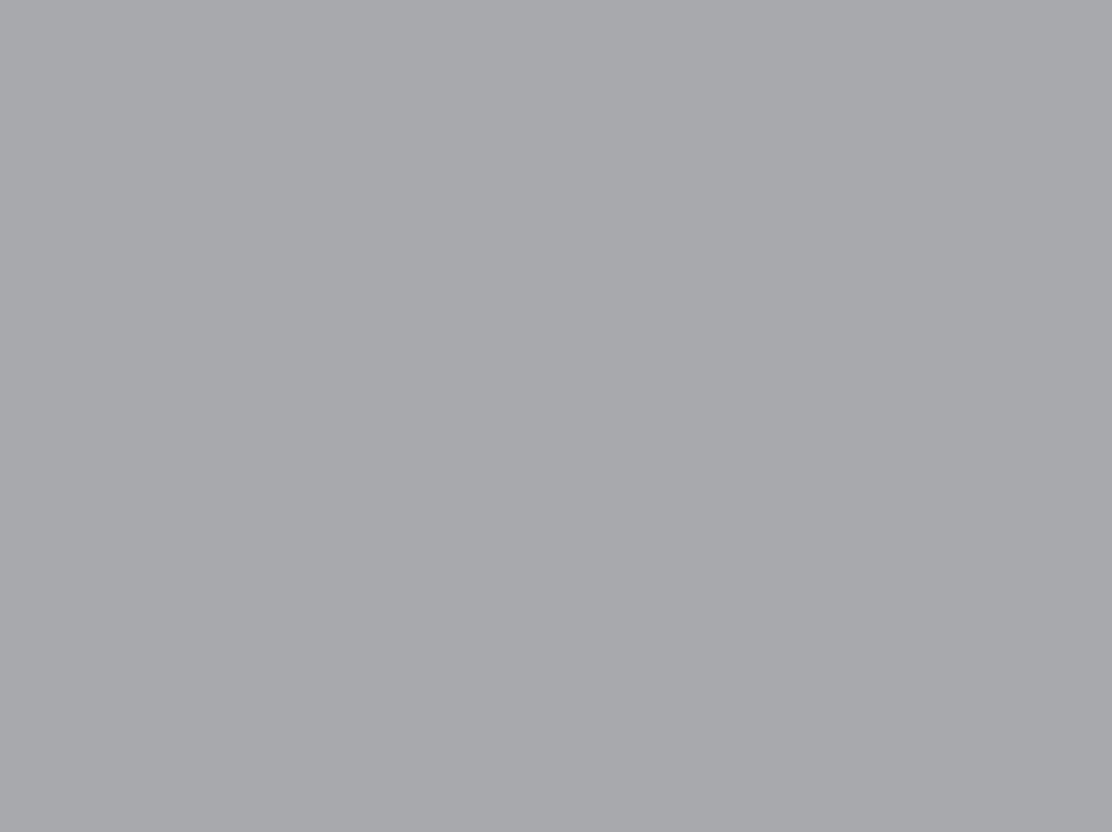


LOUIS ARAGON

ON SYNTAX

DEREK BEAULIEU



ON SYNTAX

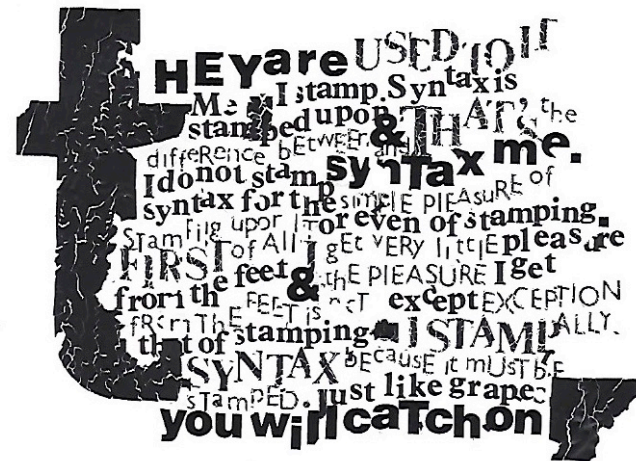
Derek Beaulieu

For Charles

And if it pleases me
to speak of syntax?
Does that mean that the should
der of the reader are convulsed
TAKE A BROMIDE have imposed
For several years I pages in wh
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Not a mistake.
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you on the SUBJECT of SYNTAX
Simple as an ass and stupid
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it read systematically under
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all that is sacred
Syntax.

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No answer from the
Abyss. whirl above
the birds that tread
the abyss, where the treading
here described perpetrated and
perpetuated with disquieting
continuity, fling not one cry,
INTO THIS CHASM.



OR VICIOUS PHRASES,
the no application of their
RRAT Parts, The forgetting of what
was said, THE LACK OF ANTICIPATION,
be said, disagreement, REGARDING what will
be said, disagreement, inattention to the
PROMPTUS,
INACCURACIES,

THE FALSE STARTS
slimpering periods, fit to put you
to sleep, confusions of tenses,
the image that consists of
replacing a preposition with a
conjunction, without changing
the case, all similar procedures
analogous to the old joke of
setting fire to your
neighbor's
newspaper

ASKING the 1st Transi^{ti}ve
FOR the Transi^{ti}ve & VICE
VERS^a BE that which calls for
WITH TO PUTTING THE
IF HAVE, PUTTING THE
ELBOWS on the TABLE,
mAkIng verbs REFLEXIVE
all over the place,

then TO BREAK the
NCT
THE feet
YOU ONE
ALL THESE
BYONE starting with the last
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SLOWLY you will soon remark that the
MATTER IS NCT EXHAUSTED

BUT AT THE SAME TIME YOU
WILL FIND OUT THAT THE
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LACKS NOT THE LEAST
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OR ELSE BY AN EXHAUSTIVE
~~treatise~~ THEREFORE
I HAVE FINISHED
WITH SYNTAX

from TREATISE ON STYLE
by Louis Aragon

And if it pleases me to speak of syntax? Does that mean that the shoulders of the reader are convulsed? Take a bromide. For several years I have imposed on your admiration pages in which the errors of syntax are not unnumerous. Not errors, mistakes. All the same, you admire.

So I, myself, approach you on the subject of syntax. Simple as an ass and stupid as a thistle, you have not noticed with what pale temerity I tread systematically underfoot the black foliage or all that is sacred – syntax. Systematically. Now, one wonders what peculiar profit I intend to reap from this incomprehensible tamping. One wonders. No answer rises from the abyss. The birds that whirl above the abyss, where the treading here described is perpetrated and perpetuated with disquieting continuity, fling not one cry into the chasm. They are used to it. Me, I stamp. Syntax is stamped upon. That's the difference between syntax and me. I do not stamp syntax for the simple pleasure of stamping upon it or even of stamping. First of all I get very little pleasure from the feet and the pleasure I get from the feet is not, except exceptionally, that of stamping.

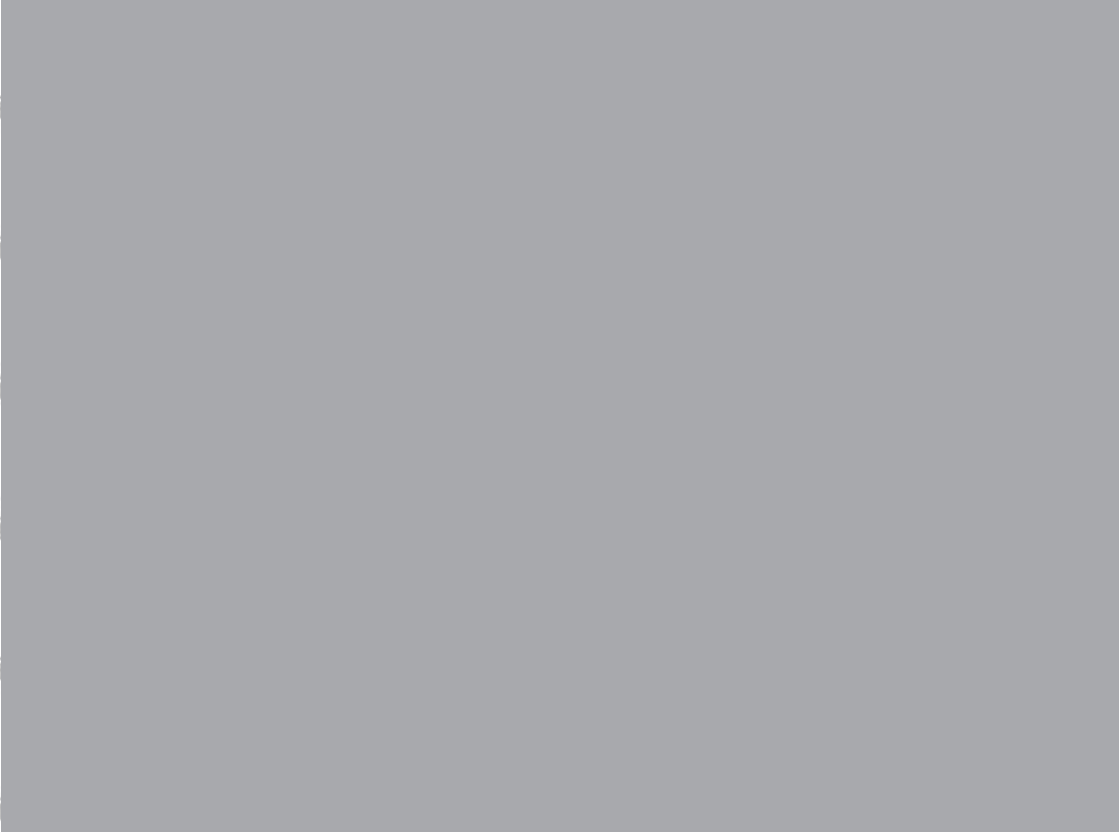
I stamp syntax because it must be stamped. Just like grapes. You will catch on.

Erratic or vicious phrases, the misapplication of their parts, the forgetting of what was said, the lack of anticipation regarding what will be said, disagreement, inattention to the rule, impromptus, inaccuracies, the false starts, limping periods fit to put you to sleep, confusions of tenses, the image that consists of replacing a preposition by a conjunction, without changing the case, all similar procedures, analogous to the old joke of setting fire to your neighbor's newspaper, taking the intransitive for the transitive and vice versa, conjugating with to be that which calls for to have, putting the elbows on the table, making verbs reflexive all over the place, then to break the mirror, not wipe the feet, that's my character. If you answer all these propositions one by one, starting with the last and in reverse order from that which I've followed in declaring them, but very slowly, you will soon remark that the matter is not exhausted. But at the same time you will find out that the phrase ending with character, in very rapid order, puts within reach of him who understands it rightly a method which lacks not the least screw to use in the draining of that pit believed inexhaustible, or else by an exhaustive treatise. Therefore I have finished with syntax.

Translated by Charles Henri Ford

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