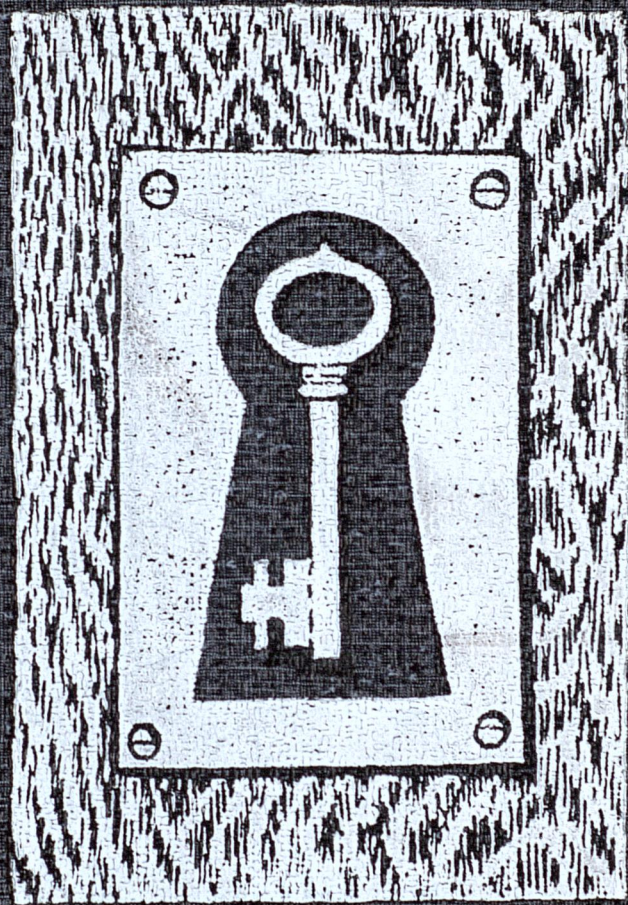


PATRICK
WALDBERG

RENÉ
MAGRITTE

ANDRÉ
DU RACHIS





PATRICK
WALDBERG

RENÉ MAGRITTE

Translated by Austryn Wainhouse

Followed by
a general bibliography
by André Blavier

ANDRÉ DE RACHE
PUBLISHER



of recreated plain-as-day facts it is because, everywhere throughout his work, we encounter, we recognize the sites and the objects which constitute home for Magritte. And those sites and objects are invariably of the simplest sort, accessible to anybody.

Foremost among these constants, the elements: sky, clouds, sea, coasts, plains, entering into startling, into delightful combinations. Theater of apparitions, of events, of metamorphoses, the sky, in many of these paintings, absorbs the greater part of the canvas. Sometimes it fills with airships of strange design hovering in airless stillness (*Le Drapeau noir*), with huge stone blocks (*Les Marches de l'Été*), with mists describing a woman's torso, a bass tuba, a chair (*Le Temps menaçant*); foliage may appear through gaps in the sky (*Le Cœur des Éponges*); or else men may be seen strolling there, sustained in space by nothing more substantial than their conversation (*La Reconnaissance infinie*).

Clouds play a guide's role in Magritte's work. A mischievous guide, assuredly, and prompt to send the mind off upon the least beaten tracks: clouds are among the most effective agents of *dépaysement*. They gather and move just above the level of the ground (*Le Sens de la Nuit*); they shape themselves into phantom objects (*Le Temps menaçant*); they traverse the body of the bird gliding in a sky whence they are absent (*La Grande Famille*); they arrange themselves in stepped stages at whose summit is set a nude woman (*Le Pain quotidien*); they provide God the Father with a cushion to sit upon (*Le Rossignol*); they take the place of moss beneath the giant bowl resting in the middle of the plain (*La Corde sensible*); they are sometimes inside houses, sometimes outside; rain falls upon them; flying stones accompany them; next to them soar heavy objects; they intervene, they startle, they delude or disabuse; here they are affecting the shape of a drawn curtain (*Les Goûts et les Couleurs*), then of a curved panel leaning against a wall (*L'Épouvantail*) or of the two doors to an empty cupboard (*La Lunette d'approche*); at times their mass claims a large area of sky, but most often they go about in scanty flocks, "little clouds, cloudlets, but clouds nonetheless, always in *their* space, in *their* world, shunning relations like the eye of the cheetah whose gaze, do what you will, is not to be caught, whose look is always directed afar, expecting the event from the far-away alone." [Michaux, *op. cit.*]

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