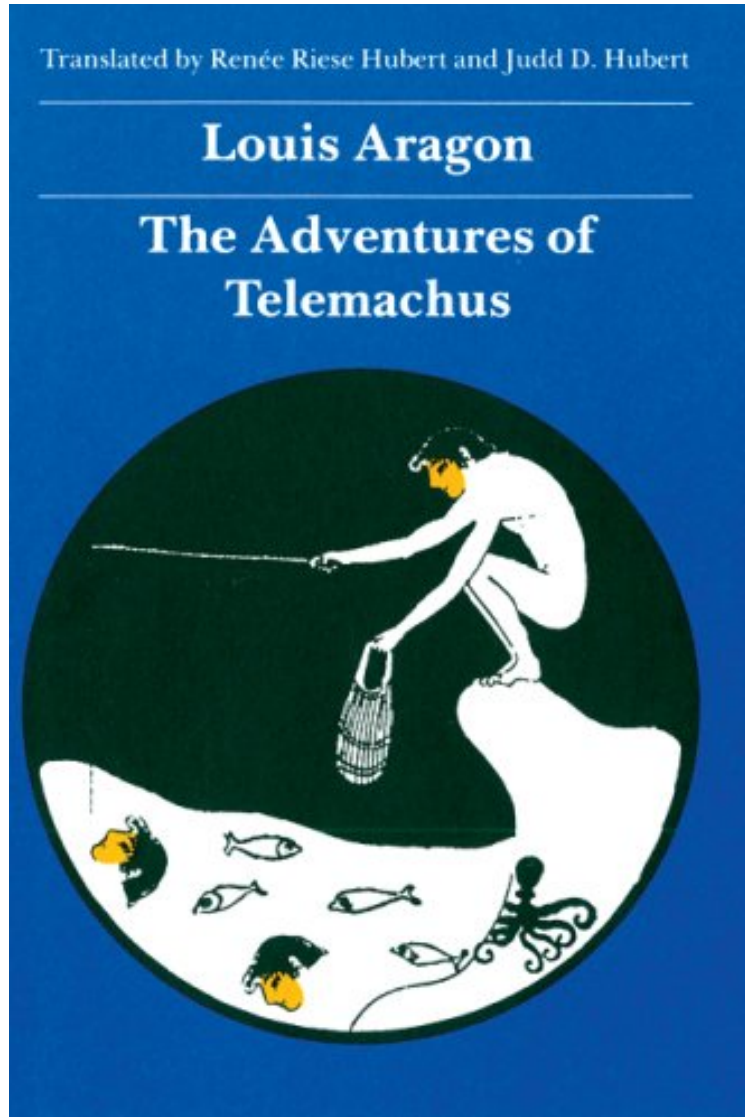


[Download pdf] The Adventures of Telemachus (French Modernist Library)

The Adventures of Telemachus (French Modernist Library)

Louis Aragon

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Louis Aragon : The Adventures of Telemachus (French Modernist Library) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Adventures of Telemachus (French Modernist Library):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. TelemachusBy ZMA bit pointless, but in a charming "Dada" way. The writing is slightly reminiscent of Apollinaire's "The Poet Assassinated," and reads almost like a play. Aragon's reworking of "Telemachus" is fun and fast.4 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A difficult book to get intoBy A CustomerMan oh man, what a trial it was trying to get into this book. I'm normally a fan of surrealist writing (see my reviews of Breton's NADJA, Aragon's PARIS PEASANT and Carrington's THE HEARING TRUMPET) but

TELEMACHUS seems to me to be a rather torturous exercise in literary gymnastics. I've been told that in this work Aragon pulls out all the stops as he uses every pun, metaphor and literary device available to rework and subvert French literary traditions. It doesn't seem to have come off too well in the translation though. The plot is very loosely based around the adventures of Telemachus, who is shipwrecked on a fantastical island with his androgynous Mentor. On the way he is tempted by the blandishments of Calypso and her nymphs. But that's about as much plot as you get. The narrative (if one can call it that) consists of sentences strung in a truly surrealist manner. Remember how the Parisian Surrealists were all enchanted by that one famous line by Lautreamont about the chance meeting of an umbrella and a sewing machine? Well, in this work Aragon takes these surrealist juxtapositions to the extreme. The result is initially surprising and one cannot doubt the startling beauty of some of the images originally afforded by this technique, but when the entire book is written in this fashion, it gets very hard indeed. Not a good introduction to surrealist writing at all--in fact, it really put me off. Read it if you absolutely MUST. 4 of 9 people found the following review helpful. An ode to disorientation

By Stephen O. Murray

Louis Aragon (1897-1982) published the most enchanting of all surrealist novels, translated as "Paris Peasant," in 1924. Two years earlier, on the cusp between DADAism and surrealism he had inverted (and perverted) the 17th-century didactic book of the same title by Fenelon. Both authors imagined Telemachus, son of crafty Ulysses and patient (and far-from-guileless) Penelope, setting out to find out why his father has not returned to Greece with the other victors of the Trojan War. Telemachus and his ancient Mentor (the goddess of wisdom, Minerva in gender-crossing disguise) wash up on the shores of Ogygia, where his father had earlier dallied with Calypso and her nymphs. The family resemblance is instantly noticed, and Calypso wants to take up with the younger image of the lover who abandoned her. He is also lusted after by the nymph Eucharis. I am making it sound as if there was a plot, but the book is almost entirely digressions that are not senseless, but are mostly pointless, as Aragon played with words and the strange juxtapositions DADAists conjured and adored. I would estimate that the text is less than 20,000 words. Perhaps it is delightful in French, though I doubt it. It was certainly a provocation, including a lesbian tryst and the debauching a virtuous youth (the inversion of Fenelon). In the formulation of the helpful (trés academic) introduction by the brave translators, Aragon (et al.) "freed himself from the constraints of mimeticism in regard to fable, meaning, and language, ... dissociated language from significance... [and] generated a verbal overflow or overkill, kindling the desire for and the voluptuousness of verbal indulgence"... which is not everyone's glass of absinthe.

Published in 1922 and modeled on Fénelon's seventeenth-century epic of the same name, Aragon's work parodies its heroic models, didacticism, psychological stability, and descriptive and narrative balance.

From Publishers Weekly

Poet and novelist Aragon (1897-1982) helped launch the dada and surrealist movements. In *Telemachus*, written in 1922 and newly translated for this first English edition, he does an irreverent spoof of the 17th century moralist Fenelon, who rewrote Homeric epic as a guide for princes and schoolboys. Along with Mentor/Minerva in drag, Telemachus quests for his father Ulysses, who is dawdling amorously on the way back from Troy. But where Fenelon warns against women, Aragon indulges Telemachus in the erotic delights offered by petulant nymphs Calypso and Eucharis. Minerva and Calypso have a lesbian interlude. An amusing sequence takes place in Neptune's underwater brothel. Instead of fleeing temptation by diving in the sea to seek wisdom on a distant shore, Aragon's Telemachus tastes pleasure and wrestles with his identity in the here-and-now of Calypso's isle. His final act is Aragon's invention. The highly academic introduction discusses Telemachus as a dada/surrealist document, with its fracturing of language and bourgeois values. Most non-specialist readers will skim over the novel's tortured talkiness, savoring Aragon's passages of sensuous lyricism, his playful tactics with myth and his obvious delight in the power of words. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

In this counter-novel, originally published in 1922, Aragon opposes his iconoclastic text to Fenelon's didactic 17th-century novel of the same title. The avant-garde hero lands at the erotic paradise of Ogygia/Calypso's island and his adventures are related with surreal, Dadaist brio: unexpected analogies, collage poetics, dream imagery, and verbal acrobatics exploiting paradox and contradiction. Translating such a text is fraught with difficulties, but this first translation overcomes the hurdle by providing an "impression" of the text "in keeping with that of the original" rather than a literal rendering. The result is most enjoyable reading, accompanied by an excellent introduction and helpful notes. Danielle Mihram, New York Univ. Lib.

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Language Notes

Text: English, French (translation)