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# Hans Bellmer's "Les Jeux De La Poupee"

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Hans Bellmer's *Les Jeux de la Poupée*

by

Amber Rae Sulick

A thesis

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of the Arts

in the program of

Photographic Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2008

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Hans Bellmer's *Les Jeux de la Poupée*  
Amber Rae Sulick  
Master of the Arts  
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Photographic Preservation and Collections Management  
Ryerson University

Hans Bellmer's 1949 book *Les Jeux de la Poupée* (*The Games of the Doll*) is the focus of this thesis which includes a detailed physical description of its first edition, its design, the techniques used to print the photographs it contains, and the circumstances of making. Deterioration issues and recommendations for the book's preservation will all be addressed, as well as a discussion of Bellmer's influences and those artists influenced by him.



My sincere thanks to Scott Broderick, Pauline and Edward Sulick for their support.

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## Introduction

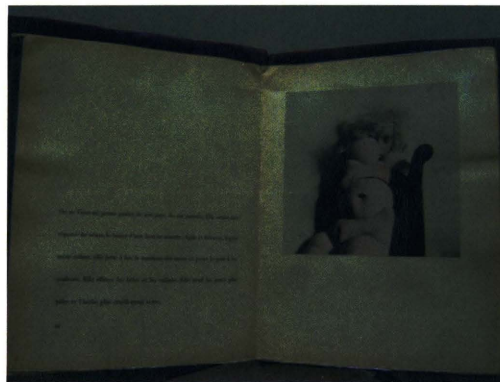
When I first came across Bellmer's *Les Jeux de la Poupée* in the George Eastman House library, I was struck by Bellmer's interpretation of the subject of the doll, a centuries-old subject of myth, literature and art. One can consider Ovid's *Pygmalion*, Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, E.T.A Hoffman's *The Sandman* or Herman Melville's *The Belltower*, to begin to realize the number of texts that deal with this topic. Contemporary interpretations include films like *Bladerunner*, based on a Philip K. Dick novel, or any number of B – grade horror films focused on documenting wax figures or childhood dolls coming to life to wreak havoc on the living world. The subject is explored through both low and high culture.

Perhaps the theme of giving life to inanimate objects is so compelling because as humans we are inclined to animate unliving objects that resemble ourselves. For example, we all have had the experience of viewing something unliving and mistaking it for something alive. Perhaps with a mannequin in our peripheral vision in a clothing store, or when a jacket is hung above empty boots in the hallway in such a way that plays a trick on our perception. We experience this most vividly in childhood, when the desire to rouse our beloved doll or stuffed animal allows our imagination to perceive this animation. Hans Bellmer uses the photograph to capture this fleeting trick on our perception and turn the passing moment of that desire into a preserved reality. While photography is traditionally used to stop a moment in time and keep it frozen forever, (a trait that it shares with the art of doll making) Bellmer uses the medium to give life to a doll, the subject of his photographs.

## Description of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*

Bellmer's *Les Jeux de la Poupée* was published in France by Les Éditions Premières in 1949. The book contains Bellmer's sixteen page introductory essay, *Notes au Sujet de la Jointure à Boule* (*Notes on the Subject of the Ball Joint*) and his seventeen hand-dyed gelatin silver prints. Fourteen of the photographs are accompanied by short pieces of prose written by the surrealist Paul Éluard, and the remaining photographs make up the cover, title page and introductory page illustrations. Each photograph measures 5.5 by 5.5 inches, and the pages of the book are 8 by 10 inches. The eighty-six pages that make up the book are of a heavy weight with a deckled bottom edge, and they bear the watermark 'Marcus.' The George Eastman House copy upon which this thesis is based is number 38 of an edition of 136.

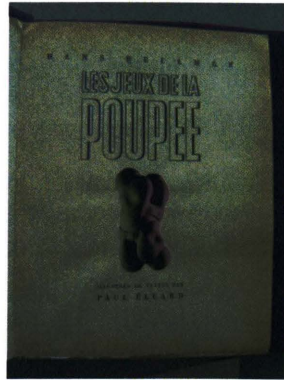
The body of the book follows the same design formula throughout. The left hand page is left blank, the facing right hand page bears a roman numeral (I – XIV) in the center, alone on the page. The following page contains the text conceived of by Paul Éluard, formatted against the bottom of the left hand page. This page also holds a diminutive Arabic page number at the bottom left hand side. On the facing right hand page is the tipped in photograph. This format is followed for the fourteen photographs that make up the main part of the book. Here is Photograph VI as an example of the way Paul Éluard's text is formatted facing Bellmer's photograph:



Photograph VI.

The illustration on the cover and the title page is the same, an image depicting two lower halves of a doll connected by a single ball joint. This doll has been cut out of the

original photograph along the lines of its silhouette and glued to the cover and title page. This cut separates the doll from its original surroundings. Below is the title page.



Title Page.

The color of the photographs is striking. They are black and white gelatin silver prints that have been hand colored with aniline dyes, similar in style to the traditional coloring of Victorian postcards. The color is startling and artificial, consisting of candy colored greens, reds, yellows, purples and blues. The colors are applied loosely, sometimes coloring the doll, and sometimes the background of the image. The color is an important element in Bellmer's ability to depict his fantasy. The colors clue us to understand that this is not straight photography, rather a use of the medium to document a created scene that springs from Bellmer's imagination.

If one possesses a technically discerning eye, one will note that these photographs are not products of the highest darkroom expertise. Bellmer did not print these images, he left the work of printing to average commercial journeymen.<sup>1</sup> It is apparent that Bellmer's primary interest was in capturing the images. Regardless, the combination of the low contrast black and white printing paired with the application of garish aniline dyes produces distinctive and unusual photographs.

The book begins with Bellmer's introductory essay, *Notes au Sujet de la Jointure à Boule*. On first reading Bellmer's essay, one may be slightly baffled or surrender in a state of frustration, as the ideas may seem convoluted or expressed with a unique choice of language. However, after subsequent readings, one realizes that Bellmer's writing is as important as his visual artwork, and in many ways the written word is the key that gives rationale to his visual expression.

In *Notes au Sujet de la Jointure à Boule* Bellmer starts by comparing the book to a game, a game belonging to the category of experimental poetry.<sup>2</sup> He describes the doll,



the subject of all of the photographs in the book, as an object of provocation. He claims it is necessary to combine the objective reality of a household object, for example a chair, and the subjective reality of the doll, in order to clearly understand the role of the provocative object. I interpret this as meaning that in order for the doll to become self aware, the chair must also admit to its existence.

‘Thus the role of the provocative object becomes clear. Whether it occupies any place at all on the nearest or farthest see-saws of the confusion between the animate and the inanimate, it will be a matter of the personified thing, mobile, passive, adaptable, and incomplete; it will be a matter in the end – within the quite broad limits where the principle of the doll or the articulated object seems to fit these requirements – of the mechanical factor of its mobility, of the JOINT.’<sup>3</sup>

After this introduction of the essential role the joint plays in the abilities of the doll, Bellmer mentions Geronymo Cardano and his invention of the gyroscope and how it relates to the universal joint. Cardano was a 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian professor of mathematics.<sup>4</sup> Bellmer seems fascinated with this idea that the gyroscope allows no force to act upon the object except for gravity, in a sense opening up limitless opportunities for movement. He then goes on to mention Philo of Byzantium, who in the third century BC described the construction of an elegant octagonal inkwell that functioned no matter which part of it was pointing up.<sup>5</sup> Bellmer claims he is interested in this tendency for concentricity and eccentricity to oppose one another within a single object.

Among the other objects that he mentions with similar characteristics are a fictional gun created by one of his favorite childhood authors, Karl May,

‘Look here! This piece of iron will become a ball which will move eccentrically; twenty-five holes hollowed in it will contain as many cartridges. At each shot, the ball turns and a new cartridge enters the barrel.’<sup>6</sup>

And Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Roto Relief’:

‘on a disk with the center A are drawn eccentric circles disposed around their false center B. The disk, set working on a gramophone, turns around its center A in such a way that each point of the circles executes at the same time an eccentric movement. From this intolerable absurdity, theoretically scandalous, results a true optical miracle, the illusion of three dimensions: the surface of the circles, like a pudding or a breast, rises, swells, and diminishes periodically.’<sup>7</sup>

Bellmer then turns his attention to impressions of childhood, the tendency of a spinning top to avoid the force of gravity, an attribute that reminds him of his doll. He explains an experiment in which one can place a mirror at a right angle to the surface of a photograph depicting a nude body and create a new body, consisting of the visible part of the photograph and its reflection. Bellmer expresses languages inability to express certain 'interoceptive images of the body'<sup>8</sup>, and goes on to discuss notions of what can be described as synesthesia. The essay is multilayered in meaning and I recommend those readers who are interested in the highlights I have mentioned to read the text in its entirety.

Because the photographs sit alone on a page they invite close inspection, and the subject and design of the book give an impression that the reader is viewing something private and secretive, perhaps even pornographic. This impression encourages the reader to bend close to the photographs, perhaps to tilt the book towards one's face in order to assure that the stranger sitting beside one in the library will not catch a glimpse of what so fully commands the reader's attention.

The photographs depict the doll in various poses and scenarios lolling about, her blank eyes and parts rolling in a conscious manner. As I mentioned earlier, the artificial colors that tint the photographs add to their ability to create a fantastic version of reality. Bellmer had a collection of Victorian postcards<sup>9</sup>, many of which were hand colored in this fashion and most likely inspired Bellmer to use the tedious aniline dye hand-coloring process.

After the introductory essay, there is an introductory photograph on page 26 that depicts the doll sitting on a wicker chair. There is a light casting the shadow of the wicker knot work onto parts of the doll's body. The doll's face is partially obscured by her breasts, and she wears a large bow in her hair. Flowered wallpaper serves as the background, and the image is blue and orange.





Introductory Photograph.

Photograph I shows a measuring device clamped onto a hollow sphere, surrounded by one smaller hollow sphere and another multi-sphered object that appears to be severed so the viewer can peer inside of it. There is a smear of liquid on the floor, and the image gives me the impression of eggs or intestines. Photograph II pictures the doll's figure, incomplete from the knees down, armless and headless with her breasts pointing upwards as though they are the doll's eyes. Her sex is both between her breasts and her thighs, colored pink against a white body.



I.



II.

Photograph III shows the doll in a blonde wig with a blue bow in her hair, with her face once again concealed by her breast. She is pictured from her thighs up, sitting in the wicker back chair against a blank wall. There is a pin stuck into her stomach sphere, and her navel is colored vermilion red. The doll is side lit and casts a dark shadow. Her face, although studded with a blank eye, is strongly expressive of something like mischievous seduction. Photograph IV is very brightly colored and shows the doll dismantled and lying on a blanket besides the dismantled wicker back chair. The doll's parts are placed in a curve; her hand, colored red, is attached to a beam of the chair. Her cheeks are pink, and she has one yellow and one orange breast, a yellow stomach sphere, and one red and one blue thigh sphere. Her bow, like the hand, is attached to a part of the chair.



III.



IV.

Photograph V pictures the doll from below, secured to a young tree, angled in a manner that makes the green branch of the tree protrude from her head like a single antler. Her torso is different than in the previous photographs and consists of a smaller, solid piece. In Photograph VI the doll consists of two lower halves connected to the stomach sphere, each half complete down to the feet in white ankle socks and black patent leather maryjanes. The body is tangled in a tree and is glowing white against a nighttime backdrop. In Photograph VII the doll is identical in construction to the doll depicted in Photograph VI, except her body is colored bright red. She is leaning against a large tree and there is a bunch of fabric at her feet. A man's figure in a trench coat is placed in the background, concealed by a second tree. The setting is the woods, and the ground is strewn with leaves. Photograph VIII shows the doll lying face down on top of a hoop on the floor. There are numerous spheres gathered around the upper part of the doll. A checked rug tinted blue serves as the background. The dolls legs are covered in stockings, and her body is colored yellow and pink. A blonde wig is laid out along the edge of a disembodied arm.



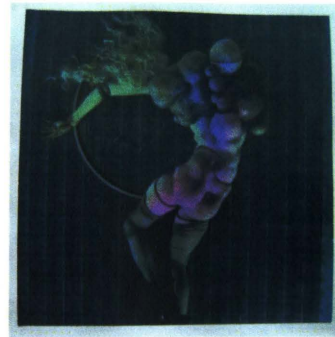
V.



VI.



VII.



VIII.

Photograph IX stands out because it is dark, much of the image consists of black negative space and the rest is tinted with a magenta color. The doll is pictured sitting on the bottom of a staircase. She has only one leg that is shown with twine tied around the knee joint. Instead of constructing the body normally, the lower torso is reversed and attached above the waist, creating an illusion that the doll's buttocks are her breasts, with her face nestled between. Her hair is dark and topped with a white bow. Her hand is placed palm upwards pointing up the staircase.



IX.

Photograph X focuses on the doll's lower half and anatomically impossible twisted upper half lying on a puffy down comforter. She is headless and there are small spheres gathered around her body. This photograph is light in contrast to the previous one, and the body is faintly colored with pink. Photograph XI features two sets of legs placed on either side of a 'Y' shaped tree. Each set of legs has one foot on the ground and one in the air, as though performing standing splits. Each of the four feet is dressed carefully in white ankle socks and black patent leather maryjanes. There is a milk pitcher on the ground in the background, and a couple of loose spheres hanging from the tree. The background is dark and the legs are colored yellow on top and pink on the bottom.





X.



XI.

Photograph XII shows two lower halves connected to the middle joint, one half dressed in trousers with an open belt and the other half nude, lying half on and half off a bed. There is a set table in the foreground, littered with used plates, a butter knife and some biscuits. Photograph XIII again shows the doll as two lower halves connected to a middle joint, standing straight up in front of a closed door, facing toward the door. The end of an intricately designed carpet beater is placed over the scene, close to the camera. The background is muddy grey, and the doll is colored pink and yellow. Finally photograph XIV pictures the two lower halves of the doll hanging down from the central joint, the body covered with small pink and white dots. The lighting is harsh and dramatic, creating large shadows that hide part of the doll's figure.



XII.



XIII.



XIV.

Paul Éluard's texts add to this viewing experience, the words are quite lovely and brief, woven together with seeming ease. The English translation of the French prose that accompanies photograph III in which the doll is pictured sitting in a wicker back chair reads,

'You never hear her talk of country, of her parents. She is afraid of a negative reply, she fears the kiss of a silent mouth. Agile and liberated, gentle mother-child, she demolished the cloak of the walls which surround her and paints daylight in her own colours. She frightens animals and children. She turns cheeks paler and the grass a more cruel green.'<sup>12</sup>

Another noteworthy piece is the one that accompanies photograph XII, in which the doll is pictured with two lower halves connected to the ball joint, one half dressed in trousers,

'Lined with white satin, heavy on the shadow, little head of gold, lined with fear, little head on its snout, submissive to the rules of the great winds, in the milk of inner days, star on a hatched egg, forgetting everything, little voice, great noise, it unravels the thread of its flight and nothing can hold it back.'<sup>13</sup>

From these two examples one can get a feeling for the nature of Paul Éluard's writings. They are abstract and curious, and match but also soften the strangeness and perversity of the photographs by using language that is both fanciful and childlike.

A re-occurring theme that is explored through these photographs is that of the ability to animate objects. Each photograph portrays the doll as though she is experiencing the situation Bellmer has created for her. As Bellmer discusses in the introductory essay,

'For such a doll, full of affective contents but suspected of only being a representation and a fictitious reality, to seek out in the external world, in the shock of encounters, the unquestionable proofs of its existence, it is necessary, besides, that this external world, the tree, the staircase, or the chair, suspected of being only perception, demonstrate what the me has gathered there of the you. In a word, it is necessary that an amalgam be formed of the objective reality that is the chair and the subjective reality that is the doll, an amalgam endowed with a superior reality since it is objective and subjective at once.'<sup>14</sup>

By repeatedly representing the doll and objects like the wicker back chair, trees, a staircase, a pitcher or a carpet beater in a manner both objective and subjective Bellmer

plays with the lines that separate the living world from the unliving world. This main theme of Bellmer's experiments with the animation of the unliving is complimented by the underlying subject of his obsession with capturing the elusive qualities of eroticism. All of the photographs in the book are charged with not only the uncanny feelings the conscious doll stirs up, but also a suggestive quality that stems from Bellmer's attempt to encapsulate the elements that cause his desire.

After the final photograph, there is a brief postscript in which Bellmer describes the making of the book. This page bears the stamp '38', indicating the edition number, and Bellmer's signature in pencil.

### **Preservation Issues**

The first preservation issue regards the paper, which is beginning to show early signs of deterioration, yellowing around the outer edges and becoming slightly brittle. The pages are buckling in some instances beneath the photographs, due to the shrinkage caused by the use of the adhesive that attaches the photograph to the page. There are pages that bear dark fingerprints on the middle of the right hand edge of the paper from user's fingers turning the pages throughout the book's life. In one instance, on plate IX, some of the type from the left hand page has transferred onto the photograph on the facing right hand page.

The binding is almost completely detached from the spine of the book, however the pages are soundly attached to one another. The cover consists of black construction style paper wrapped around two pieces of card board, one piece for the cover and one for the back cover. There is a band of pink paper wrapped over the black paper on the lower part of the cover, bearing the title of the book. It is my impression that both of these papers have faded to some degree from their original youthful colors. The whole binding is wrapped in a wax paper that may have been added to the book later in its life. It is ripped in portions and is quite fragile, but it provides some degree of protection to the primitive binding of this publication.

None of the issues are detrimental at this time. When the conservation department feels the necessity to intervene in the life of this book, they could test the acidity of the pages, the cover paper and the wax paper. Perhaps they may decide to



include interleaving between the photographs and facing pages. An analysis of the nature of the adhesive that holds the photographs to the pages may be helpful in considering what further steps may need to be taken in order to extend the life of both the photographs and the book.

The photographs are in very good condition. There are little to no signs of silver mirroring or fading of the silver particles. It is difficult to decipher whether the color has faded because there is no constant reference to use as comparison. The aniline dyes used to color the prints are light sensitive and may be subject to fading over time. The fact that they are used to color gelatin silver prints makes them more stable, because the dye is absorbed into the gelatin surface and protected to a higher degree than if the dyes were placed on a non-absorptive surface.<sup>15</sup> One of the largest issues facing the health of the photographs is the question of the acidity level and general nature of the adhesive used to attach the photographs to the paper. Some may argue that it is in the book's best interest to separate the photographs from the pages, unbind and rebind the book with archivally sound materials, and re-attach the photographs, maintaining the integrity of all original design aspects. However, I think in many ways the book has survived quite well to the present day, and will most likely continue this level of survival for a long time into the future because of its stable storage conditions. It is housed in a temperature and relative humidity controlled environment in the George Eastman House Library's rare books department. On a micro-level the book is housed within a four-fold enclosure and tied with twill tape.

I believe that these practical aspects of object preservation are not the only aspects of preservation to be considered. Re-printing or translating rare, historical art texts is an act of preservation. The German publishing house *Gerhardt Verlag* published Hans Bellmer's *Die Puppe (The Doll)* in 1962, translated from the French into the German. The book contains facsimiles of all three of Bellmer's publications, *Die Puppe (The Doll)*, *Die Spiele der Puppe (The Games of the Doll)* and *Die Anatomie des Bildes (The Anatomy of the Image)*. It reproduces the information with utmost attention to the original design on sound, quality materials. The photographs are color reproductions and function in an attempt to reproduce the original experience of viewing the book. Both

London's Atlas Press and Vermont's Dominion have produced English translations of selected Bellmer works in a similar fashion.

This act of producing a facsimile reproduction of an illustrated book is in many ways superior to any manner of digital reproduction of the book. It is true that digital reproduction is a commonly used tool of preservation, but it cannot reproduce the experience of turning the pages and experiencing the object in the way it was intended to be experienced, as a facsimile can. This manner of preservation is important and should not be overlooked.



## The Making of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*

In this section I will not attempt to recount Bellmer's biography, as it is well documented, however, I will highlight the coincidences and events in Bellmer's life that influenced the creation of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*.

*Les Jeux de la Poupée* is the second of three books that Bellmer published. The first book, *Die Puppe*, published in 1934, contains ten photographs of the original doll Bellmer built, which in many aspects was a less refined version of the second doll (the subject of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*). The driving force that led Bellmer to create and document the first doll is obviously related to the drive to create and document the second doll. Perhaps the most commonly cited influence for the creation of the original doll is Bellmer's attendance of Max Reinhardt's 1931 production of Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*.<sup>16</sup> E.T.A Hoffman's literary masterpiece, *The Sandman*, in which a great magician named Coppélius creates a mechanical girl named Olympia who seduces a living man, was brought to the stage in this production. The subjects addressed in this production seem to directly inform Bellmer's doll-related work.

Around the same time, after a family move, Bellmer's mother sent him a box of his old childhood toys. The box contained broken dolls, costumes, daggers, pistols, newspapers that he had printed with linoleum type and magic tricks.<sup>17</sup> Bellmer had a strong reaction to this re-introduction of his childhood belongings. In a letter to Patrick Waldberg, Bellmer expresses that the box of toys gave rise to 'the atrocious feeling of having lost my life in order to earn a living on reaching the age of reason.'<sup>18</sup> Bellmer had used his training in industrial design to open a private design business under pressure from his authoritative father. The combination of National Socialism's rise to power, in which his father played an active role, and his wife Margarete's development of tuberculosis, which would eventually cause her death, gave Bellmer the ability (or necessity) to break from established order. Near the end of 1933, Bellmer publicly declared that he would 'give up all work which, even indirectly, could be in any way useful to the state.'<sup>19</sup> This drive to create something socially useless that was capable of inventing new desires led to doll production.

Bellmer's first doll, which was created with help from his brother Fritz (an engineer), his wife Margarete and young cousin, Ursula, was based on a wooden framework with limbs consisting of broom handles put together with nuts and bolts. She bore one hand and two feet carved from wood. A miniscule panorama could be fitted into her stomach, and its contents could be viewed through her belly button. The panorama consisted of tiny boxes that held 'little objects, diverse material and coloured images of bad taste, representing the thoughts and dreams of a young girl', as described by Fritz. A mirror was placed at a 45-degree angle opposite the belly button, and was controlled by a button placed on the left nipple of the doll.<sup>20</sup> By pressing the button, the panoramas would turn, displaying such things as a boat in the North Pole sinking through the ice.<sup>21</sup>

The second doll, the subject of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*, was based around a pivoting ball joint, and this development was partially due to a friendship that developed between Bellmer and Lotte Pritzel in the mid 1920s.<sup>22</sup> Lotte Pritzel was a German artist famous for her wax doll sculptures.<sup>23</sup> On an interesting side note, around 1918 the Austrian artist Oskar Kokoschka begged her to build for him a doll to be his mistress after his separation from Viennese socialite and musician Alma Mahler. Pritzel claimed she could not work on such a large scale, and Kokoschka eventually commissioned Hermine Moos (a Munich dollmaker) to do the work.<sup>24</sup> On a trip to the Kaiser Friedrich Museum of Berlin, Pritzel and Bellmer discovered a pair of articulated adult dolls, made from wood. These dolls were about eight inches tall and were based around a joint that was situated in the center of the doll's body.<sup>25</sup> Bellmer was struck by the abilities of movement that were opened up by this construction, and used the new knowledge to inform the manner in which he went about producing his second doll.

Fritz participated in doll construction once again. Bellmer kept the head, hands and legs from the first doll. The body was constructed from a mixture of tissue paper and glue that hardened as it dried. This was painted in a flesh tone. He created an additional pair of legs and arms and an upper torso, two pelvises, a torso with four breasts and an extra pelvis with swaths of material around its waist, and, finally, the ball joint stomach sphere. This doll was completed in the fall of 1935.<sup>26</sup> The range of postures this doll



could achieve trumped the abilities of the first doll, and significantly allowed the representation of the image to move beyond a naturalistic view.

Although the doll is important, the photographs of the doll are more so, replacing the object in significance and memory. Bellmer made some 100 photographs of the second doll, carefully composing the doll and placing her in various settings. He took the photographs in his father's home and garden in Berlin during the years of 1936 and 1937. In December 1938, after the death of his wife, Bellmer relocated to Paris.<sup>27</sup>

Prior to this move, Bellmer had made connections with members of the Parisian Surrealist movement. In part, the connections had been made by his young cousin, Ursula, who while she was at the Sorbonne met and showed samples of Bellmer's photographs to André Breton and some of the other Surrealists.<sup>28</sup> They became immediately interested in the work, even though Breton had some reservations regarding the subject matter. Selected photographs were shown in various magazines, including the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* issues 8 and 10 in 1936 and 1937.<sup>29</sup> Bellmer saw that the Surrealists were receptive to his work, and this was part of his impetus to move to Paris.

On arriving in Paris, Bellmer met up with Paul Éluard who selected some pieces from the second series of doll photographs and used them as inspiration for short prose poems that were completed in 1938. Bellmer had written the introductory essay contained in *Les Jeux de la Poupée* earlier in the year, so all of the ingredients were in place for the birth of the second book. The French publisher Zervos planned to publish it all in 1939 under the title *Jeux Vagues de la Poupée*, however the project was called off with the outbreak of war. Ten years passed before the book was finally published by Éditions Premières, in November of 1949.<sup>30</sup>

Bellmer is most often connected with Surrealism for his expression of some of the movement's basic precepts. However, Bellmer does not perfectly fit into the Surrealist category, and in some aspects finds himself opposed to Surrealist notions. According to Andre Breton's 1924 *Surrealist Manifesto*, the movement was concerned with resolving the conscious and unconscious states of existence (dream and reality) into 'a sort of absolute reality, a surreality, so to speak...'<sup>31</sup> Bellmer's work in *Les Jeux de la Poupée* explores this melding of two states of consciousness and interprets this expression through the physical consciousness of the doll.

However, in Breton's same 1924 manifesto, he gives a definition of Surrealism as 'Pure psychic automatism by which it is intended to express, either verbally or in writing, the true function of thought.'<sup>32</sup> And here we discover the snag in defining Bellmer as a Surrealist. Bellmer practiced a high level of control over his creative process, he was conscious and in command of the end this process would meet. Bellmer stated, 'I am glad to be considered part of the Surrealist movement, although I have less concern than some Surrealists with the subconscious, because my works are always carefully thought out and controlled.'<sup>33</sup> Although it can be argued that Bellmer was exploring the subconscious, or unconscious, through his work, he was doing so in a very conscious manner.

The Surrealist movement tends to be drawn back to Breton, but certainly cannot be confined to only Breton's opinions. There were differing opinions within the Surrealist movement, and breaks that occurred and caused separate factions within the movement. Breton approached Bellmer's work with a certain level of hesitancy, as he personally felt the work degenerate, and feared its inclusion in the Surrealist movement would strengthen a forming opinion that Surrealism could be considered a form of thought that encouraged and condoned libertinage and the exploration of deviant behavior.<sup>34</sup> Despite Breton's fears, members of the Surrealist movement like Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Meret Oppenheim, André Pieyre de Mandiargues, Patrick Waldberg,<sup>35</sup> Georges Hugnet and Paul Éluard sincerely embraced both Bellmer and his work. Bellmer's doll photographs began to appear in both Surrealist exhibitions and magazine publications, including the aforementioned *Minotaure*.

There was a common interest in the subject of the living doll amongst the Surrealists, and the fact that Bellmer explored this subject in an almost instantaneous synchronicity with many other Surrealist artists involved in the movement is an important reinforcement of the Surrealist belief in the Hegelian philosophy of objective chance. Dolls, mannequins and automatons of all stripes graced the halls of Surrealist exhibitions and worked themselves onto the canvases and into the minds of numerous Surrealist artists. Max Ernst, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, André Masson, Oscar Dominguez, Marcel Jean and Leo Malet all tried their hand at customizing mannequins<sup>36</sup> and interpreted the work in various ways. Sixteen mannequins lined the entrance hallway of



the 1938 International Exhibition of Surrealism in Paris, each modified by a different artist.<sup>37</sup> Salvador Dali used the mannequin in multiple installations, notably in *Dali's Dream of Venus* on view at the 1939 New York World's Fair, or his *Rainy Taxi*, also on view at the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition.

Becoming involved with the Surrealists was a tactical and intelligent choice for Bellmer. He was living in Nazi occupied Germany, building bizarre dolls and photographing them, acting in a manner easily interpreted as both juvenile and psychopathic, rather than artistic. He had no recognition and an extremely small support group of empathetic and encouraging friends and family. Moving to Paris and entering into an artistic movement that was gaining recognition and influence was a move that allowed Bellmer to continue his work and practice his socially useless philosophies. In 1939 Bellmer spent a period of time in an internment camp for foreign Allies in the south of France, beside fellow prisoner Max Ernst.<sup>38</sup>

Bellmer's photographs of his doll became a hallmark of the Surrealist movement; *Les Jeux de la Poupée* took on the proportions of a Surrealist object, a product of the time, place and manner in which it was produced.

In *Les Jeux de la Poupée* photography served the direct purpose of documenting the themes of giving life to an inanimate object and capturing the evasive qualities of eroticism for Bellmer. Bellmer used photography as a means to these ends only four times during his creative career. The first 1933-34 doll series published in *Die Puppe*, the second doll series produced two years later and eventually housed in *Les Jeux de la Poupée*, a series used as studies for engraved illustrations for Georges Bataille's book *L'Histoire de l'Oeil (The Story of the Eye)*, and a group of images depicting his lover Unica Zurn's body bound in twine, produced in the late 1950's and referred to as *Body Transformations*.<sup>39</sup> As Alain Sayag succinctly expressed, Bellmer used photography to 'give immediate and effortless shape to his fantasies'.<sup>40</sup> The idea of giving shape to fantasies with a camera is a concept that veers from the traditional assumptions regarding the uses of photography, assumptions that assigned photography the task of documenting a straight truth.

Bellmer was not primarily a photographer, and he produced drawings, engravings and paintings with a sureness and ease of line that may have found root in his training as

an industrial designer.<sup>41</sup> His graphic work picks up on the ideas that are documented in his photographs, but expresses them with the highest level of technical skill, a skill that is not as apparent in his photographic work.

Bellmer's entire *oeuvre* deals with the subject of the erotic, and *Les Jeux de la Poupée* is a relevant example of his interest in this subject. From beginning to end Bellmer is carefully and pointedly focused on the exploration of obsession and eroticism, in a manner that appeals both to the intellectual and physical realm. He falls into place in a line of literary and artistic figures that deal with similar subject matter; he is both influenced by history and inspiring to future artists. Visually, he admired the nineteenth century Belgian artist Felicien Rops<sup>42</sup> and late nineteenth century English artist Aubrey Beardsley,<sup>43</sup> and initially ventured into oil painting by mimicking the work of Arnold Böcklin,<sup>44</sup> a Swiss painter also living in the late nineteenth century.

In terms of literary inspiration, Bellmer poured over the work of French writer and contemporary Georges Bataille, the writings of the Marquis de Sade and the Comte de Lautréaumont.<sup>45</sup> It is apparent that the work of German writer E.T.A. Hoffman was of importance in its direct influence on Bellmer's drive to create the original doll. All of these writers and artists deal not only with subjects of an erotic nature, but also subjects of violence and death and the uncanny. An expression of the carnal nature of man, a fascination with primal impulses, desire and mortality are subjects that arise through all of these literary and artistic works.

Beyond subject matter, Bellmer is clearly technically and aesthetically influenced by the visual artists he admires. If one focuses on just the photographs featured in *Les Jeux de la Poupée*, one notices Bellmer's attention to the line of the doll's figure, and his tendency to use mass and space to create a setting for the image, both aspects are reminiscent of the work of Aubrey Beardsley. His choice of garish, artificial colors is unprecedented, but his attention to composition and his use of dramatic lighting is reminiscent of the artists he held in high regard.

## Thematic Context of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*

The subject of the doll was central to Surrealism, and had the ability to express a variety of the reoccurring ideas that ran through their work.

The Surrealists interest in the subject of the doll/mannequin/automata can be related to their interest in giving life to inanimate objects. The Surrealist belief in the importance of pure expression, in allowing the unconscious to move into the conscious realm, finds a comfortable ability to express itself through the subject of the doll. Giving life to something that was not living is an alchemical act held in the highest esteem, and the Surrealists loved to play with this idea in their work. *Les Jeux de la Poupée's* expression of this theme is part of the reason the book was embraced so heartily by the Surrealist movement.

Much of this visual exploration of the doll subject finds its root in literature. I will continue to discuss some of the important literary figures that influenced Bellmer, figures that inadvertently affected the making of *Les Jeux de la Poupée*. In the early 1930's Lotte Pritzel introduced Bellmer to Rainer Maria Rilke's essay *Puppen (Dolls)* written in 1914 and subtitled *Zu den Wachs-Puppen von Lotte Pritzel (On the Wax Dolls of Lotte Pritzel)*.<sup>48</sup> In this essay Rilke, with a certain level of bitterness, writes about the way children learn their first lessons of wasted, unreturned affection with their dolls. He also writes about the uncertainty that rises in a child about where exactly a doll's soul resides – in the doll or in the child? Another comment of interest relates the doll to both God and destiny, claiming that all three are entities that respond to one's questions with an unnerving silence.<sup>49</sup>

Before he created the first doll, Bellmer devoted himself to learning, as Wieland Schmied put it, 'everything that had ever been written about dolls and artificial, anthropomorphic creatures throughout history'.<sup>50</sup> Bellmer was affected by Heinrich von Kleist's 1810 essay, *On the Marionette Theatre*. In this essay Kleist claimed that marionettes could achieve a grace far superior to that of a human, unhindered by affectation and gravity. He, like Rilke, equates the puppet to a God,

'We see that in the organic world, as thought grows dimmer and weaker, grace emerges more brilliantly and decisively. But just as a section drawn through two



lines suddenly reappears on the other side after passing through infinity, or as the image in a concave mirror turns up again right in front of us after dwindling into the distance, so grace itself returns when knowledge has, as it were, gone through an infinity. Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet or in the God.<sup>51</sup>

Bellmer's interpretation of this text through both his visual and literal work is apparent. Another important doll related text is Charles Baudelaire's 1853 essay, *The Philosophy of Toys*, in which Baudelaire relates a child's playing with toys to an adult's creative impulses. He explains it is a child's curiosity with the toy's soul that leads the child to break the toy in an attempt to see the soul. He connects the disappointment in not discovering this elusive soul with a child's first real sense of melancholy. Therefore, he claims there is an inextricable link between creativity and a sense of melancholy.<sup>52</sup>

Bellmer steeped himself in the history of the doll before embarking on his own creative ventures with it. His understanding of the subject throughout history is apparent in the success of the work. It is obvious that there is a large world of thought, consideration and understanding behind Bellmer's doll. The theme of bringing an object to life and suffering some moral consequence for the act has been explored by Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein*, by Fritz Lang in his film *Metropolis*, in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. It is apparently a theme that is deeply imbedded in the human psyche, representative of a human fear of or fascination with forbidden knowledge and supernatural powers, and it finds a continued expression throughout time.

This exploration of the role of dolls, mannequins and automata, of artificiality, of the human ability to animate the unliving, are subjects that have been dealt with before and after Bellmer's examination of them. *Les Jeux de la Poupée* is an important example of the expression of this subject, and is significant in the course of history for its use of photography to do so.

Perhaps one of the most important photographic figures dealing with this theme in present times is Japanese conceptualist Hiroshi Sugimoto. His series of portraits of Madame Tussaud's wax figures deal with the ambiguous line between the animate and the inanimate. These photographs, taken of historical figures such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Salvador Dali, Piet Mondrian, Emperor Hirohito and Queen Elizabeth are



studies done in the manner of 15<sup>th</sup> century portraiture, reminiscent of the work of Hans Holbein. Taken with a large format camera in close proximity and meticulously lit, these portraits are startling life-like. It is my experience that many viewers are fooled into believing these portraits are of living subjects, even though there are many examples where the subject lived in a time before the invention of photography. It is a compliment to the photographer (and to the artisans employed by Madame Tussaud's) that, even when faced with such illogic, the viewer's brain tends to believe these portraits are of living subjects. Sugimoto is a photographer influenced by the Surrealists<sup>53</sup>, an influence that is easy to perceive in this particular series.

American photographer Cindy Sherman's 1992 series 'Sex Pictures' cannot go unmentioned, as her work finds direct inspiration from Bellmer's doll photographs. The photographs from this series picture dismembered medical dummies in various lewd poses, but unfortunately this blatant reworking of Bellmer's work lacks a certain subtlety and depth of thought apparent in the doll photographs featured in *Die Puppe* and *Les Jeux de la Poupée*. Laurie Simmons, also a contemporary American photographer, deserves acknowledgement for her reoccurring interest in the subject of the doll. Her work has incorporated ventriloquist dummies, dollhouses and paper cut outs of women, and shares Bellmer's tendency to depict staged tableaux.

American photographer David Levinthal has used inanimate figures as subjects in his work since the 1970's. Through the study of tiny figurines he has covered interesting topics like Hitler and his troupes in the series *Hitler moves East* and *Mein Kampf*; he has closely examined depictions of caricatured African American dolls in *Blackface*. His series *Modern Romance*, *American Beauties* and *Desire* all depict female figurines in a sexualized or romanticized manner. He has even documented the passion of Christ through the use of religious figurines in *The Passion*. He regularly publishes this work in book format, and has experimented with various photographic mediums.

All of these artists, and numerous others, follow a path cleared by Bellmer that uses the doll as the subject of a photograph. It is Bellmer's thorough understanding of the history of the subject of the doll that both informed his own work and inspired future artists and thinkers.

## Conclusion / Photography and the Doll

Bellmer's use of photography in *Les Jeux de la Poupée* was groundbreaking in two ways: depicting a subject that had primarily been expressed previously through literary and painterly works, and doing so in a manner that could be considered superior to previous methods. In this final section I will discuss the reasons why the use of photography to capture the subject of the doll is such a fitting utilization of the medium.

I have discussed in some depth the significance of the metaphoric act of bringing an invention to life. Photography seems to play an opposite role. Rather than giving life to the inanimate, it takes a moment of life and stops it, turning life into an object. Bellmer uses photography, uniquely, to give life to his doll creation. He makes the doll, producing a being frozen in time, and then uses his camera to animate her. Obviously, I am not suggesting that Bellmer was such a magician that he made his doll get up and walk around on its own, but I argue that he put something of his soul into her, and that is why the doll has such remarkably emotive qualities, and why she has had the power to fascinate and disturb for so many decades. Photography was the only medium that could document the perception that the doll had living properties in a convincing manner. This is due to photography's characteristic ability to extend a fleeting moment and to render that moment perfectly. The instantaneous nature of modern photography allowed Bellmer to capture the passing moment of the doll's animation with an immediateness that is not available through painting, drawing or writing.

Disbelievers in the living qualities of Bellmer's doll will claim that the doll in no way is able to convince the viewer of its life. It hardly mimics reality in its bizarre and impossible poses, and never succeeds in fooling anyone that it is a living person. However, after encountering various volumes of criticism on Bellmer's work, I have found that the doll is referred to repeatedly as a sentient being. Apparently Bellmer has succeeded in portraying the consciousness of the doll. Bellmer's most contemporary critics tend to write about the doll as a victim, a sad and bewildered subject of his violence. For example, in discussing a photograph from Bellmer's series on the second doll, Therese Lichtenstein describes the doll, saying, 'The disorienting overhead camera

angle and the force of gravity pin her body to the ground. Her struggle is internal, but she is fighting an outside pressure as well.’<sup>54</sup> Although I can’t agree with these conclusions drawn on the nature of the doll as a victim because I find them to be more informed by current social and political trends than any aesthetic or realistic understanding, these conclusions prove that Bellmer has succeeded in giving life to his doll, for she is still spoken of some 70 years after her inception in terms of her emotions.

Bellmer was wise in using the camera to document the doll he built. The art of making pictures and the art of making dolls follow certain parallels. Both are concerned with reproducing reality and capturing a piece of fleeting life, making it last forever. Both a doll and a photograph portray an unchanging moment, unmoved by age and time. By combining these two art forms, Bellmer doubled the potency of his spell and played a game with the line that separates the animate and the inanimate.



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- <sup>1</sup> Stephen S. Prokopoff in Krannert Art Museum, *Hans Bellmer: Photographs* (Illinois: Board of Trustees at the University of Illinois, 1991), 8.
- <sup>2</sup> Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 2000), 212.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid
- <sup>4</sup> Peter Webb, *Hans Bellmer* (London, Melbourne, New York: Quartet Books, 1985), 62.
- <sup>5</sup> Taylor, 213.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, 214.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid
- <sup>9</sup> Michael Semff and Anthony Spira eds., *Hans Bellmer* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006), 235.
- <sup>12</sup> Taylor, 68.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 70.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid, 212.
- <sup>15</sup> Telephone conversation with Doug Nishimura, Image Permanence Institute, 9 June, 2008.
- <sup>16</sup> Constantin Jelenski, "Introduction," in Alex Grall ed., *Hans Bellmer* (London: Academy Editions, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), II.
- <sup>17</sup> William and Noma Copley Foundation, *Bellmer* (London and Bradford: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co. Ltd, no date), 5.
- <sup>18</sup> Webb, 26.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 27.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, 29.
- <sup>21</sup> Alain Sayag. *Hans Bellmer: Why Photography?*, in Semff and Spira eds., 28.
- <sup>22</sup> Webb, 21.
- <sup>23</sup> Max von Boehn, *Dolls* (New York, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1929), 220 – 223.
- <sup>24</sup> Wieland Schmied. *The Engineer of Eros* in Semff and Spira eds., 15.
- <sup>25</sup> Copley Foundation, 7.
- <sup>26</sup> Webb, 41.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid, 98.
- <sup>28</sup> Jelenski, III.
- <sup>29</sup> Webb, 62.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid, 100.
- <sup>31</sup> Patrick Waldberg, *Surrealism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 66-75.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid
- <sup>33</sup> Prokopoff, 14.
- <sup>34</sup> Webb, 51.
- <sup>35</sup> Semff and Spira eds., 240.
- <sup>36</sup> Webb, 46.
- <sup>37</sup> Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press,

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2001), 31.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Sayag, 30.

<sup>41</sup> Jelenski, II.

<sup>42</sup> Webb, 11.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>48</sup> Schmied, 15.

<sup>49</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, trans. G. Craig Houston, *Selected Works Volume 1 Prose* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1960), 43-50.

<sup>50</sup> Schmied, 16.

<sup>51</sup> Heinrich von Kleist, trans. Idris Parry, *On the Marionette Theatre in Hand to Mouth and Other Essays* (Manchester, England: Carcanet Press, 1981)

<sup>52</sup> Charles Baudelaire, *Morale du Joujou 1853*, trans. and ed. Jonathan Mayne, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (London: Phaidon Publishers, Inc., 1964), 197-203.

<sup>53</sup> Hiroshi Sugimoto, "The Times of my Youth: Images from Memory" in Kerry Brougher and David Elliott ed., *Hiroshi Sugimoto* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 19.

<sup>54</sup> Therese Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California and London, England: University of California Press, 2001), 105.

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## Literature Survey

Alex Grall, editor, *Hans Bellmer*. (London: Academy Editions, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966)

*Hans Bellmer* includes an introduction by Constantin Jelenski. The book mainly showcases Bellmer's drawings and engravings (no photographs). Jelenski's introduction is a basic biography of Bellmer, and focuses on the common theme of Bellmer's anti-establishment tendencies. The most important comment Jelenski makes is that the actual existence of Bellmer's doll is not as important as its multiple manifestations.

Krannert Art Museum, *Hans Bellmer: Photographs*. (Illinois: Board of Trustees at the University of Illinois, 1991)

*Hans Bellmer: Photographs* was published to accompany an exhibition of Bellmer's work which occurred at the Krannert Art Museum from 23 February to 31 March, 1991. The text that accompanies the plates of photographs in the book is written by Stephen S. Prokopoff, and is an important discussion of Bellmer's relationship with photography. He breaks up Bellmer's photographic activity into four stages. The first is the doll series produced in 1933-34; the second is a larger series of doll pictures made two years later; the third is a group of photographs of live models taken around 1946 as studies for the engravings that would illustrate George Bataille's *L'Histoire de l'Oeil* (*The Story of the Eye*); the fourth phase was produced in the 1950's depicting Bellmer's lover, Unica Zurn, tied up in twine, a series referred to as 'Body Transformations'.

William and Noma Copley Foundation, *Bellmer*. (London and Bradford: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co. Ltd, no date)

*Bellmer* contains a brief essay by Alain Jouffrey. Beyond biographical information and a description of Bellmer's major book projects, Jouffrey makes one notable comment: The limitations the photographs imposed on the Doll's poses gave Bellmer the impulse to create in his drawings various postures achieved by one figure simultaneously. In essence, Bellmer's drawings picked up where the photographs left



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off. There is no publication date within this book, although Bellmer received the William and Noma Copley Foundation award in 1958.

Hans Bellmer, *Die Puppe*. (Berlin: Gerhardt Verlag, 1962)

*Die Puppe* contains three of Bellmer's most important previously published works: 'Die Puppe' (The Doll), 'Die Spiele Der Puppe' (The Games of the Doll) and 'Die Anatomie des Bildes' (The Anatomy of the Image). The book is translated from the French into German and the works are reproduced in their original format; the first two books contain tipped in photographic reproductions, and the third is illustrated with reproductions of engravings. The first book was first published in 1934 and contains ten photographs of Bellmer's original doll creation, and is accompanied with an essay by Bellmer entitled 'Memories of the Doll Theme'. The photographs of the improved doll (the subject of the second book) were taken in Germany in 1936-37, Paul Éluard wrote the accompanying text and Bellmer wrote an introduction entitled 'Notes on the Ball Joint' in 1938. This book was not published until after WWII, in 1948. The third book (also called 'Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious'), contains text and engravings and was originally published in 1958.

Hans Bellmer, Jon Graham trans., *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image*. (Waterbury Center, Vermont: Dominion, 2004)

*Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious* contains an introduction by Jon Graham and a foreword by Joe Coleman. Bellmer's text (translated from the French by Jon Graham) is broken into three parts, 'The Images of the Ego', 'The Anatomy of Love' and 'The Outside World'. In the cold and scientific language common to Bellmer's writings, he discusses topics such as the body's tendency to divert a strong sensation by directing it to a second part of the body. ( i.e. A strong toothache causes one to dig one's nails into one's hand – in this manner dispersing the pain.) He discusses anagrams and inversions and admits to a psychological obsession with reversibility and multiplicity. He also explains how a man infatuated with a woman must first be infatuated with himself, and he points out the tendency for this infatuation to lead to the man becoming

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his image of the woman in extreme cases. Bellmer's text, among other ideas, describes the Surrealist notion that what is not confirmed by chance has no validity. This publication is significant as it provides the first English translation of Bellmer's *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image*.

Hans Bellmer, Malcolm Green trans., *The Doll: Atlas Anti-Classic 14*. London, England: Atlas Press, 2005)

This Atlas publication contains all three of Bellmer's books, similar to the 1962 Gerhardt Verlag publication *Die Puppe*, except the text is in English. This book is important because it contains the only complete English translation of Paul Éluard's prose in 'The Games of the Doll', translated from the French by Antony Melville.

Michael Semff and Anthony Spira editors, *Hans Bellmer*. (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2006)

*Hans Bellmer* accompanied a retrospective of Bellmer's work that appeared in Munich (Pinakothek der Moderne), London (Whitechapel Art Gallery) and Paris (Center Pompidou) in 2006. It includes essays by Michael Semff, Anthony Spira, Wieland Schmied, Alain Sayag, Agnes de la Beaumelle and Hans Bellmer. It contains a succinct chronology of Bellmer's life, exhibitions and publications. Most important to me is Alain Sayag's essay entitled 'Hans Bellmer: Why Photography?', in which Sayag claims that Bellmer's use of photography was more than purely documentary in nature. He also points out that it was Bellmer's photographs that were most often shown in the Surrealist exhibits, rather than his drawings. Sayag mentions that photography may have been a way for Bellmer to provide a sense of narrative that 'is missing from a drawing on a page' [p.29]. He makes clear that photography was a simple and immediate way for Bellmer to relate his fantasies. Finally, he claims that Bellmer gave rise to 'a rapport between art and photography that is now commonplace' [ibid.].

*Hans Bellmer Photographien*. (Munich: Schirmel/Mosel, 1983)

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*Hans Bellmer Photographien* contains an extensive representation of Bellmer's photographic work, including self-portraits, the dolls, erotic studies for Bataille's 'The Story of the Eye' and 'Body Transformations'. The accompanying text is brief and written by Alain Sayag in German.

Peter Webb, *Hans Bellmer*. (London, Melbourne, New York: Quartet Books, 1985)

I believe this is the most important biographical work done on Bellmer to date. Webb presents an unbiased and finely researched biography, discusses outside factors affecting Bellmer's work and the manner in which all of his publications and exhibitions came to fruition. The researcher rarely reveals himself in the work, and the reader leaves with a well-rounded and thorough understanding of Bellmer's life, influences and *oeuvre*. Along with reproductions of Bellmer's work, this book contains reproductions of postcards from Bellmer's private collection, reproductions of artwork that inspired Bellmer, and images of people that were part of Bellmer's life. Also, the author is notable because of his first hand correspondences with Bellmer.

*Hans Bellmer: Drawings and Sculpture*. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1975)

*Hans Bellmer: Drawings and Sculpture* accompanied the exhibit held at the Museum of Contemporary Art from 3 May to 22 June, 1975. This was the first exhibit dealing with Bellmer's work to occur in the USA. The foreword is written by Stephen S. Prokopoff, and the book contains a brief essay on Bellmer written by the exhibit's curator, Ira Licht. There is a succinct chronology, and the catalogue includes a description of each piece exhibited.

Therese Lichtenstein, *Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001)

*Behind Closed Doors: The Art of Hans Bellmer* accompanied the exhibition curated by the author at the International Center of Photography in New York from 29 March to 10 June, 2001. Lichtenstein's approach to Bellmer's work is largely psychological. Although certainly a thorough biography, this text largely consists of



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what can be considered academic jargon. Lichtenstein belabors the importance of the creation of the doll coinciding with the rise of Nazi power, and she focuses on a theory of Bellmer's 'male anxiety'. She talks about the doll representing ambivalence to mass culture and a challenge to social structures of masculinity and femininity. I find her theories are often only narrowly related to Bellmer's actual work, and more based in Freudian psychology. The book contains signs of noteworthy primary research, including a letter from Bellmer's cousin Ursula, and an English translation of Bellmer's essay 'Memories of the Doll Theme'.

Sue Taylor, *The Anatomy of Anxiety: Hans Bellmer*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 2000)

Like Lichtenstein's work, *The Anatomy of Anxiety: Hans Bellmer* is largely psychological in its approach to Bellmer's life and work. I find that this research reveals far more about the researcher than the subject researched. I don't agree with Taylor's obsessive focus on Bellmer's re-occurring 'violence on the subject', and I find her discussion of castration anxiety and scopophilia to be informed solely by Freudian theories and then applied to Bellmer's work. Although this text is important in bringing Bellmer's work to light, I find that it is housed in a psycho-analytical context rather than an art historical one.

Rachel Baum, *Bellmer Now*. (Art Journal: Summer, 2002)

*Bellmer Now* deals with Lichtenstein's exhibition of Bellmer's work at The International Center of Photography, the related text and also Sue Taylor's book. Baum points out how both of these authors take a psychological approach to Bellmer's life and work. Whereas Lichtenstein's approach is more personal and historical, Taylor's uses biography to connect aspects of Bellmer's work to theoretical models of family and sexuality. Both readings are presented as psycho-analytical and focus on ideas of repression, obsession and anxiety. Baum excuses this 'academic jargon', saying Bellmer did it himself to his own work, a comment I do not agree with. It is impossible for Bellmer to be speculative with his own work in the same fashion a third party would be.

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Hal Foster, *Armor Fou*. (High/Low: Art and Mass Culture: October, Vol. 56, 1991, p64-97)

*Armor Fou* relates Bellmer's and Max Ernst's work to "a psychic apprehension of the body as armor in terms of fascism". Foster also discusses the notion of Surrealist misogyny. Foster seems to be confused as to whether Bellmer's work opposes or agrees with ideas of fascism. I believe it is ambivalence such as this that makes Bellmer's work so engaging. Finding the ability to pinpoint Bellmer's actual intentions or hidden meanings is simply impossible, and can only lead to conjecture.

Unica Zürn, *Dark Spring*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Exact Change, 2003)

*Dark Spring* is a memoir/fictional story written by Unica Zürn, who was a writer, artist and companion to Bellmer in his final years. Zürn's writing style could be compared to the likes of Anaïs Nin and Georges Bataille.

Renee Riese Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, & Partnership*. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994)

This book is an examination of Surrealist partnerships. Amongst the twelve relationships the book discusses, a chapter is devoted to Hans Bellmer and Unica Zürn. The chapter points out the influence of Bellmer on Zürn's visual and literary work, and vice versa. There is a strong focus on the importance of anagrams in their collaborative productions.

Kerry Brougher and David Elliott ed., *Hiroshi Sugimoto*. (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005)

*Hiroshi Sugimoto* was published in conjunction with the exhibit of the same name at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo from 17 September to 9 January, 2006, and the exhibit at the Hirshorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C. from 16 February to 14 May, 2006. It contains reproductions of work from Sugimoto's Dioramas, Theaters, Seascapes, Chamber of Horrors, Sea of Buddha, Architecture, In Praise of Shadows,



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Portraits, Pine Trees, Conceptual Forms and Color of Shadow series. It also contains documentation of his reconstruction of the Go-Oh Shrine. The publication includes a selected exhibition history and bibliography. There are essays by Kerry Brougher and David Elliott and a foreword by David Elliot and Ned Rifkin. Most notable is the essay by Hiroshi Sugimoto, 'The Times of My Youth: Images from Memory'. This particular essay reveals information regarding Sugimoto's formative influences, and notes the affect of *yose* (a form of variety theater), Audrey Hepburn, model building, Hegel and the Surrealists.

For those interested in the artist Hans Bellmer, I recommend the canon of literature that influenced him. I have familiarized myself with a selection of this work for the purposes of writing this thesis, including the work of the Marquis de Sade, Georges Bataille, Comte de Lautreamont, E.T.A Hoffman, Rainer Maria Rilke, Charles Baudelaire, J.K. Huysmans and Heinrich von Kleist.