

SURREALIST EXPERIENCES

1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights

by Penelope Rosemont
Chicago: Black Swan Press, 2000

[SURREALISM = MC2 -an excerpt from an essay in Surrealist Experiences](#)

"A certain magical papyrus in Leiden gives a formula enabling a magician to seed a sleeper's mind with a dream of the magician's invention. The book you hold in your hand is animated by just this sort of enchantment. A mutable garden, a memory forest, an invitation to wander, it offers a purer form of fire and air."

From the Foreword by Rikki Ducornet

Media Release

One of the very few Americans welcomed into the Surrealist Movement in Paris by André Breton himself, Penelope Rosemont has been a quickening force in world surrealism since the 1960s. As painter, photographer and collagist, she has taken part in surrealist exhibitions throughout the world, and her art has been widely reproduced. Praised by such poets as Octavio Paz, Joyce Mansour, David Gascoyne, Dennis Brutus and Veronica Volkow, her poetry has been translated into many languages. Widely hailed as definitive, her breakthrough collection, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (University of Texas Press, 1998), introduced English-speaking readers to scores of women surrealists heretofore ignored by critics and scholars.

Surrealist Experiences: 1001 Dawns, 221 Midnights is Penelope Rosemont's first book of articles and essays. It includes nearly two dozen texts originally published in surrealist journals from 1970 through the '90s, plus eleven that appear here for the first time.

Focused on *fortuitous encounters* and their many-sided magic, Rosemont in these essays explores the importance of play, the affinities of alchemy and anarchy, poetry in the comics, the revolutionary significance of a fairy tale, the game of Time-Travelers' Potlatch, and the future of surrealism.

Especially striking is the account of her own discoveries on the magnetic fields of surrealist automatism, including the Alchemigram, the Landscapade and the Prehensilhouette. Rosemont also takes us on a breathtaking excursion to Chicago's Maxwell Street open-air fleamarket in the Sixties; retrieves fascinating "lost voices" (George Francis Train, Mary MacLane and others) from oblivion; discusses the impact on surrealism of such writers as Nancy Cunard and African American poet Ted Joans; and acquaints us with some of her remarkable painter friends (Toyen, Mimi Parent, Lee Godie).

The book concludes with a powerful "rant" against work and its ideological pillars: white supremacy, sexism and miserabilism.

An ardent defender of all that is most liberating in the revolutionary tradition—from Robin Hood to the L.A. Rebellion—Rosemont is also a passionate defender of love, wilderness, and the *poetic life*. In these writings, critical theory embraces the "language of birds," and poetic humor reveals the open secrets of revolutionary thought at its wildest and brightest.

"We've had books on the psychedelic experience, the Zen experience, the wilderness experience, and dozens of other experiences. Now Penelope Rosemont has given us, better than anyone else in the English language, a marvelous, meticulous exploration of the surrealist experience, in all its infinite variety."

Gerome Kamrowski