaving as an orthogonal line would in a one-point perspective. Despite the optical journey down the colonnade, the montaged wave keeps us on the shore and holds us in that liminal space between

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Mary Ann Caws, "Figure: Breton's Mélusine," in *The Surrealist Look: an erotics of encounter* (Cambridge; London: The MIT Press, 1997), 27-28. Caws explores Breton's use of the mermaid figure Mélusine in her book *The Surrealist Look: an erotics of encounter*. The character's physical and reproductive qualities are paid special attention in publications like *Arcane 17* and *Nadja*.

ocean and land that resists penetration and a concrete identification of the real. And like a wave that washes up, over and over, our perception of this photomontage drifts back and forth between believable reality and constructed image.

Conclusion

In her essay "Melancholy Objects," Susan Sontag defines photography along a Surrealist current. "Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise," Sontag writes, "in the very creation of a duplicate world, or a reality in the second degree, narrower but more dramatic than the one perceived by natural vision." This notion of photography as already surreal leads Sontag to question the nature of the photographs created by Surrealist artists. Their "manipulation or theatricalization of the real" she argues is redundant.[58] Perhaps Sontag had in mind works by Eluard or Hugnet, whose disruptions of depicted reality take over the photographic image. For Sontag, such a mode indicates a misrecognition of how any given photograph is inherently surreal.[59]

Maar's own play with the real and unreal in photomontage corresponds with Sontag's claim. In this thesis, I have argued that while Maar manipulates the photographic image, her montage strategy holds on to the appearance of the real. To speak with Sontag, instead of replacing or opposing "natural vision," Maar proceeds from that natural vision itself. Maar's photomontage begins with the photograph's already surreal duplicate world.

[58] Sontag, "Melancholy Objects," in *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 51-52.

[59] Sontag, "Melancholy Objects," 53-54.

Across Maar's photomontages, a combination of visual strategies holds onto many conventions of "straight" photography to provisionally deliver the promise of the image as documentary, no matter how constructed that image may be. The space of the photograph organizes how image fragments fit into a new composition and how they are oriented to respect scale, perspective, and depth. Maar also deploys Surrealist iconographies, especially as they relate to the fragmented body. She positions these signs within a dialogue specific to her works that challenges their conventional associations. These maneuvers concerning space and sign are interconnected, with one often informing the manipulation of the other. Together, her use of space and sign creates a sense of the real to be perceived, only to then drift away as the construction and the unreality of the photomontage emerges.

My thesis has argued, finally, that Maar's repeated motif of the ocean and, more specifically, its shoreline expresses the shift between real and unreal at stake in her photomontage, and her Surrealism more broadly. If the beach is a liminal space where water and earth meet, it represents for Maar the position where we can optimally drift between the real and the marvelous. Maar rejects the patriarchal metaphor of the ocean as that mental space in and through which we must descend, and also rejects the figure of the diver that metaphor privileges as well. Instead, she situates her photomontages not within the ocean's depths, but rather at its edge. This abstention from probing the sea proposes a desire to contemplate the unconscious, not penetrate it. When her preferred setting of the shoreline straddles land and sea, surface and depth, Maar proposes the real and unreal, conscious and unconscious must be known in and through each other. It is in this drifting, shifting experience at the water's edge that we can appreciate Maar's version of "reality in the second degree," and it is in this drifting and shifting that Maar wants our own Surrealisms to advance.

Figures

Figure 1. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Hand-shell)*. 1934. Gelatin silver print. Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou.

Figure 2. Paul Eluard, *Untitled*. c. 1929. Original photomontage on the binding of artist's copy of *La Révolution surréaliste.*

Figure 3. Dora Maar, *Monstre sur la plage (Monster on the Beach).* 1936. Photomontage of gelatin silver prints. Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou.

Figure 4. Georges Hugnet, *Untitled*. 1935. Materials unknown. Location unknown.

Figure 5. Dora Maar, *Danger*. 1936. Photomontage of gelatin silver prints. Collection of Nion McEvoy.

Figure 6. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Legs)*. 1935. Photomontage of gelatin silver print and photomechanical print. Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou.

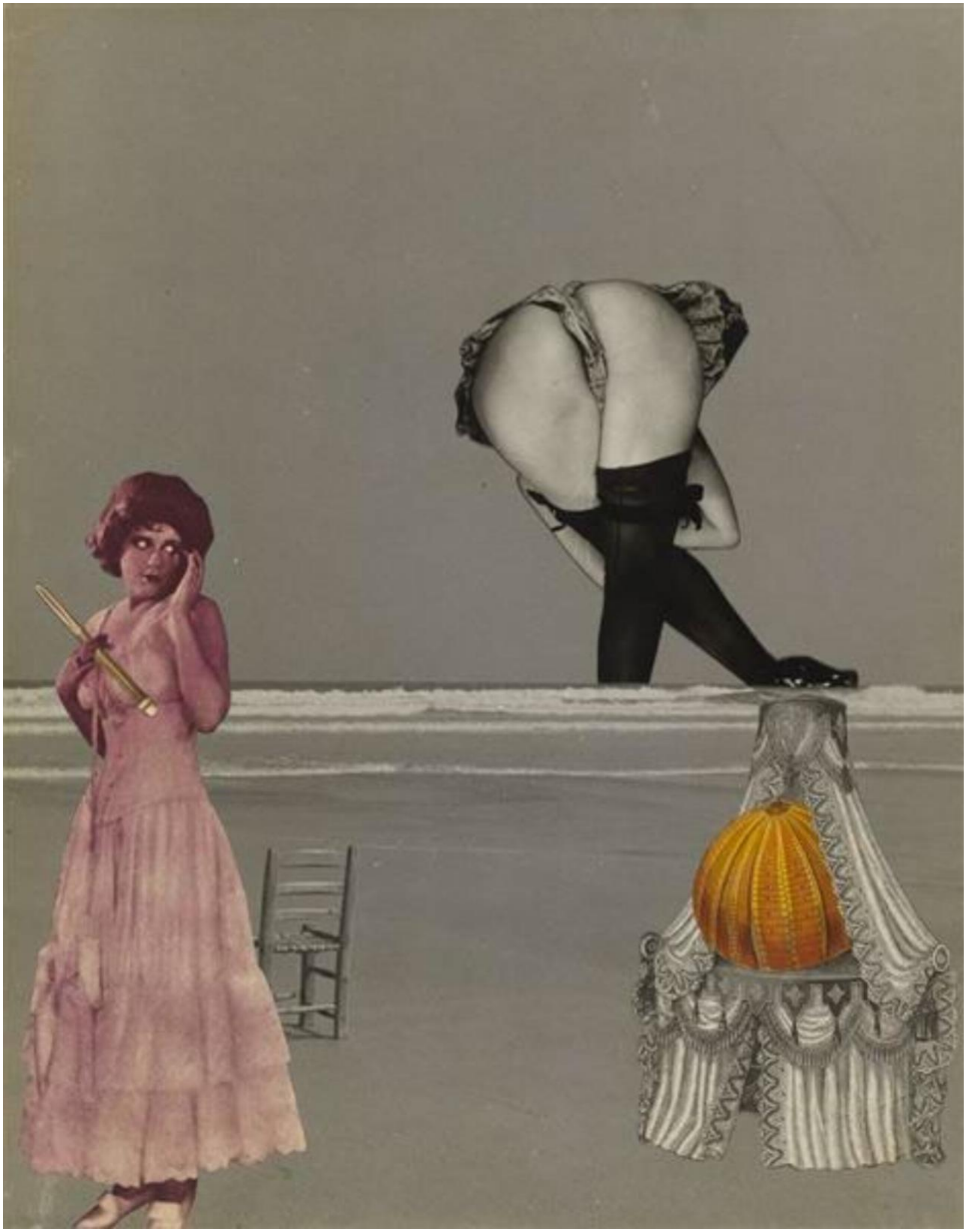

Figure 7. Georges Hugnet, *Untitled*. c. 1935. Photomontage on gelatin silver print (photogravure, lithograph, chromolithograph and gelatin silver print). The Museum of Modern Art.

Figure 8. Dora Maar, *La Liberté (Liberty)*. c. 1935/36. Photomontage of gelatin silver prints. Modernism Inc. Gallery.

Figure 9. Dora Maar, *Untitled (Arcades et morts)*. c. 1935/36. Photomontage of gelatin silver prints with applied color. The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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ABSTRACT

IN SURREALISM'S WAVE: DRIFTING FROM THE REAL IN DORA MAAR'S PHOTOMONTAGE

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Between 1934–36 artist Dora Maar (1907–1997) closely engaged with the Surrealist movement through photography and photomontage. This thesis examines Maar's photomontage in relation to the problems of reality, representation, and the marvelous that were at the center of Surrealist thought. I argue that instead of pitting reality and construction in opposition or in transposition Maar's photomontage shifts between the real and unreal. My analysis focuses on five key works and elaborates how the artist's handling of pictorial space and her use of Surrealist signs puts in motion a shifting sense of reality and unreality. This thesis ultimately turns to the recurring motif of the beach or shoreline and considers how the ocean's edge, particularly its drift, is a conceptual model for Maar's surrealism.