

and one silly game after another. A new style was invented: by drinking quantities of beer and writing as fast as you could in competition with others after three or four hours you were so dazed that your subconscious began working.

There is a specific issue, however, on which I, (*we*, if I may speak for a few others) part company with them. The French are by nature a race of *littérateurs*, artists. To write a poem is easier for instance, than not to write a poem. Therefore art is become a contemptible thing and the most snobbish and the most nobly logical way is to commit artistic suicide. If Aragon, who is a born writer and cannot help writing well, turns up with a poem every evening, Breton treats him with unstinted displeasure. "You must kill this instinct to write; it is trivial, despicable, facile." Then there is the growing belief that art is by no means the universal expression for man's exalted leisure moments. That in itself is a long story. But why in heaven's name should it concern us here? In America we live in storm cellars or country-retreats. It is bitter to survive; it is bitter to find ears. We are not naturally a race of writers and artists. It is still a thrilling struggle to be that here. Stealthily, to have done something well in the line of our own traditions remains a secret delight and a social crime. The bleakness of our situation here compared with the easy brilliance of my friends' in Paris (where Doucet the gownmaker collects mss. of Jacques Baron, aged 17) calls for a reserve of vitality and courage that is scarcely ever needed there. For this reason, one may be happy here, although the consuls in the skyscrapers still turn their thumbs down for us, and our position remains desperate and precarious enough.

Again the literary production of the super-realists is bastard. Of what value are these tedious and tepid dreams, these diffuse poems in prose, these wearisome manifestoes couched in an habitual imagery and an inverted syntax. They have begun with logic; let them cast off their literary robes; let them speak reasonably. Their field is the *quartier St. Denis*, in a barricade. Revolution, the race-track, the political arena, the stock market. Sell the French franc until the government falls again and again. Betray the country! Go over to the Riffs! (\*) But no, they cannot quit being *littérateurs*. And I find their literature contemptible and woefully easy to account for. How pretentious and literary, after all, is this:

*Pour peu que m'y sollicite la fièvre, je m'y trouverais plus dispos qu'en l'habituelle lucidité.*

\* In the several months which have intervened since first writing this protest events have conspired to give my words an air of prophecy: news has come recently that the Dadas, alias Super-realists, have shifted their objectives to political revolution, the majority turning Bolshevik and the others Fascist. Breton, Aragon and Soupault, who were the founders of *Littérature*, have now taken over *Clarté*, the radical weekly, and named it *La Guerre Civile!*