

Dalí's Religious Models:
the Iconography of Martyrdom and its Contemplation

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Summary

This thesis investigates Dalí's adoption of religious iconography to help represent themes that he had conceptualised through Surrealism, psychoanalysis and other thought systems. His selective use of sources was closely bound to his life circumstances, and I integrate biographical details in my analysis of his paintings. I identify unexpected sources of Dalí's images, and demonstrate how alert he was to the psychological motivations of traditional art. I find he made especial use of the iconography of martyrdom – and the perceptual and cognitive mechanics of the contemplation of death – that foreground the problem of the sexual and mortal self.

Part I examines the period 1925-7, when Dalí developed an aesthetic outlook in dialogue with Lorca, formulated in his text, 'Sant Sebastià'. Representations of Sebastian and other martyr saints provided patterns for Dalí's exposition of the generative and degenerating self. In three chapters, based on three paintings, I plot the shift in Dalí's focus from the surface of the physical body – wilfully resistant to emotional engagement, and with classical statuary as a model – to its problematic interior, vulnerable to forces of desire and corruption. This section shows how Dalí's engagement with religious art paradoxically brought him into alignment with Surrealism.

In Part II, I contend that many of the familiar images of Dalí's Surrealist period – in which he considered the self as a fundamentally psychic rather than physical entity – can be traced to the iconography of contemplative saints, particularly Jerome. Through the prism of this re-interpretation, I consider Jerome's task of transcribing Biblical meaning in the context of psychoanalytical theories of cultural production.

In Part III, I show how Dalí's later, overt use of religious imagery evolved from within his Surrealism. I trace a condensed, personalised life-narrative through Dalí's paintings of 1948-52, based on Biblical mythology, but compatible with psychoanalytical theory: from birth to death to an ideal return to the mother's body.

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Introduction

I have investigated the origin of much of Salvador Dalí's Surrealist visual repertoire in traditional religious iconography, as a useful supplement to psychoanalytical readings of his work. In particular, I have found that Dalí adapted religious art that depicts and facilitates the contemplation of mortality. The interest of this approach is not merely anecdotal or archival, but for the patterns it reveals in Dalí's appreciation of meanings and communicative methods within the religious tradition. It not only reveals unexpected sources of Dalí's images – enriching the experience of solving his visual conundrums – but also demonstrates the seriousness of his art-historical scholarship, and his insight into the underlying psychological content and motivation of much religious art.

Few artists' lives have been documented in as great detail as Salvador Dalí's, and to a great extent the parameters were set by Dalí himself in an insistent and conscious effort of autobiographical mythopoesis – in his voluminous writings as well as his prolific art work. His methodical reinterpretation of all phenomena in relation to a mythical self attended a vital need for reassurance of his own existence, betraying the fundamental self-doubt underlying his apparent megalomania. Dalí's thoughts and art can be distilled and labelled as an interrogation of the truth of himself: probing origins and identity within; the real and the represented without.

The basis for my thesis: the not-so-blank canvas

Dalí deliberately and methodically created images that appeared to flow spontaneously from his subconscious onto his Surrealist canvases, but the concept “self” that he explored was always personalised, inhabited and shaped by his own memory and experience. He submitted these to a process of interpretation that he called his “paranoiac-critical method”, integrating them within a coherent, personal network of associations.¹

Dalí's motivation for assimilating particular signifying structures of religious art at particular moments of his life was related to real events, and I integrate biographical study into my analysis of his works. Dalí was only ready to accept Surrealism's stated aim of revealing the machinations of the subconscious once he had reconciled this with his vital need for a sense of autonomy and control. He consciously sifted his memory for images that he had internalised and processed, before incorporating them into his mythography, even if their meanings had undergone a process of reinterpretation and appropriation since their original production. André Breton welcomed this contribution to Surrealism as an effective imitation of unmediated, instinctive thought, but Dalí's tendency toward deliberate manipulation of the subconscious in the service of his own mythopoesis remained a source of tension.

In contrast to most of the Surrealists, Dalí arrived at their door with a thorough academic art education, and with firm conviction regarding the purpose and aims of painting, which helps explain his reticence to abandon control of his image-making to automatic processes. With the support of Freudian theory, Dalí considered his art historical knowledge, and the vast store of images that he had absorbed since childhood, to be a fundamental part of the neural network of associations that comprised him as an individual. Certain constants in Dalí's career – Millet's *Angelus*, the *Venus de Milo*, St. Sebastian, Raphael, Vermeer or Velázquez – gain in significance by the fact of his familiarity with them from an early age. For example, images in the churches of Figueres or Cadaqués – where he attended mass with his mother – were established at the core of the mnemonic archives from which he compiled his paintings. In Freud, Dalí also found the licence to take seriously the humorous associations that he had already made as a child, or later with friends, and we shall come across several examples.

In May 1922 – shortly before Dalí arrived at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid to begin his studies at the Academia de San Fernando, and long before his full engagement with Surrealism – Ortega y Gasset's Biblioteca Nueva imprint had begun to publish Spanish translations of Freud's *Complete Works*.² By October 1923, *The Interpretation of Dreams* had appeared, and a timid, reclusive Dalí was among its many avid readers.³ He was still only 19 years old, so the impact of psychoanalysis

came when his fears and desires were real and not just theoretical: his mother had died; he was in a strange city with high ambitions, competing with talented peers, and negotiating his first sexual experiences. Dalí did not refer directly to Freud in his early correspondence and it took a few years before Freud's ideas manifested themselves in his paintings, but psychoanalysis suited a genuine need for self-analysis, and the methodology that Dalí adapted from it allowed him to engage in public introspection.

Freud was discussed by writers and philosophers in the progressively minded fora of the Residencia and in Ortega's recently founded *Revista de Occidente*. This was a literary not a medical or psychological journal, focussing on art, literature and philosophy, and the first of Freud's books published in Spanish were the ones that explored the psychic mechanisms at work in language. Freud's theories on the slippage of signifiers, subconscious motivations and hidden sexual intentions enlivened and nurtured the conversations of Dalí and his friends at the Residencia – Lorca, Buñuel, Pepín Bello and others – infiltrating their practices of interpretation and creation.

Dalí's early interest in art

I precede the three main parts of my dissertation with a prologue sketching the interests and education that were the foundations for Dalí's familiarity and facility with the archives of art history: interests that were encouraged by friends and family. I shall refer frequently to those sources and interests, established in Dalí's adolescence.

In his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the artist mentioned how important his collection of Gowans's Art Books had been to him. Although Ian Gibson gave a summary of the collection and others have mentioned them in passing, the effect of these books as a source of specific images has not been studied in depth. I discuss the collection in the prologue, and refer to the books throughout my study. It is useful to bear in mind the magical, suggestive power that their exquisite, black-and-white, photographic reproductions must have had at the start of the 20th century.

The three-part structure of the thesis

I have chosen three representative figures with established iconographic profiles to illustrate Dalí's evolving engagement with the problem of the self. St. Sebastian, St. Jerome and Christ represent our existence as physiological entities in a world of others, as desiring, thinking and dying bodies, but they represent three different ways in which the Church and its artists indexed the body's entropic march towards death, and encouraged a renunciation of the distractions and dangers of a desire focussed on the ephemeral and material. Dalí made deliberate, progressive use of these three iconographic identities to visualise the human condition as a search for affirmative meaning, despite awareness of our mortality.

1. St. Sebastian: the self as mortal flesh

The first part is entitled 'St. Sebastian', for the saint that came to represent an ambiguous, shared identity in Dalí's dialogue on art and emotion with his friend, the poet and dramatist Federico García Lorca. The focus in this section is on the self as a physical body, and I follow a progression in Dalí's work between 1925 and 1927, in which the artist's initially preferred depiction of the body as impenetrable surface – following examples and ideals of classical statuary – was eventually infiltrated and undermined by models from Romanesque and medieval religious art. The integrity of the individual self was brought into question with the help of Quattrocento images of martyr saints – split, fragmented, and finally exposed as vulnerable, perishable flesh.

I look at three key paintings that describe this focal penetration from exterior to interior of the self, all created over a few months of 1926, although their roots reach further back, and their branches

further into the future – *Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy)*, *Barcelona Mannequin* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, the first version of which Dalí conceived in 1926.

2. St. Jerome: the self as contemplative mind

The iconographic attributes of St. Jerome are ubiquitous throughout Dalí's Surrealist period. The pensive figure of patriarchal authority and his attributes of inkwell, skull, bread, book, lion and stone are integral to the meanings that Dalí explored in his paintings, and which are otherwise so obviously based on psychoanalytical concepts.

Beyond their representation of the mortal body itself, pictures of Jerome invite the viewer to participate in his contemplation of mortality, serving Dalí as a model for the consideration of the self as a psychic rather than a physical phenomenon. I contest that Dalí deliberately conscripted the iconography of St. Jerome for the visual code of his Surrealist paintings, recognising the parallel between the ascetic's creative acts of contemplation and renunciation, and the "sublimation" of fears and desires that he read about in Freud.

This approach opens Dalí's Surrealist oeuvre to new interpretations. I demonstrate the purposeful continuity of Dalí's motivation, and how consistently the iconography of Jerome served as a template for his Surrealist paintings, by concentrating on two paintings that bookend that period: *The Enigma of Desire* (1929), from the moment of Dalí's induction into the Surrealist group, and *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* (1940), from the time of his estrangement from it.

3. Christ: the self transcending limits of time and space

The third stage of Dalí's engagement with the representation of the mortal self in religious art was his overt adoption of standard religious iconography for what he called "Nuclear Mysticism". In a period between 1948 and 1952 – in the paintings *The Madonna of Portlligat* (1949, second version, 1950), *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1951) and *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* (1952) – Dalí took Christ's story of birth, death and ascent to Heaven as the basis for a personalised, condensed life narrative. Dalí made use of classical and contemporary practices of geometrical composition to fix the contemplator's viewpoint, and make it a meaningful extension of the picture space: an aspect that shows the continuity of Dalí's concerns since 1925.

His treatment of the narrative was informed by the highest achievements of Renaissance and Baroque art, but also took account of psychoanalysis. It began with a painting based on Renaissance treatments of the Madonna and Child, viewed through a psychoanalytical filter as the primary symbiosis of mother and child, and ended with an "ascent to Heaven" within the body of his mother-figure Gala, presented figuratively as reparation – an ideal return to the primary or intrauterine state.

In contrast, Baroque representations of the moribund flesh of Christ on the cross, starkly isolated against the dark night sky, invite the viewer to contemplate the earthly parameters of the body in time and space directly, bypassing the interpretative mediation essential to the iconography of Jerome. The implied goal of transcendence of the body's limits is one that is shared by mystical strains of both psychoanalysis (Jung, Rank) and Catholicism (St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Ávila), and I demonstrate the convergence of these threads in Dalí's thought around 1950.

Other Schools of Thought

Dalí discovered psychoanalysis while he was still young and Freud was little known outside a clinical framework, and while his interests otherwise spanned ontological philosophies. These thought systems were drawn into his exploration of the problem of himself, which, for an important period, he conducted in counterpoint to his friend Lorca. In contrast to Dalí's insistence on objectivity, Lorca favoured emotional response, abandonment to desire and – problematically for Dalí and for himself – religious sentiment. There is a difference, however, between religious sentiment and religious art, which may be studied dispassionately and analytically, and Dalí did not fail to recognise themes in religious art that were of personal concern.

There are a number of thinkers – and not necessarily religious ones – who helped Dalí develop his perspective on religious art. Otto Rank, Miguel de Unamuno, Salomon Reinach and Friedrich Nietzsche were guiding influences whom have not been given their due attention. I also suggest others – such as Aldous Huxley, Jan van Eyck, Marcel Duchamp and E. H. Gombrich – that intervened at specific moments in Dalí’s development.

Key to my discussion in Part III is another previously neglected source: the journal *Études Carmélitaines*, edited by Father Bruno de Jésus-Marie, in which a wide range of writers, including Dalí, meant to reconcile psychology and theology. The influence of this journal came at a key moment in Dalí’s trajectory, at the crossroads of Surrealism and the “Nuclear Mysticism” of the 1950s.

Notes

¹ Dalí formulated his “paranoiac-critical method” over the course of several texts, gradually refining it. Adès (1978) gives a clear definition.

² Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas del profesor S. Freud, traducidas directamente del alemán por Luis López-Ballesteros y de Torres*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid 1922-1934, 17 vols:

Vol. I, *Psicopatología de la vida cotidiana (olvidos, equivocaciones, torpezas, supersticiones y errores)*, prologue by José Ortega y Gasset, 1922.

Vol. II, *Una teoría sexual y otros ensayos*, 1922. Including ‘Three Essays on Sexuality’, ‘Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis’, ‘Introduction to the Study of Dreams’ and ‘Beyond the Pleasure Principle’.

Vol. III, *El chiste y su relación con lo inconsciente. El delirio y los sueños en la 'Gradiva' de Jensen*, 1923.

Vol. IV-V, *Introducción a la psicoanálisis*, 1923.

Vol. VI-VII, *La interpretación de los sueños*, 1923.

Vol. VIII, *Totem y tabú. Un recuerdo infantil de Leonardo de Vinci*, 1923.

Vol. IX, *Psicología de las masas y análisis del yo*, 1924.

Vol. X, *La histeria. Un caso de curación hipnótica*, 1925.

Vol. XI, *Inhibición, síntoma y angustia. Las neuropsicosis de defensa y otros ensayos*. 1923.

Vol. XII, *El análisis profano. El múltiple interés de la psicoanálisis. Historia del movimiento psicoanalítico. La etiología de la histeria y otros ensayos*, 1928.

Vol. XIII, *Psicopatología de la vida erótica*, 1929.

Vol. XIV, *El porvenir de las religiones. El porvenir de una ilusión. Técnica de la psicoanálisis. Introducción al narcisismo*, 1930.

Vol. XV-XVI, *Historiales clínicos*, 1931-1932.

Vol. XVII, *Nuevas aportaciones a la psicoanálisis. Esquema de la psicoanálisis y otros ensayos*. 1934.

³ In October 1923, the *Revista de Occidente* described “the ‘greed’ with which Freud was currently being ‘devoured’ in Spain”. José Moreno Villa, and others, recalled the shy, Freudivore Dalí (DJDG, 171, L-D, 114). In his autobiography, Buñuel recorded the impact on him of *The Psychology of Everyday Life*, and in the *Secret Life*, Dalí stated that he had been consumed with self-interpreting, not just dreams but everything that happened to him. Dalí read his copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams* repeatedly, and underlined many passages (DJDG, 172, L-D, 115). That copy is in a private collection in Cadaqués (EM, 16).

Prologue: a Portrait of the Young Man as an Artist

Dalí's early interest in art was nurtured by his family and friends, and he was privileged to have connections to the cream of Barcelona's cultural life: especially through his Uncle Anselm – who ran a prestigious bookshop on the Ramblas – and the artistic Pichot family, including one of Picasso's closest friends, Ramón. Although he had already begun to dabble in paint, Dalí wrote in his *Secret Life* that it was seeing Ramón Pichot's colourful paintings at the age of twelve that convinced him to be an "impressionist" painter. He was given a makeshift studio and assigned an art tutor, Juan Núñez Fernández, who coached him towards his enrolment at the Real Academia de San Fernando in Madrid in autumn 1922.

Dalí had friends in his home town of Figueres who were accomplished artists, such as Ramón Reig, or who went on to careers as art historians, and who helped guide him towards the vanguard of European thought. One, Joan Subias Galter, became a professor of art and history, and Art Commissary of the Catalan Government under the Republic. Another, Jaume Maurici Soler, edited a review, *Alt Empordà*, which introduced Dalí to Futurism and writers such as Apollinaire, Pierre Reverdy, Philippe Soupault, and Joan Salvat-Papasseit.¹

Uncle Anselm provided Dalí with the latest international art journals, but the most important portal to the avant-garde was Ramón Pichot, who provided a link to Picasso, against whom Dalí would always measure his own achievements. Although his work had taken a different path to Picasso's, Pichot was well-placed to understand the development from Modernisme to Cubism, having accompanied his friend from Barcelona to Paris at the turn of the 20th century.² Although Pichot died in 1925, before Dalí could reap the full benefit of his experience, the paths that he indicated beyond his own impressionism – towards Picasso and towards modernist experimentation in Paris and Italy – were of crucial importance. Paradoxically, one key lesson that Dalí learned from Picasso – and other painters such as de Chirico that he was beginning to discover – was to return to established precedents in traditional art for tested solutions to problems of representation. This was a lesson easily absorbed by Dalí, who retained a thorough knowledge of the paintings in his collection of Gowans's Art Books.

Gowans's Art Books

In *The Secret Life*, Salvador Dalí acknowledged the importance of the Gowans's Art Books that he owned as a child, yet there has been no serious attempt to study the specific effects of these books on Dalí's work. Ian Gibson described the collection as "the sort of little volumes with which one could make friends", and they proved to be reliable companions throughout Dalí's life.³ They are an invaluable archive for identifying many of the images found in Dalí's Surrealist paintings, and their perusal helps reveal the patterns of significance that run through the three stages in which I present Dalí's work.

The 52 small format volumes were published between 1904 and 1914 by Gowans and Gray, Ltd, of London and Glasgow, and spread across Europe in many editions. Each measured just 15 x 10 cm, and contained 60 high-quality, black-and-white photographic reproductions of paintings by Great Masters – some of which choices we might find surprising today. The list of individual titles is given in the bibliography. In about 1940, Dalí wrote that the books

produced an effect on me that was one of the most decisive in my life. I came to know by heart all those pictures of the history of art, which have been familiar to me since my earliest childhood, for I would spend entire days contemplating them. The nudes attracted me above all else, and Ingres's *Golden Age* appeared to me the most beautiful picture in the world and I fell in love with the naked girl symbolising the fountain.⁴

Around twenty years earlier, Dalí expressed his debt to the books in slightly more innocent terms:

The Gowans's collection is closely linked to my childhood. From a very early age I remember the collection in our home and I used to look at the reproductions with positive delight. I adored Rubens's sensual nudes and the Flemish domestic scenes.

Today I sometimes have to make an effort to separate out a real lived incident from one of these reproductions. Many times, lived events and pictures fuse in my memory. When I leaf through these pages again, I feel that I've really *seen* all this and that I've known these people for ages and very intimately. I feel sure that I picnicked once in that shady Watteau glade or that, when I was small, my nurse was that giggling cuddly girl by Teniers; I've walked at twilight by a fountain in a garden with a Renaissance building, through one of those landscapes used by Titian as backdrops for his Venuses of golden flesh stretched on folds of fine and costly dresses, etc.⁵

The erotic content that Dalí emphasised in the *Secret Life* corresponded to Dalí's interest at the time of its writing, looking back past his years as a Surrealist. There is actually very little naked flesh in the books, and most of it supplied by Boucher. There were the paintings by Ingres that Dalí described, but the first edition of the Rubens book had only *The Toilet of Venus* and *Helen Fourment*, wrapping her arms coyly around her flabby body, which could be described as "sensual", unless Dalí also means Rubens' Christ Crucified, "*It is Finished*". The second edition added *Castor and Pollux carrying off the Daughters of Leucippus* and *Andromeda*, and while both of these titles have resonance in Dalí's later work, they could hardly have provided the young lad much titillation.

In the *Secret Life*, Dalí wrote that the books had been a "premature gift" from his father, and that he had the whole collection in his laundry room studio on the roof of the family home by the time he was nine years old. If these rather delicate books were to be consulted for the whole of the period we are interested in, they are unlikely to have been kept in an exposed rooftop laundry, especially as Dalí would have us believe he splashed about in a water-filled trough there while he painted. It is more feasible that they were originally part of his father's library, as Dalí had earlier recalled.

The English editions were available throughout Europe but, as their popularity spread, a French edition was produced from 1910, and this is probably when Dalí's father began to add them to his collection. At some point, Dalí became engrossed in the images they contained, as if they were children's picture books, prior even to taking up painting himself. However, there is no visible impact of the Gowans books on Dalí's early paintings, which were mainly landscapes and harbour scenes that took their inspiration from more contemporary sources, such as Pichot.

Nevertheless, Anna Maria recalled that Dalí constantly browsed them around the time he started to paint, and that once he had his own room as a studio, he kept the Gowans books there on a shelf, alongside his modern art magazines.⁶ Despite their lack of accompanying text, Dalí must have consulted the books for the articles on great artists that he wrote in 1919, at the age of fourteen, for *Studium*: a magazine that he produced with friends, and which he illustrated with reproductions cut from them.

The first noticeable impact of the Gowans books is not on Dalí's paintings but on the image of himself that he presented, both in his paintings and in real life. He painted a self-portrait with "Raphaelesque neck" in 1921, based on the picture on the cover of

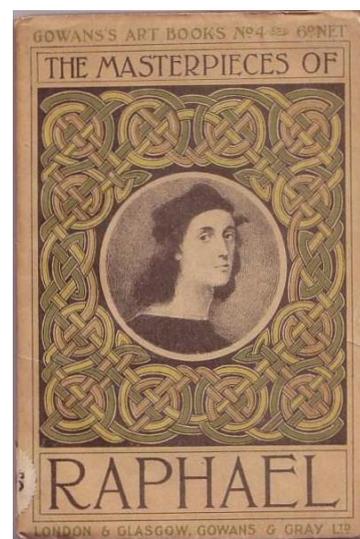


Fig 1
Gowans's Art Book, no. 4:
The Masterpieces of Raphael



Fig 2
Salvador Dalí
Self-Portrait (c. 1921)

the Gowans Raphael book, but he wore his hair and dressed in a style that more closely mimicked characters in paintings by Metsu, Teniers, Jan Steen and Gerard Dou's several self-portraits in Gowans, and did so still when he arrived in Madrid at the end of 1922. With shoulder-length hair, britches and a cloak, and clenching a pipe between his teeth, Dalí apparently imagined himself occupying the "Flemish domestic scenes" that he had admired in the earlier text.

That a large proportion of the sources of Dalí's later images can be found in the Gowans books could obviously be assigned to their containing 3,120 works by most of the Great Masters. The odds are that if Dalí made reference to a great work, it would be in Gowans. Also, several important exceptions make clear that they were not an exclusive source. There is no place in the collection, for example, for El Greco, Leonardo da Vinci, Mantegna or Piero della Francesca: all artists that proved vital to Dalí's art at different times.

Still, there are works of direct, clearly identifiable influence on Dalí as important as Holbein's *Ambassadors*; Velázquez's *Christ Crucified*; Andrea del Sarto's *Abraham's Sacrifice*; Bouts' *Emperor Otto's Unjust Sentence*; Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*; Perugino's *St. Sebastian* and *Apollo and Marsyas*; Dürer's *Triptych*; Paolo Uccello's *Story of the Jew and the Host*; Andrea del Castagno's *Trinity with St. Jerome and Other Saints*; Vermeer's *Lace-Maker* and *The Artist in his Studio* (to give *The Art of Painting* the title it had in Gowans); Ingres's *Monsieur Bertin*, *La Baigneuse*, *La Source*, *The Virgin with the Host*, and *Roger Rescuing Angelica*. There are also numerous Sebastians, Jeromes and Christs, and works that had a more subtle effect on the look of Dalí's Surrealist paintings, such as Giotto or Fra Angelico, which seem more obvious reference points than artists whom he did name: Rubens or Watteau, for example.

Paintings that Dalí knew from the series became especially significant when he was able to expand his thoughts on them in the Prado, which shows how Dalí incorporated his interpretations of art into the myth of himself. A good example is Andrea del Sarto's *Abraham's Sacrifice*, which Dalí used as the basis for his psychologically loaded, personally significant *William Tell* in 1930.

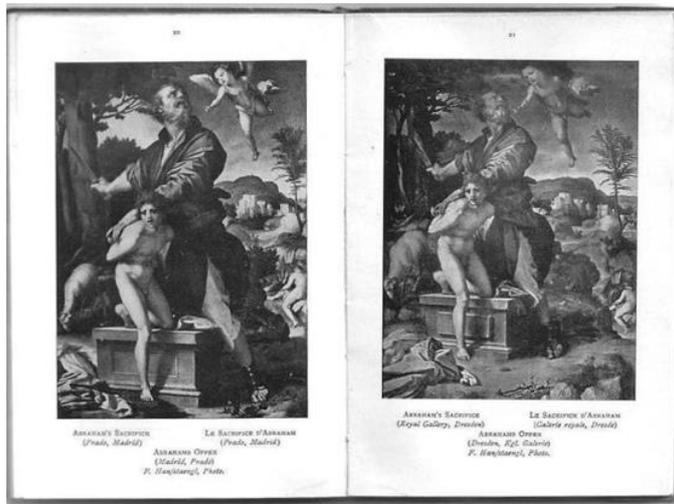


Fig 3
Andrea del Sarto
The Sacrifice of Abraham (1527-8), in Gowans No. 16



Fig 3
Salvador Dalí
William Tell (1930)

It is possible that when Dalí refers to the Gowans Books he means not only the main Art Books series – of painters born before 1800 – but also other series, such as the Nineteenth Century Artists, published 1911-3 (but not in French translation), which included Watts, Rossetti, Meissonier and Orchardson, before production was interrupted – presumably by the First World War – with the next volume tantalisingly announced as Millais. Paintings of Napoleon in these books – by Meissonier and Orchardson – might have helped shape one of Dalí's early obsessions, and Orchardson also painted scenes of polite courtship taking place around pianos, or an enormous harp, that may have found an echo in Dalí's Surrealist paintings. In any case, if this series did have an effect on Dalí, it seems to have been in the Surrealist period, and Dalí might have come across these books only then, perhaps after visiting London.

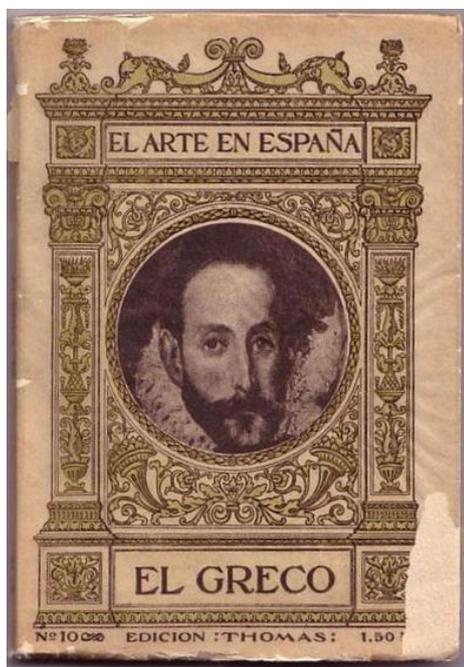


Fig 4
El arte en España: no. 10, El Greco

There were also five volumes of *Drawings from the Old Masters*, *Masterpieces of Spanish Architecture* and two volumes of *Masterpieces of Sculpture*, volume one of which had a photograph of the *Venus de Milo* on the cover that might have been Dalí's earliest encounter with another of his later obsessions.

The popularity of the Gowans Books soon persuaded editors across Europe to copy their format. In Spain and Portugal, similar such series were given official backing by ministries of culture and tourism, and the fact that these books included French and English translations of texts shows that they were meant for wide dissemination and therefore easily available. The illustrations which Dalí pasted into his article on El Greco in *Studium* appear to have come from a book in the series *El arte en España*, published in Barcelona by Edición Thomas.⁷ The book reproduces several paintings that became important reference points for Dalí in later years: the *Assumption* in the church of San Vicente, in Toledo, several saints in contemplation, a St. Sebastian, and the painting of *San Mauricio* in the Escorial.

Photographic reproduction of the quality that could make High Art available anywhere for mass consumption was fairly recent. Walter Benjamin put it around 1900 in his essay 'Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' (1936), which gives an idea of the luxury that these books afforded when the first Gowans books began to appear in 1904: the year, incidentally, of Dalí's birth. Benjamin's essay arrived well into Dalí's artistic trajectory, but looks back on changes that occurred over the modernist period, and these were changes that Dalí was conscious of as he began to theorise on art in his own essays of the 1920s, anticipating Benjamin's opinion that reproduction has helped remove the "patina", the "aura", and the status as cult object of art. Dalí delighted in the access that he had to such a patina-free, miniature photographic record, and it was reproductions like the ones in Gowans – each measuring only around 10 x 7.5 cm – which Dalí soon aspired to match in his Surrealist paintings, which he described as "hand-painted colour photography".

I think there are several ways in which Dalí used these reproductions. In technique, and in their effect, Dalí's paintings can look like the open skies over a low horizon, with barely discernible actions confined to the lower foreground that Wouwerman painted. Or they can engage in a discourse on desire using the repertoire of jugs, bread, fruit and pianos that he had studied in the paintings of Gerard Dou, Metsu, and other artists with whom he clearly identified, as he absorbed lessons on meaning, iconography and interpretation directly through his absorption in these sources, as a complement to his formal studies.⁸

The lack of explanatory text in the Gowans books also meant that Dalí learnt to appreciate the autonomy of the observer, and the right and responsibility to see for oneself: to pick out themes and methods, recognise and decipher iconography, and to interpret freely. In the early manuscript quoted

above, Dalí made clear that he equated these archival images with personal memory, and I think that it is in that regard – and not as common cultural currency – that they were so readily available for personal reinterpretation and appropriation for his Surrealist painting practice.

Notes

¹ DJDG, 117-8, and note 132.

² Richardson reproduces a photograph of Pichot surrounded by “primitive” artefacts in Picasso’s studio, in winter 1910-11. That was only a few months after Picasso had reached the summit of his flirtation with abstraction in paintings he had done at Cadaqués, in the company of Pichot and André Derain. On the Pichot clan and their connection with Picasso and other artists in Barcelona, Cadaqués and Figueres, see Gibson (L-D, 45, 47, DJDG, 32, 54).

³ Gibson (1997), 41, 43. Also in L-D, 56-7, and DJDG, 65-6

⁴ *Secret Life*, 71

⁵ From AMD, *Noves imatges de Salvador Dalí*, 74-5. Gibson, 42

⁶ AMD, 45

⁷ El arte en España 10: *El Greco*, published in Barcelona by Edición Thomas, “bajo el patronato de la Comisaría Regia del Turismo y Cultura Artística”, n.d. Unlike the Gowans books, these other series often had introductory texts: the one on El Greco was written by Manuel B. Cossío, director of the “Pedagogical Museum of Madrid”. Other variants of the format included a series of *Los grandes maestros de la pintura en España*, published in Spain by Fernando Fe, in Madrid, concentrating on works in the Prado. No. 5 was Velázquez. In Sweden, for example, Gleerupska Universitets-Bokhandeln in Lund published at least 21 issues of their *Små Konstböcker*.

⁸ The English edition showed the whereabouts of the major works by each artist, and Dalí could have begun to form a mental map of where he would be able to see the works which interested him. A copycat series, published by Cassell and Co. In London, Paris, New York, Toronto and Melbourne, in 1907, showed selected work from ‘The Great Galleries of Europe’ – The Louvre, The Tate Gallery, The National Gallery and The Luxembourg.

Part I: St Sebastian

The central figure of the first section is St. Sebastian, who held the attention of Dalí and Lorca between 1926 and 1927 as together they weaved meaning around the figure of the martyr saint.¹ At the end of that period, Dalí published a prose piece entitled 'Sant Sebastià' that compiled his eclectic but firmly defined thoughts on art. I examine Dalí's approach, during that period, to questions of identity and representation that consider the self principally as a physiological entity, and trace his progression towards the later consideration of the self as psychic entity, which informed his incipient Surrealism. The identification with Sebastian, shared with Lorca, was not exempt from the long-standing reputation of the saint as an icon of homoeroticism.²

Dalí painted no explicit representation of St. Sebastian, despite his titular status. There are some drawings, but none that was developed into a painting.³ There are, rather, several works of disguised or indirect self-portraiture, in which we recognise something of the saint's predicament – works which represent a central figure responding in different ways to the vulnerability of the sexual and mortal body. The chronological progression of the works examined here also suggests the progression in Dalí's consideration of the "self": from the surface of the body to the interior.

Notes

¹ 'Sant Sebastià', *L'Amic de les Arts. Gasetta de Sitges*, no. 16, Sitges, 31 July 1927, pp. 52-54. See Appendix 2.

² Vasari tells a story of how Savonarola had a Sebastian painted by Fra Bartolomeo removed from the church of St Mark, Venice, because of the many confessions of lascivious thoughts aroused by it. (Book IV)

³ Descharnes reproduces a drawing of Sebastian which he dates c.1927, no doubt based on the date of publication of the essay, but the style fits better with the look of 1926, and should perhaps be associated with the *Neo-Cubist Academy* (Descharnes, *WM*, 77). The drawing features the branch, the clouds like those by Mantegna, and triangular sails on the sea. The short, sturdy arrows stuck in Sebastian suggest that Lorca may have been responding to this, or a similar drawing, when he later wrote of their different conceptions of how those arrows would be.

Chapter 1. The Marble Body: *Composition with Three Figures*



Fig 5
Salvador Dalí
Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy) (1926)

With the *Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy)* (1926), Dalí signed off a series of paintings that paired Venus and a sailor, which coincided with Lorca's first visit to Dalí in Catalonia. Dalí was still only 21 years old in 1925, when he painted most of these, and the themes and ability that they displayed did not particularly set him apart from other students at the San Fernando Academy of Art in Madrid. Yet Dalí had high ambitions for success at the vanguard of his generation, and his fanatical personality and the luxury of so many talented and knowledgeable friends at the Residencia de Estudiantes, where he lodged, helped nurture his rapid development.

The Venus and sailor paintings rested on several dualities – such as the modern and the classical, male and female, land and sea – which reveal the growing sophistication of Dalí's engagement with the subject matter of his paintings. Only four years later, Dalí was welcomed into the Surrealist movement as a shining star of dazzling image-making capacity and theoretical innovation. In this chapter, I relate the fundamental change in Dalí's outlook – which occurred in the spring of 1926 – to a series of events that facilitated his reconsideration of the methods and meanings of religious art, and that allowed this rapid progression to take place. There are indications of the relationship between Dalí's painting and religious modes of representation in the correspondence and writings of the two friends as they debated their differences.¹

The *Composition* heralded the start of Dalí's advance towards his own methodology of psychoanalytic revelation of 1929 onwards, as well as referring back to his timid stylistic experimentation up until 1925, and back beyond the sailors and bathers to their sources in classical art. There are remnants of the modern sailor's uniform on the central figure, but Dalí has quoted knowingly from classical Greek sculpture, while the monumental Venus of earlier paintings has been soaked and softened in the modern Mediterranean. The goddess of love is only faintly evoked by the two females that bracket the male. It is the sailor standing between them who is like a statue of cold marble, impervious to the temptations of their flesh.

Such flights of interpretative fancy regarding high art were facilitated by the irreverent humour and lively intelligence of Dalí's friends in Madrid: artists, writers and poets, but also the elite of medical and engineering students. Together they would visit the Prado, Natural History and other museums of

Madrid and neighbouring cities, mixing mythological and scientific interpretations to amass a stock of esoteric meanings that sustained the art of Dalí, Lorca, Buñuel and other friends for the rest of their lives. Later, many of the images in Dalí's Surrealist paintings – which were supposed to have sprung mysteriously from his subconscious – were retrieved from the categorised and cross-referenced shelves of this mnemonic store. Lorca was a particularly important guide in this formative period; Dalí was timid and slightly younger than the rest of the group, and arrived last in Madrid, while his friend effused confidence and dazzled all with his poetic facility.

Dalí described endless debates with Lorca that turned on dialectics of sentiment and science, abandonment and resistance, the ancient and the modern, but especially regarding their incompatible opinions on religion, or “spiritual” matters. Dalí claimed no interest in anything that could not be confirmed empirically, defined objectively and delimited mathematically. To this end, he sought solutions in modes of representation of the body based on the intellectually and geometrically defined classical canon of beauty. These were the aesthetic imperatives demanded by his fundamental incapacity to submit to the vagueness of emotional response that Lorca held to be the purpose of art. In the *Composition with Three Figures*, Dalí stated his position with the metaphor of cold marble resisting warm flesh.

Dalí began to formulate his aesthetic position in dialogue with Lorca, referring to it as “Blessed Objectivity”, but he soon made a comparison with the situation of St. Sebastian, who impassively ignores the arrows piercing his flesh in so many paintings and statues with which Dalí was familiar. These ideas were developed into the text 'Sant Sebastià', published in 1927, when Lorca next returned to Catalonia. This text goes beyond the figure of the martyr saint to form the hub of a wheel circumscribing the period between 1925 and 1929, with subsections like spokes indicating the various directions of Dalí's thoughts: towards irony, scientific objectivity, modern life, hygiene, artistic representation.

One dilemma that had to be addressed was that while Dalí wished to ignore the meanings attached to the erotic, mortal body that fell outside empirical verification, the images of St. Sebastian that filled churches, museums and books existed objectively in the real world, and in that sense Dalí could not deny the reality of the spiritual. Another problem was that although he selected his models preferably from the pre-Christian, classical canon of geometrical restraint and control, the largest part of the Western European tradition of painting – to which Dalí felt great attachment – rests on the foundations of emotive religious art.

Dalí painted the *Composition* in response to several events in the spring and early summer of 1926 that demarcated his appropriation of the iconography of St. Sebastian and the direction his painting would take. First, he visited Paris and Brussels, and saw paintings that he knew as small black and white reproductions in his Gowans books. He also met Picasso, whose influence spans the neoclassical and cubist elements of Dalí's painting. On his return to Madrid, filled with ideas and images, Dalí's consideration of the physical body resisting the temptations of the flesh was definitively confounded by a frustrated attempt to consummate the sexual aspect of his friendship with Lorca. In the midst of this artistic stimulation and emotional turmoil, Dalí engineered his own expulsion from the Academy and returned to Catalonia to work on his personal mythography.

There is only a faint imprint of the traditional iconography of St. Sebastian on the *Composition*, but the painting is absolutely representative of the theoretical debates with Lorca on the theme of attraction and resistance of desire that infuses their writing at that time, and that were christened after the saint. Dalí eventually abandoned any identification with St. Sebastian, but the modes and meanings of representation and reception connected to images of martyrdom were an essential reference point during his approach to a position compatible with Surrealism.

Note

¹ See Lorca's 'Ode' and Dalí's 'Sant Sebastià', both included as appendices.

1.1 Hello Sailor!

This section examines the impact of Dalí's friendship with Lorca, with whose guidance Dalí learnt to reinterpret the underlying psychological motivations of religious art. Dalí's concern with resisting the uncontrollable, emotional aspects of the self led him to focus on the subconscious workings of the mind that generated and subverted that resistance, and to Freud and Surrealism. His experiments with aesthetic frigidity, under the rubric of St. Sebastian and in relation to Lorca's contrary attitude to the sensual body, led him to an appreciation of modes of representation that had evolved within European art to communicate religious meanings. He continued to appropriate elements of its iconography through and beyond his Surrealist years.

I summarise the principal events in Dalí's personal relationship with Lorca that provided the context for the dialectical couplings of religious and classical thought, emotional abandon and self-control that are the basis for Dalí's eventual acceptance of religious art. They are events plucked from the existing biographies of their protagonists, but as their repercussions echo through the rest of the stages examined below, I feel it is important to collect them here as the context for my arguments.

Seeing through Lorca's eyes

Salvador Dalí met Federico García Lorca in 1923. One or the other was often absent from Madrid, but for four years from late 1924, their friendship was consolidated through intellectual and emotional attraction and resistance, across a six-year age difference and contrasting temperaments, that was key to Dalí's personal and aesthetic development. While Dalí struggled with shyness, the older Lorca was the natural centre of social gatherings, using his rich and varied talents to skip between intimate playfulness and deep literary erudition.¹

In early 1925, one of their friends – the painter Rafael Barradas – moved to Barcelona, where he had friends in Catalan artistic circles, and arranged for Lorca to give a talk there in April. Dalí invited Lorca to spend Easter with his family at Cadaqués on the Costa Brava, and together they visited many of the places significant to Dalí.² Lorca revelled in the mythological and religious allusions that he saw all around him, interpreting people and places through tales of sailors, goddesses and saints. These references seeped into his poetry following the visit, and also into Dalí's paintings, but the friends differed in their interpretations of them. Many ideas subsequently established in the imaginary labyrinth of Dalí's paintings and writing can be traced back along these threads they began to weave together in Madrid and Cadaqués.³

Lorca was delighted with the trip and impressed Dalí's family and friends with recitals of his play, *Mariana Pineda*, which he hoped to promote in Barcelona. This was a forerunner of Lorca's great tragedies, *Bodas de Sangre*, *Yerma* and *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* (in which Bernarda's unattractive daughter is called Martirio).⁴ The poet's wealth of knowledge and feeling regarding the play's theme of secular martyrdom for the sake of a tragic, physical love, are relevant to his impact on the "aseptic" Dalí – determined, for his part, to limit and control emotion. The play is steeped in Andalusian legend, but structured according to Lorca's love of Greek tragedy, and he soon figuratively shed his gypsy clothes for a toga, seduced by the vestiges of the classical Mediterranean world that he discovered. At Cadaqués Lorca could combine two projects: he had long fancied elaborating a book from the meanings of water, and since 1923 had been "doing modern interpretations of figures from Greek mythology, a new thing for me that I find very amusing."⁵

He imagined the bay of Cadaqués as a theatre, with its terraced mountain slopes facing the watery stage of Greece, Rome and the Holy Land – Catholicism, too, was tragic theatre for Lorca.⁶ He wrote that in that landscape he heard for the first time "the true and classical pastoral pipes", and a boat trip along the coast was "like an eclogue of Hesiod".⁷ He alerted Dalí to the foundations of Classical, Christian and popular mythology in the world around him, recounting the lives of the fishermen

through Virgil and Ovid, and showed the way for Dalí to picture himself – figuratively and literally – in that mythical landscape, in the paintings of modern sailors and eternal Venus that followed this visit.⁸

For his part, Lorca pursued the theme of love in the modern world, filtered through mythological interpretation, in 'The maiden, the sailor and the student', where Venus, as "the maiden", is disputed by personifications of physical and cerebral love.⁹ Similar themes underlie the 'Ode to Salvador Dalí' that Lorca wrote in homage to Cadaqués and his friend.¹⁰ Its classical form is punctuated with the language of the art journals dear to Dalí, conflating the modern and the ancient in a single, eternal duality – cold currents and warm within a Heraclitan flow of time: ever present, ever changing, ever the same.¹¹

Lorca probed the sentimental attachment to his environment that Dalí had eradicated since his earlier impressionistic landscapes – which Lorca probably saw for the first time on this visit – and which the painter sought to replace with a detached, cerebral cubism.¹² Lorca's ode expresses his sympathy for Dalí's search for limits, clarity, and geometric definition, as strategies to maintain a sense of emotional control, but whereas Dalí enclosed himself within a "walled garden", to shelter his personal vulnerability from emotional engagement, Lorca would rather expose himself to hurt than deny such vital feelings. This attitude of willing exposure to fatal love was also that of the heroine of *Mariana Pineda*: a pagan martyr to physical desire, in contrast to Christ's sacrifice at Easter in the name of spiritual love. These contrasting attitudes evolved into the friends' debate on the attitude of St. Sebastian, facing his death.

Venus and the sailors

While Lorca explored these themes in the ode and 'The maiden...', Dalí worked on several paintings that featured Venus and a sailor. They had doubtless discussed the significance of these characters while they were together at Cadaqués.¹³ As Lorca, Dalí and his sister Anna Maria were rowed past Cap Creus – the site where local legend locates the birth of Venus – the poet must have recounted this myth as told by Hesiod. In his *Theogony*, Aphrodite rose from the Mediterranean – not at Cadaqués but Cythera – born from the seed of Uranus, which had been dispersed in the sea following his castration by his son Cronos.¹⁴ This was also the source for the representations with which Dalí was most familiar: from the ancient marble Aphrodite *Anadyomene*, to Botticelli and Bouguereau.

In paintings such as *Venus and Sailor (Homage to Salvat-Papasseit)* (1925), Dalí sought to synthesise the mythical Mediterranean evoked by Lorca, and the modern world that he found equally or more marvellous, not least for its tangibility. He found models for this synthesis in the classical statuary that he had studied, and in several contemporary tendencies that debated the correct distribution of weight between tradition and modernity. Noucentisme, for example, promoted a Catalonia that looked more to Athens than to Madrid, claiming for itself a nobler history and a more civilised present than the capital. Dalí's Uncle Anselm, who supplied his nephew with the latest art publications, was well acquainted with artistic circles in Barcelona and was a member of the Ateneu, where those ideas were discussed and promoted.¹⁵

The two magazines to which we know Dalí subscribed proposed alternative solutions to the dialectic of tradition and modernity, in response to Jean Cocteau's "rappel à l'ordre".¹⁶ For de Chirico and the *scuola metafisica* represented in *Valori Plastici*, the "order" to be restored was the classical one, while Ozenfant and Le Corbusier, in *L'Esprit nouveau*, trumpeted the new mechanical order of steamships and aeroplanes.¹⁷ Dalí grappled with the two propositions, in search of a synthesis.

Picasso is another important point of reference, and for more than Dalí's cubistic experiments, or a superficial resemblance between his massive Venuses and Picasso's treatment of the female nude, similarly pitched between fear and desire. Despite the geographical isolation of Cadaqués, it was not provincial in cultural terms, and Dalí's education in Madrid was supplemented by his privileged access to a uniquely well-informed discussion of Picasso's art. It was at Cadaqués that Picasso took Cubism closest to abstraction when he stayed there in 1910, in the company of André Derain and Ramón Pichot, a friend of the Dalí family who had always encouraged the young artist.¹⁸ Pichot had been a

Moderniste painter who had once influenced Picasso, but who saw his friend's talent soar after they made the move from Barcelona to Paris together. He witnessed at close hand the evolution of Cubism and of the neoclassical nudes, and some discussion of their foundations in Picasso's confrontation with the truths and lies of primitive, classical, and modern modes of representation must have reached Dalí. For instance, he might have known of the hidden genesis of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* – in which there originally was a sailor surrounded by naked prostitutes – when he depicted his Venus and sailors in 1925.

Apollinaire compared Picasso's deconstructive or forensic method, stripping away cosmetic layers of style and taste to arrive at the naked object, to how “a surgeon dissects a cadaver”.¹⁹ Similar sanitary metaphors pervaded other theoretical discourses that interested Dalí, who distilled his conception of artistic objectivity from various sources that called for purity or clarity of vision, such as Ozenfant and Jeanneret's vocabulary of asepsis and nickel, translated by Lorca to a “syntax of steel” in the ode, in which “Modern painters in their white studios, / clip the aseptic flower of the square root.”²⁰

Dalí turned this vocabulary of hygiene and science against the perceived danger of “putrefaction”, a term apparently introduced by Dalí to his friends at the Residencia, who referred to the dull bureaucrats of the old order as “*putrefactos*”.²¹ Though the term peppered the humorous banter of Pepín Bello, Lorca, Moreno Villa, Alberti, Buñuel and others, Dalí stipulated that for him, putrefaction was “sentiment.”²² Dalí proposed to combat that sentimentality with “astronomy”, but he likely meant astrology – the idea being to treat Venus, Mars, and Mercury scientifically, as planets subject to mathematical laws, and not as the irresistible but arbitrary forces they represent in their mythological personifications.

Dalí sought to situate his paintings within this discourse of aseptic clarity by way of calculated geometrical compositions, which caught the attention of critics at the time.²³ His dominant compositional schema of crossed diagonals is one used consistently by two of his idols – Ingres and Raphael. The device fixes a central figure in its cross hairs, emphasising Dalí's concern to define his subjects with mathematical objectivity. Although it is a basic compositional framework that Dalí probably learnt early in his art education, one theoretical foundation for his insistent use of this strategy was a rather literal interpretation of José Ortega y Gasset's philosophical perspectivism, applied to the history of painting by Ortega himself in an essay 'On the Point of View of the Artist' (1924), and further explored in his book, *The Dehumanisation of the Arts*, which was at the forefront of philosophical and aesthetic debate in Spain in 1925.²⁴

Picasso, Paris and Brussels

Dalí stated the importance to him of retaining the skills of traditional art for depicting the modern world in notes for a letter to Buñuel that he drafted in January 1926:

Ingres... Rafael, it was inevitable, if one has the patience to learn to draw again, a great era could come, I think however that one must remain concerned, or delighted rather for Ozenfant and the metal bridges...²⁵

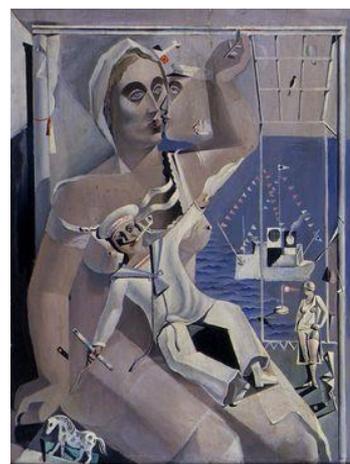


Fig 6
Salvador Dalí
Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)
(1925-6)

In February 1926, Buñuel wrote to Lorca, insisting he and Dalí visit him and a growing group of Spanish friends in Paris, where he had been living for a year.²⁶ Lorca was committed to a series of lectures and unable to go, but Dalí's father was happy to fund the trip, and in April Dalí travelled with his sister and their aunt and stepmother, la Tieta, to Paris and on to Brussels.²⁷ They spent hours at the Louvre, with Dalí ecstatic before the paintings he knew so well from the Gowans's books.²⁸

Dalí took two paintings that represented his latest achievements, and also exemplified the focus of his interest in the months leading up to his trip. These were *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* (1925-6) – one of his Venus and sailor series – and *Girl of Figueres*, which showed a woman making lace, in obvious allusion to Vermeer: an artist praised for his objective vision on the pages of *Valori Plastici*.²⁹ At the end of 1925, Dalí had turned his attention to the geometric construction of the compositions of Dutch and Flemish masters, in works in which he predominantly represented his sister Anna Maria sewing or making lace. Dalí reached such a level of proficiency in his technique that José Moreno Villa – a fellow student at the Academia Libre, which Dalí attended to supplement the classes at the Academia de San Fernando, which he deemed insufficient – took one of these paintings to the Prado to compare the technique directly with the "Flemish primitives".³⁰

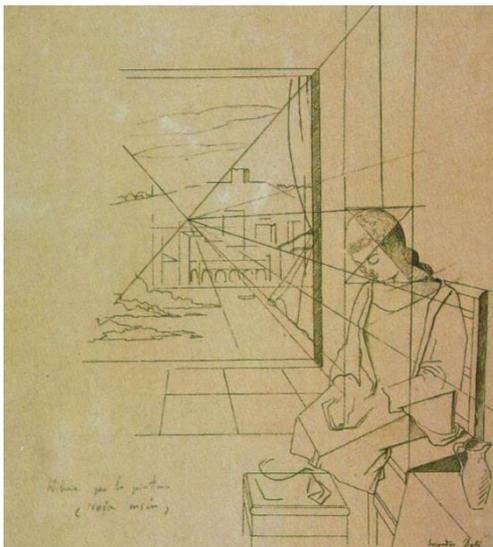


Fig 7
Salvador Dalí
Study for *Noia cosent* (1925-6)

Within the series, Dalí appears to have invested most effort in *Noia cosent* (1926), another "Girl Sewing", and it can be considered the sum of his experiments in this area. Its meticulously calculated content and composition suggest that Dalí carefully considered the meanings attached to the Virgin Mary in Flemish art. This means Dalí was fully aware of the original significance of certain elements of such paintings when he incorporated them in later Surrealist works: for example, the jug which symbolises the fertile womb, or the window that frames the sea, rocks, boats and sky of Cadaqués, juxtaposing Dalí's real world with the sacred space of domesticity. This painting occupied Dalí during his transition from the Venus and sailor paintings of 1925 to his "Blessed Objectivity" of 1926: one study is signed and dated 1925, while further studies and the painting are dated 1926.

In Paris, Buñuel was waiting for Dalí at the station with the Cubist painter Manuel Ángeles Ortiz, who had arranged for Dalí to visit Picasso.³¹ Ángeles Ortiz was a friend of Lorca's who had been resident in Paris since 1922, and who painted still lifes on tables before open balconies in style very similar to the one Dalí developed later in 1926. Dalí knew Ortiz from his return trips to

Madrid, where he was a fellow Knight in the Order of Toledo. Picasso may already have known a little about Dalí through Ángeles Ortiz as well as Ramón Pichot, and Dalí later claimed that Picasso had seen and admired one of his paintings at Dalmau in 1925. Picasso must have met Dalí's aunt when he visited Cadaqués fifteen years previously, so it is feasible that she accompanied Salvador to the studio to reminisce about Pichot, his widow Germaine and Cadaqués. Dalí wrote in his *Secret Life* that he told Picasso he had visited him before the Louvre, and that Picasso replied "quite right", before they studied each other in respectful silence. Dalí was more likely awestruck at the time, and writing for melodramatic effect in his later account. In any case, the atmosphere was likely to have been convivial and Picasso receptive to these friends of Pichot, who had died unexpectedly just before Lorca's visit to Cadaqués a year earlier.³²

Whichever he saw first, Picasso and the Louvre were vitally important and, in any case, Dalí saw the Louvre partly from the position of modernist reappraisal that Picasso had done so much to forge. We can only speculate on what advice Picasso might have offered Dalí, or on their discussion of the paintings at the Louvre, or in Brussels, Madrid or Barcelona. As an indication of what Picasso might

have said on his own relationship to traditional art, the statement he made to Marius de Zayas in 1923 was surely still valid. In it, Picasso extolled a natural eclecticism, as the art of Greece or Egypt, for example, may be even more alive now than in the past. He may also have deflated Dalí's belief in the importance of geometry:

Mathematics, trigonometry, chemistry, psychoanalysis, music, and what not have been related to cubism to give it an easier interpretation. All this has been pure literature, not to say nonsense, which brought bad results, blinding people with theories. Cubism has kept itself within the limits and limitations of painting, never pretending to go beyond it.³³

Dalí replied similarly to questions when he exhibited in Barcelona later in 1926. Asked if his work was Cubism or Surrealism, Dalí replied "No, not that either. Painting. Painting, if you please."³⁴

Dalí reported to his Uncle Anselm that the trip had been a "success in all senses, as much spiritual as material", and he had a lot to tell him.³⁵ Part of the "spiritual" benefit seems to have been that Dalí's disdain for the San Fernando Academy was reinforced by Picasso, who was disappointed with his own single year there 28 years earlier, under the same teachers as Dalí.³⁶ A few weeks later, when Dalí returned to Madrid for the June exams, he refused to answer questions on Aesthetic Theories put to him by an institution that Eugenio d'Ors had referred to as a "disarticulated, flabby and flaccid farce", and was promptly expelled.³⁷

Prior to his expulsion, Dalí shared a room with Lorca at the Residencia for six weeks or so. Buñuel was also there. The 'Ode to Salvador Dalí' had just been published, and the friends had plenty to discuss. Lorca wrote in the ode that he and Dalí were united "in the dark and golden hours" by "love, friendship or fencing," referring to the long evenings they spent discussing matters artistic, philosophical or spiritual.³⁸ Their friendship was also coloured by sexual attraction: openly, on Lorca's part, but with enough reciprocal feeling in Dalí for a willing but frustrated sexual experience to occur.

This is Buñuel's account: Lorca read his friends excerpts from *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*, on which he was working. Buñuel said it was "shit", and Dalí agreed. Lorca was distraught, and Buñuel and Dalí followed him to a church where they saw him kneel and pray – arms spread like a Crucified Christ – before they went drinking. The next day Dalí told Buñuel that he and Lorca had made up, and that Lorca had tried to have sex with him but failed.³⁹ This incident played an important part in steering Dalí's thoughts on the body over the following years, through the dialogue on St. Sebastian and towards Freud and Surrealism.

Notes

- ¹ Among many testimonies to Lorca's character is Rafael Martínez Nadal's account of gatherings at which Lorca would recite poems, play-act and play guitar, and which invariably included a reading of a classic poet chosen by Lorca (*Cuatro lecciones sobre García Lorca*, Fundación Juan March, Madrid, Cátedra, 1980, 19-21, quoted in *LDAT*, 16, 28). Lorca's skills impressed people of the stature of Manuel de Falla, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Miguel de Unamuno, and José Ortega y Gasset.
- ² *Poesía*, 151. Dalí and Lorca spent two days in Barcelona at Anselm's house, and visited Girona for its famed Easter Mass (L-D, 121, DJDG, 180, after Antonina Rodrigo *LDAT*, 49, GLPD, 41).
- ³ See Gibson (L-D, 12) on the "complex network of influences, complicities, suggestions, transferences and reactions" in Dalí and Lorca's work. See also the work of Rafael Santos Torroella, Agustín Sánchez Vidal, and Antonina Rodrigo.
- ⁴ Lorca wrote to Melchor Fernández Almagro that Mariana ends up "a martyr of Liberty, [...] a *victim* of her own enamoured and maddened heart" (Gershator, 44). "When she decides to die, she's already dead, and death doesn't frighten her in the least" (Gershator, 45).
- ⁵ "These days I feel pregnant. *I have seen* an admirable book that someone must do and I would like it to be me. It is 'The Meditations and Allegories of Water'. What deep and striking marvels can be told about water! The water poem in my book has opened up inside my soul. I see a great poem of the water, somewhere between the Oriental and Christian, European; a poem where one could sing in ample verses or in prose, *molto rubato*, the impassioned life and martyrdoms of water." (Summer 1923 to Melchor Fernández Almagro. Gershator, 35). July 1923 to Melchor Fernández Almagro: Lorca would soon visit Malaga, "where I'll see the sea, the only force that torments and disturbs me in Nature. [...] Before the sea I forget my sex, my condition, my soul, my gift of tears ... everything! [...] I'm also doing modern interpretations of figures from Greek mythology, a new thing for me that I find very amusing." (Gershator, 39).
- ⁶ As well as ancient Greece, the landscape of Cadaqués put Lorca in mind of the Holy Land (AMD, 101).
- ⁷ Letter to Fernando Vilchez: *LDAT*, 39-40, without details: my translation. In one letter to his family, Lorca described the landscape as "full of Greek things and with an elegance and an antiquity that you would find as amazing as I do." (Maurer, 185-7) He also wrote of the "many extraordinary suggestions that I've had" (*Poesía*, 151). Josep Pla described the rich history of Cadaqués's occupancy (*Cadaqués* 24-5).
- ⁸ Gibson writes how, for the young Lorca, ancient Greece was a far superior human ideal to Catholicism (L-D, 38). Anna Maria recalled that Lorca admired the bilingual Catalan and Greek or Latin Classics published since 1922 by the Bernat Metge foundation, and subscribed to by Dalí's father (*GLPD*, 216). Anna Maria mentions them in relation to the manifesto Dalí and Lorca worked on in 1927 – an embryonic version of an 'Anti-artistic Manifesto' published later without Lorca – but they might have come to his attention on this first visit in 1925. Lorca told Anna Maria she should read Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, because "everything is there", and commented on the characters and stories. (*GLPD*, 216). In Ovid's *Heroides*, Poem 7: 'Dido Aeneae', line 8: "And will the same winds carry away your sails and your fidelity?" Lorca left this impression of Cadaqués in the autograph book of Iu Sala, part of the editorial team of *Sol Ixent*:
- ¡Mar latino! (Latin Sea!): "Between the white towers / and the Corinthian capital / across you skated / the voice of Jesus Christ. // You safeguard immortal expressions / and you're humble. / I have seen / blind sailors set out / and return to their destiny. // Oh Peter of the seas, / oh magnificent / desert crowned / with vine and olive!" (*Camp de l'Arpa*, Barcelona, 4-11-1972, reproduced in *GLPD*, 41, *LDAT*, 49. My translation)
- ⁹ July 1925, Lorca to Melchor Fernández Almagro. Gershator, 62. See Vinyet Panyella, introduction to *DLPM*, 17-9, on the shared themes of sea, sailors, love and Venus at that time.
- ¹⁰ Federico García Lorca, 'Ode to Salvador Dalí', *Revista de Occidente* 34, Madrid, 1st April, 1926. See Appendix 1 for my translation of the ode.
- ¹¹ Jeanneret and Ozenfant's *L'Esprit nouveau* and the Italian *Scuola Metafisica's Valori Plastici*, which was published in a French edition as well as Italian.
- ¹² When he was younger, Dalí looked forward to the "suffering in creation. My ecstasy as I lost myself in the mystery of light, of colour, of life. My soul merging with that of Nature [...] losing myself in Nature, being her submissive disciple" (*Diari*, 105)
- ¹³ Some were exhibited in Madrid at the Sociedad Ibérica de Artistas, in May 1925, shortly after Lorca's visit, and then others at Dalí's first solo exhibition at the Dalmau galleries in Barcelona, 14th – 27th November, 1925. Josep Dalmau was an important figure in bringing the avant-garde movements of Europe to Spain, and knew Dalí's Uncle Anselm, and the friend of their family, Ramón Pichot. Dalí's catalogue was headed with quotes from Ingres' *Pensées*, and one from Élie Faure: "A great painter has no right to take up tradition again without having gone through revolution, which is none other than the search for one's own reality." (AMD, 116-7)
- ¹⁴ This myth gives her a divine, virgin birth, and she came to represent beauty and sensuality in a way that prepared the ground for the legend of the chaste Virgin Mary. The legend is a blend of myths that came together on Cyprus, incorporating Ishtar, the 'Grand goddess' of the Near East, and other mythical representations from throughout the

Mediterranean. (Paolucci, 20, ff.) Lorca read Hesiod's *Theogony*. Greek Gods shared human eroticism. In his poem, 'Sea' (1919): "The star Venus is / the harmony of the world. / Hush Ecclesiastes! / Venus is the profound / of the soul..." (L-D, 39. My translation). As well as scallop shell, *venera* means spring, or source. At the end of his life, Dalí gave an account of the "universal" mythology of Spain that begins with the birth of Venus, but has echoes of Lorca in its clicking of castanets:

In Spain are blended, until they become one thing, the erotic of the Milky Way and the mystic of the Pilgrimage to Santiago; the Greek world and the Christian world. Spain is the land of castanets. [...] Aphrodite emerges, is born from the sea waters shivering with cold, covered only in shells and with her teeth chattering, like castanets. The castanet is nothing more than the shell or *venera* (and *venera* comes from Venus, from Aphrodite) gradually transferred to noble and sonorous wood. The pilgrim, for his part, descended from all over Europe on Compostela covered as well in shells and with teeth trembling like castanets. (See Santiago Amón, 'Dalí, si no divino, inmortal', Madrid; *Época*; 29th April 1985, in Mas, 254-60).

¹⁵ See Gibson (1997: 17, 80-1, DJDG, 35, 39) on the connections to Barcelona's cultural life of Anselm, who ran the Verdaguier bookshop on Barcelona's Ramblas.

¹⁶ *Le Rappel à l'ordre – Lettre à Jacques Maritain* was the title of an essay on poetry published by Jean Cocteau in 1926, which Dalí almost certainly read.

¹⁷ Soby wrote on the influence of the *scuola metafisica* on Dalí. Fifteen issues of their magazine, *Valori Plastici, Rivista d'Arte*, were published in Rome, 1918-21, with texts by Savinio, Carrà and de Chirico. There were reproductions of work by the latter two and by Giorgio Morandi. Soby wrote that "The school's doctrine was eventually to swerve him from the abstract approach of the Cubist-Futurist tradition toward the Surrealist movement's concern with man's psychology." (Soby, 4). See Lahuerta 2003, 286-7. Le Corbusier and Ozenfant praised logic, geometry and that which was "rational, and therefore human". See Jeanneret and Ozenfant, 60, and their article 'Purism', in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no. 4, 1920. This magazine stopped publication in 1925. "One of the highest delights of the human mind is to perceive the order of nature and to measure its own participation in the scheme of things; the work of art seems to us to be a labour of putting into order, a masterpiece of human order." Dalí was seduced by the idea that "a work of art should induce a sensation of a mathematical order" (Jeanneret and Ozenfant, 61). Following *Modernisme*, Catalan *Noucentisme* attended to classical Mediterranean references, and sought austerity, purity of drawing, flat tonalities, and the depiction of Catalan themes. (ME, 86-7). See Adès (1995), 15, Adès, 'Morphologies of Desire', in *Early Years*, 135, and RES, 35. At that time, 1924-5, Dalí encapsulated a broad range of avant-garde currents, but in reality his paintings, influenced by Gris, Picasso, and Mediterraneanism, were within the same range of styles as others, especially those connected to the Academia Libre. He made line drawing portraits very similar to those by his friends Francisco Bores and José Moreno Villa.

"There is also a curious affinity between these paintings and such German artists of the nineteenth century as Overbeck, or Philip Otto Runge[...], and a further striking parallel can be drawn between Dalí and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* artists like Georg Schrimpf. Dalí shared this leaning towards a 'New Objectivity' with other contemporary Catalan painters. Given the range and sophistication of Dalí's sources at this time, it is not surprising that he took a high hand during his Academy examination in the summer of 1926." (Adès, 29-30)

In Madrid, too, Ortega y Gasset included this "new objectivity" in his "perspectivist" discussion of *dehumanised art*. *Revista de Occidente* published Franz Roh's *El realismo mágico. Postexpresionismo*, in 1927, translated by Fernando Vela, which had appeared in its original German at the time of a survey of 'New Objectivity' in Mannheim curated by Gustav Friedrich Hartlaub, in 1925. An advance extract appeared in *Revista de Occidente*, issue 48, June 1927, but the critical reception of Roh's book did not spread through that magazine, *L'Amic de les Arts* and *La Gaceta Literaria* until after 'Sant Sebastià' was written. (Juan Manuel Bonet, 'Concerning Certain Spanish Adepts of Magic Realism', in *Realismo mágico*, Eng. tr., p. 290). Dalí had contacts at all three magazines. The ideas of 'New Objectivity' were, however, already making their way into the discussion of certain artists, and Dalí was obviously familiar with the concept, a natural application to the style of realism he had been working in since 1924.

¹⁸ Pichot took enough interest in Dalí at the start of 1921 – around the time Dalí's mother died – to send him a book on Futurism, as a hint on which step to take after the Impressionism that he had originally learnt from Pichot. Dalí later confirmed the importance of this book, *Boccioni, futurista. Pittura, scultura, futuriste (dinamismo plastico), con 51 reproduzioni quadri sculture di Boccioni-Carrà-Russolo-Balla-Severini-Soffici, Edizioni Futuriste di 'Poesia', Milan, Corzo Venezia, 61, 1914*. Dalí wrote to Sebastià Gasch, c. 1927, on the impact of the book. See Gasch, *L'expansió de l'art català al món*. See Gibson, 79, EM, 24, RES, 35.

¹⁹ Guillaume Apollinaire in *Les Peintres Cubistes: Méditations Esthétiques* (1913). English translation by Lionel Abel, in Chipp, 221-48, quote on p. 222

²⁰ See Appendix 1.

²¹ Dalí and his friends in Figueres used the term "putrefacte" in Catalan to designate types they observed on the Rambla. See his diaries, and Gibson, 67, Gibson, 1997, 125-6, L-D, 64. Antonina Rodrigo says the term "putrefacte" began with the Figueres journalist Carlos Costa y Pujol, who used it in the affectionate way that Dalí and Lorca understood it. (*LDAT*, 82)

²² "Basically, putrefaction is SENTIMENT – therefore something inseparable from human nature – while there is terrestrial atmosphere there is putrefaction. The only thing outside our atmosphere is 'astronomy', so we oppose astronomy to

Putrefaction. PUTREFACTION – ASTRONOMY – are two symbols, 2 categories. In the little book, to disinfect it from so much putrefaction as there will be, I will include 6 invitations to astronomy (drawings of a style invented by me)." (Letter from Figueres to Pepín Bello, 18th December 1925, in RES, 122, my translation)

²³ Reviews for the Ibéricos exhibition, in Madrid, in May 1925, concentrated on the geometrical aspect of Dalí's paintings. José Moreno Villa ('La exposición de "Artistas Ibéricos"', *La Noche*, Barcelona, 12th June 1925, 4). Jean Cassou, *Le Mercure de France*, 1st October 1925, (DJDG, 186) Joan Subias described his childhood friend Dalí's attention to construction – his "geometric schema" – after the move to Madrid had revealed how dated his impressionist style was. (Joan Subias, 'Salvador Dalí', *Alfar*, La Coruña, no. 40, May 1924, quoted by Fèlix Fanés in 'The first image – Dalí and his critics: 1919 to 1929,' *Early Years*, 90). In Fanés's summary of the critical reaction to Dalí at that time, "he was gaining a reputation as a cold, dogmatic painter who lacked inspiration." (p. 91)

²⁴ Ortega y Gasset, 'On the Point of View in the Arts', published by his own *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, February 1924. The general history of Western art that acts as the scaffold for the essay is a familiar narrative from Giotto to Cézanne, with an invitation to guess the next step. It included the notion of cubists as "stereometers": "measurers of the cubic metre", that seems to have left its imprint in the language of Lorca and Dalí. Ortega's essay was followed by his book *The Dehumanisation of the Arts* (1925), first published as a series of articles in the newspaper *El Sol*, intended to popularise the more philosophical content of the 'Point of View' essay.

Arnheim's description of "centric" and "eccentric" systems of composition illuminates Dalí's motivation for his schemas. The way in which crucifixions focus attention on the heart and head make Arnheim's comments relevant to my later discussion of Dalí's rigid geometry for the *Christ of St. John of the Cross*:

I began to see that the interaction of centricity and eccentricity directly reflected the twofold task of human beings, namely, the spread of action from generating core of the self and the interaction with other such centres in the social field. The task in life of trying to find the proper ratio between the demands of the self and the power and needs of outer entities was also the task of composition. (Arnheim, ix)

"Psychologically, the centric tendency stands for the self-centred attitude that characterises the human outlook and motivation at the beginning of life and remains a powerful impulse throughout". (Arnheim, 2)

²⁵ Notes for a letter from Dalí to Buñuel, January 1926, in RES, 132, my translation. We do not know whether the letter was sent. Luis Buñuel was at the Residencia from 1919, but moved to Paris at the start of 1925, to work at first as secretary to Eugenio d'Ors. Buñuel's own taste for traditional art was apparent in his request for clouds copied from Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin* in the Prado, in the portrait Dalí painted of his friend in 1924. Gibson (DJDG, 184-5) identifies the setting of Buñuel's portrait with the Residencia, then on the outskirts of Madrid, but we may add that it is painted to look like a Quattrocento painting. Santos Torroella thinks it significant that Buñuel guided Dalí towards the painter, Mantegna, who would provide the solution for his depiction of his relation with Lorca (RES, 39, 55).

²⁶ Letter dated 2nd February 1926, at the Fundación Federico García Lorca, cited by Gibson (L-D, 135). Dalí was also encouraged to visit Paris by Vicens, Moreno Villa, and Hinojosa who had also moved there (Poesía, 19). María Luisa González, Hernando Viñes, Apeles Fenosa, Francisco Bores, Joaquín Peinado, Ismael González de la Serna (DJDG, 209-10), and Pedro Flores, Ginés Parra, Baltasar Lobo and Francisco de Cossío had also moved there, as well as Dalí's good friends from Figueres, Jaume Miravittles and Martín Vilanova (LDAT, 78-9).

²⁷ Trip to Paris and Brussels with Anna Maria and La Tieta, 11th–28th April 1926. (L-D, p. 138, DJDG, p. 208) Their aunt, "La Tieta", was also their stepmother, since their father married her after her sister died. Anna Maria wrote that their father was keen for them to visit the Louvre and Belgian museums, as Salvador was interested in Bosch, Bruegel and especially Vermeer (AMD, 110). Buñuel organised the trip to Brussels and Bruges, on 26th April 1926, but Rodrigo writes that Anna Maria told her that Dalí was so ecstatic with Brussels, that they didn't get to Bruges (LDAT, 79). There may have been an added incentive – at least for Anna Maria and la Tieta – to make the extra journey, if Pichot's sister Maria Gay was in Brussels. Anna Maria does not mention her, but Xosé Aviñoa says Gay made her career in Brussels and New York, 'Dalí, García Lorca y la música,' *DLPM*, 155.

²⁸ Anna Maria later wrote that the artists that most impressed Dalí were Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Ingres, but we can assume that Vermeer's *Lacemaker* and other paintings that later obsessed Dalí also made an impression. See AMD, 118. Apart from the Louvre, they also visited Versailles and the Musée Grevin (DJDG, 210). In 1920, Dalí painted two touching portraits of his mother, in which she seems to be engaged in some undefined manual task. We know that she would spend hours in their sewing room with her mother and sister, and I suspect that Vermeer's *Lacemaker* already carried associations with his mother, who died of cancer on 6th February 1921, aged forty-seven. The painting held an obsessive fascination for the artist for the rest of his life. See my unpublished MA dissertation on this topic, 'The Visible Man/The Invisible Woman: the absence of Salvador Dalí's mother', (University of Essex, 2004).

²⁹ *Valori Plastici* published an article by Theo van Doesburg about Dutch painting, praising Pieter de Hooch and Vermeer above all others with a single defining word: 'tranquillity'. *Valori Plastici*, I, no. 4-5, Rome, April/May 1919, quoted in Lahuerta: 1997, 288. Although Lorca's 'Ode' acknowledged Dalí's lack of a defined style, and the eclectic influences on his work, he still wasn't expecting praise for Vermeer when it came in a letter from Dalí.

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- ³⁰ José Moreno Villa, *Vida en claro*, 111, quoted in *LDAT*, 37. Unfortunately, Moreno Villa does not say which painting or when he took it to the Prado.
- ³¹ Gibson, 1997, 129-34, L-D, 138, DJDG, 208.
- ³² See the section, 'Passion Play' below.
- ³³ Marius Zayas, 'Picasso Speaks', New York, 1923, in *Art and Artists*, 416-9. Picasso approved the transcription of his conversation with de Zayas.
- ³⁴ Article by J.V. Foix, *Publicitat*, 1926. See Adès, ed. (2004), 83
- ³⁵ On their way back, the family spent one night in Madrid, where they met up with Lorca, and arrived home in time for the Fires i festes de la santa creu in Figueres, on 3rd – 9th May 1926. Antonina Rodrigo, *LDAT*, 79. Letter to Anselm, in Gibson, DJDG, 213, quoting from Fernández Puertas, 'Anselm Domènech, l'oncle de Salvador Dalí Domènech', 76. My translation
- ³⁶ Picasso had studied at San Fernando in 1897-8, when he was sixteen years old. Richardson finds the period puzzling, saying Picasso's development faltered. Picasso made his first conscious foray into modern styles, particularly *modernisme*, influenced by Rusiñol and Pichot in Barcelona. Picasso wrote to Joaquim Bas, "Moreno Carbonero told me that the figure I was doing was very good in proportion and drawing, but I ought to use straight lines He means you should construct a kind of box around the figure. [...] if I had a son who wanted to be a painter, I wouldn't keep him here in Spain for a moment." Letter to Joaquim Bas, from Madrid, 3/11/1897. Picasso mentions Nonell and Pichot, and praises Velázquez, El Greco and others. See Richardson, I, 89-94. Picasso also found Muñoz Degrain's lessons stifling. When Dalí later wrote of his teachers in his *Secret Life*, he complained that they taught him nothing, "not due to their academicism or to their philistine spirit but on the contrary to their progressive spirit, hospitable to every novelty. I was expecting to find limits, rigour, science". Yet, Dalí later regretted not having learnt more from José Moreno Carbonero, the same teacher Picasso had criticised. *Secret Life*, 161. In 1976, Dalí decided to give a free course of drawing at the Teatre-Museu Dalí, in honour of Moreno Carbonero, the "best teacher in the world", whom he would still take lessons from if he were alive, he told *Paris Match*. 'A l'université Dalí on enseigne le nu canne a la main', *Paris Match*, no. 1420, 14th August 1976, 3-5.
- ³⁷ Dalí wrote to his family; the letter is among Lorca's papers, now at the Fundación Federico García Lorca. See DJDG, 218-21; L-D, 149-50; Gibson, 1997, 137-9) DJDG, 213. Eugenio d'Ors wrote in defence of Dalí after an earlier suspension, in 1923. See 'La hazaña de Salvador Dalí' in *El Día Gráfico*, Barcelona, 19th October 1924, p. 6, quoted in *DJDG*, 169. In 1972, Antonio Fuster gave an idea of the pseudo-impressionist bias of the Academia, dominated by artists of the Valencia school that Dalí had mocked in a pamphlet that accompanied his participation in the Ibéricos exhibition in 1925. Fuster says that in European art (as opposed to Chinese) the painted space is closed, sealed, finished, unified, with no space for evocation. His examples are artists dear to Dalí: Fra Angelico, Van der Weyden, Memling, Raphael, Botticelli, Bosch. On the other hand, lyrical and dreamlike Eastern art insinuates rather than affirms. (Fuster, 39-40).
- ³⁸ See the 'Ode to Salvador Dalí', in Appendix 1, for the quotes in this paragraph.
- ³⁹ See Buñuel, *My Last Breath*, and as told to Max Aub in 1985, quoted in DJDG, 140-1. See also Gibson (1997), 134-7, and Poesía, note, 145. Shortly afterwards, Lorca apparently had sex with a friend of theirs, Margarita Manso, with Dalí as voyeur.

1.2 Sebastian bound

After the events of Paris and Madrid, Dalí was relieved to be back in Cadaqués for the summer but had plenty to think about, on an aesthetic and a personal level. The St. Sebastian theme arose in that aftermath, as much to do with Dalí's search for personally meaningful direction in his art after his expulsion from the Academy, as it was a reaction to the acceleration of his intimacy with Lorca. Contrary to some accounts, the incident in Madrid did not curtail their relationship, and Dalí continued a friendly – even flirtatious – correspondence with Lorca, inviting him to stay again the following summer.

Dalí's identification with Lorca as a contrary twin soul, an erotic "Other" to his frigid self, was in fact strengthened. This coincided with, or triggered, an increased introspection in Dalí's art, especially in a series of paintings that probed this ambiguous self, to which I shall return below. The *Composition with Three Figures* was the site of Dalí's first tentative experimentation regarding their different attitudes, vacillating between declaring and denying the sensuality of the body, in a meeting of classical and religious modes of representation.

Dalí's thoughts began to crystallise around these dialectical juxtapositions, culminating in his poetic statement of aesthetic intent, 'Sant Sebastià', a year later. He and Lorca had recognised Sebastian's predicament – stripped and bound, facing the arrows of his executioners – as a suitable metaphor for the dilemma of man's condition as sexual and mortal, intellectual and sentient, subject and object of desire. The martyr saint was soon established as the fulcrum of their discussions on the iconographic and personalised meanings attached to religious images, often originally constructed to warn against emotional abandonment and the dangers inherent in the weakness of the flesh. Although various specific representations of Sebastian were mentioned by each friend, it does not seem that there was one seminal image that ignited the debate. Rather, these were used to illustrate and give focus to their thoughts on the essence of Sebastian's *attitude*.

Santos Torroella suggests that Dalí's interest in Sebastian may have been triggered by seeing Mantegna's painting in the Louvre.¹ However, this painting was no revelation – Dalí knew which paintings he would see in Paris and Brussels, and Mantegna was one of the artists he would have looked forward to seeing; his *Death of the Virgin* in the Prado was a favourite of Dalí and his friends.² In any case, it is Mantegna's version of *St. Sebastian* in Vienna that contains more elements that can be said to have influenced Dalí – the chequered floor, the head within a halo divided in half by the diagonal of the arrows, the double image in the cloud, the intact buttocks, the architectonic fragments.

We do not know who first mentioned St. Sebastian, and opinion is divided on who first proposed the martyr saint as a focus for their debate. Christopher Maurer stresses that Dalí didn't publish his article 'Sant Sebastià' until 1927, implying that he was following Lorca, who had planned a series of lectures on the saint by September 1926, but of course both friends were already familiar with St Sebastian.³ His is a familiar image in the Western artistic tradition, and one loaded with meaning even before the friends in Madrid added their own interpretations. While Dalí insisted on his lack of concern for religious or other metaphysical matters, painting only what he saw, he had seen plenty of images of St. Sebastian in churches, museums and books, including many examples in the Gowans's series, and he knew well the meanings of the martyr's iconography.



Fig 8
Alonso Berruguete
St. Sebastian

Lorca, too, had studied art history, and had been on excursions around Spain organised by Martín Domínguez Berrueta, Professor of the Theory of Art at Granada University, who encouraged Lorca to publish his record of those trips as his first book, *Impresiones y paisajes* in 1918.⁴ However much Dalí knew or thought about art, Lorca no doubt also spoke fluently and evocatively about it.

Another image that it has been suggested sparked Lorca's interest was a Baroque statue of Sebastian carved by Alonso Berruguete that caught his attention in Valladolid in April 1926, just before Dalí left for Paris.⁵ It is unlikely that Lorca could have mentioned this statue to Dalí before he saw the Mantegna in the Louvre, and it was five months before Lorca asked his friend Jorge Guillén to send him a photograph of the statue in Valladolid, to illustrate a series of talks on the 'Myth of St. Sebastian' that he was planning to give, so it does not seem we will be able to reduce the origin of the theme to a single image. All we can say is that it emerged in spring 1926.

Whatever thematic seeds were planted in the minds of Dalí and Lorca in spring seem only to have germinated during the summer. Lorca never developed the talks that he had planned and, with few of his letters to Dalí available to us, we do not know what he might have said about Sebastian. However, by September, he had apparently sent some of those thoughts to Dalí – or to his friend Melchor Fernández Almagro, who was staying with Dalí in Cadaqués at that time – because Dalí's reply informed Lorca of the local significance of Sebastian in Cadaqués:

It also turns out that St. Sebastian is the patron saint of Cadaqués, do you remember the hermitage of St. Sebastian on Mount Pení? Well, there's a story that Lydia has told me, a story about St. Sebastian that proves how bound he was to the column, and the certainty of the intactness of his back. Had you not thought of how St. Sebastian's arse is *unharmed*?⁶

A vague association of Sebastian's predicament with homosexual sado-masochism – he stands semi-naked and impassively, or sometimes joyously, receiving the hard missiles that enter his body – persists in the saint's popular legend in Cadaqués, where it is thought that he was killed precisely because he was homosexual. When I attended the festival on St. Sebastian's day, on 20th January 2006, the commonly held belief was that Sebastian had been a Roman soldier who was killed “because he was homosexual.”⁷ He was excused of this misdemeanour by one resident because he was now a “plague saint”, as if this were community service that he was completing as penitence.

Lorca and Dalí were obviously aware of the saint's association with homosexuality, but did not simply use his martyrdom as a coded simile for their sexual encounter.⁸ That's hardly substance enough for a series of illustrated talks, or for a year of investigation that would steer Dalí towards a coherent aesthetic position, summarised in his essay named after the saint. Dalí had reached his own conclusions over the summer, and in September, he promised Lorca that he would soon tell him about *Blessed Objectivity*, which “now goes by the name of St. Sebastian.” This implies that Dalí's thoughts on Sebastian already focussed on the safe distance ensured by the visual representation of a sexual, sentient and vulnerable body – in the form of a carved statue or painted image – from any personal implications of that engagement with the themes of sexuality and mortality attached to the saint.⁹ St. Sebastian thus becomes an objective fact, and as such, available for consideration by Dalí as he sought to formulate his partially crystallised idea of objectivity.¹⁰

In a letter written in anticipation of Lorca's arrival in Catalonia in 1927, and while he was putting the finishing touches to his ‘Sant Sebastià’, Dalí wrote, “In my Saint Sebastian I remember you a great deal and sometimes it seems to me that he is you... Let's see whether Saint Sebastian turns out to be you!... but for now let me sign in his name.”¹¹

It is never clear where either of the friends situates Sebastian within their dual identification. Each had well-documented, but contrasting, difficulties with their own sensuality. Fernández Almagro might have remembered – and mentioned to Dalí – that Lorca had already used Sebastian in a letter to him as a poetic image to describe his animic state: “I'm neither sad nor happy; I'm inside autumn; I am... / ...Oh, heart, heart! / Cupid's Saint Sebastian!...”¹²

Christopher Maurer has described the situation of the bound, semi-naked youth Sebastian in terms that invoke the plight of Narcissus, although Maurer does not make that connection himself. Maurer believes – assuming that Dalí had spurned Lorca's advances – that Sebastian

would symbolise, as he did in the late nineteenth century, a figure that inspires passion without returning it, the object of love who receives the gaze of male – and female – admirers while staring blissfully or ecstatically *elsewhere*.¹³

Dalí had long recognised Narcissism in himself, as his earlier diaries attest, and which condition partly explains the attraction of Freud's writings in the first place. By the time Dalí pondered Sebastian's position, in 1926, he was already engrossed in Freud, and although the 'Introduction to Narcissism' was not published in Spanish until 1930, the term had then been in circulation for at least 32 years. Havelock Ellis referred to an obsessive self-fixation, manifested in excessive masturbation, as “narcissus-like” behaviour, in 1898. Otto Rank wrote the first psychoanalytical study on narcissism in 1911, which Freud followed up with his 'Introduction' in 1914.¹⁴

Exhibitionist inflation of the self is the side of the narcissistic condition that is most immediately apparent, and one which is readily associated with Dalí. A less well recognised aspect is the narcissist's fundamental sense of abandonment and isolation, and his propensity to melancholic introspection. Dalí, with or without Freud, identified one important function of image-making for the artist – it can be of direct personal benefit as a mental construction of a reassuringly stable self that is, nonetheless, wholly reliant on the artist for its existence, while maintaining affective distance from problematic *others*. Dalí's compositions of 1924-5, of forced geometrical distances, hint at an interpreter of images who was aware of his voyeuristic, alienated relationship to the world of human encounters.

Lorca later described a different form of reception of the gaze, which gives a better idea of the ideal of courageous living that he envisaged in Sebastian. Reading his *Poet in New York* at the Barcelona Ritz in 1932, he said, regarding his situation on stage,

I must defend myself against this enormous dragon that is before me and could eat me with its three hundred yawns from its three hundred disappointed heads. [...] Let us agree that one of man's most beautiful postures is the posture of St. Sebastian.¹⁵

I think this secular description of Sebastian's predicament gives a better glimpse of the treatment of the theme that Lorca planned, not reduced to the sexual. In September 1926, as Lorca thought about his lectures on the saint, he suggested that Sebastian stood on “the congenial site of true poetry which is love, effort and renunciation.”¹⁶

Lorca's thoughts on Sebastian's posture, in relation to beauty and moral integrity, rested on the long and colourful history of religious martyrdom.¹⁷ Besides the statues and paintings of martyrs that adorn Spanish churches and homes, there are the entertaining saints' lives that Lorca read in Jacob de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*.¹⁸ Most of Voragine's stories follow a standard formula, with an inventory of miracles, examples of steadfast celibacy, and insistence on the saint's willingness to be martyred. Often, miraculous anecdotes stand as unquestioned “proofs” of the superiority of Christ, or of the Christian God, over false idols, pagan sorcerers or the Ancient Enemy. Any dispute is usually settled in a contest, pitching prayer against witchcraft. Only in the life of St. Catherine is there a theological debate of sorts, concerning platonic concepts of truth and artefact.

In Voragine's version of his life, Sebastian was tied to a post under Diocletian's orders and his mortality demonstrated to all, not for any sexual misdemeanour, but because he had claimed the truth of his God, and the falsity of pagan idols.¹⁹ That is to say, Sebastian's story – which unfolded in

the pagan, classical world, as Christianity spread – was paradigmatic of Plato's disdain for the lie of representation central to the philosophy of art.

Voragine was oblivious to the irony of Sebastian himself becoming a Christian idol, but this is an aspect of the saint's story that only increases his suitability for Dalí's exploration of elusive identity, extending the concept of *Blessed Objectivity* deeper into the history of aesthetics and its concern with truth and representation. These concerns were fundamental to the Neoplatonic theology of the Middle Ages that did much to decide the course of religious iconography, and to Sebastian's importance during the Counter Reformation, when the Catholic Church displayed the execution and torments of Sebastian and other martyrs for their propagandistic value.

The *Golden Legend*, then, tells the story of Sebastian, a native of Narbonne and citizen of Milan, who was esteemed by the emperors Diocletian and Maximian. When Sebastian dared intercede on behalf of two young Christians, Diocletian had him tied to a tree in a field, and used for target practice by his archers. "They hit him with so many arrows that he looked like a [sea urchin], and they left him there for dead". He survived, but was then cudgelled to death and thrown into a sewer.²⁰ As with many other martyrs, Sebastian's violent death was a dramatic subject for a picture, but what seems to have secured his popularity over others is that he represents a wholly human sacrifice, comparable in form to the divine destiny of Christ on the Cross, but evoking empathy in place of awe.²¹

In this sense, the way Sebastian is represented – struggling against or embracing his suffering – can be a gauge for more personal than theological concerns of the artist or patron. Representations range from a mug shot in a gallery of saints, holding up an arrow or two for identification, to a wounded body, contorted in pain and slumped at the foot of a tree on a dark night. He can be a Christ figure, gazing peacefully up to heaven; a human *vanitas* displaying the corruptibility of sensually exposed flesh; or a paragon of beauty – a classically modelled nude body, but sanctioned by the church, like Guido Reni's writhing, erotic Sebastian illustrated here.

As a humanised Christ-like figure – tainted with original sin, and Roman guilt – Sebastian allows for the inclusion of the mortal and sexual self in an image that is otherwise very close to the Crucifixion. Still, Sebastian's naked flesh and intimated sensuality made him a problematic subject in the atmosphere of the Counter Reformation, especially in the Spain of the Inquisition. He arrived from Italy, where the omnipresent legacy of classical art perhaps facilitated wider approval.

El Greco, who had trained in Venice, painted several Sebastians in the 16th century, but the most notable injection of the image of Sebastian and other martyrs into Spain came through merchants and noblemen returning from Spanish-ruled Naples in the first half of the 17th century, with souvenirs from José de Ribera's workshop. Remote from the austere moral restrictions that El Greco had to contend with in Spain, Ribera gleefully and skilfully adopted Caravaggio's style and preference for dramatic subjects that vividly represented exposed and vulnerable flesh. For Ribalta and others to establish Ribera's morbid style, and for it to become definitive of Spanish religious art, it was necessary for the dark shadows of the mortality that it dealt with to be applied so heavily as to press any residual sexuality out of the flesh, typically rendered in putrescent tones of yellow and green rather than vigorous pink.

One such painting is conserved in the school Dalí attended in Figueres, although there is no record of whether it was among the collection that hung in the corridor outside his classroom and about which he reminisced nostalgically in the *Secret Life*; this included a copy of Millet's *Angelus*, which was fundamental to his pictorial memory.²² The collection has since been dispersed and added to, with many pieces returning to the seat of the Christian Brothers in Béziers, France. The painting of a trussed, naked and wounded boy has a caption pasted to its surface, identifying it as a *St. Sebastian* by



Fig 9
Guido Reni
St. Sebastian

Murillo, but it is closer to Ribera's style. It now hangs in a staff room, and its erotic character makes it unlikely that it was ever displayed openly, but it is, if nothing else, a pertinent example of the erotic Sebastian.

In his book *Apollo*, which Dalí had studied at the Academy, Salomon Reinach criticised Italian artists for favouring dramatic renditions of emotional subjects. Italian art, he complained, "strove after effect, representing the ecstasy, the sentimentalism, and the physical tortures of the martyrs."²³ Such brutal exposure of the flesh was a daring novelty in Philip II's austere Spain, and rare enough for Velázquez to hang one *St. Sebastian* by Ribera in his studio.²⁴ The challenge in Spain was how to keep the emphasis on Sebastian's spirit rather than his body. John F. Moffitt suggests the Spanish treatment of St. Sebastian, in comparison with the Italian, is an example of

the tense balance between the material and the spiritual which is the keynote of Spanish art. [...] St. Sebastian becomes an exercise in anatomy and ideal form for the Italian while the Spaniard decorously clothes him and concentrates his energies upon the painful nobility of martyrdom.²⁵

This tendency in Spanish art to disguise both the sensuality and the mortality of Sebastian makes him an evocative figure around which Dalí and Lorca could spin a discourse not only on their personal, mutual identification, but also on aesthetic ideals of objectivity and beauty; on sexual pessimism or transcendence; or on the irony of the sexual image: visible but illusory, a permanent image of ephemerality.



Fig 10
Unknown artist
St. Sebastian

Notes

¹ *Poesía*, note, p. 134.

² Lorca mentioned this painting in the talk on the poet Góngora that he gave in February 1926 in Granada. If the friends discussed Mantegna at that time, they might have mentioned his Sebastians. Lorca, 'La imagen poética de don Luis de Góngora', Granada, 13th February 1926. See L-D, 135-6. Lorca alludes to the painting at the end of his talk, imagining the poet's soul leaving his body "painted and beautiful like an archangel by Mantegna, calced with golden sandals, her tunic of amaranth and lapislazuli in the air." See L-D, 103, my translation. Dalí had already painted Buñuel's portrait with Mantegna's clouds in 1924. Dalí later recalled that Lorca said of the painting that it was painted "by the light of an eclipse", in 'To Spain, Guided by Dalí', *Vogue*, New York, 15th May 1950.

³ See Maurer, p. 21, where 'Sant Sebastià' is "an essay on aesthetics". Maurer, Gibson and Santos Torroella, squabble over which of Lorca or Dalí was first to propose Sebastian as a theme.

⁴ Edwards, 6.

⁵ Lorca had been invited to Valladolid by the poet Jorge Guillén to read poems, including 'Oda didáctica a Salvador Dalí', on the 8th April, 1926 (*Poesía*, 152). At the start of April, just before Dalí visited Paris and Brussels, he sent his friend Pepín Bello a postcard asking after Lorca's whereabouts, still unaware that Lorca was in Valladolid from 1st - 10th April (RES, 136). Later that year, Lorca asked Guillén to send him a photograph of a small, polychrome statue of St. Sebastian carved by Alonso Berruguete (ca. 1488-1561), that had caught his eye in the National Museum of Sculpture. It seems unlikely that Lorca could have communicated his enthusiasm for the statue to Dalí before he left for Paris on the 11th April, and there is no reason to think that Sebastian was a major concern of Dalí's when he visited the Louvre (Maurer, 18).

⁶ *Poesía*, 44-45. The Louvre Mantegna has two arrows through Sebastian's buttocks – further evidence that Mantegna's paintings were not essential to the theme – although Mantegna's version of Sebastian in Vienna is intact. Lydia was a local character who Dalí, Anna Maria and Lorca were very fond of. She had a reputation for being a little crazy, and Dalí used her as an example of a paranoiac, but Lorca highlighted the knowing humour in her fluid interpretations. Lorca apparently said of Lydia: "She liked to say silly things, invent words, give nicknames and play jokes. Jokes of an incredible and surprising ingenuity" (GLPD, 161).

⁷ Dalí told the same story in 1974, to the fourteen-year-old Sebastian Guinness. Dalí apparently added, perhaps with Lorca in mind, that "San Sebastian was handsome, witty and brilliant, a true hedonist who loved life so much it needed fifty arrows to kill him." This is Clifford Thurlow's account, in 2000, of Carlos Lozano's recollection of a conversation that took place in 1974. Thurlow, 182. Richard Hamer notes the frequent gleeful reaction of saints to others' martyrdom, in the stories of the *Golden Legend* (Voragine, xxviii). This may help explain Dalí's self-reported exclamation of "¡Olé!" on receiving the news of Lorca's death in 1936, which was reported in the press as a martyrdom. Gibson refers to Alberto Savinio, brother of Giorgio de Chirico, and a main contributor to *Valori Plastici*, who wrote that Sebastian was the patron saint of homosexuals and aesthetes, but this source could not have reached Dalí until much later. In the *New Encyclopædia*, Savinio wrote "The reason why inverts feel such an attraction to St. Sebastian may be found in the analogy between certain sexual details and the arrows that lacerate the naked body of the youthful relative of Diocletian." Alberto Savinio, *Nuova Enciclopedia* (trans. Jesús Pardo, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1983), 369, quoted in L-D, 154, DJDG, 227. My translation. Savinio worked on the *Encyclopædia* during the 1940s, but it wasn't published until 1977.

⁸ Richard A. Kaye says "Sebastian probably held homoerotic significance throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries". Quoted in Maurer, 20-21.

⁹ Vera points to a possible connection between the theme of Sebastian and a passage from Aragon's *Le libertinage* (1924):

For, in the garden, each tree had its Sebastian, and the women who distractedly caressed them injured themselves as they passed their perfect fingers over the barbs of the arrows. I feel myself at the same time this bound body, and the one passing it, and another twenty.

María J. Vera's introductory essay 'A la luz de la santa objetividad', xvi-xvii, in *¿Por qué se ataca a La Gioconda?* My translation, from the Spanish. Considering the lack of interest in Surrealism of the two friends until the Sebastian theme had expired, and the abundance of more immediate and relevant sources, I think the coincidence is anecdotal.

¹⁰ "Cadaqués is a 'sufficient fact', overcoming is already an excess, a venal sin; also excessive profundity could be worse, could be ecstasy. I don't like anything that I like extraordinarily, I flee from things that might make me ecstatic as if from cars, ecstasy is a danger to intelligence. [...] I'm in the middle of a Resurrection! That thing of not feeling the anxiety of wanting to throw myself into everything, that nightmare of being submerged in *nature*, that is, in mystery, in confusion, in the inapprehensible, to be sat down at last, limited to a few truths, preferences, clear, ordered, sufficient for my spiritual sensuality." *Poesía*, 42. My translation.

¹¹ Letter from Dalí to Lorca, Figueres, start of March, 1927. *Poesía*, 48-9. My translation. Dalí perhaps recalled the line "Let's see whether Saint Sebastian turns out to be you!" as a premonition fulfilled when he described his reaction to Lorca's death. See above.

¹² Letter to Fernández Almagro, autumn 1921, Gershator, 23. See *Poesía*, 43, for Fernández Almagro in Cadaqués

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- ¹³ Maurer, 22. Maurer follows Richard Kaye in discussing the sexuality of Sebastian, “not so much homoerotic affection as the ability to induce, without submission, erotic affection in others” Kaye: 1999, 291. Neither follows up the association with Narcissus.
- ¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas del profesor S. Freud, traducidas directamente del alemán por Luis López-Ballesteros y de Torres*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid 1922-1934, 17 vols. Vol. XIV: *El porvenir de las religiones. El porvenir de una ilusión. Técnica de la psicoanálisis. Introducción al narcisismo*, 1930.
- ¹⁵ GLPD, 239-40, my translation.
- ¹⁶ Lorca wrote to Jorge Guillén, who had invited him to read his ‘Ode to Salvador Dalí’ in Valladolid in April, that Guillén’s poems were
- chaste and profound. They are an invitation to astronomy. The miniaturised sea and the jelly sailors in so much recent poetry drown in the monotonous and refined ‘hard green water’ that flows like a marble frieze to the eternal and congenial site of true poetry which is love, effort and renunciation. (Saint Sebastian).
- In this letter, Lorca requests a photograph of the Berruguete statue, to illustrate the second of his three lectures on “The Myth of Saint Sebastian.” Letter, Lorca to Jorge Guillén, 9th September 1926 (Gershator, 84-5).
- ¹⁷ There is a long history of native Spanish martyrs, with Christianity established in Spain since the early 3rd century, so that it stood as a nuisance to the Romans, whose dominance over Spain lasted for four centuries under the *Pax Romana*, until the Emperor Constantine, guided by his spiritual advisor Bishop Hosius of Córdoba, offered respite. See Moffitt, 13, 16. So there was also a nationalist, or regional aspect of political defiance to early images of heroic martyrdom.
- ¹⁸ Real name Iacoppo de Varazze (c.1230-c.1290), a Dominican, and Archbishop of Genova, he completed his compilation of saints’ lives, taken from more than 120 sources, in c.1264. Voragine’s hugely popular book was soon translated into most European languages, and published by William Caxton at a time when the Bible was not permitted to be printed. Lorca recommended the book to Buñuel, who later filmed the life of Simon Stylites.
- ¹⁹ Santos Torroella, in his zeal to unmask not only Lorca, but Sebastian in the *Neo-Cubist Academy*, likens the cubistic head Dalí painted there to “a playful representation of the idols destroyed by Sebastian with the help of the priest Polycarpus.” This interpretation sees the Christian Sebastian-Dalí destroying a pagan image of Dalí-Lorca. The citing of religious or pagan affinities implied by a too literal identification with the martyrdom of Sebastian is further complicated by Santos Torroella’s interpretation as a halo of the shadow of the round table which encircles another appearance of the “pagan” head, in *Still Life. Invitation to sleep* (1926).
- ²⁰ Voragine, 50-54. *Ericlus* is sometimes translated as hedgehog, sometimes as sea urchin, in neither case corresponding to the Latin name of the species.
- ²¹ As Lorca wrote to Dalí, the column is an invention of the Renaissance. It signifies Renaissance beauty and humanist intervention; whereas the tree is alive, organic, part of God’s design untainted by man. It also recalls the tree of knowledge, man’s original sin, Joseph the carpenter, and the wooden cross
- ²² Dalí spent seven years at the Christian Brothers’ Collège Hispano-Français de l’Immaculée Conception Béziers-Figueras, nicknamed “Els Fossos”, from age six to thirteen years, 1910-17. (See Gibson: 1997, 37-40).
- ²³ Reinach quoted by Pantorba, 181, without citing which of Reinach’s books was his source.
- ²⁴ Pantorba, 191
- ²⁵ Moffitt, 8

closer ties to Italy than to the rest of Spain, and it seems that it was Italian sailors who first built shrines to Sebastian in gratitude for delivering them safely over rough seas and past pirates. Their shrines became hermitages that became chapels that became churches. Ironically, considering the martyr's life story, Sebastian came to be revered in these shrines like a pagan idol. While Sebastian is a relatively rare subject in the Prado, he is everywhere in Venetian art, and the notable disseminators of his image in Spain – El Greco and Ribera – direct us to Italy for their inspiration. Once established as patron of Cadaqués, it was Sebastian who watched over the sailors and fishermen, and to whom appeals were made for protection from dangers at sea or disease.⁵

Sebastian also played a more practical part in protecting fishermen, for the one obligation of the resident hermit was to kindle a beacon – a terrestrial star to guide sailors at night, in league with the celestial ones, the planet Venus and the Moon. The fisherman Enriquet – often quoted by Dalí as a source of popular wisdom – would have navigated by night with the help of all these. Thus, in the Cadaqués interpreted by Lorca as a gateway to the classical world, Sebastian could naturally be associated with Venus, and all who sail on her waters.

If we follow the trails of these associations into the regions of poetry and myth, both the sea and Venus are strongly connected to maternity and birth. Although Venus represents love, she was born of a virginal conception, and her myth dovetails with meanings associated with the Virgin Mary, who, as *Stella Maris*, was also the protector of sailors. In the mythology of Sebastian in Cadaqués, his watchful protection is maternal in character, as certified by the scallop shell in the frame of his niche in the altarpiece in the church of Santa Maria – a symbol of both Venus and Mary that was later important to Dalí.

When Dalí painted the hermitage in 1921, aged 16 or 17, his picture was steeped in these maternal meanings. On St. Sebastian's day that year, the 20th January, Dalí's mother Felipa was seriously ill, and she died a few days later, on 6th February.⁶ Anna Maria writes that spring arrived, with the family in shocked silence, and then Dalí painted a series of brightly coloured *gouaches* of local festivities, including the pilgrimage to the Hermitage of St. Sebastian, high above the family's summer house. Hundreds join the climb to the hermitage, and after Mass in the chapel the celebrants spread into the surrounding terraced groves to drink, feast, sing and dance.⁷ Although his paintings of the festivities have little to do with the saint – but are, rather, scenes loaded with the social and sexual aspects of the celebrations – Dalí mentioned to Lorca that Sebastian is the patron saint of Cadaqués as if he hadn't known it himself, when in fact he had probably attended the festival several times, and knew the characteristics attributed to Sebastian locally.⁸ He might well have attended the pilgrimage at the start of that year, after spending Christmas in Cadaqués: there is a photo of him there with Lydia, marked "Epiphany, 1926," which could mean when the photograph had been taken, or when it was signed and sent. Still, with no work or study obligations, and with Cadaqués his ideal painting environment, it is not too fanciful to assume that Salvador stayed on until the 20th January.

Part of St. Sebastian's significance in Cadaqués is as a plague saint watching over the health of supplicants. This has little to do with the story of the Praetorian Guard who lent moral support to condemned Christians; other plague saints earned their status through their actions: St. Roque, for example, who tended victims of the Black Death. In spite of the flimsy basis for Sebastian's supposed curative prowess, we know that Dalí's mother's faith was of a sufficiently superstitious nature for her to make the journey with her husband to another shrine, at Requesens in the foothills of the Pyrenees,



Fig 12
St. Sebastian in the altarpiece of the
church of Santa Maria, Cadaqués

after their first son, also called Salvador, had died. Ian Gibson has calculated that the second Salvador was conceived at Requesens – something that Dalí might have worked out himself. If that positive result of her pilgrimage had bolstered Felipa's faith in the protection of saints, then it is likely that she and other members of the family had invested some of that faith in Sebastian when she became ill. The failure of the plague saint Sebastian to protect his mother from cancer would have put paid to any notion of divine intervention or justice for Dalí.

In the pilgrimage paintings and others that followed his mother's death, Dalí introduced a level of allegory that he had not previously attempted, but which suggests that he understood and could call upon its language. Sentiment flared up in these scenes of local and personal significance, before Dalí smothered it with cold objectivity in preparation for his move to Madrid. There are female figures cradling fruit bowls before the sea, babies held aloft, couples dancing – scenes of revelry, sensuality and fertility. He also painted sombre scenes of clinging children and gaunt mothers, drenched in a sad symbolism of despair absent from earlier or later works. Certain motifs were introduced that would carry their meanings into Dalí's later paintings: a balloon taken from Henri Rousseau that would be prominent in his depictions of *putrefactos*, cypress trees, bell towers, guitars, sailing boats on the sea, drinking vessels... In short, there is a profusion of images that can all be related to the mother's body, to her womb and to her tomb. The mythologisation of the setting of Dalí's blissful childhood by the sea does the work, if not of mourning, then of reparation or perhaps denial, and all in the bay below St. Sebastian's hermitage.



Fig 13
Salvador Dalí
La festa a l'ermita (1921)

Notes

¹ See above for Dalí's letter to Lorca in September 1926.

² Massip quotes Dalí's reasons sent in a letter to his father, who he hoped would help him buy the hermitage. Its isolation was attractive for the same reasons he wished to be locked away at Portlligat like a Christian ascetic. The hermitage can also be connected to Dalí's obsession with Napoleon, whom Anna Maria confirmed Dalí had always wanted to be. On one climb to the hermitage, when he began to tire, a Napoleonic hat hastily confected from paper by his milliner aunt gave him the strength to gallop on (AMD, 23-30).

³ I discount, for example, any sense of identification with Sebastian as consoler of prisoners of conscience, based on Dalí's spell of imprisonment in Girona in 1924. That would rely on a supernatural intervention.

⁴ "¡O dichosos, o dulces tormentos que me han merecido tanta gloria!!"

⁵ St. Sebastian is the patron saint of the local fishing guild, and intimately linked with local rites and the economy of Cadaqués. The hermitage and church were built with funds collected from fines for fishing on reserved days, along with other taxes, donations and alms. See Pla, *Cadaqués*, 66-7, 71

⁶ Felipa was too ill to see the float that her son made that year for the Epiphany procession in Figueres on 6th January, so the family is not likely to have been in Cadaqués that winter. Dalí could instead have witnessed the St. Sebastian procession in Figueres on 20th January, which left the chapel attached to the church of San Pere – a stone's throw from the Dalí home and the church where Salvador was christened – carrying an image of Sebastian. On the other hand, Antoni Pitxot informed me (23rd January 2006) that Felipa suffered from dementia during her last days, and that this was the main factor in the fear of madness of both Dalí and Anna Maria. If this was the case, it is possible the children were in fact in Cadaqués, out of the way, by Sebastian's day.

⁷ Dalí's father, Salvador Dalí Cusí, collected the "suggestive, and often obscene songs" that accompanied the climb, and Dalí's diaries attest to his fondness for these local pilgrimages. See Poesía, 130-1, note 3.

⁸ AMD, 73. See for example, *Fiesta en la ermita de San Sebastián*, *Fiestas de la Santa Cruz*, and *Santa Lucia at Villamalla* all 1921. These paintings, of one festival in January, another in May and a third in December, use the same palette and technique, and two use the same size board, suggesting they were painted together.

1.4 The Neo-Cubist Academy

In this section I follow Dalí's aesthetic intent as far from the methods and meanings of religious iconography as I want to stretch it, in order to set the context in which Dalí's elastic attention sprang back into that area, and came to focus on the image of a martyr saint. The metaphors attached to classical statuary in which both friends indulged swept references to their times together in Madrid into the central figure of Dalí's *Composition*, which indicates how shared meanings crystallised around determined iconographic motifs in the Residencia milieu.

After his trip to Paris and his stay in Madrid, Dalí wrote to Lorca at the start of summer 1926, mentioning *Blessed Objectivity*, which "now goes by the name of St. Sebastian". Objectivity is a slippery term, but we might have a better idea of Dalí's meaning if we first decide how to translate the term "*Santa Objetividad*." It carries the tone of irony that is one category of the 'Sant Sebastià' essay, as we might say, for example, "it rained all blessed day" in British English. To *Saint*, or *Holy*, I prefer *Blessed Objectivity*— which not only covers the other two acceptations, but can also relay the same ironic twist as the Spanish *Santa*. Eugenio d'Ors frequently referred to *santa* this and that in his *noucentiste* writing, and specifically "*Santa Objetividad*" in his article 'Irony, Art and Science', but it was already used by earlier *modernistes* such as Santiago Rusiñol.¹ Dalí probably reached his own conception of the *blessed* with the help of the fantastic interpretations of d'Ors's articles served up by his friend Lydia, who also used the term *santa* freely.²

Whatever new ideas about objectivity Dalí had developed since he had been with Lorca in Madrid, they shaped a summer of painting that culminated in a second exhibition at the Dalmau gallery at the end of the year.³ The exhibition was divided into two sections displaying, on one side, Dalí's Cubist experiments, and on the other, works in a more realist style – reconciling if not synthesising the lessons of Picasso and the Louvre, and of *Valori Plastici* and *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

The centrepiece of the exhibition was Dalí's *Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy)*, which straddled the two styles and brought attention to their differences. The central figure stands facing us in the sea, flanked by two sturdy female bathers. Its evocations of Mediterranean mythology and Picasso's neoclassical beach scenes share a geometrical, deliberately classical compositional space with an incongruous cubistic tableau. Dalí later wrote that he had "tried to draw positive conclusions from my Cubist experience by linking its lesson of geometric order to the eternal principles of tradition."⁴ He may have tried, but the awkward incongruity of this cubistic interjection suggests that Picasso, for all his experimentation, was right to keep these two forms of representation separate.

It has been suggested that Dalí's painting is a direct representation of Sebastian, with his arm bound behind his back to an invisible tree, symbolised by the branch floating beside him.⁵ Although the Sebastian theme was already current, and there are elements of the painting that can be related to the saint's iconography and meanings, the identification is to say the least dissimulated. There are no arrows, no tree or column, and his left arm is untied. The only thing that lashes the central figure into place and prevents him from swimming away is the compositional and associative network in which he is enmeshed.

In Dalí's 'Sant Sebastià', the saint is specifically "tied to the old trunk of a cherry tree". The question of whether Sebastian would be tied to a tree, as he is in Voragine's story and in most depictions, or to a column, as Mantegna painted him, is not neutral. Mantegna evidently intended to underscore the Roman setting of Sebastian's



Fig 14
Mantegna
St. Sebastian, Vienna

martyrdom among broken capitals and ruined temple, and to comment, ironically, on the hypocrisy of civilization. The tree, on the other hand, carries associations with the knowledge of good and evil, and hence with man's fallible nature and the temptations of the flesh. That Dalí should botanically classify Sebastian's tree as *cherry* gives an autobiographical tint to the story, as it refers to a tree at the Pichots' country home, the Moli de la Torre, that played an important role in Dalí's artistic evolution.⁶ Looking forward to a theme of Dalí's Surrealist years, the visualisation of Sebastian tied to a tree for target practice also opens the image to association with, and absorption into, the myth of William Tell.

The *Composition* was, then, not an explicit, exclusive depiction of the martyred Sebastian, and his vague presence in the painting should be measured against the strength of other associative references. The branch, for example, is already in the painting by Picasso that was one source of the composition, *Studio with Plaster Head* (1925), where it signifies 'nature study' in a visual discourse on the competing methods, parameters and function of the arts, nestled among instruments of geometry, classical models and treatises, picture frames, architecture, wallpaper, and the view through a window.⁷ These were concerns that Dalí was wrestling with that summer, after his meeting with Picasso, the impact of the Louvre and Brussels, and his expulsion from the Academy, which go beyond his relationship with Lorca.



Fig 15
Pablo Picasso
Studio with Plaster Head (1925)

The 'Ode to Salvador Dalí', which Dalí had only seen in its published state in spring, was in his thoughts that summer, and in it Lorca described the "yearning to be a statue" which Dalí pursued to avoid "the fear of emotion that awaits [him] in the street." To the extent that the *Composition* does evoke Sebastian, it is a sanitised or "aseptic" version, scrubbed of sentiment or drama. Like the statue in the hermitage above Cadaqués, this one is unharmed, and not the writhing Sebastian of tortured, mortal, flesh. Impassive, cold as marble, it denies its sensuality, oblivious to the distractions of the heavy nymphs on either side.⁸

Dalí turned to Greek statuary for stylistic solutions of form, balance and beauty, but also to construct a geometrical framework of affective distances, limits and boundaries in his search for his "aseptic" aesthetic.⁹ There are many examples of this device in Dalí's work, of isolating a central figure through its geometrical and affective distance from the figures of desire that surround it.¹⁰ Here – through association with its sculpted models – the cold marble body's mute declaration of impenetrability articulates Dalí's isolating vulnerability concerning mortal and sensual flesh better than any morbid display of a suffering martyr would.¹¹ Yet these are still the two alternative responses to the same interrogation of the senses that are suggested by the theme of the *Composition*, and it is this test of the self's integrity that is at the heart of Dalí's aesthetics of Sebastian.

The classical models of renunciation of sensual abandon that Dalí opted for are ones dearer to Diocletian than to Christians, and dear also to Salomon Reinach, whose course book he had studied at the Academy, and who was Dalí's primary source on classical statuary.¹² In naming his book *Apollo*, Reinach declared his preference for controlled, classical beauty over unbridled expression, within the Apollonian and Dionysian dialectic formulated by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which exercised enormous influence over art historical discourse across Europe. Dalí read Nietzsche and read de Chirico's articles in *Valori Plastici* on this dialectic. He perhaps alluded – obliquely but deliberately – to Dürer's pen drawing of 'Apollo and Diana', reproduced in the *Drawings from the Old Masters* series of Gowans's books, when he used the headless body of Diana a model for *Venus and Amorini* in 1925.



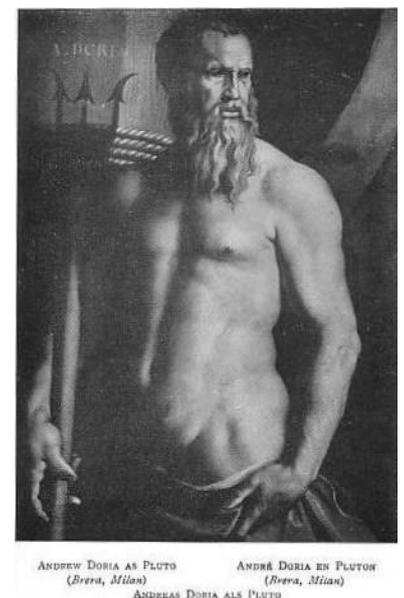
Fig 16
Gowans's *Drawings from the Old Masters*,
including Dürer's 'Apollo and Diana'

Dalí's classical models: paintings

Before pursuing the classical models advocated by Reinach, it is worth remembering that his course at the Louvre in 1902-3, which formed the basis of *Apollo*, was taught deep into modernist history, forty years after Manet exhibited his *Olympia*, and only four years before Picasso painted the *Demoiselles*. Reinach, then, was not oblivious to the theoretical currencies of the Parisian art world that challenged the classical ideal, and we could even consider *Apollo* a counter-reaction to the perceived threat of modernism. For his part, Dalí was frustrated by the outdated impressionist mannerisms of his teachers at San Fernando, and turned the Academy's own weapon – its text book, Reinach's *Apollo* – against it when he proposed his alternative "Neo-Cubist Academy".¹³ For once, the specific wording of the title was of paramount importance to Dalí, and he wrote to Anselm with corrections to a proof of the catalogue, specifying that "Composició amb tres figures (pintura Neo-Cubista)" should read "Composició amb tres figures (Acadèmia Neo-Cubista)".¹⁴

The painting's references were eclectic and spread across sculpture and painting, modern and classical. Isolated in his studio at Cadaqués, one of Dalí's main sources of reproductions of art was the Gowans collection, which he trawled for solutions to his preoccupations. Dawn Adès has noted the similarity between Bronzino's painting *Andrea Doria as Neptune* and the figure in the *Composition*, and also that "Dalí has drawn broadly from the rich tradition of the male nude in antique sculpture and Renaissance painting".¹⁵ This painting was reproduced in the Gowans Bronzino book, which identifies the character represented by Andrea Doria as Pluto rather than Neptune, although Dalí would have known how to interpret the trident for himself.¹⁶

Other possible sources underscore the primacy of aquatic mythology in Dalí's *Composition*. Boucher's *Birth of Venus*, for example, which retains traces of its own ancestry, transmitted in turn to the *Composition*: the *Aphrodite Anadyomene* type derived from Apelles, and channelled through paintings such as Botticelli's *Birth of*



ANDREA DORIA AS PLUTO (Verrocchio, Milan) ANDREA DORIA EN PLUTON (Verrocchio, Milan)
ANDREA DORIA ALS PLUTON

Fig 17
Bronzino
Andrea Doria as Pluto
Gowans no. 18

Venus.¹⁷ Raphael's *Galatea* – pertinently described by Vasari as a composite image of ideal feminine beauty – riding the waves in a scallop shell, and threatened by love's arrows, is another descendant of this aquatic lineage. Dalí might also have thought of Picasso's parody of the ideal *Aphrodite* in his *Demoiselles*.

Dalí placed a tuning peg beside the central figure's head, referring us to the discourse on the various arts invoked in Picasso's *Studio with Plaster Head*, but which might also be a coded caption to the figure's shadow identity as Lorca, whom Dalí had recently painted as *Pierrot Playing a Guitar*.¹⁸ Staying with the musical resonances of the painting, the flute – which may also be a baton of some sort – is not only a sailor's attribute, but that of the satyr Marsyas, the pretender to Apollonian mastery when he challenged the God to a contest between his pipes and Apollo's lute. The hidden painting within the painting in this case is Perugino's *Apollo and Marsyas* in the Louvre and in Gowans – a debt made explicit in Dalí's later *Two Adolescents*.¹⁹ Like Dalí's *Composition* – with its allusions to Sebastian's impending martyrdom – Perugino's peaceful, pastoral scene hides implicit violence: the outcome of the contest was that Marsyas was flayed alive for his presumption.

The suggestion of a picture frame marks the boundary between the veined, sensual arm that clutches the Dionysian flute and the smooth Apollonian beauty of the torso. One of the depictions of Sebastian that best epitomises Dalí's calm, emotionless side of the



St. SEBASTIAN (Louvre, Paris) St. SEBASTIAN (Paris, Louvre) St. SEBASTIAN (Louvre, Paris)
F. Hanftauegl, Photo.

Fig 20
Perugino
St. Sebastian

debate with Lorca was Perugino's version – also in the Louvre and Gowans and discussed in *Valori Plastici* – which shows the saint unconcerned by the two meagre darts that have pricked him. As with the *Apollo and Marsyas*, it is enough to identify the subject to imagine the violence that awaits him. Dalí follows Perugino's lead in his *Composition*, and paints a figure of Apollonian calm to mask the conflict with Dionysus, with Eros and with Thanatos, below the surface.

I do not intend to stifle Dalí's *Composition* by deciphering and registering all of its interlinked sources, and my account is not exhaustive. The painting breathes most freely in the realm of ambiguity and/or duality; true to Nietzsche's formulation of artistic creativity, it is both Apollonian *and* Dionysian in its means and its appearance. It is a compendium of Dalí's thoughts regarding his art in relation to tradition and the avant-garde, after his return from the Louvre and the Prado, after his encounters with Picasso and Lorca.



Fig 18
Perugino
Apollo and Marsyas



Fig 19
Salvador Dalí
Two Adolescents (1954)

Dalí's classical models: statues

In the 'Ode', Lorca described Dalí's outlook with an image that could describe the *Composition with Three Figures*, and which no doubt helped steer the painting's course. He likened Dalí's art to a marble iceberg in the Seine: that is, as functioning from a cool, dissociated viewpoint, floating through Paris, past the Louvre and the galleries of modern art.²⁰

Even the pose that Dalí chose to give his statuesque figure rings a note of ambiguity in his dispassionate demeanour, and this was probably deliberate. Dalí read in *Apollo* that Polykleitos emancipated statuary from its stiff, frontal stasis with the introduction of the attitude that Reinach called “de la jambre libre,” with the weight of the body in repose shifted onto one leg.²¹ The relaxed posture of Dalí's central figure conforms to Polykleitos's rule of harmony, the *kanon*, rather than its cousin, Sebastian's sensual writhing *contrapposto*. This same posture “de la jambre libre” played an important part in W. Jensen's novel *Gradiva* (1903), and its psychoanalytical interpretation by Freud in 1907. Freud does not explicitly refer to Reinach in his study, which was published six years before he acknowledged Reinach as a source of art historical and other information in *Totem and Taboo*, but the basic premise of Polykleitos's contribution to the development of classical art could easily have reached him.

The attitude was sufficiently familiar among the Residencia friends for Emilio Prados to joke to Pepín Bello, in a letter of September 1925, that a woman he was interested in had so far done no more than raise her foot.²² In the same letter, Prados asked Bello to send him a copy of Reinach's *Apollo*. If Prados's joke does not prove awareness of Freud's study of Jensen's *Gradiva* – published in Spanish in 1923, in the Biblioteca Nueva collection of Freud's works – it at least shows that the Residencia crowd were alert to the coquetry of the gesture described by Reinach.²³ In 1925, Lorca and Dalí had probably also joked about Polykleitos's rule of beauty, which was a rule in two senses of the word – this also applies to the Spanish word, *regla*. *Kanon* already meant “measuring rod” when Polykleitos adopted it as a metaphor for beauty and harmony, as Lorca seems to have known when he wrote in the 'Ode', “A desire for forms and limits overwhelms us. / The man who checks with a yellow ruler comes”, gently mocking Dalí's conflation of geometrical and emotional measure.

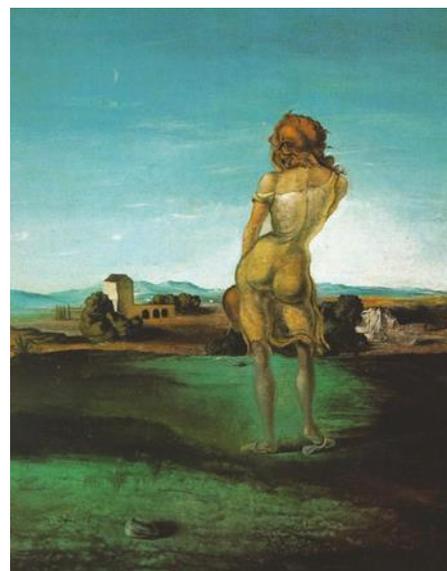


Fig 21
Salvador Dalí
Girl with Curls (1926?)



Fig 22
Polykleitos
Doryphoros

There is a painting by Dalí, entitled *La noia dels rulls* (Girl with Curls or Young Girl of the Ampurdán) that is clearly dated 1926, and which leaves no doubt as to his grasp of the posture's erotic connotations. It shows a girl in a jauntily pose “de la jambre libre”, with one foot raised from her slipper. William Jeffett has studied this painting in relation to a later series that explores the theme of *Gradiva*, firmly within Dalí's Freudian period of Surrealism.²⁴ Jeffett, and Fiona Bradley before him, may well be right in taking this as the first direct treatment of the figure of *Gradiva*, although it is so similar in style to paintings of around 1933 that I suspect it was reworked at that time, when Dalí had incorporated the figure into his cast of characters and when he drew an almost identical ink study, entitled *Gradiva*. In 1926, regarding *Gradiva*, the most that can be said with certainty is that Dalí was aware of the significant step in the development of artistic expression taken by Polykleitos when he brought life to his statues with a stirring of their loins.

What then is the significance for Dalí of the object in the figure's left hand in the *Composition*, if it is not a sign for a tree that explicitly labels the figure Sebastian?

Dalí might have had Reinach's paradigmatic example of Polykleitos's *Kanon*, the “Spear-bearer” *Doryphoros* in mind, and have known the stump to be the remnant of a spear, but he made no attempt to restore it to its full

length, better to defend the “ephebe” against the sexual danger around him.²⁵ Santos Torroella sees it as a “baton or torch of command,” or elsewhere a “staff or sceptre,” although he states that what Dalí really wanted to represent was another branch, snapped from the tree, that becomes a “magnified vein” which somehow serves as an instrument for measuring rising passion, like the apparatuses in Dalí’s essay.²⁶ This awkward reading stretches the evidence on display to support the idea that painting and essay are elaborate pantomimes of Dalí’s resistance of Lorca’s sexual onslaught. The object held aloft could just as easily be interpreted as an emblematic “measuring rod”.

There seems to be no end of directions in which the associative spokes radiate from the hub of St. Sebastian, all more or less viable as expositions of Dalí’s conscious experimentation with means and meanings of representation. The letters that Lorca sent to Anna Maria, after he returned to the Andalusian Mediterranean of Malaga and Granada, show that he continued to digest his impressions of Cadaqués, and revel in the juxtaposition of the classical and the modern, gleefully constructing his own associative constellation of poetic imagery.

The *Composition* is certainly immersed in the debate with Lorca that includes their correspondence, the ‘Ode’ and Dalí’s ‘Sant Sebastià’, and it declares Dalí’s preference for emotional distance, but I think it does so more honestly and *dispassionately* than Santos Torroella or Gibson have suggested, and for reasons associated as much with Dalí’s search for an aesthetic attitude that suited his temperament and that would lead him forward in his artistic career, as with projecting the details of his erotically compromised relationship with Lorca onto canvas.

The dialectical “fencing” in which Dalí and Lorca were engaged was given expression through Lorca’s lyrical evocation of the Biblical and classical mythology that rose from the Mediterranean on his first visit to Cadaqués, counterbalanced by the modernising discourses that were intended to subvert or revitalise their stale significance. Towards the end of the sailor and Venus series, which is infused with this clash of classical and modern registers, Dalí painted *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* (1925-6). The sailor in this painting sits in the lap of Venus like a child on the Madonna. He wears a similar hat and smock to the figure in the *Composition*, and holds a whistle. Perhaps the Roman soldier Sebastian, carried over the Mediterranean by sailors to watch over them from the mountainside at Cadaqués, is playing the ancient pastoral pipes that Lorca said he had heard for the first time in that place.

Josep Pla tells a local legend in which the guardian of the fishing rites can be pictured as this central figure: a dispute arose between the fishermen of Cadaqués and those of Roses over two local coves. The representatives of the Roses guild wanted to join the procession to the hermitage of St. Sebastian, but the Cadaqués fishing council intercepted them and told them to remove their insignia before entering, but they refused. The ceremonial staff of the Consul of Roses was broken in the ensuing fracas.²⁷

The figure also seems to have much in common with a character who appears only as the title of a suite of poems that Lorca was working on at the time, and which Dalí must have been allowed glimpses of, before it was tagged onto the end of his book, *Songs 1921-1924*. Despite the book’s title, poems were added after 1924, before the collection was eventually published in 1927. Lorca dedicated the suite entitled ‘Eros con bastón’ to Pepín Bello in September 1925, only a few months before Dalí placed a “bastón” in the hand of the sailor-Sebastian. Ian Gibson has noted that the poems are steeped in the humour of the Residencia, while confronting serious issues of unfulfilled love, the fear of death, the passage of time, and the questions of aesthetics alive in the 1920s.²⁸ Lorca’s title is not explained by the poems, but is a joke that his friends would appreciate. His *bastón* is not a walking stick necessitated by age or infirmity, for Eros is young and healthy. Neither is it the baton of command that Santos Torroella saw, and which would leave Eros in Apollonian control of his virility. I believe Lorca imagined a spontaneous, Dionysian Eros, who carries a cane because Love is blind.

Another poem in *Songs*, ‘In Malaga’, sets the tone in which Lorca imagined the Gods of mythology dealing with the mundane desire of the modern world. After deciphering the poem’s imagery, Candelas Gala has described the character Leonarda as the Earth Goddess Ceres, “oscillating between carnality and marble rhetoric, life and classicism.”²⁹ The poem presents a prostitute, Leonarda – the eternal sexual feminine – in a modern world of trams and boats. Her name mocks the High Art of

Leonardo da Vinci, and her “pontifical flesh” the Church, both tested against the modern world of trams and boats:

Sumptuous Leonarda.
Pontifical flesh and white gown,
On the rails of 'Villa Leonarda'.
Exposed to the trams and to the boats.
Black torsos of bathers darken
the seashore. Swaying,
conch and lotus at once,
comes your arse
of Ceres in marble rhetoric.³⁰



Fig 24
Jean Cocteau
'Masturbating sailor' (1923)

This metaphor of “marble rhetoric” is clearly suitable to Dalí’s *Composition*, which alludes to the same questions of fecundity, birth, and carnal desire as Lorca does, and which underlie all mythology – primitive, classical and Biblical. Like Venus, Ceres represents reproductive woman, who – especially since Freud – can be understood as the basis of all meaning. The various legends concerning Eros connect him, too, to the miracle of procreation and birth, and its symbol, the sea.³¹ Rather than identifying one or both of the *Composition*’s women as Venus, or seeing Eros himself rising from the water as a masculine *Aphrodite Anadyomene*, we could think of the mythological corpus itself emerging from the classical Mediterranean past, to give poetic form to the physical world of carnal desire that seemed so strange to Dalí.

The identification of Eros with the sea is humorously indicated with a sailor’s cap and smock, familiar from the Venus and sailor series of the previous year.³² Santos Torroella, insisting on the identification with Sebastian, sees the cap as standing for his halo, but it may have had a less saintly origin in Jean Cocteau’s drawings of masturbating sailors with bulging veins for his novel *Le grand Écart* (1923).³³

Within our frame of classical references, we could also read the sailor’s cap as a diadem, like the one worn by one of the few Roman copies of Greek sculpture in the Prado, *Diadoumenos*, the “diadem-wearer,” by Polykleitos. Dalí probably revisited the few classical statues in Madrid in May or June 1926, and possibly together with Lorca. He could have seen many more in the Louvre shortly before that, but he also had access to printed sources that summer, including *Apollo*, and likely the two Gowans volumes on sculpture. The principal reference work available was another work by Reinach, whose three volume *Répertoire de la statuaire grecque et romaine* (1897-8) comprised drawings of several thousand classical sculptures. If these tomes were not in his father’s library, then they were certainly available for consultation in Barcelona.

In 1949, Anna Maria recalled her brother painting “a sailor who resembled the statues of Skopas”, probably basing this identification on examples reproduced by Reinach.³⁴ The description of Skopas’s style in *Apollo* not only fits the face of Dalí’s statuesque figure in the *Composition*, but also suits the underlying theme of St. Sebastian. Reinach wrote that Skopas’s curved brows give his statues a “passionate and almost painful



Fig 23
Polykleitos
Diadoumenos

expression; one feels it is like the intensity of a desire resisted, the anguish of unfulfilled aspiration. [...] Praxiteles was able to render languorous reverie in marble; Skopas the first to have expressed passion".³⁵

There is another sculpture in the Prado – in the style of Praxiteles – which he could also have had in mind. The two figures in the so-called *St. Ildefonso Group* were then thought to represent Castor and Pollux, whom Lorca apparently invoked in 1927 when he depicted Dalí “incarnating life, wearing the headgear of one of the Dioscuri”.³⁶ The subsequent identification of the figures in the sculpture as Orestes and Pylades, models of inseparable friendship and implicit homosexual love, only confirms the aptness of this sculpture to the discussion.³⁷ In the statue, Orestes raises his left arm, while he holds a torch in his right hand; and he wears a wreath resembling a halo.

Whatever the identity of the couple, this source for Dalí's *Composition* would imply a hidden duality in the central figure, and a joint identification forged by the two friends together in the Prado. This duality was underscored by the deliberate location of the painting on its first showing at Dalmau's gallery, bestriding the realist and Cubist sections.

The multiplicity of sources for the painting outlined above – paintings as well as sculpture – that compete for visual or signficatory primacy reaffirms the place of Nietzschean creative duality in the painting: Apollonian serenity struggling with unruly Dionysian emotion. It is in this context of ambiguity that the sailor-Sebastian figure acquires its proper meaning for Dalí, beyond anecdotal gossip about his relationship with Lorca.

Sebastian's resilience against the temptation to abandon himself to the senses stands for an *aesthetic* resilience, so that emotive themes, such as death, sexuality and beauty, that unavoidably underlie all creative expression – as Dalí was reading in Freud and his interpreters – may best be represented *dispassionately*. This is the Blessed Objectivity which, at the time Dalí painted *Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy)*, went by the name of St. Sebastian.³⁸ Religious art, through Lorca's personality, and Dalí's reconsideration of traditional sources, had its foot in the door.



Fig 25
Orestes and Pylades
("St. Ildefonso Group")



Fig 24
Salomon Reinach
Apollo, p. 60

Notes

- ¹ Maurer concurs in translating “blessed.” Santos Torroella (*Poesía*, 129, note 1), writes that in Dalí had used a “d’Orsian repertory of ideas” in the letter, influenced by *Noucentisme*. Eugenio D’Ors writes of Blessed Objectivity, Blessed Efficacy, Blessed Civility, Blessed Continuity, and Blessed Discipline, throughout his published articles, but the term was not restricted to d’Ors. Santiago Rusiñol invoked “Blessed Poetry” and the “Blessed Struggle” in a speech at the Third Festa Modernista at Cau Ferrat, Sitges, in 1894. (Reproduced, translated by Marilyn McCully as “Saint Poetry” and “Sainly Struggle,” in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, with Jason Gaiger, eds. *Art in Theory 1815-1900*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, 920-1)
- ² Anna Maria Dalí told Antonina Rodrigo that Lydia would say that d’Ors’s *La bien plantada*, which she thought was about her, contained the secret that made Cadaqués vibrate and divided it in two – The Society of the Secret of Xenius, and the Society of the Goats and Anarchists. This situation could only be resolved by way of “Blessed Patience” and “Blessed Perseverance”. (*GLPD*, 147, *LDAT*, 168)
- ³ Prior to the solo exhibition, Dalí showed examples of a more “realistic” strain at the Saló de Tardor, in October 1926: *Girl Sewing*, and *Figure on the Rocks* (both 1926). At the same time, he showed works in a newer style – *Naturaleza muerta al claro de luna* (later *Peix i balcó*), *La maniquí* (*Maniquí barcelonesa*) (both 1926) – at Dalmau’s ‘Exposició del modernismo pictórico catalán comparado con una selección de obras de artistas extranjeros de vanguardia’, alongside works by Delaunay, Gleizes, Picabia, Barradas, Miró, Manolo Hugué, Ramón Pichot. (*DJDG*, 232). Dalí’s uncles Raphael and Anselm, and Ramón Pichot were all acquainted with the gallerist Josep Dalmau – and therefore provided him with indirect links to Picabia, Duchamp, Miró and Picasso. See *DJDG*, p. 119, L-D, p. 90, on Dalmau’s record of mounting avant-garde exhibitions.
- ⁴ In *Secret Life*, 204-5. When Dalí visited, Picasso was preparing for his June exhibition at Paul Rosenberg’s gallery (*Poesía*, 152). Dalí would have seen examples of his neoclassical style, like *The Three Graces*, and cubist still-lives such as *Studio with plaster head*. (L-D, 139, *DJDG*, 209).
- ⁵ This point has been most assertively made by Ian Gibson, Christopher Maurer, and Ramón Santos Torroella. See, for example, Gibson (*L-D*, 154), who gives the veins in the figure’s arm as evidence that this is Sebastian, as they appear in “various drawings” of Sebastian at that time, but the veins are part of a wider repertoire, and not direct signifiers of Sebastian.
- ⁶ See Appendix 2, ‘Sant Sebastià’. Ramón’s brother, Pepito Pichot apparently remarked on the “genius” of Dalí for squeezing paint directly from the tube onto an old door, and adding stalks and even maggots to imitate cherries, and the cherry tree also appeared in his diary and an unfinished novel, *Tardes d’Estiu*, or *Summer Evenings* (See Gibson 1997: 50)
- ⁷ Dawn Adès first identified this source in 1978. See Adès, ed., 80-3. I return below to this intrusion of his cubist style into his Blessed Objectivity.
- ⁸ Anna Maria says that they referred to the massive bathers that Dalí painted during 1926 as “Trossos de Coniam,” which translates as something like “insentient lumps.” This irreverent treatment of the female body was undoubtedly influenced by similar bathers by Picasso. Dawn Adès has noted that the treatment of these semi-nudes is similar to that of the hard edges of the rocks on which they recline (Adès, ‘Morphologies of Desire’, *Early Years*, 132)
- ⁹ That Dalí was not simply following an ideal of classical beauty can be gleaned from the draft of a letter to the author of an article titled ‘The Nude’, that Dalí wrote around that time. It shows that Dalí considered Greek sculpture as just one option.
- Greek sculpture is neither the most beautiful nor the one and only sculpture, and neither is the most beautiful sculpture that to which we are most accustomed. Egyptian sculpture is completely opposed to Greek sculpture, nevertheless it is outstandingly beautiful. There is not only one kind of beauty, a kind of beauty was not discovered once and for all, aesthetic possibilities will always be new and unsuspecting. *Lletres i Ninots*, 106. Eng. trans. p. 264.
- Minguet Batllori dates the notes between 1924-6.
- ¹⁰ See for example a ‘Study for a self-portrait’, where Dalí is flanked by embracing couples, that stayed in Dalí’s possession until his death (1923, pencil on paper, 22 x 15.4 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres. Reproduced in *Early Years*, 102). An intermediate step between this drawing and the *Composition with Three Figures* could be a ‘Sailor with four people’, also retained by Dalí. (c. 1925, pencil on paper, 22.3 x 16 cm, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres. Reproduced in *Early Years*, 116).
- ¹¹ Saints had sometimes been targets for the friends’ caricatures of “putrefactes.” Santos Torroella identifies one saint, sent by Lorca to Pepín Bello, as Job, implying that Lorca had the patience of a saint, waiting for a letter from Bello. The drawing as likely depicts St. Sebastian, with halo, naked torso, and arms bound to a column, rather than the pillar of salt Santos Torroella sees. Postcard, July 1925, in *RES*, 84-5. On 26th March 1926, Dalí sent a postcard to Bello with a drawing of a “putrefacte” saint, with moustache and dotted halo, for Bello’s Saint’s Day, on 19th March. (*RES*, p. 134). Both drawings predate Lorca’s trip to Valladolid and Dalí’s to Paris.

- ¹² Salomon Reinach, *Apollo: Histoire générale des arts plastiques*, Paris: Hachette, 1904. Reinach gave his 25 lessons at the Louvre in 1902-3. The book was soon a standard History of Art across Europe. I have consulted the 1924 French edition. The Spanish translation was made by Dalí's teacher of History of Art, Rafael Domènech i Gallissà. Reinach also compiled 5 volumes of the *Répertoire de la statuaire grécque et romaine* (1897-1924), an essential source book for the academic study of sculpture, with each volume containing ink drawings of tens of thousands of objects. Dalí probably also had the two-volume Gowans *Masterpieces of Sculpture* book.
- ¹³ Santos Torroella notes the "element of revenge" in Dalí's title in 'The Madrid Years' (*Earl Years*, 87).
- ¹⁴ *Lletres i Ninots*, 130
- ¹⁵ Adès: 2004, 80
- ¹⁶ Although it may be stretching the interpretation a little, Dalí might have associated the trident with Lorca in ways that carried into Dalí's later Surrealism. At the start of July 1927, Lydia sent a postcard to Lorca – who was staying with the Dalís in Figueres – addressed to "Dn. Federico Orca". See *GLPD*, 144. F. Orca or *forca* – if this is what Lydia had in mind – can mean pitchfork, crutch, crotch or gallows in Catalan. The trident would then share a genealogy with the pitchfork in Millet's *Angelus*, and Dalí's many crutches, as well as associations with sex and death. Lydia's variation on Lorca's name would be an example of the paranoiac humour of wild association that the poet had enjoyed since his first visit to Cadaqués in 1925.
- ¹⁷ Galatea was of current interest because of the interest in Luis de Góngora, whose reworking of Ovid's tale, *La Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea* was published in 1627, the year of his death. Lorca was involved in the tercentennial celebrations of Góngora, of which Dalí was well informed.
- ¹⁸ See Gibson, in L-D, 156-7, DJDG, 229-30, on these clues to Lorca's presence in the painting.
- ¹⁹ Dalí later borrowed Perugino's composition for *Two Adolescents* (1954)
- ²⁰ "In the waters of the Seine a marble iceberg / chills the windows and clears the ivy." See appendix 1: 'Ode to Salvador Dalí'. These lines were perhaps added when Dalí's trip to Paris – several months in the planning – was imminent.
- ²¹ Reinach, 46.
- ²² The letter from Prados to Bello is reproduced in RES, 98-101.
- ²³ The study appeared in volume III of the collection, along with Freud's *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*.
- ²⁴ Jeffett (2002), especially p. 33.
- ²⁵ Polykleitos was a key figure in the development of the Classical Greek style, in the 4th C BCE. He wrote a treatise, *Kanon*, and designed a male nude, also known as the *Kanon*, exemplifying his theories of the mathematical basis of artistic perfection. Reinach (46) wrote that the proportions of the body in this statue were recognised as the *kanon*, or rule, as they were "more precisely rendered than any other statue".
- ²⁶ Santos Torroella described it as a "baton or torch of command" in EM, and a "staff or sceptre" in EY.
- ²⁷ Pla, *Cadaqués*, 83.
- ²⁸ Candelas Gala examines this suite in 'Tópicos sublimados: Lorca's Female Iconographies in *Eros con bastón*', *Lorca, Buñuel, Dalí: Art and Theory*, 86-105. She cites Gibson as the source of her thoughts on these poems.
- ²⁹ Candelas Gala, 102.
- ³⁰ 'Eros con bastón: En Málaga', in *Canciones 1921-24* (1927). My translation.
- ³¹ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Eros sprang from the primordial *Chaos*, with *Gaia*, the *Earth*, and *Tartarus*, the underworld. In Aristophanes' *The Birds*, he hatched from an egg. In the *Eleusinian Mysteries*, he was worshipped as *Protogonus*, the first-born. Later in antiquity, Eros was the son of Aphrodite and, most commonly, Ares, but occasionally Hermes or some other deity.
- ³² As well as Cocteau, the Russian Constructivist Vladimir Tatlin, who had served as a sailor, painted similarly in 1910-12 (Gray, 168).
- ³³ EM, 72-3. Similar sailors were drawn by Lorca and others in the Residencia circle. Santos Torroella reproduces one that Dalí sent to Rafael López Egóñez, a friend of Benjamin Palencia, on 2nd August 1925, without drawing any conclusions about a possible sexual encounter between Dalí and López (RES, 86-7).
- ³⁴ AMD, 93.
- ³⁵ Reinach, 60. Skopas was a follower of Polykleitos, and worked with Praxiteles.
- ³⁶ In 1962, Dalí commented on a drawing that Lorca had given him in 1927, saying it represented Dalí as the Dioscuri – "The hands with the fingers transformed into 'fish-chromosomes'." *WSD*, 21. By the time Dalí made this comment, he had

developed a mythological genealogy that had him and Lorca, and Gala as their sister Helen, born of an egg laid by Leda, after her impregnation by Zeus, who had taken the form of a swan. There is no record of Dalí and Lorca identifying themselves with Castor and Pollux while Lorca was alive, but that they thought of each other as a twin soul is certain. See also DJDG, 245-6, and L-D, 168 and plate 13.

³⁷ The story of Orestes and Pylades is told by Lucian in *Amores*:

Such love is always like that; for when from boyhood a serious love has grown up and it becomes adult at the age of reason, the long-loved object returns reciprocal affection, and it is hard to determine which is the lover of which, for – as from a mirror – the affection of the lover is reflected from the beloved.

On the identification as “two naked epebes perhaps representing Castor and Pollux”, see Pantorba, 202-3

³⁸ An interesting comparison is Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1912), where Sebastian is the emblem of the Apollonian beauty that the protagonist, Aschenbach seeks amid a network of references to art and Greek mythology. The novel also links Sebastian to repressed homosexuality and the resistance to passion.

Chapter 2. The Wooden Body: *Barcelona Mannequin*

Dalí strived for an ideal image of composed integrity in the *Composition with Three Figures*, adapting models of classical harmony. This was the essence of an aesthetic attitude that he chose to name St. Sebastian, yet despite the saint's Roman citizenship, his iconographic identity belongs to the later Christian tradition, not the classical. In Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque representations, St. Sebastian continued to provide a suitable basis for the exploration of fragmented identity that crept into Dalí's paintings later in 1926, in a series of ambiguous portraits – of elusive identity and sexuality – that culminated in the figure of the *Barcelona Mannequin*.

I first sketch out the theoretical motivation and context for Dalí's exploration of fragmentary identity, and his admission of an "Other" into his self-representation, before looking at his specific sources in religious art.



Fig 26
Salvador Dalí
Barcelona Mannequin (1926)

2.1 Picturing the Other

The myth of the Other – loosely, a double or a shadow of the self – is necessarily vague in definition but it is distinctive in its general character. It permeates several areas of literature, art, myth and psychology that explore equivocal or fractured identity, and it carries an element of threat that is recognisable in the double and triple portraits that Dalí painted from late 1926. For example, Freud's conceptualisation of the 'I' and its intrigues with shadow agencies of the Psyche, in such texts as 'The Uncanny', made psychoanalysis a fertile source of inspiration to artists and writers alike.

In this section, I trace the various paths through which the idea of a darker, uncontrollable aspect infiltrated and disrupted Dalí's "marble rhetoric" – his belief in an integral, hermetically contained self. I compare the influence of Picasso, de Chirico, Nietzsche, Freud, Rank, Ovid, Unamuno and of course Lorca, in allowing the presence of the "Other" into Dalí's self-representation. In the following section, I will identify the models in religious art that Dalí conscripted to give shape to his shifting conceptualisation.

*

A deliberate presentation of exterior integrity characterises the Blessed Objectivity that Dalí had named St. Sebastian, and crystallised in the *Composition*. The threat to that integrity is sensuality, and it is a mortal danger – sentiment leads to "putrefaction", he wrote to Bello. These were not just throwaway comments by Dalí, but concepts consolidated in the statement of his aesthetic position that he entitled 'Sant Sebastià'. The statuesque central figure of the *Composition*, flanked by two hefty nymphs, stands for Dalí's preference, or need, for an appearance of controlled resistance to the forces of desire, in both the classical Greek canon that it refers to and in his personal life. In the *Ode*, Lorca called this Dalí's "yearning to be a statue". Yet by this "yearning", Dalí admits that sexuality – whether the "Other" is working from inside or out – cannot be denied or avoided, only resisted or dissimulated.

The title was not arbitrary: the iconography of St. Sebastian evolved for a specific function, one which Dalí had considered and debated with Lorca. Images of suffering martyrs were intended to elicit horror, guilt and awe, and to remind us of the fragility of our physical embodiment. Contemplation of them – and the empathic recognition of pain and mortality as defining conditions of life – is meant to console us with the promise of release from our suffering in this world. The constellation of meanings orbiting Sebastian includes the suggestion that his agony can be beautiful, and not for sadistic but for spiritual reasons. Fixed like a pinned butterfly to a tree or column, and exposed to our scrutiny, Sebastian urges us to consider the ephemeral nature of our own flesh – like a *vanitas* still-life – and to draw positive conclusions.¹

Dalí knew the finality assigned to the still-life genre in Romance languages, and exhibited several with titles that varied on *Natura morta* in the Cubist section that stood to one side of the *Composition* in his second Dalmau show. An element of those "dead nature" paintings, a plaster head, interrupts the neoclassical schema at lower centre of the *Composition*, appended like an explanatory predella to the sailor figure, labelling him as *memento mori* and underscoring his association with St. Sebastian. As mentioned, Dalí borrowed the head from Picasso, who frequently placed similar heads in studio settings. In contrast to Dalí, however, Picasso let desire run riot in his scenes, and gave sexual relationships primacy over mortality as defining conditions of the artist's true and created identities.

Dalí, still only twenty-one years old, was naturally invigorated by his meeting with Picasso. It was only three years since Dalí had discarded Impressionism, and he had begun to chase after the succeeding *-isms* in search of the current leader, only to arrive late at them all. Who better to orientate his next steps than Picasso, whose voracious cannibalisation of art past and present stimulated Dalí's efforts over the following years?

In the summer of 1926, Dalí wrote to Josep Dalmau that he had been working on new paintings under the impulse of his trip to Paris. He referred to his "Resurrection", and was eager to meet Dalmau and tell him about his conversation with Picasso, which obviously went further than the silent exchange of glances that Dalí described in the *Secret Life*.

Like Pichot, Dalmau had accompanied Picasso on his journey from *Modernisme* in Barcelona into Cubism and beyond in Paris, and had organised the first dedicated Cubist exhibition in Spain, in 1912.² So, Dalí aspired to make an impact at the highest level when he wrote that he believed he could contribute new insight into the theory of Cubist methodology, “convinced of the infinite possibilities of cubism, which has only died for those who, for comfort, prefer to paint twisted trees and beautiful reflections.”³ After considering Cubism relative to the two streams of avant-garde thinking that he knew best, Dalí told Dalmau that he now preferred the “Italian cubism” of *Valori Plastici* – which had been disseminated in Barcelona by Dalmau's friend Salvat-Papasseit – to the “aridity” of disciplined, studied cubism, which had led to works that wringed dry the purism of Ozenfant and Jeanneret.

Dalí's preference for the *Scuola Metafisica's* traditionalism over the Purists' scorched earth modernism was grounded in his own deep-seated appreciation of art – its foundations laid browsing his Gowans books, developed during six years' tutorship under Juan Núñez Fernández and consolidated during his education at the Academy and visits to the Prado.

In 1920, in *Valori Plastici*, de Chirico called for a return to the craft of the old masters, including his particular favourites: Giotto and the Tuscan Quattrocento artists, whose awkward perspectives had influenced his distinctive architectural settings. Owing to his disappointment with Italian and French academies, de Chirico advocated a return to Ingres's principles of good drawing.⁴ The advice did not fall on deaf ears, and Dalí declared Ingres's influence in the catalogues for his two Dalmau exhibitions. Florentine artists also made their mark, as we shall see. Dalí's allegiances to de Chirico and to traditional art – despite his praise for the ultramodern – partly explain his reluctance to accept Surrealism. When de Chirico poured his Nietzschean scorn on an unspecified Parisian avant-garde in articles that Dalí read in *Valori Plastici*, in 1918-21, he had the Surrealists in mind. By then, his period of working in Paris, making paintings admired by the Surrealists, had ended in acrimony with André Breton dismissing de Chirico's latest works as degenerate in 1925.

Willard Bohn has demonstrated how de Chirico based his earlier, enigmatic paintings on elements scattered through the classical Western tradition, or rather, on their translation from *mythos* into *logos* by Solomon Reinach and other art historians.⁵ This made him, like Picasso, an exemplary predecessor of the assimilation of modern and ancient means and meanings that Dalí was attempting, complementing Lorca's literary lessons in the same area.

De Chirico's advice to young artists was to “buy a plaster copy [...] and then in the silence of your room copy it ten, twenty, a hundred times.”⁶ Dalí, like Picasso, had spent hours copying pieces of statues – at San Fernando and even before that, with Núñez – and had seen thousands of these petrified body parts in the museums of Barcelona, Madrid, and Paris. So these fragments of allusive or elusive identity were already familiar objects; he no doubt recognised the arm of the *Doryphorus* that lay on Picasso's table.⁷ There was no need for Dalí to “buy a plaster copy”. Instead, he followed Picasso and repeated a synthesis of the “plaster head” in his works of 1926-8.

Although Picasso also used the plaster head to explore the elusive identity of the artist – surrounding it with the objects traditionally subjected to the artist's scrutiny – he did not project his own features onto it. Picasso's curiosity for the objects around him was not tinged with the threat upon his identity that Dalí felt. Picasso could afford to comment playfully on the transience of art, to parody the still-life genre, or simply to look objectively at the real objects around his studio, as features of his environment that defined him from the outside, studying his plaster head within this discourse of appearance and identity, closer to the concerns of Cubism than Surrealism.

While the head in Picasso's *Studio with Plaster Head* entailed a cubist doubling of viewpoints of a single head, Dalí combined profiles and silhouettes that suggested an overlapping of two or more faces, using his own distinctive facial features and those of Lorca. Whereas Picasso sets up the subject and the object of representation as a dichotomy, Dalí, at least where identity is concerned, blurs the boundaries and apports ambiguity to each within the dense tangle of associations weaved in the conversations, letters and drawings from which the dual identification of Dalí's heads was formed. He later described these as self-representations, but which incorporated the personality of Lorca.⁸

Many of Dalí's drawings at the time incorporate elements borrowed from Lorca's drawings and poetry: fish, books, the moon, breasts, shared profiles of faces.⁹ In *Still Life. Invitation to sleep*, Dalí

makes apparent reference to Lorca's habitual enactment of his own death and funeral, which Dalí had watched dozens of times.¹⁰ Of the series, *Table Before the Sea. Homage to Erik Satie* (1926) is closest to Picasso's *Studio*, in both the appearance of the plaster head and thematically: with sheet music and a guitar on the table alluding to the other arts. The musical references also reassert Lorca's omnipresence in Dalí's paintings at the time, as does the piano music in other titles in the series: Beethoven's or Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, or the Pierrot and Harlequin characters in Schumann's *Carnaval*.¹¹ It is even possible that Debussy's *St. Sebastian* played a part in their dialogue on the saint.

This interlocked, fragmented or ambiguous identification with Lorca, in the isolated motif of the disembodied head, was the basis for a further series, of double or triple portraits. Picasso had drawn several frontal views of heads at this time – which Dalí might even have seen in Picasso's studio – in a style that Dalí imitated but modified. Picasso's represent a single face, with facets blocked in black, white or hatching, and pressed flat across the picture plane, as if flayed. Dalí's variations on the style again suggest multiplicity of identity, either by a splitting of a single head into two or three, or a merging of two or three heads into one.¹²

In *Self-Portrait Splitting into Three*, Dalí took the style to a theatrical extreme, with competing comic and tragic forces almost overpowering an insubstantial, blind shadow-self at centre. David Lomas sees it as a “rather flippant, comical” adoption of similar Picasso paintings, perhaps to trump his double portraits, or with the intention of showing the three-fold Freudian psyche.¹³ I think that despite Dalí's immersion in Freud by that time, he was still short of wanting to represent psychoanalytical concepts as deliberately as Lomas suggests, and we can find pertinent antecedents of triple portraits within the tradition of art. These sometimes show one subject in three views, arranged side by side – as in examples by Van Dyck that Dalí knew from Gowans – but there is also the psychologically more interesting *Allegory of Age Governed by Prudence* by Titian, which shows the three ages of man that were Oedipus's solution to the Sphinx's riddle.¹⁴

Lomas traces the current in Picasso's work that states “binary difference” in black-and-white back to 1913-4, but says that “self-reference” really only “became an issue” in 1927, with the incorporation of Harlequin into the theme. By then, the *commedia dell'arte* was already a part of Dalí's experiments with Picasso's style as he had represented Lorca as a cubistic Pierrot in 1925.¹⁵ Dalí's *Harlequin* (1927) wears a parody of a mask – a slit cut in a crumpled paper bag suggesting a single eye in a double head. The mask and the title hint at comedic and tragic meanings that are visible in the lateral division into light and dark sides. This suggests a cleft in Dalí's representation of the ambiguous self; a duality possibly suggested to Dalí by the arrows that diagonally traverse Sebastian's haloed face in Mantegna's painting in Vienna, and echoed in Dalí's description in 'Sant Sebastia':

The head of the Saint was divided into two parts: one, completely transparent, formed of a matter resembling that of jellyfish, and held up by a very fine hoop of nickel; the other half was occupied by half a face which reminded me of someone very familiar.¹⁶

The essay began by citing Heraclitus on Nature's propensity to disguise itself, and the “someone very familiar” was obviously Lorca. Several writers have tried to identify the faces in the series as

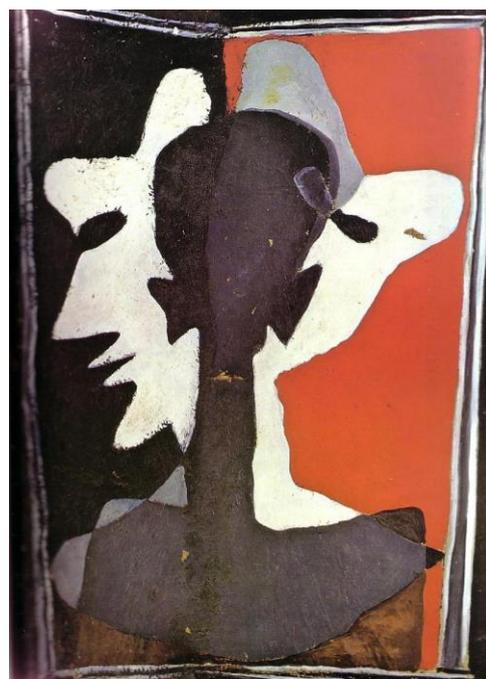


Fig 27
Salvador Dalí
Self-Portrait Splitting into Three (1927)



Fig 28
Salvador Dalí
Harlequin (1927)

sometimes Dalí, sometimes Lorca, and possibly even Buñuel. Antoni Pitxot, with the benefit of long conversations with Dalí, believes all were essentially self-portraits.¹⁷ Nonetheless, they are self-portraits that always contain the psychological presence of an Other.

Lorca took over that role in Dalí's paintings from a 'feminine Other': Dalí's sister Anna Maria, whom Dalí depicted almost obsessively in 1924-6. There was no disguise and less ambiguity in her naturalistic portrayals, closer to the style of the monumental triad in the *Composition* than the cubistic Lorca-Dalí head interjected below it. Anna Maria's body is secured in these pictures by a perspectival mesh of lines, which could be interpreted as a wish for security in the female body; an attempt to repair the loss of their mother, especially considering Dalí was already immersed in Freud's texts. The "shadow of Maldoror," as Dalí called Lorca's presence in his life at this time, shook this scaffold. Although both of these Others raise the spectres of Freud's prohibited loves – incestuous and homosexual – the Lorquian Other is now an ominous shade, threatening the integrity of the repaired but counterfeit wholeness of the

imagined body with his revelation of the creative force of desire.

Although Dalí was avidly reading Freud, and the device of the head with binary identity continued to appear in his paintings as they became more and more susceptible to psychoanalytical readings, I do not give prominence to these readings: to their separation from the body as having to do with figurative castration, for example. Dalí was reading Freud, but not yet painting him.

We should also give some thought to the Jungian concept of *individuation* – in which the "shadow" plays an important role, as a key archetype interacting with the anima, the animus and the persona. "Everyone carries a shadow", wrote Jung, "and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is." Although pertinent, Jung's concept of the shadow was not properly formulated until the 1930s, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933), *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1934) and *Psychology and Religion* (1938), from which the quote is taken. Freud, Rank and Unamuno, as we shall see, offer better precedents of Dalí's paintings of 1926-7.

I think Dalí's adoption of Picasso's plaster head underscores that Dalí's thoughts were focussed on artistic representation, even if increasingly infiltrated by psychoanalytical symbolism. Dalí was certainly beginning to perceive the self differently with the help of Freud's provocative texts. He was assimilating the fact that the objectivity he had pursued is always inescapably subjective: a basic tenet of Cubism. Still, the essence of Dalí's treatment of the portrait bust is that it concentrates attention on the question of *visible* identity. Heads have faces we can see as well as minds we can imagine, and identity may only be posited in painting by visible signs, however ambiguous or suggestive.

Dalí welcomed Freud's scientific theories of the forces at work within a person as a more reliable framework for these questions of identity than the religious mysteries underpinning Sebastian's steadfastness in the face of death, which were closer to Lorca's outlook. Yet, the dual identification in these paintings leaves them open to both psychoanalytical and religious interpretation. At the same time as we detect Dalí's first explorations of Freud's theories, we find religious iconography and themes creeping into Dalí's purportedly objective paintings. Freud's theories relied on established meanings and cultural manifestations within a legible social structure for their evolution and communication; the context for the development and expression of psychoanalysis was founded on Judeo-Christian and classical Greek and Roman bases. Within the rich visual language of the European history of painting in which Dalí was fluent, the iconography of martyrdom provided him with a useful visual lexicon for the themes through which Freud was guiding him.

Lorca enters the arena of Dalí's interrogation of fractured or manifold identity in several ways – by inclusion in Dalí's ambiguous self-representations; in the ambit of their dialogue on and shifting identification with St. Sebastian; or as a counterpart in myths connecting them as twins such as Castor and Pollux, which Dalí later elaborated in autobiographical texts. But the nature of their mutual

identification always remains elusive. For Lorca, it was “love, friendship or fencing”, as if, like siblings, their bond was unique and inescapable, but unavoidably tinged with conflict.

For Binding, Lorca was a twin in another suggestive sense: his astrological sign Gemini often denoting homosexuality.¹⁸ This tenuous explanation of the part played by Lorca within their binary identification leads us to a much more apposite one, for Binding's description of the simile of homosexuality as a search for “a spirit and body matching one's own” is interchangeable with the dilemma of Narcissus. Freud's 'Introduction to Narcissism' was not yet published in Spanish, and Dalí was not yet using Freud's theories as directly as he later would, but there is plenty in the original myth of Narcissus to help clarify Dalí's ambiguous identification with an Other, without having to depend on published psychoanalytical theory. In Ovid's story, Narcissus's condition is a tragic one – of melancholy estrangement and introversion, rather than the extrovert preening central to the popular acceptance of the term “narcissist”. Ovid's Narcissus is aware of his own isolation, and the distance that separates him from others, but is affectively incapable of making empathic contact across the gap. Lorca recommended Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Anna Maria because “everything is there” and he likely said something similar to Dalí.¹⁹

Freud explored these ideas in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919), which related the fear of the Double to problems in the formation of identity rooted in *primary* Narcissism. Although it is unlikely that this essay reached Dalí until later – it was not included in the Biblioteca Nueva collection – the concept of a threatening Other was not beholden to Freud, and it lurks everywhere in literature and art.²⁰ Dalí's treatment of ambiguous identity, in the split or double heads, is in tune with tales of the self and the other current in 1926 that took their lead from psychoanalysis.

Freud indicated that his conception of the Double originated with Otto Rank, who – in spite of subsequent efforts to erase him from the history of Psychoanalysis – was his closest colleague for over 20 years, and an invaluable source of information on artistic and literary matters. Rank published *Der Doppelgänger* in 1925, before moving to Paris in May 1926, but Freud had known its contents since 1914, when Rank had written it, and had summarised its content in 'The Uncanny'.²¹ If Dalí read Rank's book, it was not until its translation into French in 1932, as *Don Juan. Une étude sur le double*, but there is scope for its ideas – if not the complete text – to have been discussed in the Residencia shortly after its publication, through Germanophiles such as Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno.²² This same Germanophilia that introduced Freud and Rank into the intellectual discourse of Spain, brought with it too the philosophy of Kant and the phenomenology of Husserl, filling Spanish literary debate, which Dalí knew well, with a vocabulary of *existencia* and *ontología*.

Unamuno wrote his dark tale of fratricide, *El otro* (The Other), in 1926, but it was not published until 1932 either. Nevertheless, Unamuno's book is so well-suited to Dalí's paintings and their apparent theme, that we should not dismiss the possibility that some account of it reached the painter. It tells the story of twin brothers, Cosme and Damián, whose names refer us to two twins martyred, like Sebastian, during Diocletian's persecution. Their story is told in the *Golden Legend*, and their deaths were a popular subject of paintings.²³ Whereas the Christian martyrs died together, Unamuno has one of his characters murder the other. For good measure, Unamuno involves a female Other, Damiana, in their deadly intrigue, who is expecting the child, and possible twins, of one or the other of them.²⁴ These were dark themes that are anecdotal from a religious point of view, but fertile ground for philosophical and psychoanalytical thoughts, and a step in the direction of Surrealism.²⁵

Unamuno – who moved to Paris in 1924, two years before Rank's arrival there and Dalí's first visit – used these concepts to pit existential doubt against his own Catholic faith, which had entered a phase of doubt. Donald Shaw summarises Unamuno's thought in a way that makes it apposite to a discussion of the elusive identity of the heads and of the image of Sebastian, and of the anxieties that motivated Dalí: “All is founded on two irreducible facts which the experience of anguish forces man to face: his consciousness of his own personal existence and his fear of non-existence. It is impossible either to think of ourselves as non-existent or to contemplate total annihilation.”²⁶

Notes

- ¹ See the appended 'Ode to Salvador Dalí' for Lorca's comparison of a rose, a blind statue and a pinned butterfly to describe Dalí's aesthetic position.
- ² See Gibson (1997), 80-1 on Dalmau, who was a friend of Dalí's uncles, Anselm Domènech and Rafael Dalí, and of the Pichot clan in Barcelona. He exhibited at Els Quatre Gats in 1898, and first showed Dalí in a group exhibition in 1922, before giving him his first one-man show in 1925.
- ³ Letter from Dalí to Josep Dalmau, in *EM*, 76-7. My translation
- ⁴ First Dalmau exhibition, 14th – 27th November, 1925. Catalogue with quotes from Ingres' *Pensées* (AMD, 116-7)
- ⁵ Willard Bohn, *The Rise of Surrealism*, chapter 4, 'Giorgio de Chirico and the Solitude of the Sign', 73-119. Bohn cites the influence on de Chirico of Reinach, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, and other writers such as Otto Weininger and Nietzsche. For de Chirico and Alberto Savinio's enthusiasm for Reinach, see pp. 108 and 224, n. 33. That de Chirico relied heavily on Reinach's writings for his understanding of classical art means that Reinach was a common source for Dalí, de Chirico and Freud.
- ⁶ Giorgio de Chirico, 'The Return to the Craft', *Valori Plastici*, November-December 1920, in Harrison and Wood, eds., 234-7. De Chirico signs the article, "Pictor classicus sum." De Chirico's advice continues, "Copy it until you manage to produce a satisfying work, to draw a hand or a foot in such a way that if they were to come alive miraculously, the bones, muscles, nerves and tendons would all be correct."
- ⁷ Santos Torroella points out that Dalí knew the many fragments on show in the Museum of Reproductions in the Casón del Retiro in Madrid. *EM*, 69.
- ⁸ The first author to extensively explore this dual identity in several isolated heads, continuing from this period into Dalí's Surrealism, was Rafael Santos Torroella, in *La miel es más dulce que la sangre* (1984). See in particular the 'Graphic schema', pp. 223-232, which reproduce line drawings illustrating the various heads that I discuss in this section and elsewhere. Enrique Sabater said that Dalí told him that the head as it appears in *Still Life by Moonlight* (1926), his first donation to the Teatre-Museu in 1970, represented Lorca, with the shadow being his own. Enrique Sabater 'Éste será el primer cuadro que Dalí donará a su museo', *Los Sitios*, Girona, 14-06-1970, p. 7, quoted in L-D, 296, DJDG, 237.
- ⁹ See, for example, the pencil drawings reproduced in *Poesía*, 55-56.
- ¹⁰ Gibson – as always, keen to assert the primacy of Lorca – has written that Dalí started to sketch Lorca's representations of his own death during the 1925 trip. In Gibson's interpretation, Dalí developed his Cubistic paintings of 1926, including the features of Lorca and the round table at the Dalí house at Es Llané beach in Cadaqués from a staged photograph taken by Anna Maria. But the photograph seems to be from a series taken in 1927, and it may well be that it imitated the painting. See L-D, 120-1, illustration 21, and DJDG, 179, photograph on p. 179.
- ¹¹ For example, *Still Life by Mauve Moonlight*, and *Still Life by Moonlight*, as well as several representations of Pierrot and Harlequin. Such deliberate use of the piano enlightens its frequent appearances throughout Dalí's career, when it would always seem to refer back to this moment of his greatest intimacy with Lorca.
- ¹² The consensus among critics is that Dalí overlaps several palimpsest faces, mainly in frontal view, but profiles, too, as Lorca often does in his drawings, something that both may have borrowed from the "transparencies" that Picabia painted from 1924.
- ¹³ Lomas, 124.
- ¹⁴ This painting, in the National Gallery in London, was not reproduced in the Gowans book on Titian, but Dalí could easily have seen it elsewhere.
- ¹⁵ "Harlequin, Pierrot and Pucinello allowed artifice and the figurative together," Gino Severini, *The Life of a Painter*, Princeton 1995, p. 256, quoted by Paz, in *Realismo mágico*, Eng. tr., p. 271. Lorca had an easy association with the *commedia dell'arte*, and his own perspective on it, as a dramatist and musician. Carl Einstein certainly had music in mind when he remarked of Picasso's paintings in this vein that by "the polyphonic law of opposites, every form signifies itself and yet simultaneously hurls us into its antithesis" (Einstein, 'Picasso: The Last Decade', 169-70, cited by Lomas, 124)
- ¹⁶ See appendix 2: 'Sant Sebastià'. Dalí added the clarification that the jellyfish-like side was "completely transparent" to the Spanish version published the following year by Lorca in Granada in his magazine, *gallo*.
- ¹⁷ Personal communication, 23rd January 2006. Pitxot is a nephew of Ramón Pichot, but adopted the Catalan spelling of his surname on the advice of J.V. Foix. In the notes to 'Sant Sebastià' in *Obras Completas*, and probably following his own personal communication from Pitxot, Juan José Lahuerta also observes that the heads were closer to self-portraits than to Lorca. Santos Torroella has worked hardest to pick out Lorca's face in Dalí's heads, amalgamated in a "symbiosis" (*EM*, 69). See also *Poesía*, 133, note.
- ¹⁸ Binding, 24. Lorca was born on 5th June, 1898.

¹⁹ *GLPD*, 216.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), Penguin Freud Library, vol. XIV, *Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 356-7

²¹ Freud wrote a key paragraph summarising Rank's book in 'The Uncanny' (1919),

[Rank] has gone into the connections which the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the surprising evolution of the idea. For the 'double' was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death', as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or a multiplication of a genital symbol. [...] Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the 'double' reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death. (Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), Penguin Freud Library, vol. XIV, *Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 356-7)

²² David Lomas cites Sidra Stich's suggestion that Picasso, too, was acquainted with *The Double*, but it is unlikely that he read it before its French publication, although he could have perhaps known about it from German friends. See Lomas, 238, n. 127. Lomas refers to Sidra Stich's PhD thesis on Picasso and Surrealism.

²³ Cosme and Damián in Unamuno. Cosmas and Damian in English, and sometimes Kosmas and Damianos. They were martyred ca. 287. See Frances Wyers, *Miguel de Unamuno: The Contrary Self* (London: Tamesis, 1976), especially chapter II, 'Mirror Games', pp. 82-91.

²⁴ Unamuno pursued the theme of fratricide already explored in another novel, *Ábel Sánchez* (1917)

²⁵ See Edwards, 16. Edwards sees the influence of Surrealism on Unamuno, and other important writers of the Generation of '98. Although Unamuno may have found Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto* interesting, and it was published in time to have influenced *El otro*, Unamuno had been exploring themes for a long time that were later also taken up by the Surrealists. See, for example, his plays *La esfinge* (The Sphinx) (1898) and *La verdad* (The Truth) (1899). Even if Unamuno was not a topic of conversation between Lorca and Dalí, they were both aware that he had moved to Paris in 1924, to escape his banishment to Fuerteventura by Primo de Rivera's regime. The same regime had unjustly imprisoned Dalí in 1924. Unamuno wrote *El otro* in France in 1926, and although it was not published until 1932, the Spanish friends that Dalí visited in Paris – enlightened intellectuals connected to the Residencia, who were aligned with Unamuno against the dictatorship – could well have known at least the premise of the novel.

²⁶ Shaw, 50-1.

2.2 The Rhetoric of the Halo

In this section, I identify some of the sources in religious art that helped Dalí explore and represent the splitting or doubling of the self in his series of “heads”.

As Lorca guided Dalí through the “marble rhetoric” of the *Composition*, his religious fervour led Dalí to reconsider the means and meanings of Christian art that are foundational to the history of European painting. Dalí insisted on the atheism that differentiated him from Lorca, but this did not prevent him from looking to religious art for solutions to the depiction of the psychological states that did interest him. Rather, it gave him licence to freely adapt religious art to his exploration of fused, mirrored, split or ambiguous identity, in ways that demonstrate his increasing awareness of Freudian concepts.

Dalí’s palimpsest portraits of faintly identifiable factions, framed within angular halos, are blocked in with the distinctive flat areas of black, red and white found in Catalan Romanesque mural painting, towards which either Picasso or Lorca could have ushered Dalí, if he did not find his own way to them. Specifically, the paintings recall scenes of the Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth typical of Catalan Romanesque altar frontals – that is, art which was representative of Dalí’s local heritage, and that treated themes of origin and identity.

Head (1926, fig 31) is representative of this series. The success of the dissolution of identity in this painting means it has often been reproduced with the title *Portrait of a Woman*, when it is essentially another self-portrait. In this painting, Dalí indicates duality, or multiplicity of identity, in two ways. Firstly, a profile line meanders down the centre of the face, but it is not clear whether Dalí is summarising the features of a frontally viewed face – as Picasso often does – or showing one face encroaching on another, as he had done in the ghostly profile of a sailor kissing Venus goodbye in *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* (1926).¹ Whether we see it as two faces joined in a kiss, or as a single face with a binary identity, *Head* evokes Lorca – through his shadow presence, and by the similarity of its overlapping features to certain of Lorca’s drawings.²

Identity is further multiplied (or divided) by another device – the several silhouettes, shadows, or halos that circumscribe the *Head*. Santos Torroella noted that Dalí might already have meant the sailor’s cap in the *Composition* to be read as a saintly halo – albeit matched with a Roman baton of command – and I added the diadem to the possible readings. The ambiguous significance of these attributes amounts to more than mere visual punning. Dalí was methodically working toward a theoretically sound synthesis of avant-garde and traditional methods of artistic representation, encouraged by the texts of de Chirico and others in *Valori Plastici*, and by his encounter with Picasso and the Louvre. Dalí used his various sources and interpretations to suggest fragmented identity and equivocal sanctity, in keeping with the hypotheses on the theme of St. Sebastian that he was testing.

Dalí used a bare minimum of identifying features in these enigmatic portraits. At the same time, he exchanged caricaturesque drawings with Lorca, mainly of single figures performing gestures rather than actions. Contemporaneous letters also reveal a Dalí keen to impress Lorca with what he had learnt about poetic expression. The Catalan critics referred to Dalí’s *lyrical* Cubism, and the economy of means of the head paintings could as well be compared to Lorca’s admiration for *haiku* poetry, as to Picasso’s whittling of a subject down to its minimum expression.

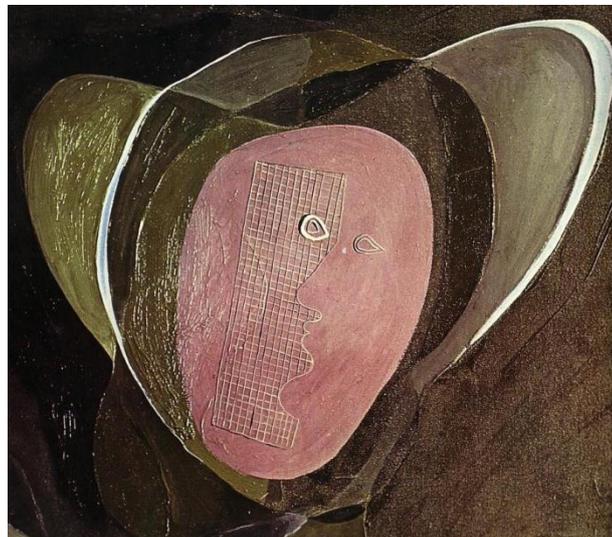


Fig 29
Salvador Dalí
Head (1926)

Dalí's first contribution to *L'Amic de les Arts*, at the end of 1926, were two simple drawings in a style that recalls the woodblock illustrations that he and Lorca also admired – Lorca was delighted by a woodblock depiction of *La divina pastora* that he had seen in the house in Cadaqués, and Dalí sent him others over the following months. A similar woodblock print of St. Sebastian hangs now in the hermitage on Mt Pení, illustrating a paean to the saint, which Dalí may have known by 1926.³

Some of the symbols in Dalí's illustrations for *L'Amic de les Arts* are lifted from Lorca's repertoire, such as the moon, horse and playing cards in the drawing entitled '*...era ple d'homes amb tricorni...*'.⁴ The other drawing, '*...el vigilant nocturn...*', has stronger allusions to the themes of sexuality and identity that underlie Dalí's paintings. It shows the Night Guard of the title holding two keys in the position of his genitals. These *genital-keys* can also be read similarly to *Head*, as a face or two faces, with two eyes and two interlocked profiles.⁵

Although sometimes a key is just a key, it did later become a stock symbol in the visual repertoire that Dalí developed in his paintings. This process became much more fluid during his Surrealist period of the 1930s, when Dalí deliberately mimicked the delirious machinations of Freudian "dream-work", but the first utterances of this visual language of obsessive symbolism occurred during this initial period of reappraisal of the modes of religious communication, around 1926. We do not need to stray from religious art to find the source of many of the symbols that Dalí adopted: the keys here, but elsewhere fish, bread or the halo, for example.

The meaning of keys in religious art is prescribed, but still evocative. As St. Peter's attribute, they open the door onto the wide open spaces of the meanings of the afterlife. An earthly, indeed sexual, interpretation of the key to heaven – related to Dalí's exploration of his identification with Lorca – is hinted at in a kitsch postcard that Anna Maria sent Lorca, in August 1927, after the poet had spent July in Cadaqués, and which she asked Lorca not to show to "St. Sebastian" (so, in 1927, she was familiar with the identification of her brother with the saint).⁶ Although it cannot be associated retrospectively with Dalí's earlier drawing of the Night Guard, that postcard – showing two lovers within a heart-shaped locket, surrounded by flowers and a golden key – does illustrate the popular meaning keys might have, and the way that sexual meanings might don the disguise of an innocent symbol in order to pass freely in polite society – mechanisms of social psychology that later fascinated Dalí.⁷

The cartoon simplicity of Dalí's drawings, their blocked colour, diagonal latticework, and figures drawn either in profile or frontally, recall the didactic language of gesture and symbol in the visual sermons of church art of the 12th and 13th centuries. His paintings that dealt with binary identity function on a more sophisticated level of communication than these drawings, but also have their roots in religious art. Dalí's language of overlapping or fused halos resembles a kind of hieroglyphics of interrelation found throughout Byzantine and Romanesque art, based on a hierarchy of nimbi, aureoles and



Fig 30
Anonymous
'St. Sebastian'



Fig 31
Salvador Dalí
A key drawing: '*...el vigilant nocturn...*'
(1926)

mandorlas, and on characters' inclusion or exclusion from a privileged, glorious space. It is one element of Byzantine visual language that Giotto retained when he otherwise "humanised" his designs, and which later artists such as the Pre-Raphaelites or Klimt had occasionally revived.⁸

There were many examples of this device in Dalí's Gowans books, but a few from Giotto – an artist de Chirico urged his readers to look at – suffice as illustration. In his *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth*, two near-equals meet. Both have halos, but Mary's is situated slightly higher than Elizabeth's. In the *Lamentation*, as Mary cradles the dead Jesus, their halos link for one last time. In *The Meeting at the Golden Gate*, Joachim and Anne are united in joy within their fused halos. Their faces, pressed together in a kiss, are only vaguely differentiated by the line of Joachim's profile, running down the centre, similar to the effect in Dalí's *Head*. In the *Kiss of Judas*, on the other hand, Jesus' halo is drawn back to emphatically exclude Judas from its space. Dalí similarly brought two heads into a communion of interlocking aureoles in *Two Figures* (1926).⁹



Fig 33
Giotto
Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth



Fig 32
Giotto
The Lamentation, detail



Fig 34
Giotto
The Meeting at the Golden Gate, detail

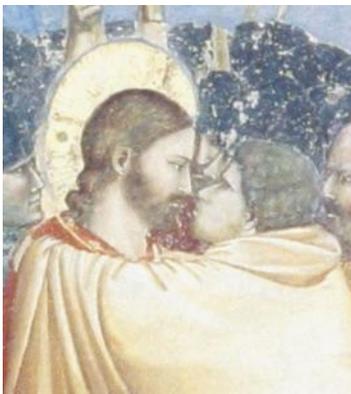


Fig 35
Giotto
The Kiss of Judas, detail



Fig 36
Salvador Dalí
Two Figures (1926)

Dalí might have been alerted to this language of gesture and relationship by Picasso, whose *The Kiss* is from the same cycle as *Studio with Plaster Head*. Its title immediately takes us to Klimt, but Picasso surely saw all the way back to Klimt's inspiration in Byzantine art. Picasso kept this painting all his life and rarely showed it in public, so it was almost certainly in his studio when Dalí visited in April 1926. It shows either an embracing couple or, as Elizabeth Cowling sees it, a mother and child, locked and merged in a kiss.¹⁰ Either way, Cowling has shown that it is crammed with signs of sexuality: the violence of the embrace; the horror engendered by a *vagina dentata* in a face and a *vagina oculata* below; and everywhere, ovular signs of fertility.¹¹ Picasso displays the biology of carnal desire that originates in the mother-son dyad, setting in motion a new cycle of reproduction, with all its psychoanalytical implications.¹² Cowling sees the direct influence of the recently translated works of Freud in this painting, as well as Picasso's familiarity with the Surrealist adoption of psychoanalysis. If so, Picasso might have transmitted some of his enthusiasm for psychoanalysis and Surrealism to Dalí. It was certainly in the months following their meeting that Dalí explored similar imagery, imbued with biological desire and with Freud.



Fig 37
Pablo Picasso
The Kiss (1925)

Cowling also notes the stylistic antecedents of Picasso's representation of motherhood in the Romanesque frescos installed in the Museu d'Art i Arqueologia. The museum was inaugurated in 1924 as the culmination of an operation to rescue these frescos from neglect and vandalism in isolated locations, driven by members of the *Noucentisme* movement.¹³ One prominent *Noucentiste* was Eugenio d'Ors, who visited Paris at the start of 1925 to prepare himself for a series of lectures on art he gave at the Prado in 1926. It is unthinkable that he could have failed to discuss with Picasso their shared fascination with those unique representations of Catalonia's cultural, geographical and historical separation from the rest of Spain.

The Romanesque survived and flourished in the region, while most of Spain was under Islamic rule, and Picasso could have seen examples in situ during periods he had spent in the Catalan countryside. We know that he took an interest in church art on his trip to Gósol in the Pyrenees in 1906, when he engaged with a variety of "primitive" forms of art, understood in the widest sense: ranging from the Palaeolithic to the Gothic to Henri Rousseau. Among the "primitive" art forms that held his attention that year were the Russian icons that he had seen exhibited in Paris, which shared traits with Catalan Romanesque art.¹⁴

With those thoughts rekindled in 1925, Picasso might have acquired the folio albums of colour reproductions of the frescos published in Barcelona, which would allow the intriguing possibility that he shared his thoughts on them with Dalí.¹⁵ In any case, Dalí could have acquired an interest in the frescos independently of Picasso: Dalí's uncles, Rafael and Anselm, and friends of the family such as the Pichots were connected to the Ateneu in Barcelona, which was the focus of discussions of the museum project.¹⁶ Whether or not he was following Picasso's advice or example, Dalí also took a sudden interest in the early art of his region. He must have visited the Montjuïc collection by the time he painted the heads in 1926, when it had been open for two years, and very likely saw it in the company of Lorca when they visited Barcelona the previous year.

Within a couple of years, Dalí was making deliberately provocative – and perhaps less deliberately, oedipal – attacks on his Catalan cultural heritage, and much later he showed Amanda Lear the frescos as an example of how not to paint, but these later negative statements are contradicted by the evidence of the head paintings.¹⁷ In 1925, J.V. Foix and other Catalan intellectuals formed the Amics de



Fig 38
El Greco
The Visitation

Sant Pere de Roda association, which began renovation, built a proper access road, and campaigned successfully to have this monastery, sitting above Cadaqués, declared a national monument. The lasting impression of the Romanesque architecture of the Empordà, if not its paintings, is clear to see in the bell towers that later recurred in his Surrealist paintings, fantasies and childhood memories.¹⁸

There are several examples in the Montjuïc collection of a distinctive representation of the *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth* that recurs in Romanesque art, and which has formal – and perhaps thematic – similarities to Dalí's ambiguous heads. Luke recorded the pregnant Virgin Mary's visit to her relative Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist.¹⁹ In 1902, Picasso adapted the theme as the secular *The Visit (Two Sisters)* from a representation by El Greco – who knew the subject well from his early training in the Byzantine tradition which survived on Crete.²⁰ After Picasso, El Greco's version seems a stylistic leap from the Byzantine into the modern, although it respects the essence of the traditional representation. It is, however, a more humanist treatment of

the wonder of creation than, for example, an annunciation delivered by angel-courier. The sisterly empathy of the two women, their mutual acknowledgement of their responsibility for the sacred lives carried in their wombs, is based on maternal biology and emotion, not paternal theology or law.

The distinctive treatment of the Visitation on 13th century Catalan altar frontals once extended across Western Europe, but it only survived subsequent modernisation in two separate enclaves: Catalonia and Norway. Trondheim thrived as an important spiritual centre in that century, and welcomed itinerant artists from countries to the south with more established artistic traditions. The plague of 1348 curtailed the traffic of artists and monks alike, and Norway's participation in the common development of European art was truncated. Surviving examples in Norwegian stave churches confirm the essential elements of this style. Catalonia, for its part, survived as a Christian zone within Moorish Spain through the Romanesque period, but its precarious situation severed its art from the Gothic renovation which superseded it in France and Italy.

These altar frontals are divided into narrative scenes. One fine example from the church of Santa Maria de Mosoll in Das has been in the collection on Montjuïc since 1906. It tells the exemplary narrative of the life-cycle of Jesus and Mary, and includes a version of the *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth* which is a striking example of the "rhetoric of the halo": the two women's faces are pressed together on either side of a straight dividing line, within a double halo which has fused into a heart-shape.

The Das Visitation uses the minimalist language of symbol and gesture to promote sanctity and chastity, and the pure, disinterested love of mother and son, devoid of the corrupting nature of carnal desire. The narrative ends with the scene of the Dormition of Mary – the term denoting her death devoid of *putrefaction*, and the theme of Mantegna's painting in the Prado that fascinated Lorca and Buñuel.²¹ Like Freudian theory, the tale on the altar frontal plants the seed of identity in the mother-son dyad. Although more obliquely than Freud, the Biblical myth nonetheless also recognises that sex is inextricable from the cycle of biological life.

The maternal bias of the surviving 13th century art of both Catalonia and Norway demonstrates how local geography and the real concerns of common folk can be as influential as theological debate in forming the character of particular religious art. There is even a similar preference, in both of these coastal areas, for the identification of the Virgin Mary as *Stella Maris*, Star of the Sea and protector of sailors.²² These themes are at the centre of Dalí's aesthetic of St. Sebastian, where the *science of astronomy* – the astronomy of navigation, of the heavenly body Venus, of the *Stella Maris* – is set against the putrefying intervention of sentiment.



Fig 39
Anonymous
The Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth (13th century)

Notes

- ¹ *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* was finished at the start of 1926, at the end of the series of sailor and Venus paintings, and before the trip to Paris. Possible interpretations of the *Composition with Three Figures*, painted later that year, would be that the sailor is returning from his journey, or that he is being reborn, like Venus, from the sea.
- ² I am referring to drawings in which Lorca also used overlapping factions, which were possibly based on Picabia's "transparencies."
- ³ There is of course no way of knowing whether Dalí knew this print, but he was familiar with the woodblock style, which became a topic of discussion between him and Lorca, with them exchanging prints by mail. Lorca was enchanted by a print of the *Divine Sheperdess* at Es Llané, and in August 1927, he wrote to Anna Maria, mentioning the print of the locally revered holy man, the Franciscan monk Salvador de Horta, which he had been given. (Gershator, 113, original in AMD, 171-3).
- ⁴ Reproduced in *DLPM*, 84
- ⁵ *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 9, December 1926, reproduced *DLPM*, 83
- ⁶ *Poesía*, 63. On this occasion, "St. Sebastian" was Dalí.
- ⁷ These mechanisms formed the basis of Dalí's serious theoretical engagement with the phenomenon of popular imagery in art, *The Tragic Myth of Millet's 'Angelus'*.
- ⁸ Giotto (?1266-1336), in his painting, is linked to the humanising efforts of St. Francis of Assisi. The art historical commonplace, since at least Vasari, is that Renaissance painting started with Giotto. He is credited with introducing emotion, and the tenderness of human relationships. Wölfflin, for example, wrote that Giotto "loosened the tongue of art. [...] He explored the wide circle of human emotion, he discoursed of sacred history and the legends of the saints, and everywhere of actual, living things." (Wölfflin, 7)
- ⁹ Mas Peinado places *Dos figuras* (1926) at the end of the sequence exploring shared identity. He reproduces and describes the painting as *Tres figuras*, suggesting that Buñuel is a third character. See 'Retratos de ida y vuelta,' *DLPM*, 53. If there are three figures rather than two, even if one is only implicit, then we could alternatively propose Picasso rather than Buñuel as the shadow to Dalí and Lorca.
- ¹⁰ Cowling (471) calls it "one of the most visually aggressive paintings Picasso ever produced".
- ¹¹ See Cowling's (469-75) analysis of the painting. She sees these "indications of the ceaseless biological activity of copulation and procreation" as connected to paintings by Miró and Ernst.
- ¹² Cowling, 477, sees "maternal caresses which are sexual in character and transform the child into a lover." While she points out that he could have known the ideas without reading the books, Cowling indicates *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* and *The Interpretation of Dreams* as sources of the *vagina dentata* idea, and for the notion of the eye as an erotic zone. See Cowling, 475-6.
- ¹³ Josep Pijoan was the prime mover behind the programme to rescue neglected Catalan art and install it in what was then the Museu de Belles Arts on Montjuïc in Barcelona (See Carbonell i Estellar, et al, 8-12). Acquisitions began in 1890, but were interrupted by Primo de Rivera's dictatorship in 1923 (Boronat, xiv-xv). The decision to buy as much Romanesque and Gothic art as possible was taken in 1905 (Boronat, 201-2).
- ¹⁴ Diaghilev organised a Russian section at the 1906 Salon d'Automne, to introduce the whole of Russian art to Paris, from icons to that influenced by contemporary French and German art. Sergei Schukin met Matisse that year, and became his most famous patron. Matisse travelled to Moscow in 1911, to install *Music and Dance*, and spent time studying icons: "It was looking at the icons in Moscow that I first understood Byzantine painting." In 1908, Matisse introduced Picasso to Schukin, who bought over 50 of his works between 1908-14 (Gray – *Russian Experiment*, 54, 68, 69. Matisse quoted in 'Le chemin de la couleur', *Art Présent*, no. 2, 1947 – note 9, p. 27).
- ¹⁵ Josep Pijoan published reproductions of the murals as *Les pintures murals catalanes*, I-IV, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 1907-21. A catalogue of the collection was also published in 1926 by the museum, written by Joaquim Folch i Torres.
- ¹⁶ Other friends of the family, or people with whom Dalí would later become friendly, were involved. Josep Maria Sert, based in Paris, acquired Renaissance and Baroque works. Miquel Utrillo was the museum's representative in Madrid. Pere Corominas, a good friend of Dalí's father was involved in 1914 (Boronat, 342), and Francesc Pujols, in 1920 (Boronat, 555).
- ¹⁷ Dalí mocked the frescos on a visit to Montjuïc with Amanda Lear in 1976 (Lear: 1985, 250). He told Oscar Tusquets Blanca that the purpose of his visit with Amanda had been "to show her how difficult it is to [paint] even slightly well, for her to see that for centuries they could have been so clumsy" (Tusquets, 140, my translation).

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- ¹⁸ Alexandre Deulofeu worked to establish the importance of the Romanesque period of Catalan history in several books published in the 1960s. He was a year older than Dalí, and lived across the road from him in Figueres in an impressive *Moderniste* building that housed his father's pharmacy. He attended the Instituto at the same time as Dalí, was involved in Republican politics, and studied in Madrid, but only became friendly with Dalí later in life. In 1972, Reynolds A. Morse wrote that he and his wife had been reading books by Deulofeu – most probably *El monestir de Sant Pere de Roda. Importància, història i art*. (Figueres: Editorial Emporitana, 1970) – demonstrating that San Pere de Roda had been “the true cradle of Romanesque culture dating from the year 700” (*Dalí ...A Collection*, reproduced in Morse & Morse, n. p.).
- ¹⁹ *The Gospel of Luke*, 1:39-56. Sources disagree on the relationship between the two, whether aunt and niece or cousins.
- ²⁰ To underscore the relevance of this painting, note that Picasso's turn toward a symbolism that embraced El Greco was tied to his friendship with Ramón Pichot during his transitional years between Barcelona and Paris.
- ²¹ See Carbonell i Estellar, et al, 69.
- ²² Martin Blindheim, *The Stave Church Paintings: Medieval Art from Norway* (Milan; Collins in association with Unesco; 1965), 5, 8, 10, 15, 24. After a century of civil war came a long period of peace, and Norway opened up to Western European culture, with King Håkon (1217-63) becoming an important patron of the arts. The surviving Catalan altar fronts date over a much longer period than the Norwegian, from the Romanesque through to the High Gothic.

2.3 Passion Play

Surprisingly, we have discovered the importance of Picasso in orienting Dalí towards religious art. I continue to investigate that influence in this section, and reveal the equally surprising input of Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian, which – in concert with Lorca's "religious" presence – began to challenge the Apollonian character of Dalí's earlier neoclassical Venus and sailor series.

From summer 1926, Dalí worked in several styles simultaneously until he settled on the familiar look of his Surrealism in 1929. He rarely dated these paintings, and any order assigned to his progression can only be approximate. However, clues such as exhibition catalogues, or remnants of a previous style in one work, or an anticipation of a future style in another, allow us to make some generalisations. For example, that the religious modes of representation that I examine began to infiltrate Dalí's work after his meeting with Picasso and his visit to the Louvre, and that they were related to his discussions with Lorca, while Dalí continued to absorb Freud's texts.

I focus here on Dalí's adoption of a black silhouette from Picasso's *The Three Dancers* (1925), which enabled Dalí to appreciate the totemic value of the Crucifixion symbol. The interplay between sexuality, mortality and identity in Picasso's painting was personally meaningful to Dalí and pertinent to the forms of representation he was exploring at the juncture between classical statuary, religious art and psychoanalysis. Dalí's fullest response to the black shadow was his *Barcelona Mannequin* (1926), where the identification with Lorca has expanded from head portraits to encapsulate the whole of their interlocked bodies, flagged with signs for ambiguous sexuality. I look at this painting in the next section, but I will first enlist the support of two relevant theories of the tragic existence of man, which both hinge on double identity: Nietzsche's duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian – which infused the art theory that Dalí was reading – and Miguel de Unamuno's religio-existential philosophy, which was essential to Lorca's ideas on religion.

When Ramón Pichot died suddenly on 1st March 1925, Picasso added a commemorative silhouette to the painting he was working on, which he later said should have been entitled *The Death of Pichot*.¹ The painting was in his studio when Dalí visited in April 1926, just after the anniversary of Pichot's death. Picasso surely confirmed the identity of the shadow to his young visitor – whom he might have remembered as a six-year-old friend of Pichot's nephew when Picasso spent the summer at Cadaqués in 1910 – and it must have caused quite an impression on Dalí, even if he had already seen it in reproduction.² Similar black silhouettes began to appear in Dalí's paintings and drawings that summer.³

Picasso must have had fond memories of his stay with the large, eccentric and artistic Pichot family, and Ramón had probably kept his friend informed on young Salvador's artistic vocation and early successes.⁴ Picasso was accompanied by Fernande Olivier, whose friend Germaine was married to Pichot, and who has been identified as the dancer on the left of the 1925 painting. The painting associates Pichot with music, dance and revelry – an association shared by Dalí, who pictured several *modernistes*, modelled on the Pichots, cavorting with maenads in two 1921 gouache bacchanalia.⁵

Picasso's *Three Dancers* sways between these pagan meanings and Christian imagery in its commemoration of the life and death of his friend – he also altered the central figure after Pichot's

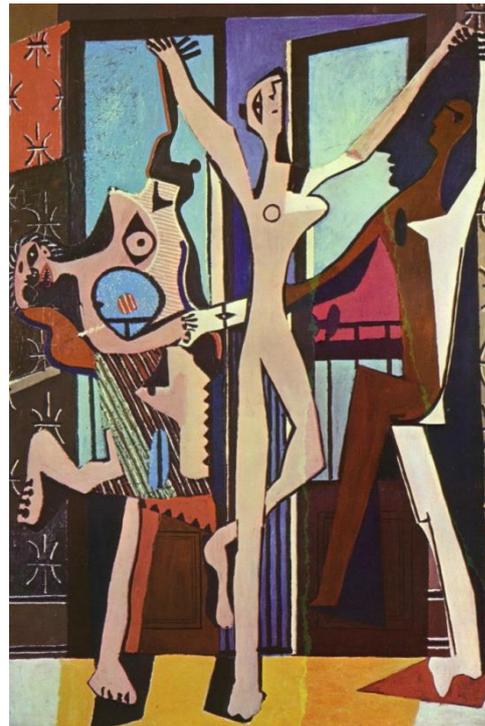


Fig 40
Pablo Picasso
The Three Dancers (1925)

death, posing it like a Crucified Christ. Gertrude Stein described Pichot ending a wild dance in this pose, and if she shared this image with Picasso, this would explain such a conflation of Dionysian ritual and the Christian celebration of death and resurrection.⁶

Pichot died just before Lorca and Dalí travelled to Cadaqués together for Easter, and the death of a close friend of the Dalí family – who had been so important to Dalí's artistic progression – must have weighed over the trip. Picasso painted the shadow into the painting in time for it to appear in the April 1925 issue of *La Révolution surréaliste*, along with *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Dalí was not yet convinced by Surrealism, but he had a personal interest in this painting. He could easily have obtained the magazine through Anselm, and could have heard about Picasso's gesture from one of the Pichot family. In May, Dalí took part in the Ibéricos exhibition in Madrid – which dedicated a room to Pichot – so he could hardly have avoided thinking about Pichot as the year progressed. It must have been tremendously poignant for Dalí to be showing his works alongside the artist who had helped steer his path from Impressionism towards the avant-garde, and to see the death of his first idol in painting commemorated by his current idol.

Picasso had painted dead friends before: the corpse and imaginary funeral of Casagemas, who committed suicide over Germaine in 1901, or Apollinaire and Max Jacob as two black silhouettes alongside Picasso in *The Three Musicians* (1921), a precedent closer in time and style to *The Three Dancers*.⁷ Ramón Pichot had been by Picasso's side for nearly thirty years, through those deaths and through the stages of Picasso's Cubist adventure, and Picasso commemorated him not with a solemn, funereal elegy, but in noisy flashes of flesh-pink, blood-red, and black.⁸ If Dalí had sought to assert the controlled integrity of the Apollonian, marble body in the *Composition*, which was Dalí's first reaction to his meeting with Picasso, this Dionysian frenzy soon fractured that image.

Dalí was familiar with the Apollonian and Dionysian duality that Nietzsche originally developed with regard to tragic theatre and in relation to Christian morality.⁹ He read Nietzsche, whose thought saturated the philosophical and aesthetic discourses that Dalí absorbed: Ozenfant, de Chirico, Savinio, Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Freud and Reinach. Nietzsche was also vital to the thinking of the *moderniste* circle around Pichot and Picasso in Barcelona. In 1901, Picasso spent a short period in Madrid, as artistic director of the periodical *Arte Joven*, which was set up to promote *Modernisme* there. The review featured an article, 'Arte Dionysiac', which explained the theory of Apollonian and Dionysian creative forces that Nietzsche introduced in *The Birth of Tragedy* – a book listed as recommended reading in each issue.¹⁰

Nietzsche's theory is relevant to the personal and theoretical sparring between Dalí and Lorca, and might have arrived most directly and consciously in Dalí's aesthetics of 'Sant Sebastià' through de Chirico's essays in *Valori Plastici*.¹¹ In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollo and Dionysus are different, but complementary and compatible. Nietzsche calls them "the living and conspicuous representatives of two worlds of art differing in their intrinsic essence and in their highest aims." He wondered whether the Greek ideal of beauty – the ordered, harmonious, integrity of the beautiful body – might have been based on a "susceptibility to pain". Apollo's is the reassuring art of ideal, eternal beauty in plastic art – "beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is in a sense obliterated from the features of nature." Dionysus reveals the underlying "tragic myth" that external appearance only masks the truly eternal, which is death. Dionysus lives for the moment, and his typical art is music, which releases "the joy involved in the annihilation of the individual."¹² Dalí, then, would feel more affinity to Apollo, and Lorca to Dionysus.

The Christian iconography of St. Sebastian emphasises the corruptible nature of human flesh, exposed between steel arrows and a hard tree or column, rather than denying it by presenting it as hard marble. We get a glimpse of Dalí's wariness of Dionysian "annihilation of the individual" – of his "susceptibility to pain" – from his explanation of the appeal of the Charleston lessons he took in the summer of 1926. It was "a most appropriate dance, impoverishing the spirit to perfection." Dalí was careful to deny any sense of abandonment to sensuality in the dance: "I shun whatever could send me into ecstasy," he wrote. This was the same letter in which he said Blessed Objectivity now went by the name of St. Sebastian.¹³

Nietzsche added his own critique of *The Birth of Tragedy* to later editions, and contrasted the *aesthetic* response of both Apollo and Dionysus, to the *moral* response of Christianity,

which relegates art, every art, to the realm of lies; with its absolute standards, beginning with the truthfulness of God, it negates, judges, and damns art. Behind this mode of thought and valuation, which must be hostile to art if it is at all genuine, I never failed to sense a *hostility to life* – a furious, vengeful antipathy to life itself: for all of life is based on semblance, art, deception, points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error.¹⁴

Nietzsche concluded that Dionysian instinct was turned “*against morality*” and “*aligned itself with life*”. It was “*purely artistic and anti-Christian*.”

Nietzsche's view of Christianity as antithetical to art and life was probably clouded by the Lutheran sermonising of his pastor father. He might have thought differently of Catholic Spain's theatrical Easter celebrations, which reach their maximal frenzy in Lorca's Andalusia, where carved scenes of Christ's Passion are paraded through crowded streets to loud musical accompaniment, animated by the lurching steps of their penitent bearers. At determined moments, the procession will halt and the crowd hush, and a lone figure on a balcony will aim an impassioned lament – a *saeta*, or “arrow” – at the lifelike statue. Such idolatry may have been anathema to Protestants, but it allows us to speak of the Dionysian character of Lorca's religion, which was no po-faced sermonising: Sainz de la Maza told Antonina Rodrigo that Lorca defined his political position as “*anarchochristian*.”¹⁵ He gleefully embraced the theatricality of Catholicism, and regretted Dalí's emotional reticence. Picasso, too, grew up with the spectacular drama of the Andalusian Holy Week processions, and *The Three Dancers* is his Easter lament, shot from the painting's balcony like a *saeta* for Pichot.

Sebastià Gasch – who became friendly with Lorca when the poet visited Barcelona for the second time in 1927 – recalled Lorca anticipating the “*aroma of antique pomp!*” of mass at Barcelona cathedral. Dalí's response, that he was more interested in the olive on the table, was not merely humorous antagonism, but representative of his need for the empirically verifiable, the quantifiable, the reassuringly concrete.¹⁶ Two years previously, after insisting they attend Easter mass in Girona, Lorca was delighted with the Resurrection Sunday enactment of Christ's life story in Cadaqués: a man representing Jesus and a woman representing the Virgin Mary leave the church separately, parade through the town, and then meet up again. This was a very different Easter celebration to the Andalusian, and alert to the remnants of classical culture around him, Lorca must have considered the timing of the Christian celebration of the Death and Resurrection of Christ in the spring, synchronous with pagan rites of regeneration.

It seems that to know Lorca was to be swept into a dramatization of life, where everything became a comic or tragic spectacle – religion included. Sainz de la Maza, who spent time with Dalí and Lorca in Madrid, Barcelona, and then Cadaqués in 1927, evoked Lorca to Antonina Rodrigo in the 1970s:

He was so extraordinary in everything, he emanated such fascination from his person, that at times he seemed an unreal being. In constant imaginative tension, he transfigured all things, revealing the most unsuspected aspects of reality. Incredibly lucid, his intelligence acted upon manifestations of life, adhered to a profound faith in man, in art, in religion.¹⁷

Dalí often felt overwhelmed by Lorca's personality, which he later described as the “*shadow of Maldoror*” that threatened to eclipse him. Lorca was the “*poetic phenomenon in its totality*” made flesh, “*vibrating with a thousand fireworks and subterranean biology,*” in contrast to his own social awkwardness.¹⁸ Dalí was at some level receptive to the ideas that flashed from his friend, but could only admit later in life how much he had learnt from him.¹⁹

Lorca was only too aware of the inevitable dénouement of the drama of life, and was periodically overwhelmed by what he described to a friend as the “Sadness of the enigma of myself!” Lorca explained this in terms that approach Dalí’s position of Blessed Objectivity, as a scientific fact – “the external force of temptation and the overwhelming tragedy of physiology ensure our destruction.”²⁰ Lorca’s inclination, though – and this is where he differed from Dalí – was to embrace, not erase, the emotional extremes of the human condition. To demonstrate their contrasting openness to religious meaning, Anna Maria Dalí wrote that when Lorca attended mass with her in Cadaqués, it was the only time he didn’t fear death – “when he sensed eternal life.” Dalí declined to join them, she said, as he had “already seen it.”²¹ Lorca’s love of the theatre of Catholic ritual extended to the enactment of his own funeral, demonstrating the willing confrontation of the anxiety of annihilation that characterised his “spiritual region.”

Gasch was struck by the endless, amicable arguments that Lorca and Dalí maintained – their “fencing,” Lorca called it in the ‘Ode’. In a letter to Gasch in 1927, Dalí confirmed that he and Lorca had always had those discussions, which were based on

the violent antagonism of his eminently religious spirit (erotic) and my anti-religiousness (sensual). [...] I recall the unending discussions which lasted until three or four in the morning and which have perpetuated throughout our friendship; [...] Everything that made reference to the interior world left me absolutely indifferent, better said, made its presence felt as something extraordinarily unpleasant.²²

By the time Dalí adopted the shadow motif from Picasso, Lorca’s interpretative brilliance might have supplemented Freud’s, to make him more accommodating of the emotive drama and universal relevance of the Crucifixion and Resurrection myths. However resistant to the pull of religion Dalí might have been, Picasso’s celebration of Pichot’s *life* was more than a souvenir of a drunken jig. It synthesises the Dionysian and Catholic acceptance of mortality and adds Picasso’s weight to the arguments of Nietzsche, Freud, and Reinach on the side of Lorca.

*

Miguel de Unamuno was an important influence on the particular religious sentiments of Lorca, who collected and commented on his essays as they were published.²³ Unamuno was a Catholic, but, as chair of Greek and rector of the University of Salamanca, his faith was built on well-tested philosophical foundations. In comprehending the Christian myth as tragedy, Unamuno, serves as a bridge between Lorca and Dalí. Both friends knew the thesis of *The Tragic Sense of Life* (1913), which discussed the impossibility of reconciling reason and our knowledge of death; logical, mathematical reason needed to be vitalised, argued Unamuno, in order to comprehend the “vital lie” of faith. The religious impulse was “an instinctive, irrational, visceral need” of the biological self, he argued: an imperative of the mortal and reproductive body.²⁴

Unamuno’s personal, heterodox faith was based on the classical Mediterranean foundations of human knowledge, and his influence is clear in the prologue to Lorca’s first published book, *Impresiones y paisajes* (1918): “It is imperative to be one and to be a thousand to feel things in all their nuances. You have to be religious and profane. Put together the mysticism of a severe Gothic cathedral with the wonder of pagan Greece. See everything, feel everything. In eternity we shall have the reward of not having had horizons.” Lorca’s admiration seems to have been reciprocated by Unamuno, who must have been impressed by this passage from the prologue; Lorca was enormously grateful for a review of *Impresiones y paisajes* by Unamuno.²⁵

Lorca’s book was part travel diary, part spiritual tour guide to Spain’s cities, art and architecture, emphasising the legacy of Spain’s violent medieval history. In it, Romanesque churches and monasteries are places for the dead: dusty and anachronistic, housing relics of martyrs, “those who became blood and flame for the love of Jesus.” While Lorca adored the Catholic theatre of mass, he

was scornful of the piteous idols – dolls with “stupid faces” – worshipped unquestioningly in Spanish churches.²⁶ His faith was heterodox, like Unamuno's, and perhaps even more personalised. According to Gibson, at the time Lorca wrote *Impresiones y paisajes*, he sketched a “religious tragedy”, *Cristo. Tragedia religiosa*, in which he displayed the ultimate martyr complex by identifying himself with Christ. In the play, Christ is nineteen – the same age as the author, Lorca – and is a sad soul lost in erotic despair, destined only for pain and suffering.²⁷

In his faith, like Unamuno, Lorca aimed beyond rational thinking, to comprehend the strangeness of existing – the “enigma of myself” – as a physiological individual in a world of others. While Christianity as *logos* sermonises on morality of conduct, the visual art of the Crucifixion concentrates attention on the essential human condition – the objective fact – of mortality, with morality left outside the picture.²⁸ This seems closer to Unamuno's desire for an “agonic faith”, and indicates that there was scope for Lorca to persuade Dalí of the worth of objective consideration of the Catholic spectacle of pain and suffering – in images of the Crucifixion, martyrdom and mortification. The spectacle of the vulnerable body was increasingly the concern of Dalí, not because he was religious, but because he was – objectively, scientifically – a body of flesh: mortal, sexual and sentient.

The threads linking Pichot, Picasso, Nietzsche, Unamuno and Lorca draw together in this common theme of death as spectacle. The image of St. Sebastian, strapped to a tree and facing his imminent death, matches this theme.

Notes

- ¹ *The Three Dancers* (1925). In 1962, Picasso told Sir Roland Penrose that the black figure was "the presence of Pichot". Simon Wilson, *Surrealist Painting*, 56.
- ² *The Three Dancers* was reproduced along with four other works, including *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, in the July 1925 issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste*. The nascent discussion of Surrealist painting may have been another topic of discussion for Dalí and Picasso.
- ³ The earliest example is probably *Figure on the Rocks* (1926), a work which relies heavily on Picasso.
- ⁴ La Tieta, who was not yet stepmother, but aunt to Dalí, accompanied Dalí to Paris. Considering Dalí's famed ineptitude, she probably also went along to Picasso's studio, on the visit arranged by Manuel Ángeles Ortiz. She had most probably met Picasso and his friends in 1910, and in any case knew Pichot well. Dalí would not necessarily have mentioned her in his account.
- ⁵ Both titled *El berenar "sur l'herbe."*
- ⁶ Gertrude Stein's account, in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. That the central figure was also altered to adopt the crucified pose after Pichot's death, see Simon Wilson, *Surrealist Painting*, 56. Jonathan Jones sees the central figure as "the ghost of the doomed Casagemas," *Portrait of the week, no. 65: The Three Dancers, Pablo Picasso (1925)*, *The Guardian*, 7-7-2001.
- ⁷ As revealed by Theodore Reff, 'Picasso's *Three Musicians: Maskers, Artists and Friends*', *Art in America* 68 no. 10 (December 1980): 124-42, cited by Lomas, 114
- ⁸ Elizabeth Cowling (468-9) describes the painting as a proto-Surrealist synthesis of themes that are pertinent to the aesthetics of St. Sebastian:
- Bacchanal, or Dance of Life, and Dance of Death are shown to be fused and interchangeable - like life and death, pleasure and pain, night and day, dream and reality, reason and madness, civilisation and savagery, and all the other antinomies Surrealism was pledged to 'reconcile'.
- ⁹ Freud consulted Reinach's *Cultes, mythes et religions* (1905-12) for information on Greek tragedy, Dionysus, and medieval passion plays. Dalí read this in the same volume as Freud's essay on Leonardo – Sigmund Freud, *Obras completas del profesor S. Freud, traducidas directamente del alemán por Luis López-Ballesteros y de Torres*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 17 vols. Vol. VIII: *Totem y tabú. Un recuerdo infantil de Leonardo de Vinci*, 1923. I take licence to link Greek tragedy and the enactment of Christ's death from Freud's acknowledgement that Salomon Reinach had been an important source for his *Totem and Taboo*.
- ¹⁰ Elizabeth Cowling writes that Picasso "rejected the standard, Winckelmannesque version of Greek art", and embraced "the subversive alternative" presented by Nietzsche (Cowling, 444). On Picasso's alignment with "that arch-transgressor of the classical order, Dionysus", Karen L. Kleinfelder invokes his depictions of satyrs, the minotaur and other hybrid beings that recall Nietzsche's phrase "monstrous oppositions" in *The Birth of Tragedy* ('Monstrous Oppositions', in *Picasso and the Mediterranean*, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; 1996). For further discussions of the Dionysian in Picasso, see Kleinfelder's cited sources: Mark Rosenthal, 'The Nietzschean Character of Picasso's Early Development', *Arts Magazine* 55 (October 1980), 87-91, Leo Steinberg, 'The Philosophical Brothel', (Part 2), *Art News* 71:6 (October 1972), 38-47, and Ron Johnson, 'The *Demoiselles d'Avignon* and Dionysian Destruction', *Arts Magazine* 55 (October 1980), 94-101.
- ¹¹ See Appendix 2, and further discussions below, for Dalí's aesthetics of 'Sant Sebastià'.
- ¹² Nietzsche wrote that music gives rise to "the tragic myth: the myth which expresses Dionysian knowledge in symbols. [...] In Dionysian art and its tragic symbolism the same nature cries to us with its true, undissembled voice: 'Be as I am!'" (From *The Birth of Tragedy*, in Nahm, 527-8)
- ¹³ Dalí attached a photograph of himself dancing to a letter he sent Lorca on or around Sebastian's day, 1927, having recently returned to Cadaqués from Barcelona with a pile of jazz records. Lorca used the photograph as a model for a drawing of Dalí as St. Sebastian. Letter from Dalí to Lorca, 18th-20th January 1927. See *Poesía*, 46-47. Dalí might even have participated in the hermitage bacchanale on the day he wrote the letter.
- ¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism', added to later edition of *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 17-27, quoted in Steven David Ross, ed., *Art and its Significance* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994) I quote from § 2, 4, 5, on pp. 169-73 of Ross.
- ¹⁵ *GLPD*, 129, *LDAT*, 162.
- ¹⁶ Gasch, 'Mi Federico García Lorca', prologue to García Lorca, *Cartas a sus amigos*, 10-1, quoted in DJDG, 249 and *L-D*, 170, *GLPD*, 42. Dalí was earnest in his reply, and subsequently span out an aesthetic of "little things," supported by several poems, that restated his preference for the tangible, observable, or quantifiable. These characteristics of Dalí are apparent in both Lorca's 'Ode' and Dalí's 'Sant Sebastià' in appendices 1 and 2.

¹⁷ *GLPD*, 372. My translation. Gasch was bowled over, as it seems most were, by Lorca's charisma and spontaneity. See 'García Lorca a Catalunya', *Serra d'Or*, 1967, p. 718, in Panyella, *DLPM*, 83. See also *GLPD*, 369.

¹⁸ It is worth asserting the dominance of Lorca's personality over Dalí at this time, to keep in context the latter's explorations of their dual identification. Lluís Montanyà described the impact of Lorca, within the "Dalí-Barradas-Gasch trajectory" of their nightly wanderings around Barcelona, when he outshone Dalí, as he had done in Madrid (*GLPD*, 172-3). Montanyà recalled these nocturnal excursions by Gasch, Lorca, Dalí, Montanyà, and Sainz de la Maza, among others, sometimes beginning at Dalmau's, in a letter to Lorca. (17th January 1928, reproduced by Gasch in 'García Lorca a Catalunya', *Serra d'Or*, 1967, p. 718). Montanyà described Lorca's "extremely fast imagination" in *L'Amic de les Arts*, June 1927 – "every phrase contains an idea and every word a verse." (*LDAT*, p. 148) As early as 1918 an article in the *Noticiero Granadino* had stated that to hear Lorca talk even on architecture was to realise he was a "true artist" (L-D, p. 40). In *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 16 (31st July 1927), Montanyà reviewed *Canciones, 1921-1924*. In contrast to Dalí – says Santos Torroella – Lorca's book "is the triumph of the new aesthetic, of the modern sensibility". Lorca displays "a vibrant poetic temperament, of an amazing aptitude for the rapid and ultramodern image and a formidable sense of rhythm and lyricism" (*Poesía*, p. 153, my translation). Josep Maria de Sucre and Joan Alsamora also vouched for Lorca's impact in Barcelona ('Postales Ibéricas de Cataluña' section of *La Gaceta Literaria*, 1st July 1927, in *GLPD*, p. 171). Moreno Villa sought to explain the fascination produced by Lorca as "coming principally from the happy conjunction of the cultured and the popular, infantile and cheeky intertwined with the reflexive and the rigorous" (*Los autores como actores*, 65, quoted in *GLPD*, 181). Dalí gave his description of the effect of Lorca, in *The Secret Life*. Sometimes, on the way to a tertulia, knowing Lorca would shine, Dalí would disappear for three days. To confirm the awe in which Dalí regarded Lorca, Bello told Gibson of a discussion of art, in which Lorca and Bello were participating. When Bello urged Dalí to contribute, all he could do was stand and mutter "I'm a good painter, too." See *DJDG*, 148-9; L-D, 101-2.

¹⁹ 1964. Quoted by Sánchez Vidal, from the cover of Paco Ibáñez, Polydor 658 022 GU:

In reality, I owe many of my ideas to that sort of confused, bristling and integral mass that is the poetry of García Lorca... What I've done has been to develop them; and, as I am slightly Phoenician, I've speculated for a long time with the ideas that he threw out confusedly, with a really dazzling generosity. I've speculated with them and systematised them, I've made them intelligible, intelligent; because García Lorca, like the majority of the great poetic phenomena, was not very intelligent. He was the phenomenon of poetry in the raw, with a significance, on the other hand, very close to that of the folkloric and popular phenomenon. (L-D, 290. My translation)

²⁰ 1918 to Adriano del Valle:

One must move along because we must grow old and die, but I don't want to pay attention to it ... and, nevertheless, with each day that passes I have another doubt and another sadness. Sadness of the enigma of myself! There is within us [...] a desire not to suffer and an innate goodness, but the external force of temptation and the overwhelming tragedy of physiology insure our destruction. (Gershator, 2)

²¹ For Lorca attending mass, see *AMD*, 127. Anna Maria told Rodrigo what Dalí said about mass (*LDAT*, 177).

²² Letter in *L'expansió de l'art català al món*, original in Gasch family archives. See Gibson, L-D, 18, 100-1 and *DJDG*, 147-8.

²³ Lorca bought Volume VI of Unamuno's essays 1916-8, in spring 1919, edited by the Residencia (L-D, 77-8)

²⁴ Shaw, 50-1.

²⁵ L-D, 41. Gibson tells us that the review has yet to be tracked down.

²⁶ Spanish original at http://federicogarcialorca.net/obras_lorca/impresiones_y_paisajes.htm.

²⁷ L-D, 27-9. *Cristo. Tragedia religiosa* was written 1917-8, at the same time as Lorca also dealt with religion in a series of mystical poems, *Místicas*.

²⁸ John, in his Gospel, identified Jesus as the incarnation of the Logos, the 'Word'.

2.4 Something Fishy

The *Composition with Three Figures* was a first reaction to the events of spring 1926. It initiated a period of experimentation in which Dalí's initial preference for a classical ideal of integrity and balance – linked to modern tendencies that similarly emphasised cold science over sensual expression – led him to imagine himself as a cold, hard, insentient, marble statue. Within a few months, this rigid and frigid self-representation was infiltrated by modes of expression of more vulnerable emotional states, which had evolved primarily as modes of representation and communication in religious art.

Lorca guided Dalí's tentative representation of the sensual self. With the shift in the focus from exterior to interior, and with Freud increasingly relevant, Dalí dabbled with self-portraiture of ambiguous sexuality and identity. As religious and sexual passion were established as themes, the single, central figure standing in Sebastian's predicament in the *Composition*, in calm defiance of the senses, was articulated by the end of summer and animated with the first, jerky movements of a semi-humanised body, as the *Barcelona Mannequin* – a revised, sexualised and ambiguous figure in the martyr's stiletto shoes.

Lorca lurks within the ambiguous identity of Dalí's *Barcelona Mannequin*, and with him the themes of sex, passion and the spectacle of death that fill his poetry and which were the essence of the ritual Catholic theatre that fascinated him. As we peel away the veiled meanings wrapped around the *Mannequin* we uncover solutions to the representation of psychological alienation and existential doubt that Dalí had found, with Lorca's guidance, in religious art.

The change from statue to mannequin as a suitable metaphor for the physiological self suggests the influence of de Chirico. His painted statues that might step down from their plinths, or tailors' dummies that embrace in the street, were crucial contributions to the genesis of Surrealist painting, and to Dalí's in particular. The tone of strangeness and alienation in de Chirico's visual language was a suitable register for Dalí's visualisation of themes at the origin of meaning and identity, described by Freud in terms of the return of the repressed, and the mystery of the womb.

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Two or three months after Dalí had combined elements of classical statuary in the central figure of the *Composition with Three Figures* – to present an ideal of impermeable resilience to the unfathomable waves of desire lapping against his marble thighs – he painted another, very different, statue-like figure: the *Barcelona Mannequin*.¹ The new painting looks below the surface – or below the shoulders – of the problems of fragmented identity investigated in the “heads”, dissecting the body to reveal an ambiguous, slippery interior. Shortly afterwards, and ostensibly referring to the spiritual dimension of Lorca's character, Dalí made a revealing appraisal of the hidden aspects of the person: “Everything that made reference to the interior world left me absolutely indifferent, better said, made its presence felt as something extraordinarily unpleasant.”²

In the *Barcelona Mannequin*, Dalí states this unease in a language of gesture and symbol – which addressed spiritual matters in its original medieval context – to probe complexities that were equally the remit of psychoanalysis, especially in the form in which it arrived at Dalí. That is, filtered through the literature of Ortega y Gasset and Unamuno as proto-existentialist phenomenology with a Catholic bent: a phenomenology that comprehended religious faith as another objective fact. Unamuno, once again, is a useful point of reference.

In 1926, Dalí returned from Picasso and the Louvre to spend May and June in Madrid, sharing Lorca's room at the Residencia, and continuing the “unending discussions which lasted until three or four in the morning”.³ Buñuel was also in Madrid at some point, and Lorca treated his two friends to a preview of his tragicomic play *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*. In the play, Perlimplín is aware that his young wife has married him for his money, while finding him repellent. Driven by frustrated desire, Perlimplín disguises himself as a mysterious gallant and successfully woos her. He then reveals his real identity to her and, having reached the conclusion that his body is nothing but a “mannequin,” stabs his own heart. The theme of Lorca's play – a conflictual double self undergoes a

crisis of identity, culminating in a violent death – echoes works by Unamuno, such as *El otro* or the earlier *Ábel Sánchez* (1917). These were books that posed similar questions to those Dalí posed in his series of split or binary portraits – books concerned, in the words of Gwynne Edwards, with “the inner life of the individual, the monologue, the soliloquy, the exploration of the divided self.”⁴

Dalí joined Buñuel in ridiculing Lorca's play at the time, but the theme of the body as a mannequin lingered in his work. Dalí included the mannequin, alongside jazz, cars and film, in a roll call of the spectacles of modern living in 'Sant Sebastià', which he started drafting around the same time that he painted the *Barcelona Mannequin*.⁵ The painting extends the exploration of ambiguous identity in Dalí's heads, further complicating matters by including the sexual body. That ambiguous sexual identity is personified as a mannequin refers us back to the night of the debacle of Lorca's reading of *Perlimplín*, which Dalí spent in Lorca's bed. Lorca no doubt vehemently defended the play, and chided Dalí for his cruelty. Lorca had, after all, recently published his 'Ode to Salvador Dalí' – a public declaration of his love and friendship.⁶ The affective tension between the two friends infuses the work of both at this time, and it is apparent in the *Barcelona Mannequin*.

The bipartite identity of the *Mannequin's* head is more obviously defined than in the series of portraits. Dalí's profile, with lips effeminately pursed, is on the left, Lorca's squarer silhouette at centre, and an amorphous shadow of their shared head, at right. In the middle, a single eye, resembling an Egyptian Eye of Horus, might stand for their shared vision.⁷ Or, if this is essentially another exploration of the multiple facets of a single person, as I believe, then perhaps it means that all the shadow personalities of a complex self are unified in its objective viewpoint.

After Dalí returned to Cadaqués from Madrid, the theme of Sebastian began to evolve in the correspondence between Lorca and Dalí, and if we could compare the exposed central figure of the *Composition* with the saint, then the same applies to the *Mannequin*. Although the single eye is unrelated to the story of St. Sebastian, it does hint at the limitation of the senses that was central to Dalí's *aesthetics* of Sebastian. In Dalí's text, Sebastian – whose head is also divided into two parts of different consistencies – has a single magnifying lens at the top of his “apparatus”, the “Heliometer for Deaf-Mutes.”⁸ In the centre of this apparatus, “a simple indicator mechanism served to gauge the agony of the saint.” The mannequin's single eye, like a camera, provides a fixed, objective view – a blinkered, focussed vision, free of subjective, emotionally invested perspective. Dalí's theories of objective vision and affective distance are intended to make quantifiable the emotive value of the martyr's image. Sentiment, as Dalí had told Pepín Bello, is putrefaction, and must be combated with astronomy, with scientific fact. The single eye of the mannequin – like the single lens of the astronomer's telescope – is meant to bring unpredictable emotion under control.

Considering the association with St. Sebastian, it may be that this large, unblinking eye deliberately marks the figure as a *martyr*, from the original Greek, *martys*, or “witness”, as Dalí might have known. In 1924, Lorca sent Melchor Fernández Almagro a poetic description of the mechanics of vision, and its part in memory and attachment, after their friend José de Ciria y Escalante had died.⁹ His description recalls Unamuno's “agonic faith”, and marks Lorca's distance from Dalí's cold objectivity. “Death to cold science!” wrote Lorca, “Long live mystic science, and love, and friendship!” Lorca reflected on how our memories and character are absorbed through the eye: “Do you always keep in mind that you have eyes? And, nevertheless, all of life enters us through them. Let us convert our dead into *our blood* and forget them.” The possession of vision, Lorca is saying, makes us witnesses to the mortality around and within us.

Surviving letters suggest that Lorca confided even more in his old friend Fernández Almagro than in Dalí, who must have gleaned fresh insight into Lorca's character when Melchor stayed with him in Cadaqués in September 1926. This was only three months after Lorca's frustrated seduction of Dalí, and shortly before the *Barcelona Mannequin* was first exhibited, meaning that this was painted to the accompaniment of conversations and reveries on Lorca.

Lorca's poetry and tragic plays proclaim him a witness to the suffering of unrequited love; this was the theme of his *Mariana Pineda* – the drama of secular martyrdom that occupied Lorca on both his visits to Catalonia. This theme of unrequited love was already concealed among the sources for the *Composition with Three Figures* – which referred so heavily to Greek art and myth – in Raphael's fresco

The Triumph of Galatea, which resembles Dalí's painting in compositional schema and aquatic setting, as well as its presentation of a central, composite figure of ideal beauty.¹⁰ Shortly before, Dalí had praised Raphael in a letter to Buñuel that he had drafted, and Anna Maria later wrote that Raphael was one of the artists in the Louvre that had most impressed her brother earlier in 1926.¹¹ The presence of Raphael's *Galatea* on one stratum of the *Composition* provides a bridge to the apparently dissimilar *Mannequin*, via the latter's single, cyclopic eye, for if we think of the connection as thematic rather than formal, then we find a place for Galatea, as the impossible object of desire, in the *Mannequin*.

The mythical Galatea was a subject of discussion in 1926, as Lorca and others planned events for the following year's tercentenary of the death of the Spanish Golden Age poet, Luis de Góngora.¹² Góngora's *Fable of Polyphemus and Galatea* (1612) told an episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of the unrequited love of the Cyclops Polyphemus for the nymph Galatea. In the Villa Farnesina, as Dalí probably knew, Sebastiano del Piombo's jealous *Polyphemus*, clutching Dionysian pipes and a staff, observes Raphael's *Galatea* in the fresco adjacent to Raphael's. We could imagine Dalí's Cyclopean *Mannequin* similarly juxtaposed with the *Composition* – the imperfect body desiring the impossible ideal.

The one formal element that is common to Raphael's *Galatea* and Dalí's *Composition* and *Mannequin* is the *contrapposto* posture that exaggerates the sensuality of the central figure. Dalí described the pose in 'Sant Sebastià' – "Live mannequins, sweetly stupid, walking with the alternating and contradictory rhythm of hip-shoulders". Dalí knew the posture well, as Polykleitos's *kanon*, and was familiar with Reinach's description of its prototype *Doryphoros* as an "ephebe". All four paintings – Dalí's two, and the pair of Raphael's *Galatea* and Sebastiano's *Polyphemus* – represent impossible desire in the form of a duality of attraction and repulsion. This draws one source of the mannequin image, Lorca's *Don Perlimplín*, into the centre of the associative network.

More than others of the series, and like Lorca's play, the *Barcelona Mannequin* conflates the questions of problematic identity and sexuality. Below the neck, the ambiguity of identity is presented with disconcerting humour, perhaps betraying Dalí's discomfort regarding the "extraordinarily unpleasant" interior world – discomfort which could only have been exacerbated by his relationship with Lorca. The mannequin is not only sexually ambiguous but a caricature of effeminacy in its limp-wristed pose, puckered lips, and false breasts, which conform to the "new, reinvented physiologies of costumes" described in 'Sant Sebastià'.

When Dalí sent the Spanish version of 'Sant Sebastià' to Lorca for publication in his magazine *gallo* several months later, he added the words "The mannequins' mouths. Saint Sebastian's wounds".¹³ This line juxtaposes the ultramodern and the traditional, without committing to either comparison or contrast. The purpose of adding this cryptic line can hardly have been to clarify the sense of the paragraph. It was more likely a veiled allusion to Lorca, and if the sense of sight was highlighted for attention with the hieroglyphic eye, then these supplemented words draw attention to an organ – the mouth – that can similarly be considered erogenous, but was also the poet Lorca's weapon of verbal seduction.

Ambiguity is also stated with the fish that stands in place of the mannequin's genitals, similarly to the key in the drawing of the 'Night Guard'. The fish also indicates classical myths connected to the sea that Lorca told when he gave expression to his impressions of Cadaqués through Ovid and Hesiod.



Fig 41
Raphael
The Triumph of Galatea
in Gowans no. 4



Fig 42
Salvador Dalí
Barcelona Mannequin (1926),
detail

Even at a more mundane level, St. Sebastian was the protector of Cadaqués's fishermen, whose navigation under the twinkling eye of Venus took place in the waters from which she was born. The ambiguous symbol of the fish places the mannequin's sex between that of Sebastian the sailor and Venus – or between Hermes and Aphrodite, to refer to another tale told by Ovid. In the *Metamorphoses*, Hermaphroditos was born as a brother to Eros, but was made androgynous when the nymph Salmacis was granted her wish to merge with his body. The question is whether, for Dalí, the androgynous body of the mannequin doubles or neutralises sexuality. The answer – the “key” – might lie at the centre of the composition, in the place of the womb, where an eclipsed moon is caught in a fishing net, *poetically* annulling the reproductive function of the sexual body.

We have seen the mannequin's sexual ambiguity stated in several ways, and with priority given to classical antecedents. I have dug deep for these classical references – which are more visible in other paintings, but which can be linked thematically to the *Barcelona Mannequin* – and while I believe they were still active in the production of meaning of the *Mannequin*, the pendulum was swinging away from strictly classical models, to include religious ones, too. The fish that underscores the figure's hermaphroditism, for example, is also a Eucharistic symbol for

the church, or for Jesus.¹⁴ To place it in the groin of this mannequin could be a sly blasphemy or a serious comment but in any case, Dalí had begun to recognise and appropriate such insinuations in religious paintings, outside their intended meanings.

Raphael's *Madonna of the Fish* in the Prado, for instance, could have been an easy target for humorous interpretations by Dalí and his friends, but of the type that Dalí could retain, reinterpret and assimilate into serious artwork. In Raphael's painting, Tobias raises the symbolic fish, and gestures toward the Christ child. This reminder of the use of symbol and gesture takes us back to the 'rhetoric of the halo' – more apparent in the *Mannequin* than the mythical themes that can be associated with it.

In terms of the look of Dalí's painting, we are on safer ground if we return from Ovid and his nymphs to take our bearings from Picasso, whose work was a bridge between Dalí and the Romanesque. Elizabeth Cowling suggests that the influence of Catalan Romanesque art on Picasso might have been reinforced by contact with Francis Picabia, when they both spent the summer of 1925 at Juan-les-Pins. Picabia had been bowled over by the Romanesque frescos exhibited in Montjuïc and incorporated elements of Catalan art into his “transparencies,” of overlapping portraits.¹⁵ Lorca's drawings of similarly overlapped faces, which he exhibited at Josep Dalmau's gallery in summer 1927, have even more in common with the “transparencies” than Dalí's haloed heads do, and it is possible that Picabia's influence reached Lorca by a route other than Dalí. This could have happened as early as 1919, when Lorca met Raphael Barradas, who had recently moved to Madrid from Barcelona.¹⁶ Barradas had exhibited at Dalmau's gallery in 1917, when Picabia published four issues of his magazine *391* in Barcelona, which were distributed by Dalmau.

Dalí began his collaboration with Dalmau in a group show at his gallery in January 1922, before he moved to Madrid and met Barradas, at the end of the year. In November 1922, Dalmau hosted an exhibition of mechanomorphic works by Picabia and Duchamp, and Picabia's series of “Spanish women”. André Breton wrote the preface to Picabia's catalogue, and gave a talk at the Ateneu that had an impact in Barcelona's intellectual circles.¹⁷ Surrealism was yet to take full shape in 1922, but by 1926, Dalí had had ample opportunity to think about Picabia's work in the context of other art such as the variants of Cubism promoted by Dalmau and Barradas, who had returned to Barcelona. Dalí had been in close contact with Dalmau since his first one-man show the previous year, and had been eager to tell him about his meeting with Picasso. Then, in October and November, while Dalí prepared his second one-man show, he exhibited the *Barcelona Mannequin* alongside Picabia, at Dalmau's

'Exhibition of Catalan pictorial modernism compared with a selection of works by foreign avant-garde artists', which also included works by Miró, Pichot and Barradas.¹⁸

Anselm provided Dalí with the latest publications on modern art, but also attended the Ateneu, which was not only the forum for avant-garde debate, but also for the revival of Catalan Romanesque painting, and neoclassical Mediterraneanism – all currents running through Dalí's production in 1926. Dalí occasionally attended the Ateneu, and was building his own art on a broad base that comprehended Picasso, the Louvre, classical Athens and modern Paris. This was the solid foundation on which he constructed art that could confront eternal themes of passion, identity and tragedy, without exposing himself personally. Lorca, of course, played an important part in this process, and in the insinuation of religious modes of interpretation and representation into Dalí's work.

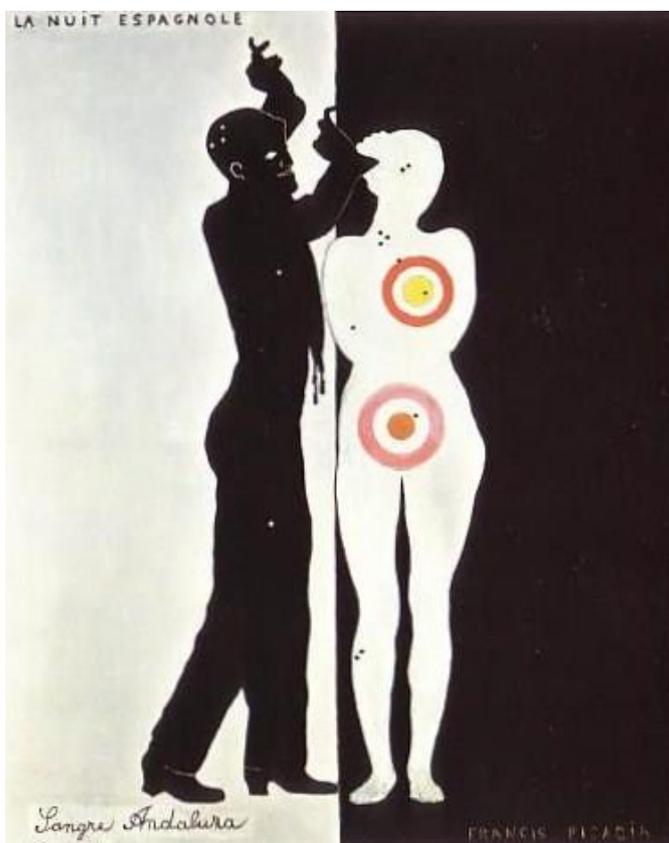


Fig 43
Francis Picabia
La Nuit espagnole (1922)

Picabia, I believe, helped orientate Dalí's visual expression of the conflicts represented in the *Barcelona Mannequin* that have so much to do, thematically, with Lorca. The ambiguities and dualities of male and female, of pain and desire, of interior and exterior, in the *Mannequin* are also in a painting that Picabia exhibited at the 1922 Salon d'automne in Paris, *La Nuit espagnole*. Picabia's painting uses the tricks of symbol and gesture of the Romanesque art that Picabia had seen in Barcelona. The stark blocks of opaque Ripolin enamel paint, and the explanatory caption, invoke the didactic intent of medieval art as much as the language of the commercial poster. At the same time, the binary division of Picabia's full-length format, and upright pose of the male and female models, are echoed in Dalí's *Mannequin*.

The inscription 'Sangre Andaluza' (Andalusian Blood), in Picabia's painting, is evocative of Picasso, but especially Lorca. In juxtaposition with the mortal and sexual, earthly threat of the male silhouette's Dionysian dance, the caption reminds us of the religious passion that is raised to caricature in the Spanish, and typically Andalusian, celebration of

suffering in art and ritual that Dalí saw in Picasso's *Three Dancers* a few months before he painted the *Mannequin*.

Dalí and Lorca exchanged letters after they were together in Madrid in May 1926, but they did not see each other again until spring 1927, when Lorca went to Barcelona to produce *Mariana Pineda*.¹⁹ There is no mention of Picabia in their correspondence before this time, or in Dalí's other writing of the period, and it is unlikely that Lorca played a direct part in Dalí's interpretation of Picabia's work. They must, however, have discussed the themes, content and form of the *Mannequin* when Lorca saw it in Dalí's studio, and possibly with a reproduction of *La Nuit espagnole* at hand, which might be considered an irreverent parody of the themes of desire and resistance that they were exploring together and apart within the theme of Sebastian.

There are clear traces of Picabia's painting in the drawings of 'St. Sebastian' and 'Ecce Homo' that Lorca exhibited at Dalmau's gallery in July, enough for Dalmau to ask Lorca to leave his drawings behind after the exhibition for Picabia to see when he arrived.²⁰ Lorca referred to Picabia's work – and possibly Dalí's cyclopean reaction – in his text, 'St. Lucy and St. Lazarus', written as a response to his time in Catalonia: "The Spanish night – night of red earth and iron nails – barbarous night with its breasts exposed, caught in a unique telescope".²¹

We have yet to see an unequivocally identifiable Sebastian in Dalí's paintings, with only intimations of the saint in the *Composition with Three Figures* or the *Barcelona Mannequin*. Lorca, on the other hand, had no qualms in distilling the iconography of Sebastian, with haiku elegance, to its basic elements of eye and wound, each piercing the surface of the body in its own way. The arrow that enters the body marks it as mortal, and the gaze that exits the body marks it as sentient, and as a witness. Together, the two signs define the martyr.

Lorca had not seen Dalí's 'Sant Sebastià' text before his visit in spring 1927, and was surprised by its depth of thought. In anticipation of the visit, Dalí and Lorca had exchanged a flurry of drawings of Sebastian, accompanied by flirtatious inferences that the saint represented one or the other of them, but these, and Lorca's drawing of Sebastian for the Dalmau exhibition, were games at the margins of Dalí's formulation of a serious aesthetic.²² Lorca wrote to Sebastià Gasch, describing a playful but intense working method that had little in common with Dalí's concern for a solid foundation of studied references to art past and present:

These last drawings I've done cost me a great effort of elaboration. I abandoned my hand to virgin territory and my hand together with my heart brought me the miraculous elements. I discovered them and noted them down. [...] I've thought and produced these little drawings with a poetic-plastic or plastic-poetic criterion, in fitting union. And many of them with lineal metaphors or sublimated commonplaces, like the 'St. Sebastian' and the 'Peacock'.²³

The target Lorca provided for the archers to aim at, and the marks of the arrow shots, in 'St. Sebastian', suggest that he had indeed seen Picabia's *La Nuit espagnole*. Lorca also gave Sebastian a single, witnessing eye like that of Dalí's mannequin. Considering the flirtatious nature of the two friends' discussion of Sebastian, and of the drawings exchanged at the start of the summer, it would not stretch interpretation too far to see the hole within a circle of Lorca's target as a reference to Dalí's anus. Sebastian was, by that point, an emblem of their "love, friendship and fencing", but this should not be the dead end to the drawing's interpretation that an oversimplified consideration of their relationship would give – of Lorca as archer and Dalí as target.

Although Lorca's drawing may have distilled his thoughts on the spiritual struggle with the human condition to Sebastian's essential attributes – "sublimat[ing] commonplaces" – these do not represent the limits of his thoughts on the saint. After all, he planned to give a series of lectures on Sebastian and, simply by signifying the martyr, the drawing invokes the two friends' discussions of sentiment and resistance, of the body and the spirit. The drawing only hints at all the threads of significance of the martyr to Lorca, extending into Greek mythology and the Catholic drama of passion and pain.

It is important to clarify the relationship between Lorca and Dalí at this time, if we are to say that it is somehow present in Lorca's drawing or Dalí's text, or in any of the paintings we are looking at. This is not to engage in gossip, but to sketch the affective circumstances that compelled Dalí to develop his aesthetics of St. Sebastian: an aesthetics of renunciation and resistance of emotional engagement.

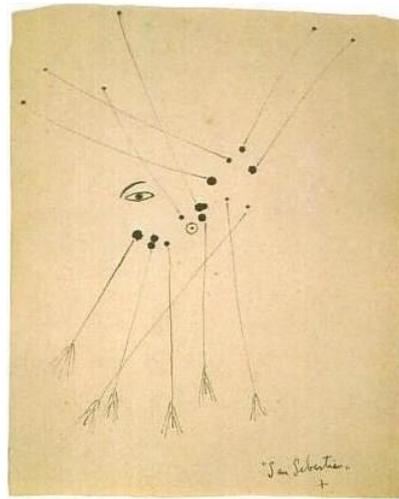


Fig 44
Federico García Lorca
'San Sebastian' (1927)

Antonina Rodrigo wrote about the relationship as a “friendship betrayed”, a perception Dalí was keen to rectify.²⁴ Lorca's love, Dalí told Ian Gibson, was “an erotic and tragic love, because it could not be corresponded to.” He wanted to convince Gibson that “Lorca had loved him sexually, not merely ‘platonically’.”²⁵ Dalí explained that circumstances had simply taken them in different directions, but they had never fallen out.

Their friendship was not adversely affected by their sexual experience in 1926 – Dalí continued to write affectionately to Lorca, and welcomed him back to Cadaqués in 1927, when they may even have made another frustrated attempt to have sex.²⁶ They both entered very busy and exciting phases of their lives in this period, but they remained close for another two years after their incident, and harmonised perfectly when they made contact again in 1935. Their love, friendship and admiration were mutual, but Dalí was incapable of reciprocating Lorca's desire for physical love.

As they debated their feelings, Lorca perhaps recalled the platonic dialogues on love in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. In the *Symposium*, the guests at the drinking party discuss, among other things, homosexual seduction, and Plato has Aristophanes speak of the double – and divided – body of the androgyne. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates lists the four types of divine madness that arise from Apollo, Dionysus, the poetic and the erotic, and also discusses unrequited and reciprocal love, the latter personified and deified as Anteros. The loved one, says Socrates, believing he resists love, realises that what he thought was friendship has become love, and surprises himself by feeling the pain of separation.²⁷ This pain comes, not from the golden arrows of Eros, but from the leaden arrows of Anteros, also the avenger of unrequited love. Anteros was another brother of Eros and Hermaphrodite – together they were the Erotes. In representations, Anteros is identified by his long hair, and his plumed butterfly wings, and it is possible that Dalí alludes to these in the arabesque on the hem of the *Mannequin's* open gown. If these classical references were also in play, this would make the Dionysian *Barcelona Mannequin* Anteros a brother of the marble Apollonian Eros in the *Composition*.

Perlimplín and *Mariana Pineda*; the *Composition* and the *Mannequin*; *The Three Dancers* and *La Nuit espagnole*: all are connected – and separated – by the tragedy of unrequited, impossible love.



Fig 45
Federico García Lorca
'Ecce homo!' (1927)

The empirical measure of suffering on a quantitative rather than a qualitative scale is a central concept of the aesthetics of 'Sant Sebastià' shared by both friends. Lorca's drawing 'Ecce homo' includes a gauge indicating the degree of Jesus' suffering on a scale of one to six. This image is a close relative of the “simple indicator mechanism” the “Heliometer for Deaf-Mutes” Dalí described in 'Sant Sebastià', which he was completing around the time Lorca made his drawings. The friends' *Residencia* humour is recognizable in this quantification of suffering – Dalí had already drawn such a 'Heliometro per a mors', for the book of “putrefactes” that he and Lorca had planned.

By 1927, however, Dalí had developed a more sophisticated understanding of the reach of that humour. The time that Dalí was spending in Barcelona was invaluable for his application of mechanistic euphemisms to the

human body, and he was able to debate the mechanomorphic works of Picabia and Duchamp with Josep Dalmau, who had introduced them to Spain, and with their mutual friend Barradas. After the *Barcelona Mannequin* was exhibited by Dalmau in October 1926, Dalí could also discuss this figurative language with his new friends at *L'Amic de les Arts*, and all before testing his grasp of it with Lorca in spring 1927.

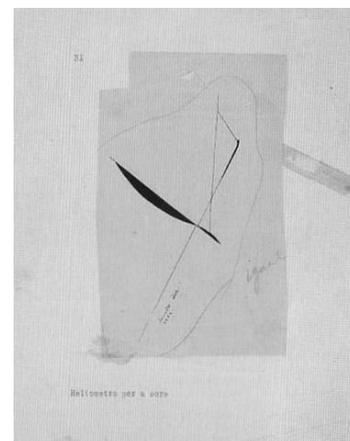


Fig 46
Salvador Dalí
'Heliometro per a mors' (1924)

Dalí's views on the strangeness of the human body as a modern spectacle found expression in 'Sant Sebastià': "Mannequins, static in the electric splendour of the shop windows, with their neutral, mechanical sensualities and disturbing articulations". Lorca's lyrical language was a counterpoint, holding Dalí back from presenting a wholly mechanised body in the *Barcelona Mannequin*, cut off from emotional involvement like a showroom dummy behind glass. As the metaphorical target for mortal and sexual threats, Dalí's mannequin is resolutely anthropomorphic – animate, even, as it must be for these dangers to be real.

For several years, Dalí had been reading articles by de Chirico in *Valori Plastici* that had helped form his aesthetic position. In the *Composition*, he gave precedence to solutions offered by the Scuola metafisica over ideas gleaned from L'Ésprit nouveau that had complemented them more closely in earlier Venus and sailor paintings. In his review of Lorca's exhibition in September 1927, Dalí lamented the demise of de Chirico's earlier period, when he had been essentially erotic, spritual, mystical, obsessive, capable of pathetic lyricism and disturbingly concrete hallucinations. Dalí regretted that de Chirico had unfortunately fallen into "those naïve mistaken ways" of Surrealism, apparently oblivious to Breton's equal disappointment with de Chirico. There was still much for Dalí to assimilate before he was aligned with Surrealism, but he did not realise how close he was getting on a parallel track.

De Chirico painted a number of mannequins into his strange scenes. One at least, *Il Trovatore* (1917), was based on the figure of St. Sebastian, whose status as a soldier may have had particular relevance to de Chirico as he completed his military service that year, with war raging across Europe. It was during his military service that he met Carlo Carrà, and together they founded *Valori Plastici*.

When Dalí painted his *Mannequin*, he was anticipating his own military service, which he had started by the time Lorca arrived in May 1927, and had wondered in a letter if Lorca might turn out to be the saint. Lorca posed for a photograph in Figueres with Dalí in uniform, and after he had moved on to Barcelona Lorca sent a photograph of himself in an identical pose to the original photograph, modified by the addition in ink of a saint's halo.²⁸ Sebastian's status as a soldier – no longer the sailor of the earlier series – was drawn into this diffused, ambiguous identification. As part of the *Golden Legend* tale of Sebastian, this facet of his meaning could have already been considered by either of them before Dalí began to play soldier in Figueres.²⁹

De Chirico painted his mannequins at the height of the period that both Dalí and Breton praised, and there are others that left their mark on the paintings by Dalí that heralded his entrance to the Surrealist movement. In 1915, the same year as *Enigma of a Day*, *Nostalgia of the Infinite*, or *The Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour*, de Chirico painted *The Duo* (*Les Mannequins de la Tour Rose*), followed by *Hector and Andromache* (c. 1916). The last two each show two mannequins who would be embracing if they had arms, which Dalí would use as the models for the embracing father and son that appear in his paintings of 1929 that were related to his rift with his own father. This shows that Dalí turned to images of alienation by de Chirico for their adaptability to personal relevance, making de Chirico's mannequin-Sebastian in *Il Trovatore* a suitable model for Dalí's visualisation of Sebastian.

As Dalí approached Surrealism, this transformation from statue to dummy shows Dalí straying into the region of the Freudian "uncanny". Freud wrote his essay 'The Uncanny' in 1919, but it was not included in the Biblioteca Nueva collection, and was not published in French translation until 1933.³⁰ It could, however, have reached Breton through translation or paraphrase by Max Ernst or another



Fig 47
Giorgio de Chirico
Il Trovatore (1917)

German speaker in time to influence Breton's use of the mannequin as an example of the "marvellous" in the *Surrealist Manifesto*, in 1924.³¹ The main novelty of Freud's essay was that it gathered together and categorised strands that were already alive in psychoanalytic theory, and which reached into areas of literature and art of interest to Dalí and the Surrealists. Freud's essay suggests, for example, another nuance to the *Mannequin's* single, hieroglyphic eye, which can also see and be seen as the evil eye, directing an uncanny gaze.

Freud was beginning to shape Dalí's thoughts on the psychological condition of knowing oneself to be a sexual and mortal physiological body, and the shadow-Sebastian in *Barcelona Mannequin* is almost an uncanny double of Freud's 'Uncanny' essay. The gist of the essay is that the uncanny is the return of the repressed, a nostalgia for the mother's womb, to which we know we can never return. In Hal Foster's words,

This uncanny homesickness is evoked in important apprehensions of the surreal, as is the primal fantasy of intrauterine existence. Indeed, all the primal fantasies according to Freud (seduction, castration, the primal scene or the witnessing of parental sex, as well as intrauterine existence) are active in surrealist reflections concerning subjectivity and art.³²

The singular, integral, but false figure of the *Neo-Cubist Academy* was split open to reveal the ambiguous, uncanny *Mannequin*, anticipating ways of visualising the tragic psychological condition of life as a physiological entity that continued through and beyond Dalí's Surrealist years. Here is Dalí's horror of the biological, sexual and mortal body – a horror to which the ritual presentation of the martyred body in Catholic art also appeals. As we shall see in Part III, the lessons learnt here served Dalí well for his reinterpretation of the Biblical mythology of Christ's life story around 1950.

Notes

- ¹ Dalí's *Barcelona Mannequin*, which is sometimes dated 1927, was shown by Dalmau in October 1926, at the 'Exhibition of Catalan Pictorial Modernism Compared with a Selection of Works by Foreign Avant-Garde Artists', although it did not feature in Dalí's one man show at the same gallery at the end of the year.
- ² Dalí, letter to Gasch, 1927, in *L'expansió de l'art català al món*, original in Gasch family archives, reproduced by Gibson, in DJDG, 147-8, L-D, 100-1. My translation.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Edwards, 16.
- ⁵ See Appendix 2 for Dalí's full list of modern spectacles.
- ⁶ See Appendix 1.
- ⁷ It is possible that Egypt is what is meant to be seen. The two friends had heard Howard Carter give a talk at the Residencia in 1924, which Dalí joked about in a letter to Lorca a year later.
- ⁸ See Appendix 2.
- ⁹ Gershator, 52-3.
- ¹⁰ *The Triumph of Galatea* was included in the Raphael volume of Gowans's Art Books from its third edition in 1908.
- ¹¹ See AMD, 118.
- ¹² It was these events that led to the designation of the term, Generation of '27. Lorca gave a lecture, 'La imagen poética en don Luís de Góngora', at the Ateneu in Sevilla, where Pepín Bello had relocated in 1927.
- ¹³ Gibson claims that the added words refer to Lorca's 'Árbol de canción', included in *Canciones 1921-1924* (Gibson: 1997, 653, n.50), but there is no mention of mouths or mannequins in 'Árbol de canción'.
- ¹⁴ In the painting, Jerome, holding a Bible, his lion, the Archangel Raphael and Tobias, holding a fish, are arranged around the Virgin and Child, on a plinth similar to those employed by Dalí in later paintings such as his *Leda Atomica* (1949).
- ¹⁵ Cowling, 479-80. Miró, too, often repeated his admiration for Catalan Romanesque painting. See for example, 'Three Hours with Joan Miró', an interview with Santiago Amón, *El País*, 1978, Rowell, 297: "Before I was even ten years old I was going by myself on Sunday mornings to the Museum of Romanesque Art in Montjuïc Park".
- ¹⁶ Gibson: 1997, 97. Barradas designed figurines for Lorca's first play, *El maleficio de la mariposa* in 1920. See also Antonina Rodrigo, *GLPD*, 110-111, 115 and Chapter VII, on Barradas.
- ¹⁷ Breton's lecture, 'Caractères de l'évolution moderne et ce qui en participe', at the Ateneu, 17-11-1922. The exhibition and lecture were reviewed by M. A. Cassanyes in *La Publicitat*. See Gibson: 1997, 99-100.
- ¹⁸ Dalí showed *Peix i balcó*, *Barcelona Mannequin* and another *Figure*. Robert Delaunay, Raoul Dufy, Albert Gleizes, Manolo Hugué, and others, were also represented.
- ¹⁹ Lorca arrived at the end of April or beginning of May (Gibson: 1997, 153)
- ²⁰ Letter from Lorca to Dalí, from Barcelona, Madrid or Granada, August 2-11? 1927, in Maurer, 77.
- ²¹ *Revista de Occidente*, November 1927, dedicated to Sebastià Gasch. This painting illustrated the cover of *Littérature*, November 1922. At the time, Picabia was working close to André Breton on the transition from Dada to the more positive orientation of Surrealism. (L-D, 189-90)
- ²² The interchange of these drawings has been studied in depth – by Santos Torroella (1984), or Gibson (1997, 1999, 2004), for example.
- ²³ Gershator, 119-20, translation modified following the Spanish in *GLPD*, 101-2.
- ²⁴ See Antonina Rodrigo, *Lorca-Dalí. una amistad traicionada* (1981), passim.
- ²⁵ Dalí first spoke about his sexual encounter with Lorca in 1926 to Alain Bosquet, in 1955, and repeated it several times, but was keen at the end of his life to clarify certain misinterpretations. Gibson met Dalí on 15th January 1986, but Dalí was not satisfied with Gibson's account in 'Con Dalí y Lorca en Figueres' in *El País*, 26th January 1986. Gibson published a 'Matización de Dalí', to clarify the story, in *El País*, Madrid, 30th January 1986. (Gibson, 1997, xxviii).
- ²⁶ Gibson's inference that there was another incident of frustrated seduction in summer 1927 is based on a letter sent by Lorca afterwards, when he apologised for behaving like an ass. However, Lorca was in the habit of writing such melodramatic and self-deprecating apologies for his behaviour. See numerous examples in Gershator.

²⁷ See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 255.

²⁸ The two photographs can be seen in Maurer.

²⁹ *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 16, 31st July 1927. Review of *Canciones, 1921-1924* by Lluís Montanyà. Illustrated with Dalí's drawing, based on a photo of Lorca with Dalí in uniform, taken in Figueres. Lorca had a photo of just himself in the same pose taken on arrival in Barcelona, and then added a plinth and halo similar to that in Lorca's *Saint Sebastian* drawing, around that time, before sending it to Dalí (GLPD, 175, DJDG, 247-9, *L-D*, 168-70 – Lorca's drawing and photograph, illustrations 22 and 23).

³⁰ Foster, 2.

³¹ The uncanniness of showroom dummies, statues, dolls, and the related aspects of fetish, castration, and the strangeness of the body were followed through most thoroughly by Hans Bellmer. See Foster's chapter 'Fatal Attraction' in *Compulsive Beauty*, 101-22.

³² Foster, 8.

Chapter 3. The Body of Flesh: *The Forest of Apparatuses*

In this chapter I will highlight the similarities and differences that existed between Dalí's painting practice and Surrealism as they converged, better to understand why religious art remained essential to his practice despite the avowed militant atheism of the Surrealists. In contrast to André Breton, Dalí considered it perfectly legitimate to adopt and adapt religious imagery to his own purposes, as pure images that had entered his consciousness. Ironically, it was his analysis of religious art – and even the very specific subset of 15th century Flemish and Italian religious art – that enabled the shift in his thinking to a position closely aligned with Surrealism.

3.1 A “rigorous logic of fantasy”

In this section, I look at how Dalí’s assimilation of symbols and methods of religious art helped him arrive at a position in which his initial resistance to Surrealism was negated.

Dalí held his second solo exhibition at Josep Dalmau’s gallery for the first two weeks of 1927. The exhibition summarised the buffeting cubist and realist tendencies of 1926, and cleared the way for a new direction in Dalí’s painting, which is sometimes seen as the moment of his first Surrealist practice. Yet Dalí remained adamant that his method was very different from Surrealism, and what made it different was his careful choice of personally meaningful images – analysed, interpreted and very deliberately manipulated. In this respect, Dalí’s method was already close to his own later Surrealist image-making practice, but it did differ from the originally dominant, automatist strain of Surrealism.

Even before the Dalmau exhibition, he had made an important step in his new direction with the first version of a painting eventually entitled *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. Lorca and Dalí referred to the second version, which has only survived in photographic reproduction, as *The Forest of Apparatuses* when Dalí worked on it during Lorca’s visit the following summer. Because of its comparative emptiness, the first version is often referred to as a study for the second, but it is signed, and there are plenty of examples of Dalí reworking earlier paintings, and it deserves consideration as an autonomous work.

Dalí’s work polarised opinion among Barcelona’s art critics, but he found influential support from contributors to the magazine *L’Amic de les Arts* – in particular Sebastià Gasch and J. V. Foix – who had been following his recent progress. Dalí began a collaboration with *L’Amic de les Arts* that lasted a little over two years, contributing essays, poems, ‘Sant Sebastià’, and eventually an entire Surrealist edition, in March 1929.¹ Gasch was impressed by the clarity and resoluteness with which Dalí expressed a mature theoretical basis for his paintings.² His enthusiasm was tempered only by the apparent cold calculation of Dalí’s eclecticism, evidenced by the quotation of Ingres that Dalí chose for the Dalmau catalogue: “If we trust experience, in art one learns to invent by familiarising oneself with the inventions of others, in the same way that one gets used to thinking by reading the ideas of others.”³ Dalí possessed neither the “profound interior life, nor the rich instinctive nature” of Picasso or Miró, Gasch wrote.⁴ Dalí agreed, and insisted on this superficial objectivity, to both Gasch and Lorca, who remained the essential sounding-board for Dalí’s latest experiments.⁵

Dalí’s correspondence with Lorca had decreased since September 1926, so Lorca was not aware of all of the new developments in his friend’s ideas, but in January 1927, after “almost a month” in Barcelona, Dalí wrote to say he was back in Figueres, with “infinite old and new things to read. And with many paintings at my *fingertips*, and not in my head.”⁶ Unfortunately, most of those paintings must have remained in Dalí’s head, for there are very few that can be reliably dated 1927. His productivity was restricted in part by the military service he began two weeks after writing this letter, and also by the intricacy of the new paintings and volume of “old and new things” that Dalí was absorbing.

The articles that he published in *L’Amic de les Arts* and elsewhere, and the correspondence with Gasch and Lorca that has so far been published, document his gradual alignment with Surrealism,



Fig 48
Salvador Dalí
Honey is Sweeter than Blood (1926)

which crept into the subsequent sequence of paintings such as *Apparatus and Hand* (1927) and *Cenicitas* (1927-8), despite Dalí's protestations to the contrary, which continued until 1928.⁷ Dalí eventually admitted to Gasch, who remained vehemently opposed to Surrealism, that *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* represented a "moment of transition to Surrealism".⁸

It is not surprising that Dalí was reluctant to consider his painting as Surrealist. The very notion of Surrealist painting was still under discussion, and even for André Breton it was merely a "lamentable expedient".⁹ Pierre Naville had opened the debate in Paris in 1925, by declaring that "as everyone knows, there is no such thing as *surrealist painting*".¹⁰ Breton responded with a series of articles that tested the hypothesis under the title 'Surrealism and Painting', which he continued until 1927, and by organising a first, tentative exhibition of Surrealist art in October 1925.¹¹ The articles were not published as a book until 1928, and it was only then that Dalí could grapple with the full argument for Surrealist painting.

Spanish intellectuals connected to the Residencia had taken note of Surrealism from its beginnings, while Dalí was in Madrid, but those beginnings were in literature and based on automatism, and Surrealist painting had not been given much thought.¹² Even when Breton did consider painting, he kept it at arm's length from Surrealism proper – his book was *Surrealism and Painting not Surrealist Painting*, as Mark Polizzotti has noted.¹³

Breton focussed on Picasso as the clearest example of a painter whose work approached the methods of Surrealism. He might have been partly motivated by a desire to reinforce Picasso's proximity to Surrealism, but it is also natural that he should test the hypothesis against an artist's work with which his readers were familiar. However, if Dalí's conversations with Picasso in 1926 – in the middle of the debate – helped to temper Dalí's opinion of Surrealism, the effect was only gradual.

Dalí and Lorca missed Louis Aragon's talk at the Residencia in 1925, and Buñuel was not convinced enough to promote Surrealism's cause when Dalí visited Paris in 1926.¹⁴ Dalí was more interested in the Louvre and the Musée d'Art ancien in Brussels, and even neglected to use the letter of introduction to Breton that Dalmau had written for him.¹⁵ Nonetheless, Picasso was the other focus of Dalí's thoughts in 1926 and it is almost certain that Dalí read Breton's articles in *La Révolution surréaliste* for their analysis of Picasso's work.

Breton saw Picasso's distrust of the deceitfulness of appearances, masquerading as objective truth, as a step in painting that was close to Surrealism.¹⁶ Picasso's response to that deceitfulness, according to Breton, was to attempt "the highest degree not of contradiction, but of evasion!" This "evasion" is the same quality that Dalí praised in Miró's work in May 1928, in an article in which he still insisted on his differences with Surrealism.¹⁷ Dalí wrote to Lorca in September that it was this "evasion" which was important, and that Surrealism was just *one* of its forms.¹⁸ By then, Lorca was also persuaded of the lyrical insight that Surrealism was capable of, and raised the quality of "Evasion" to the level of "Imagination" and "Inspiration" in the title of a talk he first gave at the end of 1928.¹⁹ We might wonder how this attitude of creative evasion fits into the dialogue between Dalí and Lorca, as a possible attitude for St. Sebastian. In the end, the term itself evades definition and explains little, but its popularity with Dalí and Lorca suggests that they found it enticing.

Ortega possibly helped Dalí and Lorca to appreciate Picasso's "evasion" when he wrote about the "evasion of living forms" as just one form of dehumanisation of art, no doubt influenced by Breton's use of the word.²⁰ Ortega had introduced Surrealism to Spain in 1924, and was in the friends' thoughts in 1926, when he published Lorca's 'Ode to Salvador Dalí'. His recent publications, 'On the Point of View of the Artist' (1924) and *Dehumanisation of the Arts* (1925) were important reference points for Dalí's aesthetics of objectivity. When the *Revista de Occidente* published a review of the 'First Surrealist Manifesto' in December 1924, Fernando Vela had noted its debt to Freud, who was already high on Dalí's reading list.²¹ So several paths now tempted him towards Surrealism, despite his reluctance to follow them.

Freud's theories might have played a part in such symbolic elements as the severed hands and isolated breasts that floated over his picture surfaces during 1927, but the extent to which this coincided with Surrealist sensibility is open to question.²² Freud was obviously important to

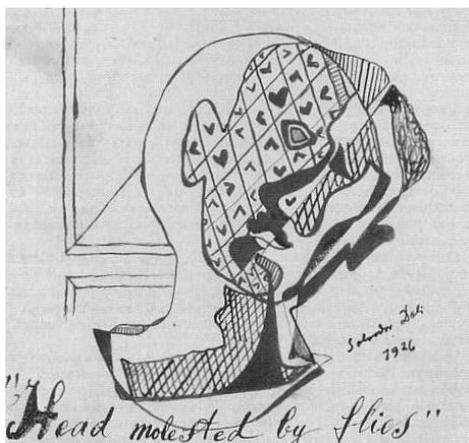


Fig 49
Salvador Dalí
'Head molested by flies' (1926/1941)

Surrealism, but Breton made no reference to him in relation to Surrealism and Painting, and Dalí would have had to make his own inferences.

Although Breton was familiar enough with psychoanalysis to visit Freud in 1921, and for it to be fundamental to Surrealist theory, psychiatric institutions in France were hostile to Freud, and his work was translated into French relatively late.²³ The official, xenophobic French resistance may have only piqued the Surrealists' interest, but it still meant they were limited in their access to full, translated editions.²⁴ There was no such obstacle in the Germanophile intellectual climate of Spain, represented most visibly by Ortega y Gasset, who studied philosophy in Germany before taking up the Chair of Metaphysics at the University of Madrid in 1910.²⁵

Santos Torroella has written on the Surrealism *avant la lettre* of the 'Residencia style', which manifested itself at its peak in the sharp wit of Pepín Bello and Lorca. Their black humour and ironic subversion of the solemnity of much high art was aimed at revealing the fallible humanity that is the real subject of many works, and their easy familiarity with the personages of literature and painting reveals a sense of the absurd with a heart of gold. Dalí's attempts at something similar betrayed once again his essential incapacity for such empathic engagement, when he described his own new "poemas memos" (stupid poems) to Buñuel, in September 1926, as "a literary procedure that consists in creating a *rigorous logic of fantasy*."²⁶

Nevertheless, Lorca and Bello led the way for Dalí to collapse categories, and to reinterpret and appropriate psychoanalytical, mythical and theological patterns of significance, and artistic representations. Oedipus was the tragic hero of a tale in Greek mythology before he was conscripted as a complex, and Dalí heard Lorca recite his everyday encounters with Adonises, Apollos, Eros and Chronos. We can imagine how Lorca interpreted the legend of St. Narcissus, patron of Girona, when the two friends attended mass at the Cathedral in 1925, before huge paintings showing the swarms of flies that rose from Narcissus's tomb to drive back the French invaders.²⁷

This legend became important to Dalí in later years, but there is a clue that places it in the context of Lorca and Dalí's ambiguous, Narcissus and Echo identification. To illustrate the passage in the *Secret Life* in which Dalí describes the overwhelming effect of Lorca's personality, Dalí reproduced one of the double or split heads explored in the cubist style of 1926, and in which half of the face is filled in with a pattern of chevrons, he added the caption, "Head molested by flies". I will return to this little drawing below as it succinctly connects diverse strands of Dalí's identification with Lorca.

The irreverent observations of Dalí and his friends as they walked through the Prado were of fundamental importance to Dalí's personalised reinterpretations of images from religious art in his later Surrealist practice. Whim and lewdness were given a scientific basis by Freud's theories on wit, and its revelation of the surprising associations that often masked underlying sexual motives. Through the humour of Lorca, Bello and his own observations, Dalí recognised Freud's theories of hidden meanings and the problematic nature of the sexual self as already present in and fundamental to much Christian art.

These theories gave scientific support to the friends' flippant observations and allowed Dalí to treat seriously the surprising



Fig 50.
Domenico Veneziano
Head of a Monk, in Gowans No. 41

revelations of visual jokes, of double images and accidental euphemisms. For example, there are numerous cases among the small black and white reproductions in the Gowans books of halos that have lost their golden sheen and appear dull and heavy, like Domenico Veneziano's *Head of a Monk*. I think these are probably the origin of the loaves of bread and other items that Dalí occasionally placed on heads in his Surrealist paintings, while offering diversionary explanations.²⁸ An imagined conversation before a painting can throw up wide-reaching metaphors. A loaf of bread on a saint's head is an edible halo, or transubstantiated Christ. Once eaten it can be defecated, and now we have gold converted into Jesus, converted into shit: an inverted alchemy of the imagination. These are my own suggestions, but I think they adequately approximate Dalí's Surrealist practice and suggest how he might have applied Freud's words to Gowans' pictures. Once he had understood Surrealism, Dalí made great use of such "evasion" of attention; it is when the mind is left to wander freely that it stumbles across these images and associations.

Dalí wrote seriously of his attachment to the Gowans books, and the extent to which he had fused his living memories with the images he had seen in them. He could imagine he had strolled through the landscapes, and it is easy to imagine the garden of the Font del Soc near Figueres – which played a real part in his youthful romantic dalliances – as a scene by Watteau, or Boucher's nymphs splashing in the waves at Cadaqués. The Tuscan landscapes of Quattrocento artists could easily be imagined to depict some part of Girona; the distinctive square towers of Northern Italy are also dotted around this corner of Spain, and one of the most impressive examples was the monastery of San Pere de Roda, high in the mountains behind Cadaqués. The Costa Brava can seem painted by Patinir on a stormy day... or by Bellini on a sunny one.



Fig 51
The monastery of San Pere de Roda,
near Cadaqués

We can imagine too, how gruesome scenes of martyrdom, removed from their context, might appear more comical than tragic. Dalí browsed the Gowans books as a child might, inventing stories. The sheer senselessness of martyrdom was part of its cautionary function, and it often found expression in scenes of

absurd deaths, or absurd survival. The fun is augmented in our post-Enlightenment eyes by the comic-strip gesticulations of the characters of medieval art, as they act out their medieval sermon. Scenes of martyrdom invite reflection on irrational behaviour, on the mob mentality of lynching, on morally driven absurdity. The tiny images of 15th century art in the Gowans books had no explanatory text, inviting interpretation and analysis. They were an ideal ground for Dalí to test his new "procedure that consists in creating a *rigorous logic of fantasy*" that would be the essence of his "paranoiac-critical method", but was far removed from *automatic Surrealism*, as it stood in 1926.

Notes

- ¹ See Fanès, 'The first image...', 91-2, for an overview, and individual articles: Gasch, 'De galeria en galeria', *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 2, 31st May 1926, in DJDG, 232-3; Gasch 'De galeria en galeria', *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 8, 1st November 1926, in Poesía, 152, DJDG, 231-3; Panyella, *DLPM*, 85; articles by Gasch and Joaquim Folch i Torres in *La Gasetta de les Arts*, Barcelona, no. 60, 1st November 1926.
- ² Gibson, 1997, 145-7. There are apparently "hundreds" of unpublished letters from Dalí to Gasch, which would doubtless reveal much about Dalí's thoughts on art at that time (DJDG, 236). In one letter, Dalí expressed his preference for the "antiartistic": a concept which formed the basis for a manifesto published in *L'Amic de les Arts* in 1928. "'Artistic' – horrible word that only serves to signal things totally lacking in art." (Gasch, 'Salvador Dalí', *La Gasetta de les Arts*, Barcelona, no. 60, 1st November 1926, reproduced in Gasch, *Escrips d'art i d'avantguarda (1925-1938)*, 67-70, quoted in DJDG, p. 234). Dalí probably took his lead from Ortega y Gasset, who wrote in *The Dehumanisation of the Arts* (1925) that the "artistic" demanded a grounding in art theory for its comprehension.
- ³ Aguer, 10. My translation.
- ⁴ *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 11, 28th February 1927.
- ⁵ "I am superficial, and the external is what I love, for in the final analysis the external is the objective. Today the objective is what I like most in poetry, and only in the objective do I see the quivering of the Ethereal." (Dalí, Figueres to Lorca, Barcelona, start of June 1927. Poesía, 58-60). Dalí explained his preference for "objective" observation to Gasch in the context of his exhibitions at the end of 1926: "Things have no meaning whatever beyond their strictest objectivity; herein resides, in my opinion, their miraculous poetry" (Dalí letter, c. 1926, to Gasch in *Expansió de l'art català al món*, Lubar, 1991, 9-10)
- ⁶ Santos Torroella speculates that the letter was sent on 18th-20th January 1927. Poesía, 46-47. My translations. Dalí chided Lorca for not responding to his letters.
- ⁷ A look at the contents of *La Révolution surréaliste* shows that we would expect Dalí to have become more sympathetic towards Surrealism from the time that Breton takes over as editor, in July 1925. Over the following issues there is a growing predominance of themes that we recognise in Dalí's subsequent production. (See Adès, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, 203-6 for summaries of the contents of the magazine). There are two ways to interpret this: as Dalí accepted Surrealism, he took up the themes as presented, or as the themes became more interesting to him, so he became more sympathetic towards Surrealism.
- ⁸ Unpublished letter, quoted by Gibson in L-D, 192-3. In 1950, Dalí reaffirmed that it was one of his most important paintings, containing "all of the obsessions of my entrance into Surrealism." Massip, José María, 'Dalí hoy', *Destino*, no. 661, 1-4-1950, Barcelona, 1, 4-5, quoted in L-D, 177, DJDG, 265.
- ⁹ Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 6.
- ¹⁰ Pierre Naville in *La Révolution Surréaliste* no. 3, April 1925.
- ¹¹ The first of Breton's series was published in *La Révolution Surréaliste* no. 4, July 1925, 29.
- ¹² According to Ian Gibson (1997, 100) the first stirrings of Surrealism had reached Barcelona and Madrid in 1922. C.B. Morris calculates that appreciation of Surrealism reached an informed level among Spanish writers, playwrights, painters and critics by around 1927-8. See Morris, 12-63.
- ¹³ Polizzotti, 'Introduction: André Breton and Painting', *Surrealism and Painting*, xix.
- ¹⁴ Ian Gibson suggests that Buñuel, Ángeles Ortiz, Picasso or another Spaniard could have recommended visiting the Galerie Surréaliste, which had just opened, 10th March 1926, but the influence of Miró, and indeed of de Chirico, that Gibson sees appearing shortly after returning from Paris was in fact not apparent until at least the end of 1926. DJDG, 210-2.
- ¹⁵ On 14th March 1926, Josep Dalmau gave Dalí two letters of recommendation, one for Max Jacob – which was not needed as Dalí had his introduction to Picasso through Manuel Ángeles Ortiz – and the other for Breton. L-D, 138, DJDG, 207.
- ¹⁶ Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 5. Cowling sees Picasso, in 1925, at a point reconciling Purist, Platonist Cubism, and Surrealist biomorphism, with *The Three Dancers* as her example. See Cowling, 468-9.
- ¹⁷ 31st May 1928, *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 25. 3rd part of 'Nous límits de la pintura' (*L'alliberament dels dits*, 84-7).
- ¹⁸ Letter, start of September 1928, *Poesía*, 88-94.
- ¹⁹ 'Imagination, Inspiration, Evasion', end of 1928-30. Also 'Sketch of the New Painting', "where the cold mathematics of Cubism yields to an art – that of Joan Miró – governed by dream and inspiration." Maurer, 10. Similar antithesis in Lorca's 'Santa Lucía y San Lázaro', published in *Revista de Occidente*, dedicated to Gasch, November 1927. Written autumn 1927. For Maurer, Lucy is surface and clarity (Dalí), and Lazarus is depth and mystery (Lorca), two "dialectical principles" he recognised needed to be reconciled in art and their relationship.

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- ²⁰ Ortega identifies an inversion of the traditional hierarchical intent of perspective onto the “suprareal” and the “infrareal” as methods of “dehumanisation”. Ortega names Proust, Ramón Gómez de la Serna and Joyce as experts in surpassing realism by “attending, magnifying glass in hand, to the microscopic of life”. Ortega (1987), 76.
- ²¹ ‘El suprarrealismo’, *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, 6:18 (December 1924), 428-434.
- ²² DJDG, 173, L-D, 116. Santos Torroella has worked hardest to trace Freudian allusions as far back as possible in search of an origin, in order to draw a dividing line between “Lorquian” and “Freudian” periods in Dalí’s work. See, in particular, *La miel es más dulce que la sangre*, passim. However, Dalí’s paintings of 1926-7 show the influence of both Lorca and Freud, and indeed others overlapping and merging.
- ²³ See the dates of publication of Freud’s works in French translation in the catalogue *Desire Unbound*, 58.
- ²⁴ David Lomas has shown the official resistance, possibly part repression, part xenophobic, towards Freud in France. See Lomas, 1-2.
- ²⁵ Ortega studied in Leipzig, Nuremberg, Cologne, Berlin and Marburg, 1905-7. Attesting to the impression left by German thinkers, Ortega later published philosophers such as Husserl, Spengler and Simmel, and art historians such as Worringer and Wölfflin in Spanish translation.
- ²⁶ Letter from Dalí to Buñuel, 21st September 1926, in RES, 21, from A. Sánchez Vidal, *Buñuel, Lorca, Dalí...* Dalí’s emphasis.
- ²⁷ The record is unclear, but Narcissus was possibly the Bishop of Girona, 304-7. The legend of St. Narcissus and the flies became part of his mythology in the 1960s. The flies appeared again in the *Hallucinogenic Toreador*, that treats other themes related to Lorca. *Secret Life*, 177.
- ²⁸ Dalí told Amanda Lear that when he was young he imagined his geography teacher with a shit on his head, but that hardly raised a smile, so he imagined a neighbour in the same situation, again with no effect. Finally, he pictured the priest of their church with the faecal headdress and couldn’t stop laughing (Lear: 1970, 159).

3.2 Painting well

In September 1926, Dalí wrote to Lorca, pleased with the “7 hard, cold waves like the ones in the sea” that he had painted, because he had “painted them *well*.”

You wouldn't believe how I've given myself to my paintings, with what love I paint my windows open onto the sea with rocks, *my baskets of bread, my girls sewing, my fishes, my skies like sculptures!*¹

If in 1925, he looked to Ingres and Raphael for how to paint “*well*”, his trip to Paris and Brussels persuaded him of the need to return to the latter to copy “the Dutch”, perhaps heeding de Chirico's recommendation in *Valori Plastici* to copy “the masters”. Although de Chirico was referring principally to Italian artists, he also recommended Vermeer, whom he praises for his meticulous skill – his “patience that is a type of passion”, as Dalí would call it in ‘Sant Sebastià’. Dalí's lifelong obsession with Vermeer had already been apparent for a year or two in his many “*girls sewing*”, but it was centred on the *Lacemaker*, which Dalí had seen in Paris.² There were no Vermeers in Brussels, so he was not the “Dutch” artist that Dalí sought.

Dalí had his Gowans collection with him in Cadaqués, and had surely persuaded his aunt to spend some of their travel budget on books. Besides an illustrated catalogue of the *Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, there was a series of small-format books published in Brussels that faithfully copied the model of the Gowans books. These were ideal souvenirs – they were cheap, occupied little room, were packed with reproductions that were not available in Spain, and they supplemented his Gowans collection with just the type of painting with which he was currently obsessed.³

These would have provided Dalí with an extensive archive of reproductions in which to study the content, meanings and composition of these “Dutch” paintings in the comfort of his studio. The only problem was that they were small, black and white reproductions, which suggests that it was the artists' technique – how “*well*” they painted, which could only be appreciated in the presence of the original – that would merit another journey. Yet the Louvre and Prado were more easily accessible, oozed with art of exquisite technique, and contained far more paintings by the artists that Dalí names around this time.⁴ There were fine examples of 15th century Flemish art in Madrid, and ones that already had the attention of his friends. For example, the Prado had purchased Van der Weyden's *Christ Descended from the Cross* in 1925, while Dalí was still in Madrid.⁵ That Bello sent Lorca a postcard depicting this painting in October that year suggests it had some significance for them.⁶

Neither would the new theme of Sebastian have justified the trip, although there were a few examples in Brussels. Among many anonymous “Masters” there was the Master of Saint Sebastian, but he was represented by a *Marriage of the Virgin*. The theme is depicted with stunning technique in one of the museum's masterpieces, Hans Memling's *The Martyrdom of St. Sebastian*, but again, there were more pertinent examples closer to hand, such as Mantegna's in the Louvre, not to mention the local Sebastians in Cadaqués. There were also fine 15th century panels representing Sebastian by Pedro García de Benaberre and Jaume Huguet who, with Lluís Dalmau, represented the peak of the influence of Van Eyck and Flemish painting on Spanish art, and which Dalí could have seen at any time in Catalonia, or with a trip down the coast to Valencia.⁷

The two artists that Dalí cited most in 1927 – in letters and articles – were Bruegel and Bosch, and despite Dalí's distance from the sermonising and moralising intention of their paintings, there are formal similarities between their paintings and Dalí's of that year.⁸ Without specifying which of her brother's paintings she had in mind, Anna Maria wrote that those painted that summer were of “pure fantasy and, at the same time, of a great realism, which recall those of Bruegel and Bosch.”⁹ Both artists were represented in Brussels, but only by minor works, while the Prado had Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* and *The Haycart*, among others, and four important Bruegels, including *The Triumph of Death*, to which I return below.¹⁰

Dalí later confirmed that these paintings were amongst the friends' favourites at the Prado, and he had ample opportunity to see them in the company of Lorca, Buñuel and Pepín Bello when he spent six weeks in Madrid immediately after his trip to Brussels.¹¹ Ramón Gómez de la Serna testified to the magical world of the basement rooms of the Prado that held the paintings by Bosch, Bruegel, Patinir and others, calling it “an underworld, a kind of crypt of the pantheon of art, containing its most distinguished corpses and its most dazzling apparitions”.¹² The renovation of these rooms during the 1920s made this a dynamic and fascinating space for Dalí and his friends to visit.¹³

The fascination of these artists was not concentrated in their technical prowess; they were not the Flemish or “Dutch” artists that painted *best*. In fact, technical skill was sooner jettisoned from Dalí's stated aesthetics than the perceived “primitive” character of these artists, as he dealt with the subtle distances that separated him from Surrealism in response to the publication of Breton's *Surrealism and Painting* in 1928. One problematic area for Dalí at the beginning of his engagement with Surrealism was its trumpeting of art from more ethnographically distant regions of the broad category of the “primitive” than Paris and Brussels. The appreciation of Western European art history that he had laboriously acquired, and of the methods of personal interpretation and appropriation of the meanings of art, set him apart from Breton's easy dismissal of all things religious.

It was in defining and reconciling these differences that Dalí developed his own acceptance of Surrealism. Although he was later careful to distance himself from facile comparisons of his work to Bosch, Dalí initially championed the “imaginative and additional” method that he thought raised Bosch above the “aesthetic, insipid subjectivism” that came from “pure inspiration, religious instinct, the passive state of automatism”.¹⁴

In 1925, Lorca wrote in the 'Ode', “I sing the yearning to be a statue that you resolutely pursue,” and sang “the fear of emotion that awaits you in the street”, which cuts to the quick of Dalí's difficult acceptance of Surrealism and his difference from Breton, who wrote in *Surrealism and Painting*:

Faced with all those religious compositions and pastoral allegories I completely forgot the meaning of the part I was supposed to be playing. The enchantments that the street outside had to offer me were a thousand times more real. [...] I do not mean to suggest that no emotion can be aroused by a painting of Leda [etc.] I simply mean that genius has nothing to gain by following these beaten tracks and taking these circuitous paths. [...] There is not a single work of art that can hold its own before what one can only call, in this sense, our integral *primitivism*.¹⁵

Dalí understood this “integral *primitivism*” to be best attended by the “imaginative and additional” methods of Bosch, or by Vermeer's “patience that is a type of passion” – answering a vital need of the artist to observe, question and understand his place in a world defined by his unique perspectival situation. The totemic art of Papua New Guinea, according to Dalí, responded to this visceral need to understand the real world, and could stand alongside “the film of microscopic fertilization processes” as a worthwhile exercise.¹⁶ Dalí agreed with Breton in dismissing art which was merely an unthinking regurgitation of good taste – what Dalí called art of “the admired period” – but where he differed with Breton, then and always, was in his equal disdain for the “aesthetic, insipid subjectivism” that came from “the passive state of automatism”.

Understandably, these thoughts infiltrated Dalí's ongoing dialogue with Lorca, who gave talks on art between 1928 and 1930 that similarly dealt with these areas of confusion and “evasion”.¹⁷ When Lorca arrived in Catalonia in 1927, Dalí was still developing these ideas, and insisting on his absolute difference from Surrealism, while he had begun the second version of the painting that brought him so close to it, which Lorca gave the provisional title, *The Forest of Apparatuses*. The juxtaposition of wild nature and scientific measurement in this title is the familiar meeting of lyrical and objective viewpoints that had shaped their discussions since Lorca's previous visit in 1925.

Lorca often used the forest as an open metaphor, or rather a stage set on which primal metaphors of mystery, desire or danger could act. In Lorca's 'Ode', Dalí was afraid not only of the emotion that

awaited him in the street, but also fled “the dark forest of incredible forms”. It is a metaphor that translates easily to visual expression, and it has been used through the centuries by artists of significance to Dalí. Dragons emerged from thick forests to be slain by St. George in paintings by Paolo Uccello and Raphael; Botticelli ventured deeper into its significance in *Spring*; Dalí imagined himself in Watteau's verdant groves; Henri Rousseau wandered through an imaginary forest of wild beasts and women; and life began in Bosch's lush Garden of Eden. Gómez de la Serna even referred to the “sylvan interior world” of Bosch, in a pun on the resemblance of his name in Spanish, “El Bosco”, to *bosque*, or forest – a pun which was probably current at the Residencia.¹⁸

By the end of 1927, Dalí was writing poems and testing his ideas in letters to Lorca, whose suggested title for Dalí's painting also points toward Baudelaire's “forest of symbols”, in the poem ‘Correspondances’.¹⁹ But the metaphor had wider currency for Lorca; in a lecture on Góngora that he first gave in 1926 but was going to repeat at the end of 1927 as part of that poet's tercentenary celebrations, he has the poet go on nocturnal “hunting trips”, in the dark forest of the imagination, firing “his arrows only at the best images”.²⁰ As the two friends discussed the painting at Cadaqués, where Lorca had been so alive to the meanings in the landscape two years earlier, the name of the harbour town situated across the rocky peninsula of Cap Creus, Port de la Selva, or “Forest Port”, can only have helped extend the metaphor's *correspondences*.²¹

These exchanges with Lorca came before the publication in 1928 of Breton's books, *Surrealism and Painting* and *Nadja*, and prepared the context of Dalí's reception of them. In *Nadja*, Breton gave, as an example of the perfect poetic image, “a speeding locomotive abandoned for years to the delirium of a virgin forest”.²² In the 1920s, the primeval forest was alive in the fantastical works of scientific speculation of explorer-anthropologists. Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which had impressed Breton after its publication in French translation in 1923, the same year that Freud's *Totem and Taboo* was published in Spanish, influenced in its turn by Salomon Reinach's books on “primitive” cults and religions.²³

Despite the apparent openness of the metaphor, a pattern emerges. The forest is the chosen metaphor to evoke the lost, primal origins and identity of mankind. So it was in Breton's metaphor for *Convulsive Beauty* quoted above. So too was this *uncanny* place – an impenetrable forest concealing the lost intrauterine paradise – the setting for Narcissus's pining for his irretrievably lost sense of self. On Lorca's first visit to Cadaqués in 1925, when Ovid was his guide, he wrote a sonnet ‘Narcissus’, situating Ovid's myth of tragic isolation in the “scrub of a shore” – perhaps the laughably barren “forest” across Cap Creus – where Philomena reclines by a pool of blood, which runs perpetually from love's wound:

Long spectre of affected silver,
the night wind breathing
opened with its grey hand my old wound
and went away. I was desiring!

Wound of love which will give me life
perpetual blood and pure light flowing.
Ravine in which muted Philomena
shall have her forest, pain and soft nest.

Oh what a sweet murmur in my head!
I shall lie down beside the simple flower
where your beauty lies ignored.
And the wandering water will turn yellow.
While my blood runs in the directed and trembling
scrub of the shore.²⁴

As well as the formal similarity of the scene described by Lorca to the one painted by Dalí in *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, the sonnet also suggests threads connecting Narcissus and Sebastian; pain and desire; decapitation, blood and the forest, which Dalí would have traced.

The sonnet also mentions Philomena, a 4th-century Greek Virgin Martyr Saint whose story was mystically revealed to a Dominican tertiary in the 19th-century. The same Diocletian who had killed Sebastian had apparently fallen in love with Philomena when she was thirteen, but when she spurned him he had her scourged, thrown into the sea with two anchors attached, and shot with arrows on three occasions, but when she survived each attempt he finally had her decapitated. Perhaps 19th-century Dominican tertiaries should have got out more.

There is a painting in Brussels that tells a strikingly similar story to Philomena's, and which contains a horrific image of a decapitated body like those in Dalí's *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* and other paintings. Dalí knew the sonnet and its coded meanings before his trip to Brussels, where he cannot fail to have been affected by the image of a decapitated nobleman in a panel of the diptych *Justice of the Emperor Otto III* by Dirk Bouts, despite his familiarity with its reproduction in the Gowans *Masterpieces of the Early Flemish Painters*.²⁵



EMPEROR OTTO'S UNJUST SENTENCE
(Royal Gallery, Brussels)
DIRK BOUTS

LA SENTENCE INJUSTE DE L'EMPEREUR OTTO
(Musée royal, Bruxelles)
F. Hanftaengl, Photo.

Fig 54
Dirk Bouts
Execution of the Innocent Count,
in Gowans No. 7



Fig 55
Dirk Bouts
Execution of the Innocent Count

Bouts was commissioned to paint four panels for the Town Hall in Louvain, but only managed two before he died: the *Execution of the Innocent Count* and the *Ordeal by Fire*, and Dalí saw these in the Musée d'Art Ancien in Brussels. Each is an impressive 324 x 182 cm in its full colour glory and gore, in stark contrast to the tiny, black and white photographic reproductions in the Gowans book. I believe that this was the “Dutch” painting that Dalí had in mind when he told Lorca he wanted to return to Brussels, while he elaborated his first version of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*.

There was certainly scope for Bouts to have been of relevance to Dalí's discussions with his friends at that time. Lorca knew an altarpiece by Bouts in the Royal Chapel in Granada, showing crucifixion, descent and resurrection scenes, as did Melchor Fernández Almagro, who was in Cadaqués in September 1926. In January 1927, Dalí wrote to Lorca that he had seen their friend, Josep Rigol – “El santo Rigol” – who had spent Christmas in Granada with Lorca.

Voragine's *Golden Legend* tells the story of the 11th century Holy Roman Emperor Otto III as a digression in its life of St. Pelagius.²⁶ Otto's Spanish wife – daughter of the king of Aragon – fell in love with a count of the court whom, after rejecting her advances, was beheaded when she falsely accused him of an attempt on her honour. The Count's wife proved his innocence by surviving an ordeal by fire, and so Otto's wife was burned alive. The Count's decapitation recalls that of Philomena who, like Sebastian, was killed by Diocletian, and whose headless corpse was dumped by a gully of blood in Lorca's sonnet, where she is in turn compared to Narcissus. Bouts' image of secular martyrdom can have stirred all of these associations in Dalí's alert imagination, conjuring visual metaphors that had circulated during the previous year.

It is impossible to say where Dalí's attention would have focussed but, if we focus ours on the Count's severed neck, we discover one more connection that reinforces the place of Bouts' painting in the associative network enmeshing Dalí and Lorca. Above, I linked the drawing in the *Secret Life* that illustrated Dalí's recollection of his ambiguous identification with Lorca, to which Dalí added the caption “Head molested by flies”, with the flies that rose from the tomb of Narcissus, and I suggested that it would have amused Lorca. Flies are also visible – if only apparently – in the Gowans reproduction of Bouts, where they seem to buzz around the decapitated corpse of the Count-Philomena-Sebastian-Narcissus. At some point, the gaping wound of the Count's severed neck was painted over with some conveniently placed plants by its squeamish guardians. The painting has since been restored, and these vegetable veils removed, but they were still there in the diminutive reproductions in the Gowans book that Dalí had for reference. In these tiny photographs, the leaves and flowers of the plants can be seen, but not the faintly traced stems, so that it resembles a swarm of flies buzzing around the congealing blood. They are like a multiplication ad absurdum of the flies that have settled on fruit in the Spanish *bodegón* still-lives that Dalí knew from the Prado. A dialogue on transience and transcendence is always implicit in the *Natura morta* genre, and the presence of insects in many *bodegones* underscores their significance as *memento mori*, as Dalí was aware when he conscripted them into his pictorial repertoire.²⁷

Dalí's treatment of a woman's body as such a *memento mori* introduces a theme to his painting which dominates his approach and entrance to Surrealism, and which resonates throughout his career: in *Cenicitas* and the savage reclining bathers that Dalí painted in 1928; spanning his Surrealist years; and on to the late resolutions of primary loss in *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* (1952) and *Pietà* (1982).

Dalí made his first attacks on the reclining female nude – more accurately, a roughly feminised, hermaphrodite body – parallel to his dialogue with Lorca on the sexuality and mortality of the body, under the rubric St Sebastian. He was also already making deliberate use of his readings of Freud, especially after the circumstances of his national service between 1927-8 meant that he spent more of that time reading and writing than painting, and he was increasingly alert to the themes of primary loss, oedipal tragedy and castration threat at the levels of cultural production of popular imagery, and classical and Biblical mythology.

Dalí meticulously planned his bather paintings in which the woman's head was lopped off or shrivelled to redundancy – a violent rhetoric of the anti-halo in which Dalí seemingly vented a rage interiorised since the death of his mother only five years previously. This was an important aspect of

the Surrealist aesthetic that he presented, fully-formed, the following year. Although in a different register to psychoanalysis, the degeneration of the sexual and mortal body – the journey from womb to tomb – was also one of the central themes of Lorca’s poetry. He spoke and wrote of his own death, and would enact and narrate his death and funeral, creating a lasting impression on Dalí. The death, or wishful “dormition” of the archetypal mother, the Virgin Mary, was also the theme of his favourite painting in the Prado, Mantegna’s *Death of the Virgin*.

By the time Dalí painted his bathers as carcasses devoid of femininity, he was able to apply his knowledge of Freud to the theological and art historical contexts of Mantegna’s painting – the Church’s difficult acceptance of Mary’s mortality, eventually resolved in the imagery of the Assumption – as well as the results of long discussions with his friends, with Bello no doubt providing a detailed medical diagnosis and prognosis of the Virgin’s condition. Mantegna continued to provide a focus for Dalí’s theoretical discussions with Lorca as they arrived together at their dialectical aesthetics of St. Sebastian, and his painting of the dead Virgin can never have been far from their thoughts. Mantegna survived as an unnamed presence in ‘Sant Sebastià’, as Dalí revealed in a postscript added to a letter to Lorca at the start of March 1927, when the essay was nearly complete, in response to a comment of Lorca’s:

Why do you want nothing to do with irony? In my article I speak about just that, and I defend it: irony = nakedness, *to see clearly*, to see limpidly, to discover the nakedness of Nature, who, according to *Heraclitus*, *likes to conceal herself*, that’s irony, to paint all of the waves in the sea. Irony! Mantegna ... irony!??²⁸



Fig 56
Mantegna
The Death of the Virgin

It has rightly been assumed that the reference is probably to Mantegna’s Sebastians, but it is also possible that Dalí linked his notion of irony to a discussion with Lorca before the *Death of the Virgin* in the Prado. There was certainly more to Dalí’s thoughts on Mantegna than “... irony!??”

In September 1926, Dalí had made an elliptical allusion to Sebastian in a letter to Lorca, when he told him that he had been painting “*skies like sculptures!*” Juan José Lahuerta has identified the origin of this metaphor for static art that can in some way halt the entropic march of time as de Chirico and, before him, Bernard Berenson. So much of the influence of de Chirico on ‘Sant Sebastià’ originates in Berenson that Lahuerta speculates that his books could have been among those that Dalí bought in Barcelona at the end of 1926 and read during his national service. Yet Berenson’s influence began earlier, through the articles by and about him in *Valori Plastici*.

Berenson described Perugino’s Sebastian “enframed under an arch which opens out on Eden, and measuring, not as in *plein-air* painting, a mite against infinity, but as man should in Eden,

dominant and towering over the horizon.”²⁹ De Chirico’s paintings transmitted these observations on Sebastian, on stopped time and towers, and Dalí was taking note.

Dalí expected his friend to understand his reference to “*skies like sculptures*”, so Lorca was probably also familiar with what Berenson had written about Mantegna, who “forgot that the Romans were people of flesh and blood and painted them all in marble”, or at least with de Chirico’s

development of Berenson's ideas, when he followed him to describe the solidity of the sky in Perugino's *St Sebastian*.³⁰

Although the *St Sebastian* that Berenson described was by Perugino, Lahuerta is sure that it was also the Sebastians that Mantegna had painted that motivated Berenson to insist

on the mineralisation in Mantegna which intensifies the object quality not of things but of bodies. One can well understand how, in March 1927, Dalí exclaimed in one of his letters 'Mantegna ... irony!!??', because, although Berenson did not refer in his text to any *Saint Sebastian* by Mantegna, to which of his painted bodies could this 'forgetting' of the flesh, this marble sorrow be applied more fittingly?³¹

One possible answer to Lahuerta's question is the *Death of the Virgin* – if not exclusively, then in conjunction with his *St Sebastians*. There is no Gowans book on Mantegna and, though we cannot discount other sources, we should remember that Dalí had often stood before this painting with his friends in the Prado, and probably as recently as June 1926, as he assimilated the ideas that would evolve into his aesthetics of *St Sebastian*. Even Dalí's depiction of the sterile womb of the hermaphrodite Sebastian as an eclipsed moon in *Barcelona Mannequin*, later in 1926, relates it thematically to Mantegna's image of the death of the archetypal mother, painted, said Lorca, "by the light of an eclipse".³²

When he had seen Mantegna's *St. Sebastian* in the Louvre that year, prior to reuniting with Lorca in Madrid, he had also had the opportunity to compare Mantegna's treatment with Caravaggio's vivid, monumental *Death of the Virgin*. He saw it in the presence of his mother's sister and his mother's daughter, and memories of Felipa's death from cancer of the uterus cannot have been far below the surface.

Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin* is, at least, complementary to the paintings of *St Sebastian*: as a reflection on the Unamunian *Tragic Sense of Life*; and as a key to Dalí's notion of the irony in Mantegna's effort to deny death – painting flesh as marble, as Berenson had written. The bitter irony in Dalí's mythologisation and mourning of the mother's body in his proto-surrealist nudes continue through the *Enigma of Desire*, and on to the *Assumpta*.



Fig 57
Caravaggio,
The Death of the Virgin

Notes

- ¹ Poesía, 44-45. My translation.
- ² The *Lacemaker* was possibly a model for a portrait Dalí painted of his mother in 1920, when he was only sixteen and probably already knew that his mother was dying of cancer. I explored the implications of this origination of the obsession with Vermeer's painting in my MA dissertation, 'The Visible Man/The Invisible Woman: the absence of Salvador Dalí's mother', (University of Essex, 2004).
- ³ Volumes dedicated to Roger van der Weyden and Hans Memling were published by Vromant & Co. English editions of the same books were published in London by David Nutt. L.J. Kryn published the almost identical *Les Chefs d'oeuvre de Bruegel*.
- ⁴ Among the works that may have interested Dalí, but would not warrant a trip to Belgium, was a *St. Sebastian* by Van Dyck, a *Temptation of St. Anthony* by Lucas van Leyden, a *Franciscan Monk* by Murillo, a *Rest on the Flight to Egypt* by Patinir, and works by Cranach, Rubens and Teniers. The Musée d'Art ancien also housed David, Delacroix, Ingres and Goya, before they were transferred to the Musée d'Art moderne in 1927.
- ⁵ Pantorba, 34.
- ⁶ RES, 114.
- ⁷ Van Eyck visited Spain on a diplomatic mission, 1427-9. His paintings caused a sensation, and his *Adoration of the Lamb* was particularly influential on Spanish art. Lluís Dalmau travelled to Flanders in 1431, and established the influence of Flemish naturalism in Valencia on his return. Dalí knew Jaume Huguet's *Altarpiece of St. Sebastian and Santa Tecla* in Barcelona Cathedral. See Ainaud de Lasarte, 96, 98, 103.
- ⁸ In 1927, Dalí wrote that his new paintings inaugurated "a new orbit, equidistant between Cubism and Surrealism on the one hand and a primitive art such as the Bruegels' on the other". In October 1927, 'Temas actuales a izquierda y derecha' names Mantegna as an exemplary painter, along with Bruegel and Bosch (*¿Por qué se ataca a La Gioconda?*, 16-18), and Dalí also used Bosch as a character in his fantastic prose, 'Christmas in Brussels', published in November 1927 (*¿Por qué se ataca a La Gioconda?*, 20-21).
- ⁹ AMD, 124.
- ¹⁰ The Musée d'Art ancien in Brussels held *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, *The Naming of Bethlehem*, *The Adoration of the Magi*, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Bruegel, an *Adoration of the Burghers* from the studio of Bosch, *The Carrying of the Cross* by a follower of Bosch, a *Temptation of St. Anthony* from the school of Bosch, and a copy of Bosch's *Temptation of St. Anthony* triptych in Lisbon.
- ¹¹ 'To Spain, Guided by Dalí', quoted in DJDG, 158. Lorca may have had Patinir in mind when he wrote, "I've been across the green waters of neuralgia two times, but fortunately I'm fine now, and I expect that after Epiphany you'll see me in Madrid. [...] My silence has been necessary ..., I've imposed it on myself. Why scratch the little wounds I bear beneath my tunic?" Lorca to Adolfo Salazar, 1st January 1922. Gershator, 25.
- ¹² Gómez de la Serna, 41.
- ¹³ There were five rooms of Flemish, German and Dutch artists, containing works by Quentin Metsys, Roger Van der Weyden, Gossaert, Bouts, Petrus Christus, Isenbrandt, Robert Campin, the Masters of the Holy Blood, Hoogstraten, Patinir and Bruegel, as well as seven works by Bosch, the majority with several panels. A renovation of these rooms was completed on December 12th 1927. Nearby, were the rooms with Spanish 15th-century artists, with a strong presence of Catalan *primitives*, mostly incorporated in the twenties and thirties (Pantorba, 127, 144). Other works by Bosch could be seen at the Escorial.
- ¹⁴ In June 1928, Dalí wrote,
- There are moments by Bosch which seem to obey this surreality, contained in reality itself; Bosch's process, however, is clearly imaginative and additional, active after all, and, often, a sudden rupture separates reality and surreality. This rupture disappears when imagination is replaced by pure inspiration, religious instinct, the passive state of automatism, etc.
- 'Joan Miró', *L'Amic de les Arts*, Sitges, no. 26, 30th June 1928, p. 202, as translated in *Early Years*, 224. On "aesthetic, insipid subjectivism" which corrupts the intellect, 'Realidad y sobrerrealidad', *La Gaceta Literaria*, Madrid, no. 44, 15th October 1928, p. 7, translated as 'Reality and Surreality', *Early Years*, 225-6.
- ¹⁵ Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 3.
- ¹⁶ 'Realidad y sobrerrealidad', *La Gaceta Literaria*, Madrid, no. 44, 15th October 1928, p. 7.
- ¹⁷ See Maurer for 'Imagination, Inspiration, Evasion', pp. 153-62, and 'Sketch of the New Painting', pp. 167-79.
- ¹⁸ Gómez de la Serna, 42.

¹⁹ Baudelaire, 'Correspondences', in *Fleurs du mal* (1857), in William Aggeler, trans., *The Flowers of Evil* (Fresno, CA: Academy Library Guild, 1954) The first stanza reads: "Nature is a temple in which living pillars / sometimes give voice to confused words; / Man passes there through forests of symbols / which look at him with understanding eyes."

²⁰ Maurer, 19.

²¹ Pla, *Cadaqués*, 19.

²² Mary Ann Caws names a few of the oppositions conjured – "motion and rest, speed and halting, the phallic thrust and the virginity of the forest." ('The poetics of surrealist love' in *Surrealist Love Poems*, 15). We could add the masculine mechanical, overwhelmed by the feminine natural – allusions to the processes that led to the mythology of the Garden of Eden and the devouring female of the *Angelus* myth.

²³ The abridged edition of *The Golden Bough* was published in 1922, and a partial French translation, *Le rameau d'or* appeared in 1923 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1923).

²⁴ Lorca, 'Narcissus', dedicated to José María de Sagarra, 1925. Dalí must have heard or read, or even received a copy of it, or a variation. The version that appears in *Obras Completas* has the following variation in the final stanza:

Oh what a sweet murmur in my head! / I shall lie down beside the simple flower / where your beauty floats without soul. / And the wandering water will turn yellow, / while my blood runs in the pungent and damp / scrub of the shore. (LDAT, 72-3. My translations)

²⁵ Dirk Bouts (c.1410-20, d.1475). His real name may have been Theodorik Romboutszoon, and he sometimes appears as Thierry Bouts, as in Reinach's *Apollo*, which has an even smaller reproduction than in Gowans.

²⁶ The historical Otto III may himself have interested Dalí, being a close follower of Charlemagne, who visited his tomb in Aachen, or Aix-la Chapelle in 1000 CE. Influenced by the ruins of Rome, and perhaps by his Byzantine mother, Otto devised a dream of restoring a universal Empire formed by the union of the Papacy, Byzantium and Rome. His admirers called him the *Mirabilia mundi*, the "wonder of the world."

²⁷ The arrival of flying insects is sometimes used as clumsy academic trope for the transcendence of the next world, in contrast to the decadence of human life. This is the explanation given by Eva Blanch, Anna Capella and Mariona Seguranyes for the fly and wilting flowers that Francesc Masriera Manovens included in a portrait of his dead sister, *Retrat de la difunta Elisa Masriera* (1883) (*ME*, 68).

²⁸ Poesía, 48-49. In Santos Torroella's transcription, the words "Mantegna ... ironía!?" follow the signature, but they are in fact the continuation of Dalí's marginal postscript on irony and nakedness, in relation to the martyr, before he ran out of space.

²⁹ Berenson, 126

³⁰ Giorgio de Chirico, 'Il senso architettonico della pittura antica', *Valori Plastici* no. 5/6 (1920). See also Berenson, 146-58

³¹ Lahuerta: 1997, 288

³² 'To Spain, Guided by Dalí', *Vogue*, New York, 15th May 1950

3.3 Little things

In 1927, Dalí wrote several poems aesthetically reminiscent of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. The poems enumerated apparently meaningless objects, mimicking the detached objectivity that he claimed for his paintings. He called these poems “stupid”, but he took them seriously enough to rework and refine them for deliberate effect. Several were versions of a 'Poema de las cosas' – a poem of “little things”. He wrote to Lorca, too, about the importance to his poetics of these little things. This shift to the diminutive in his paintings and poems leads us, once again, to a specific type of religious art: that of the Italian Quattrocento artists that followed Giotto.

Ortega grouped these Italian “primitives” together with Flemish artists in a section of his essay 'On the point of View of the Artist', in 1924. His analysis of their contribution to the evolution of the artist's viewpoint explains their appeal to Dalí, and possibly helped direct his change of style; they too directed their gaze selectively toward “little things”. According to Ortega,

The primitive picture is, in a certain sense, the addition of many small pictures, each of which is independent and painted from a close viewpoint. The painter has directed an exclusive and analytical gaze at each one of the objects. Hence comes the fascinating richness of these fifteenth-century panels. We can never run out of things to see in them. We are always discovering some new little interior picture which we had failed to notice. On the other hand, they exclude contemplation as a whole. Our eyes have to wander step by step over the painted surface, lingering at the same viewpoints which the painter himself had taken.¹

In early 1927, during the progressive elaboration of his two versions of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, Dalí sent Lorca a playfully constructed collage poem of “little things” – bits of wool, string, tin and a halo cut from card or felt, entitled *The Birth of Baby Jesus. Homage to Fra Angelico*.² It is not dated, but the title suggests that Dalí could have sent it as a Christmas card, perhaps at the end of 1926 or beginning of 1927, when Twelfth Night is celebrated in Spain. The three pieces of wool could be the kings' moustaches, a common sign for a bureaucratic type in the *putrefacto* caricatures Dalí drew. There is only one painting by Fra Angelico in Spain that the friends could have seen together – the *Annunciation* in the Prado – and although it does have a scene of the *Adoration of the Kings* in its predella, the Gowans volume on this painter was probably the source of Dalí's image.³

The collage is an eloquent comment on the strangeness of many Quattrocento paintings, until their coded images are deciphered. Fra Angelico's peculiarly empty scenes, dotted with inexplicably floating objects leave a similar impression to an ancient text, when we barely recognise half of the words and the syntax is confusing, but we get the gist. As a boy, Dalí must have had the same sensation when he saw the *Mockery of Christ* in St. Mark's, Florence, for example, reproduced in his Gowans book.⁴

Another of Fra Angelico's works reproduced in Gowans, *Saints Cosmo and Damian on the Cross*, shows an attempted double martyrdom, which fails when the executioners' arrows turn back on the archers. On the following page is the scene of their subsequent successful martyrdom, *The Martyrdom of Saints Cosmo and Damian*, which is in Gowans but also hung in the Louvre where Dalí could have seen it

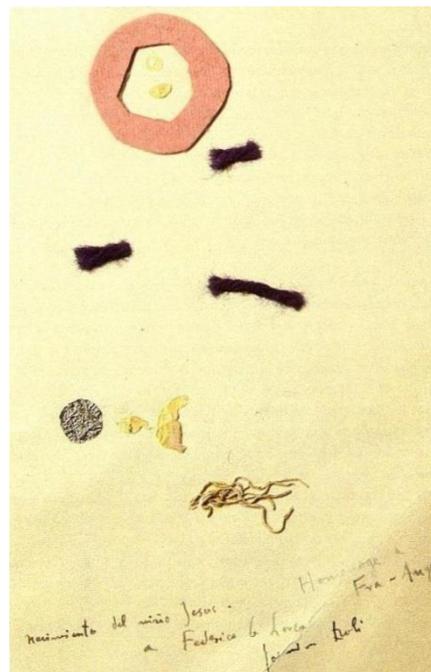


Fig 58
Salvador Dalí
The Birth of Baby Jesus.
Homage to Fra Angelico (ca. 1926-7)



Fig 59
Fra Angelico,
The Mockery of Christ,
in Gowans no. 21

Sebastian's predicament. Despite the differences between Sts. Francis and Sebastian, there are similarities in the humility of their faith and in their situations – think of images of St. Francis receiving the stigmata through sharp shafts of solid light that pierce his flesh like arrows.

The pioneer artist of the Franciscan, humanist wave that swept over Europe was Giotto, whose *rhetoric of the halo* Dalí had adopted only a month or two before he began *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. Around that time, Dalí saw Giotto's *Altarpiece of St. Francis* in its full glory in the Louvre, which demonstrated the two distinctive Franciscan attributes: the main panel has St. Francis receiving the stigmata, while he goes about his humble work of feeding the birds in the predella.

Wölfflin gives an indication of the appeal of Giotto's art to Dalí while he focussed on “little things”, “painted well”. Giotto, he writes, “like the preachers and poets of the school of St. Francis of Assisi, undertook to expound the sacred story, and to elucidate it by intimate details.”⁵

Dalí had already discussed St. Francis with Lorca. In the summer of 1925, following Lorca's first visit to Cadaqués, Dalí wrote to him about their projected book of *putrefact* drawings and texts. Unlike the cruel caricatures of Grosz or Pascin, wrote Dalí, they had “elevated the stupid

earlier in 1926. This painting combines two devices that Dalí had appropriated from religious art that year: a dramatic use of the *rhetoric of the halo* and the dual identification of the saints. It fits into the same nexus of meanings as the Bouts panel – the saints' decapitated bodies lie on the ground while their heads roll around, secured within their spherical halos. Like the portraits Dalí painted using the *rhetoric of the halo*, identity is diffused and confused – two saints are named, but three lie dead. One lies very similarly to the Count in Bouts' painting, and the flecks of blood on his gown also resemble flies or ants crawling over him. What's more the whole scene takes place in a landscape similar to the coast around Cadaqués.

The attention to small details that is common to Van Eyck in the North and the Quattrocento artists of Florence can be traced to the influence of St. Francis of Assisi, who had a huge impact on medieval humanist theology, promoting life in imitation of Christ and in community with nature. St. Francis preached the humility to accept that we are part of a cosmic whole that we cannot hope to understand, and to welcome the parameters of our existence as divinely decreed – an interesting counterpoint to the ongoing discussion between Dalí and Lorca of the correct attitude to assign to St.



Fig 60
Fra Angelico,
The Martyrdom of Sts. Cosmo and Damian,
in Gowans, no. 21

man; *idiocy*, to a *lyrical* category. We have arrived at the *lyrics of human stupidity*; but with a love and a tenderness for that stupidity so sincere it is almost Franciscan."⁶ Freud had taught Dalí that the purpose of humour is to laugh in the face of death, and this was just what motivated his tender Franciscan regard for the comical stupidity of martyrdom in the funny little scenes in his Gowans books.

For his part, Lorca considered St. Francis of Assisi the epitome of his own humanistic, or pantheistic, faith in the meanings that flutter about us, and used the forest metaphor to describe the mystery of nature that was revealed to St. Francis.⁷ In 1920, Lorca had written to a friend about the consolation he found in St. Francis during crises of faith: "In my meditations with the poplars and the waters, I've arrived at the Franciscan stance of Francis Jammes. [...] Well do I know that the dawn keeps a hidden key in strange forests, but I'll know how to find it."⁸ The metaphor applied to St. Francis helps explain Lorca's description of Dalí's painting as a "forest of apparatuses". He used the metaphor again to describe Góngora's poetic method – firing his arrows in a forest teeming with images – and also his own: "Right now I'm involved in my work *St. Francis of Assisi*, which is something completely new and strange. [...] In my soul is a forest full of nests which come to life with the breeze of my great passion."⁹

It is no coincidence that Lorca and Dalí were thinking about St. Francis in 1926. It was the quincentenary of the saint's death, commemorated in Spain and Italy with numerous publications illustrated with the art inspired by him.¹⁰ The Franciscan Order held an important exhibition in Madrid that ran from late 1926 to early 1927: just the period when Dalí wandered into his own Franciscan *forest of apparatuses* in search of "little things". Works by many of Spain's great Baroque artists displayed the quiet, contemplative nature of its Franciscan mysticism, to which I return later; El Greco, Zurbarán, Murillo and Ribera all painted St. Francis receiving the stigmata.

The saint's influence came earlier in his native land, and it was the Italian Quattrocento artists that celebrated the various aspects of his life most enthusiastically. In the summer of 1926, in the wake of his trip to Paris and expulsion from San Fernando, Dalí was looking for artistic direction, and these were precisely the artists that de Chirico was referring to when he recommended his readers to return to the "masters".¹¹ Dalí appreciated the apparent objectivity of the Italians' attention to meticulous detail – its elucidation of "little things" – in contrast to the forceful persuasive methods of the Spanish Baroque, at least as a model for his own search for a *rigorous logic of fantasy*.

While none of this implies any interest in religion *per se* on Dalí's part, when Lorca turned to St. Francis for inspiration it was not for the art inspired by him but for spiritual comfort. He was helped to understand Francis's humanistic, altruistic faith by Unamuno, whose essays he was reading when he developed the "Franciscan stance" that he arrived at in 1920.¹²

St. Francis' *Canticle to the Sun* had been one of the inspirations for Lorca's first publicly staged play, *The Curse of the Butterfly*, which was met with almost universal ridicule in 1922, as witnessed by Rafael Barradas, who painted decorations for it.¹³ Dalí saw Barradas in Barcelona over Christmas, and considering his focus on "little things" at that time, it is possible that their conversations had extended to Lorca's fanciful, "Franciscan stance" regarding the lives of insects in that play.

Insects became an important part of Dalí's Surrealist imagery: flies, butterflies, ants, locusts and praying mantises creep through his paintings, starting with the flies buzzing around the rotting carcass of a donkey in *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. Dalí released a swarm of connotations when he transferred the flies buzzing around the heads of the Count in the *Bouts* painting, and Cosmo or Damian by Fra Angelico, from the decapitated body of Philomena to the donkey. Dalí's flies are not simply copied, but analysed, interpreted and appropriated for personal, coded meaning. The meanings that they carried for Dalí may be associated with Lorca's Franciscan poetry, but they were supplemented with scientific information from Buñuel, who studied entomology in Madrid. This was made clear two years later with the ants that crawled out of a hand in Dalí and Buñuel's film, *Un Chien andalou*.

The Curse of the Butterfly, deals with the unrequited love of a beetle for a butterfly, having been corrupted by the discovery of a poem 'O, Woman Unattainable, you I love' – a parody of the romantic poetry of Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, another Andalusian.¹⁴ The humour in Lorca's approach is self-

deprecating and tragic, for it refers to Lorca's own impossible, homosexual love and the inevitable pain that his abandonment to romantic notions always caused him.

Dalí's painting, with its buzzing insects, acquired its second title of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* from conversations with Lorca and with a colourful local character, Lydia, during summer 1927. The phrase was one she used to explain her own misdirected love for Eugenio d'Ors, evoking the fatality of desire through a metaphor from the insect world.

The threat to Dalí's integrity that he felt within his dual identification with Lorca is at the centre of the network of meanings attached to the painting. A few years later, firmly into his Surrealist practice – after Dalí had learnt to categorise the fatality of desire in Freudian terms of Death Instinct, Pleasure Principle, Primary Narcissism and original bisexuality – Dalí left a clue to the personal motivations for the painting. In 1933, Dalí gave Paul Éluard an erotic drawing “to entertain him for a moment while at his sanatorium in Switzerland”.¹⁵ An “average bureaucrat” inserts one finger into a girl's anus, while another hesitates at the edge of her labia. Below, Dalí has written “honey is sweeter than blood”, confirming the bureaucrat's preference for “honey”. In this drawing, the choice is treated as a joke, but in 1927, any laughter would have masked Dalí's genuine anxiety. Blood, too, was everywhere in the paintings of 1926-9, coursing through swollen veins and running from decapitated heads.

Dalí's appropriation of images from Franciscan art played a crucial role in his transition into Surrealism. Franciscan mysticism meant an acceptance of things as they emerge from a schema that we do not have access to, easily comparable to the subconscious. De Chirico – who took Italian Franciscan artists as his model – stated that he saw more with his eyes closed, an idea that Breton repeated in *Surrealism and Painting*:

In order to respond to the necessity, upon which all serious minds now agree, for a total revision of real values, the plastic work of art will either refer to a *purely internal model* or will cease to exist.¹⁶

The primacy of internal vision was a tenet of Bernard Berenson, who, as Lahuerta has established, was an important source of ideas for de Chirico, although it is doubtful that Breton saw Berenson as a kindred spirit. The Gowans series had already hinted to Dalí the value of Berenson for understanding these artists – five of its books on Florentine artists were selected and made available as a single, hardback volume, *The Masterpieces of the Florentine Painters*, and the publishers acknowledged that they had been guided in their selection of works by Berenson's *The Florentine Painters of the Renaissance*.¹⁷

Dalí could have obtained, through Anselm, a copy of Berenson's *A Siennese painter of the Franciscan Legend*, containing 26 illustrations in collotype: an early form of mechanical colour reproduction. This book, published in 1909, claimed a place in art history for the relatively unknown Franciscan artist, Stefano di Giovanni, “il Sassetta”, whom Berenson compared with Giotto – although several of the panels that Berenson attributed to Sassetta were reassigned by Longhi in 1940 to another, slightly later hand, known today as the Master of the Osservanza.¹⁸

The Osservanza Master's works are hilariously fascinating; his *St. Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold*, in the Metropolitan Museum, shows the saint startled by a rabbit. The focus of Anthony's gaze was originally a more readily explicable pile of treasure – St. Anthony's second temptation – but it was later overpainted with a harmless rabbit to give him Franciscan appeal. The Master's panels, with their

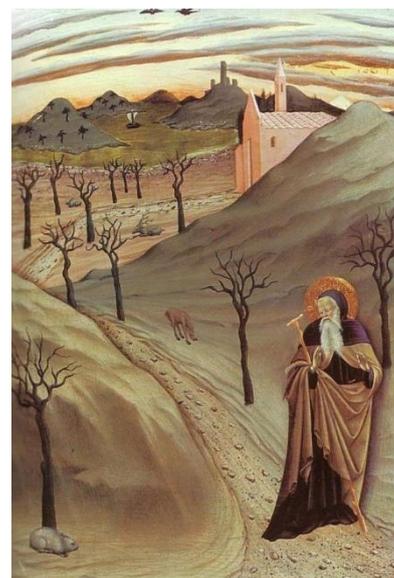


Fig 61
Osservanza Master
St. Anthony Tempted by a Heap of Gold (c. 1435)

strange little trees and creatures, fit into Dalí's declared Franciscan sympathy for "little things". They also suggest the appeal of two particular Surrealist artists, despite Dalí's caution. One was Miró – whose own *little things* float across his canvases with a Quattrocento disregard for gravity – and the other was Yves Tanguy. The influence of both is acknowledged, but there is more that can be said about Tanguy, especially, in the light of comparisons with Sassetta or the Osservanza Master.

Secret took at face value Dalí's declaration to Tanguy's nephew that he had stolen everything from his uncle, and arbitrarily chose Tanguy's *The Storm (Black Landscape)* (1926), as "perhaps the most convincing and direct evidence in support of the thesis that Tanguy showed the way", yet there was much in Dalí's new paintings that did not come from Tanguy.¹⁹ While the open, blue-grey spaces and strange organic shapes that Dalí painted over the next three years might resemble later paintings by Tanguy, it is hard to see how he could have been influenced by the muddy darkness of *The Storm* or even *L'anneau d'invisibilité* (1925), which he could have seen in *La Révolution surréaliste* in June 1926. Dalí began the *forest of apparatuses* painting around that time, but Tanguy's technical sloppiness at that time contrasts with Dalí's insistence on the importance of painting "well", expressed to Lorca in September 1926. Dawn Adès has already drawn attention to the difference, as well as the similarity, between Dalí's paintings and Tanguy's:

Tanguy's paintings have a rudimentary naivety and immediacy; a self-taught painter, he uses the simplest, almost child-like means to present his enigmatic images. Dalí, on the other hand, also makes sporadic use of an almost academic realism.²⁰

If we relegate Tanguy to an incidental role, we can make a direct comparison between Dalí's *Forest of Apparatuses* – or *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* as it was retitled – and a Franciscan antecedent, Sassetta's *The Journey of the Magi*. Although Dalí's source was probably a colour colotype reproduction in Berenson's book, only a black-and-white photograph of the second, more elaborated version of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* has survived, and so I reproduce both paintings in greyscale here to aid comparison.



Fig 62
Yves Tanguy,
The Storm (1926)

Without the distraction of the original blue tones of the two paintings, we might wonder why Tanguy has ever been mentioned in connection with Dalí's painting. In contrast, Sassetta's *Journey of the Magi* provided strange images for Dalí to pluck from their original context as religious art, and adapt to his own meticulous work of image-building. The contrast between Tanguy and Sassetta illustrates the contrast between Dalí's evolving methodology and the dominant automatism that discouraged him from embracing Surrealism in 1927.



Fig 63
Il Sassetta
Journey of the Magi (ca. 1435)

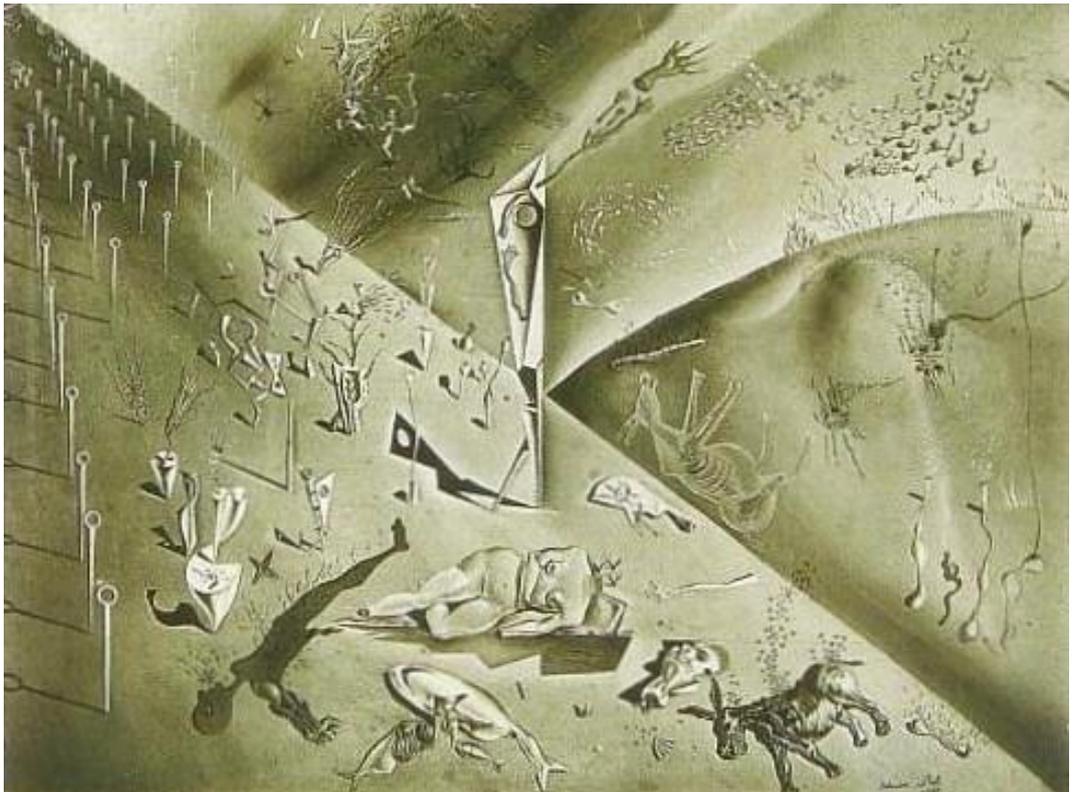


Fig 64
Salvador Dalí
Honey is Sweeter than Blood (1927)

Notes

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- ¹ In José Ortega y Gasset, *Velázquez, Goya and The Dehumanisation of Art* (Tr. Alexis Brown, London: Studio Vista, 1972) p. 26.
- ² *Poesía*, 51, reproduced as if between March and April 1927, but not dated.
- ³ Pantorba, 52.
- ⁴ Fra Angelico, *The Mockery of Christ* c. 1441. Fresco, 187 x 151. Museo di San Marco, Cell 7, Florence.
- ⁵ Wölfflin, 7.
- ⁶ Letter from Dalí in Cadaqués to Lorca in Granada, summer 1925. *Poesía*, 16-7.
- ⁷ Tasende and González del Valle, 12.
- ⁸ Letter to Adriano del Valle, 19th September 1920. Gershator, 9.
- ⁹ Gershator, 10.
- ¹⁰ St. Francis of Assisi lived from 1182 to 1226.
- ¹¹ See Massimo Carrà on the “new consideration and appreciation of certain early artists, such as Giotto, or Renaissance figures from Masaccio to Piero della Francesca” in Italy in the 1920s (‘The crisis of the avant-garde and Magic Realism’, in *Realismo mágico*, Eng. tr., p. 294).
- ¹² Letter to Adriano del Valle, 19th September 1920. Gershator, 9.
- ¹³ When Dalí began three months leave from his National Service, in June 1927, he joined his friends in Barcelona, including Rafael Barradas. Lorca's sources for the play included Christ's Sermon on the Mount, St. Francis' *Canticle to the Sun*, Edmond Rostand, Maurice Maeterlinck, Albert Roussel, André Gide, Manuel de Falla, and the entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre, whom Gide called “the insects' Homer” in his dialogues on homosexuality, *Corydon* (Binding, 93-5).
- ¹⁴ Binding, 91-2.
- ¹⁵ *WM*, 132.
- ¹⁶ Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*, 5.
- ¹⁷ See Lahuerta: 1997, 288. The Gowans volumes were Vol. I – Giotto; Vol. II – Orcagna, Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino; Vol. III – Fra Angelico; Vol. IV – Uccello, Veneziano, Masaccio and Castagno; Vol. V – Fra Filippo Lippi.
- ¹⁸ Stefano di Giovanni, “il Sassetta” (1392-c.1450), Master of the Osservanza (active c. 1430-50).
- ¹⁹ Secretst, 86-8.
- ²⁰ Adès (1978), 45.

3.4 The Triumph of Death



Fig 65
Il Sassetta
Journey of the Magi (ca. 1435)

At the front of the procession in Sassetta's *Journey of the Magi* is a monkey sitting on a donkey's pack. The donkey is followed by a man wearing what looks like a giant, woolly condom. The donkey's burden is two chests filled with treasure, but it can also be seen as its body split open along its spine to reveal the "precious stones" inside – referring us to a key image in Dalí's writings on his paranoiac-critical method, and suggesting that this method was already in operation when Dalí painted *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*:

Nothing can prevent me from recognising the multiple presence of simulacra in the example of the multiple image, even if one of its states adopts the appearance of a putrefied donkey and even if the donkey in question is actually and horribly putrefied, covered in thousands of flies and ants, and, as in this case one may not of themselves suppose the meaning of the pure states of image outside the notion of time, nothing can convince me that this cruel putrefaction of the donkey could be anything more than the hard and blinding reflection of new precious stones.¹

The meanings attached by Dalí to the "rotten" or "putrefied" donkeys continued to multiply through his paranoiac-critical method, but their basis was inherent in this image that Dalí appropriated. Dalí made the point that his real, rotting donkey was opposed to Juan Ramón Jiménez's sentimental, imagined one, but even before Jiménez wrote his *Platero y yo*, donkeys carried a burden of religious symbolism. As Jesus's preferred mode of transport, Dalí knew many of them from the Gowans books, carrying Maries to Bethlehem, witnessing Nativities, and on Flights to Egypt. In the Franciscan aesthetic of the Quattrocento, the cruciform stigmata on donkeys' backs are a mark of their stoic acceptance of suffering as God's will – one possible attitude to adopt in St. Sebastian's situation.



Fig 66
Il Sassetta
Journey of the Magi, detail

That Dalí was keen to add his own meanings to the idea of the rotting donkey is clear from his subsequent repetition of the image. He gave the title 'L'Âne pourri', 'The Rotting Donkey', to a painting, and later to an essay on his paranoiac-critical method, which I suggest made reference to his engagement with Sassetta's donkey, and the precious stones buried in its entrails. In another essay, 'Liberation of the fingers', Dalí imputed the origin of the image to the memory of a donkey carcass he had once seen, coinciding with similar recollections by Buñuel and Bello.

Adès has written that the coincidental recollection was probably channelled through a "complex of associations" that led Dalí, Buñuel and Bello to similar thoughts at the same time.² Lorca was a key player in the interpretative games that nurtured that complex, and we would expect to find him connected in some way to the donkey. Besides being a friend of Juan Ramón Jiménez, and defender of his donkey Platero, he was working on his own poetry of gypsy romance during the period of our interest, in which horses and riders were prominent tropes. In 1926, Lorca published 'San Miguel' in the first issue of the literary review *Litoral*, which had many contributors among the Residencia group with whom Dalí was in close contact that summer.³ The poem opens with a religious procession of mules loaded with sunflowers.

Like Dalí, Lorca was happy to playfully adopt religious images for his own purposes, and the comical red horse trotting through a Mironian landscape that he drew around that time reinforces his place in the complex of equine associations. It appears to have been inspired by an illustration that he and Dalí saw in a renowned illustrated Apocalypse in Girona Cathedral, when they attended Easter Mass there in 1925.⁴ This red horse is not so distant a relative of the rotting donkey as it might seem.

Gibson has pointed out the breast-like appearance of the rounded "hill" on the right of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* that has been added to the original version, and which he suggests may have originated with Tanguy.⁵ Nevertheless, there is another painting that may sit more pertinently alongside the Sassetta as a source for Dalí, and which was firmly within the "complex of associations" that connected Dalí to his Residencia friends: Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Triumph of Death* – one of the jewels of the newly renovated lower galleries of the Prado, which Dalí had revisited in May 1926.⁶

A plunging diagonal movement in Bruegel's composition sweeps sinful bodies into the mouth of Hell. Half-buried mule carcasses are scattered in the middle distance. If Gibson is right, and Dalí meant the hill to represent a breast, then its position would correspond to the entrance to Hell in Bruegel's painting – as if identifying the mother's body as the instigator for man's Dance of Death.⁷ It is not impossible that Dalí was making such deliberately calculated pictorial decisions; after all, he painted few paintings during 1927, and spent much of his time absorbing "infinite old and new things to read."⁸ Plausibly, then, the matching of breast and Hell would be religious allegory treated to the Freudian interpretation that he was immersed in.

Triumphant Death, in Bruegel's painting, tramples the unfortunates under the hooves of a red horse, as he swings his scythe above his head. This is a painting that Dalí and Lorca knew well from visits to the Prado, and which they had possibly seen together in 1926. Lorca might have also had Bruegel's red horse in mind when he drew the Whore of Babylon offering her Chalice of Impurity: again, the implication would be that corruption has its origin in the body of a woman – the primary object.

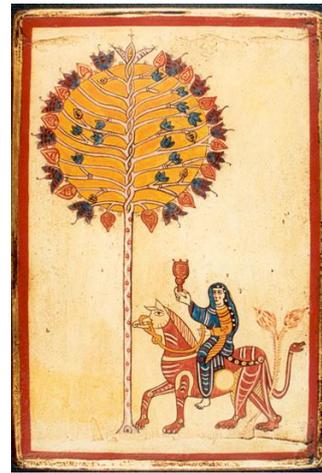


Fig 67
'The Whore of Babylon riding the many-headed beast, and brandishing the Chalice of Impurity', *Codex Gerundensis*

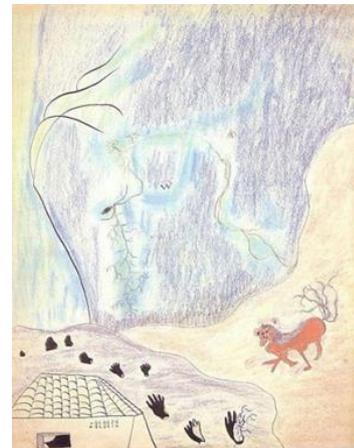


Fig 68
Federico García Lorca
'Red horse' (ca. 1926-7)



Fig 69
 Pieter Bruegel the Elder
The Triumph of Death (ca. 1562)

Perhaps it was also with the brutal allegory of *The Triumph of Death* in mind that Lorca coupled a Bruegelian warning –Death’s swinging scythe – to a Franciscan and Unamunian image of passing time when he advised Dalí to create his own myths through the power of his own objective imagination in the final stanza of the 'Ode':

Do not watch the hourglass with membranous wings,
 nor the hard scythe of allegories.
 Always dress and undress your brush in the air
 facing the sea full of ships and sailors.⁹

Notes

¹ From 'L'Âne pourri', *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, no.1, July 1930, in *Obra Completa*, IV, 201-7. My translation. The article was motivated by Dalí's concerns of 1930, within Surrealism, but the title harks back to 1926, suggesting that certain themes were already alive then.

² Adès, 'Morphologies of desire', 140.

³ Lorca, 'San Miguel (Granada)', in *Poema del Cante Jondo/Romancero gitano*, 251-3.

⁴ In the *Codex Gerundensis* (c.976), in the Diocesan Museum in Girona. This is a version of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* – written around two hundred years earlier by Beatus of Liébana.

⁵ Gibson gives the example of *Belomancie* (DJDG, 266).

⁶ Gómez de la Serna, 41

⁷ Pantorba compares the processional composition of *The Triumph of Death* to the *danses macabres* of medieval poets. Pantorba, 37.

⁸ Santos Torroella speculates that the letter was sent on 18th-20th January 1927. *Poesía*, 46-47. My translations. Dalí chided Lorca for not responding to his letters.

⁹ Shaw, 66-7. Unamuno used the image "My breast is an hourglass / through which flows blood", in *Teresa* (1923), and in his *Cristo de Velázquez* (1920), the hourglass marks eternity.

3.5 Cinderella shall go to the Surrealist Ball

I conclude Part I by reviewing the dramatic change in Dalí's conception and depiction of the self as an impervious marble sailor in the *Composition with Three Figures* in spring 1926 and its descent from Pygmalion's pedestal to become a living body of sexual and mortal flesh in *Cenicitas*, during autumn 1927 and into 1928. This was the culmination of a process in which Dalí adopted certain methods and meanings of religious art that similarly addressed the tragic human condition. The personal and aesthetic concerns that impelled Dalí to present his new image of the self as a polymorphous, autonomous, biological entity are also those that thrust him into the adventure of his Surrealist period, which I look at in Part II.

In July 1927, Dalí presented his new aesthetic outlook in the poetic essay that he named 'Sant Sebastià', after the focal figure of his dialogue with Lorca on the exposed, vulnerable body.¹ When the Sebastian theme arose in 1926, Dalí depicted a central, integral, ideal body of marble, indifferent to – or hopelessly alienated from – the perils of carnal desire surrounding him. When he returned to the scene of the *Composition*, equipped with revelations of the uncanny Other within, of shadow selves, and of Apollonian-Dionysian ambiguity, gleaned from Freud, Unamuno, Nietzsche, Picasso, de Chirico and of course Lorca, coupled with a reinforced iconological understanding of original sin and martyred saints, Dalí relocated the exterior threat of desire to within the polymorphous self.

Dalí started the painting now entitled *Cenicitas* towards the end of summer 1927. While it takes a little licence to describe this painting as a St Sebastian, it was the principal or only work painted in the months following the publication of 'Sant Sebastià', and if we are to look for a painted counterpart to that essay I think it is *Cenicitas* that best responds to the challenges of Dalí's *aesthetics* of Sebastian. It similarly fixes the physiological self under consideration in the position of the martyr, exposing it to the scalpel incisions of a graphic autopsy: a vulnerable, mortal body of flesh, artery, nerve and quantified pain; its physical and moral integrity probed and analysed.

Physiology and psychology were added to geometry as sciences applicable to the objective representation of the self. This is no longer the body as pristine exterior, constructed in terms of classical perfection and harmony, but a body deconstructed – *dis-integrated* – by the scalpel and the paintbrush; by definition, Polykleitos's classical canon of balance and harmony had its limits. If it were only for its distorted echoes of the *Composition*, *Cenicitas* would still retain an echo of classical art, but there are other important resonances.

When Dalí first questioned the integrity of the statue by making it a loosely articulated dummy in *Barcelona Mannequin*, he posed it in a parodic contrapposto that mocked the classical canon. *Cenicitas* was a further declaration of the teeming biological world below the harmonic surface; Dalí

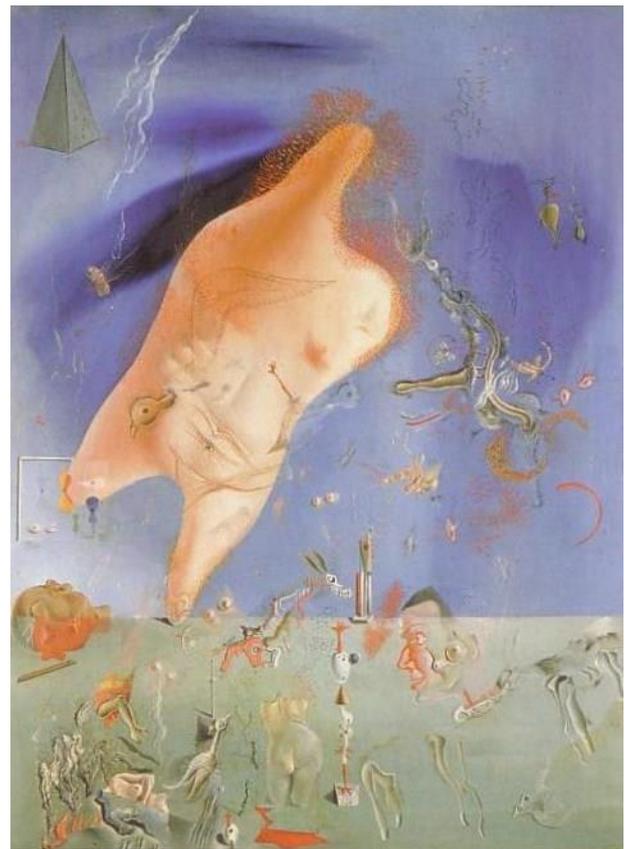


Fig 70
Salvador Dalí
Cenicitas (1928)

now had his mutilated carcass pirouette on one stump at the Cadaqués shoreline, its other stump raised in its best attempt at a coquettish posture *de la jambe libre*.

Dalí went deeper than the split psyche of the *Barcelona Mannequin* to examine the body at the level of nerve and artery – passion as blood; pain and desire as synaptic reactions. Whether or not Dalí still “yearn[ed] to be a statue” himself, he recognised the tragic condition of human existence: irremediably sexual and mortal; in entropic degradation within its porous, fleshy boundaries. As Lorca hinted in the ode, once the hourglass has been turned at birth, not even marble will forever withstand the tides of time – the march of erosion and putrefaction that Dalí labelled “sentiment”.

The first incisions of Dalí’s surgical dissection of the body were in *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, where strewn body parts and a scene of decapitation can be understood both in Freudian terms and in relation to its formal and thematic similarities to paintings by Bouts, Bruegel and Sassetta. Dalí now conceptualised the mortal and sexual body within overlapping psychoanalytical and religious frameworks, trawling his bookshelves and mnemonic archives to give form to his aesthetics of St. Sebastian.

A new type of St. Sebastian

Dalí had begun his new paintings while his second Dalmau exhibition summarised his previous period around the fulcrum of his *Composition*. That exhibition finished on 14th January 1927, leaving two weeks before his national service started in Figueres, from where he wrote to Lorca on or about the day of Sebastian.² With Sebastian present in his thoughts, it is conceivable that he took advantage of his last few days of freedom to attend the festivities in Cadaqués, as he had the previous year. In any case, the day was also celebrated in Figueres and the pilgrimage was discussed in the local press.³

The locally conceived saint, then, was in Dalí’s thoughts as he formulated these new paintings and wrote his essay, and the “new type of St Sebastian” that he described to Lorca was the miracle worker in the hermitage. His status as a plague saint made him an ironic model for resistance against physical corruption, providing a ready-made mythology of the transcendence of pain, sensuality and mortality. Dalí illustrated this ironic reading with a pasted advertisement of a man wearing curative patches, with the caption “San Sebastian”. Dalí completed the transformation of the patient – whose arms appear to be bound behind his back – into the saint by tracing a simple halo.⁴ The irony of this presentation should be noted, because Dalí wrote that precisely what the martyr did not do was to annul bodily corruption: “The principle of elegance is what made Sebastian agonise with delight. In this one it’s an anti-elegant feeling which leads him to *convalesce* like a coward”.

Shortly afterwards, he wrote again to say that he was making changes to ‘Sant Sebastià’, and signed the letter with a “big hug from your SAINT SEBASTIAN”.⁵ He made those changes as he began his national service and immersed himself in the “infinite old and new things to read” that he had brought back from Barcelona. By the time Lorca arrived to spend June in Barcelona and July in Cadaqués, Dalí’s aesthetic outlook was crystallised and his essay practically complete. Anna Maria told Antonina Rodrigo that Lorca would sit and watch Dalí paint, and his irrepressible capacity to interpret and elaborate must have suggested new images to his friend, and steered his critical and lyrical awareness of the meanings and evocations alive in his new works.⁶



Fig 71
Salvador Dalí
'San Sebastian' (1927)

Physiological aesthetics

By the end of summer, Lorca referred to Dalí's new direction as his "physiological aesthetics".⁷ This label was loaded with meaning for them, steeped as it was in evocations of the Residencia, where the majority of the residents were medical students, including Pepín Bello.⁸ From the descriptions we have of Bello's manner, we can assume he regaled his friends with detailed, objective descriptions of his studies; his comments on the paintings in the Prado were no doubt peppered with humorous medical diagnoses. Bello's objective detachment was so marked that his sister Adelina had to chide him for his flat descriptions of the horrors of the Civil War, recounted in front of their parents.⁹ Bello enjoyed sharing his scientific knowledge and taught his sister, for example, "the composition and structure of matter: molecules, atoms and electrons, making drawings for me that I conserved until recently."¹⁰ Similar drawings would have given Dalí the key to the objective depiction of Sebastian's pain and pleasure, in keeping with his interest in "little things", "painted well".

Bello and other medical students had the use of the Laboratories for Biological Investigation, inaugurated in the basement of the Residencia complex in 1922 – the year Dalí moved to the Residencia – under the direction of Santiago Ramón y Cajal, who had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 1906 for his proposal of the "neuron doctrine". In other words, Ramón y Cajal was the world's leading expert in the quantification and classification of sentiment, pain and emotion. What is more, he held a title that would have delighted Dalí, as Director of the National Institute for Hygiene. Dalí would have heard about Ramón y Cajal from Bello, and also from Buñuel, who prepared microscope slides for him at the Entomology department of the Museum of Natural History.¹¹

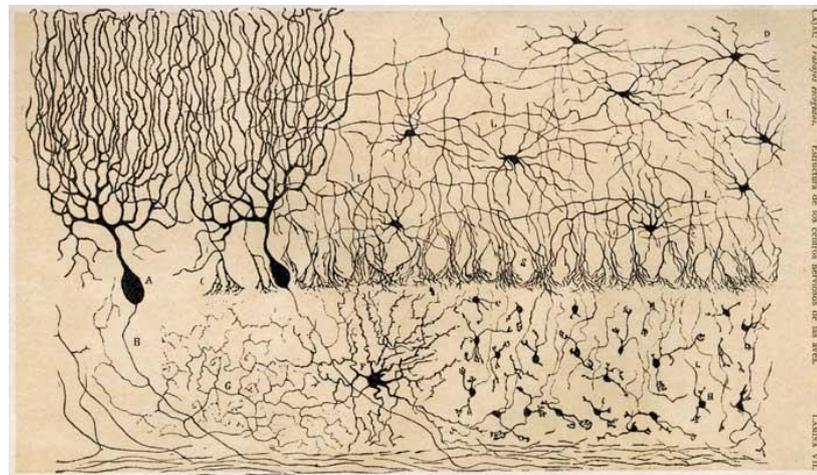


Fig 72
Ramón y Cajal,
'Structure of the nerve centres of birds'

Like Freud, whose drawings helped visualise his biological model of the mind, Ramón y Cajal drew his own illustrations: fine ink drawings of cells, neurons, dendrites and axons, labelled with arrows, numbers and letters that were conscripted into Dalí's "physiological aesthetics". This is a fascinating, uncharted area, and it does not take us as far from the aesthetics of St. Sebastian as we might think. In fact, it suggests a context in which the scientific illustration of the body presents itself as the ideal register for the representation of the meanings attached to St. Sebastian at the heart of Dalí's dialogue with Lorca. As Dalí wrote in 'Sant Sebastià', the "pain of Saint Sebastian was a pure pretext for an aesthetics of objectivity".

The identification of a dissected corpse with St. Sebastian is something that Bello was well-placed to recognise, in either the laboratory or the Prado. Either a detailed description by Bello of Ramón y Cajal leading an anatomy class, or a photograph like the one reproduced here, would have immediately reminded Dalí of the tradition of painted anatomy classes, beginning with the one by

Rembrandt that Dalí knew from his Gowans book. In the photograph here, Ramón y Cajal holds his scalpel like a pen, ready to sign his work.

Both Lorca and Dalí used the metaphor of the dissecting table for the painter's studio, in relation to Dalí's art: in the 'Ode', "Modern painters in their white studios, clip the aseptic flower of the square root", while in 'Sant Sebastià' the studio is a "white clinic" with glass cabinets in which a "chloroformed scalpel slumbers, reclining like a sleeping beauty in the forest of impossible entanglement of nickels and Ripolin."

Medical students worked on corpses for up to a week each, so Bello had real experience of the *putrefaction* that was a theme among the Residencia group – an experience that he no doubt shared with his friends and which fed into Dalí's "physiological aesthetics". Incidentally, Man Ray described his envy when a friend who was studying medicine in New York let him in to see their dissecting room, which held a dozen corpses. He was fascinated by the medical students' contact with reality, compared to his art academy's conformity with plaster casts.¹²



Fig 73
Ramón y Cajal's anatomy lesson



THE ANATOMY LESSON
(Royal Gallery, The Hague) F. Hanfmann, Photo.

Fig 74
Rembrandt
The Anatomy Lesson, in Gowans, no. 3

Approaching Surrealism

In 1962, Dalí remembered *Cenicitas* as the "only painting that I painted during the nine months of my military service", completed between the Februaries of 1927 and 1928.¹³ This is perhaps not strictly true, as he seems also to have at least finished *Apparatus and Hand* in summer 1927, but it is a reminder that Dalí spent a lot of that time absorbing his new readings – and re-readings, perhaps, in the case of Freud. He synthesised his evolving thoughts in theoretical articles published in *L'Amic de les Arts*, which plot his progressive understanding of and enthusiasm for Surrealism.

Sebastià Gasch shared Dalí's initial reticence towards Surrealism, but had known Miró since 1919, who was now making progress in Paris. When Miró's dealer Pierre Loeb visited Catalonia in September 1927, and the painter asked Gasch which emerging artists might be of interest, he was put in touch with Dalí and visited him in Figueres with Loeb. Dalí wrote to Gasch that what had most impressed the French dealer were his latest two paintings, "*Forest of Apparatuses* and *Apparatus and Hand*", which he showed at the *Saló de Tardor* exhibition in Barcelona shortly afterwards. They had noticed the similarity of some passages to Tanguy's work, but had agreed that Dalí's paintings were "superior in technique, much better *de nature*, and infinitely more plastic."¹⁴

Dalí had begun work on *Cenicitas*, but at his studio in Cadaqués, so that his visitors did not see it. He continued with the painting after their visit, and it includes indications of Miró's influence in the swarming signs of fertility that fly or swim across the picture – intimations of birds and their eggs; evocations of spermatozoa; clues that Dalí had seen Miró's *The Birth of the World* (1925) or something similar. One noticeable difference is that while Miró wanted to "assassinate" all vestiges of academic art, Dalí retained an essentially classical compositional schema for *Apparatus and Hand* and for *Cenicitas*: a central figure placed against a background divided according to the Golden Ratio, which the Franciscan friar and friend of Leonardo da Vinci, Luca Pacioli, had translated from classical to Christian significance in *De Divina Proportione*.

So, Dalí had not completely abandoned the concerns with canonical harmony and geometry that motivated his *Composition with Three Figures* just eighteen months or so earlier, and when he and Lorca wrote to Gasch in July 1927, Dalí told him that the *Birth of Venus* which he had begun to paint “approaches pure beauty.” This working title was generally assumed to apply to *Cenicitas* until Adès recognised that Dalí may have been referring to *Apparatus and Hand*. The timing of Dalí’s comment supports her suspicion, but it does not rule out the possibility that *Cenicitas* was *also* a *Birth of Venus*. They are ostensibly similar paintings, compositionally and thematically, and the second can be thought of as a busier elaboration of the first, as with the two versions of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*.

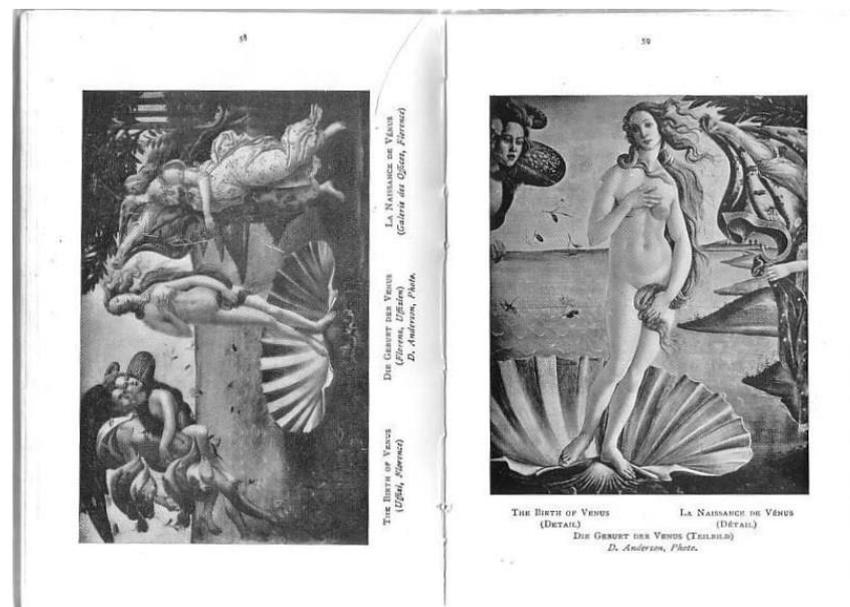


Fig 75
Sandro Botticelli
The Birth of Venus, and detail, in Gowans no. 20

Dalí’s violent treatment of the central nude body may disguise the debt, but there are clues that the figure was consciously based on Botticelli’s *Birth of Venus*. This was the probable origin of the “hard, cold waves like the ones in the sea” that had so pleased Dalí when he had “painted them *well*” in September 1926, and that could be counted in Dalí’s ‘Sant Sebastià’. The likeness to Venus is clearer in the carnal bulk of *Cenicitas*, but it is possible that Dalí already compared the Goddess of Love with a mechanical apparatus in *Apparatus and Hand*. For over a year, he had been enjoying a close working relationship with Dalmau, who had introduced the mechanomorphic works of Duchamp and Picabia to Spain, and he had even exhibited alongside these artists a few months earlier. When similar apparatuses first appeared in Dalí’s paintings – in *Still-Life. Invitation to Sleep* (1925) or *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* (1925-6) – they are rather marginal to the composition, as if added as footnotes. They might even have been added to these earlier paintings in order to bring them up to date for the Dalmau exhibition.

The apparatus in *Departure* stands on the shoreline, mimicking the contrapposto mannerism of a standing bather. *Cenicitas* goes further, exposing the classical sensual nude – the idealised mother’s body – as a biological apparatus, a de-idealised lump of degenerating flesh... a *putrefacte*! Dalí followed this painting with a series of savagely flayed nudes that mock the reclining Venuses of Titian and Ingres, exposing their raw bodies to electric sunlight on a dissecting table of sharp sand, revealing Dalí’s horror at the reality of physiological being.

Dalí’s sexless, decapitated Venus seems more a harbinger of Death than a Goddess of Love; an ominous bird’s head the only thing to emerge from her womb. The sense of foreboding is increased by

the identification that Dawn Adès has made between the bird's wing – which stretches out under the thin skin of Venus – and *Mercury*, the winged messenger of the gods. For Adès,

the most startling aspect of the 'Mercury' form is its disgendered character. Hinting at both Venus and Mercury, it bulges ambiguously, the body with the incipient breast topped with a gross phallic protuberance. Rather than desire, it is sexual anxiety that is most strongly conjured.¹⁵

In classical mythology, Venus and Mercury are connected, as Lorca had no doubt informed Dalí, either directly or through recommending Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to him, as he had to Anna Maria. The connection is more apparent when we consider their Greek guises, as Hermes and Aphrodite, which come together as one possible solution to the problem of desire: the *Hermaphrodite* who nullifies desire, whom we already glimpsed in the *Barcelona Mannequin*. Another attribute of Mercury/Hermes might have helped Dalí arrive at his aesthetics of limitation and quantification – it was his symbol, the *herma*, which marked out distances and frontiers on ancient roads.¹⁶

A pair of stanzas of the 'Ode' collected together the images of decapitated woman and a man with a measuring stick, possibly suggesting the route that Dalí's thoughts took from the *Composition to Cenicitas*, so that Venus and Mercury had always been present:

Sailors who know nothing of wine and penumbra
decapitate sirens in the leaden seas.
Night, black statue of prudence, holds
the round mirror of the moon in her hand.

A desire for forms and limits overwhelms us.
The man who checks with a yellow ruler comes.
Venus is a white still life
and the butterfly collectors flee.

What is certain is that Dalí's progression between 1926 and 1928 was shaped by his ruminations on the dangers of awakened desire, as became even more obvious in his Surrealist period. The identification with St. Sebastian that he shared with Lorca served as a rhetorical device, but the question remains of the extent to which their debate was motivated by any real sexual tension between them. In a letter sent to Dalí at the end of his stay in Cadaqués, Lorca wrote that "I have behaved towards you like an indecent ass, with you who are, for me, the best there is."¹⁷ Both Gibson and Santo Torroella cite Lorca's contrition over his behaviour as evidence of a second attempt by Lorca to have sex with Dalí, but if epistolary self-flagellation were proof of anything then Lorca had sexually assaulted half of his friends and relatives, male and female; he was forever apologising for gross indecency.¹⁸ We are on surer and frankly more fertile ground if we concentrate on their dialectic consideration of how best to conceptualise and represent theoretical desire.

Dalí gave one of the series of disfigured bathers that he painted later in 1928 the title *Dialogue on the Beach*. In the painting, two dubiously sexed pieces of carrion confront each other awkwardly. Dalí confirmed the awkward nature of their relationship when he later retitled it *Unsatisfied Desires*.¹⁹ The painting indicates the growing input of psychoanalysis, as well as the "base materialism" that captured Georges Bataille's attention. Lorca's presence at some level is implicit, but there is also a couplet in a poem by the Cadaqués poet, Federico Rahola y Trémols, which helps to explain the painting, and which may even have inspired it:

Més grat és el desig que no es compleix / que el goig de la insegura possessió...
(More pleasing the unsatisfied desire / than enjoyment of an insecure possession...)²⁰

In the letter, Lorca asked Dalí to remember him as he painted his “crackling and unique little cinders”, and to add his name to the painting, but this cannot have been *Cenicitas*, which he had not yet begun; Dalí later said that Lorca was referring to *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. The title that Dalí first used for *Cenicitas* – setting aside its possible description as a “Birth of Venus” – was *Sterile Efforts*, which it still had when he exhibited it in Paris in 1929. This keeps our thoughts in the area of nullified desire, while the English translation of *Cenicitas* as *Little Ashes* immediately evokes little beyond Dalí’s delight in “little things”.

The “little ashes” or cinders that Lorca mentioned may have had a meaning that they had discussed during the summer, perhaps in connection with the “aesthetic of the flame” that he also mentions in the letter; they could be the residue of spent passion. They might also have alluded to another “little cinders”, Cinderella, whose story Lorca had adapted to his own use in a letter to Melchor Fernández Almagro in autumn 1924, to which he affixed a label for ‘Amatller Chocolates, Barcelona’ depicting Cinderella and the prince. “And then what?” Lorca wrote to Melchor. “For how long has the prince been putting Cinderella’s shoe on? The day he gets up from his cushion the world will come to an end.”²¹ Without proving the participation of Cinderella in the genesis of *Cenicitas*, this anecdote at least demonstrates Lorca’s capacity to interpret and discuss folklore and mythology in terms of psychoanalytical concepts such as sublimated desire and fetishism. In an aspect of the story that would have appealed to Dalí, Cinderella’s sexual fulfilment is clinched by the exact measure of a shoe size.²²

Later in 1928, Lorca gave a talk on ‘Lullabies’ that asserted the important underlying function of popular culture, manifested in fairy tales and mythology. As he left Dalí in Cadaqués, painting his *Forest of Apparatuses* and his *Apparatus and Hand* and planning his second *Birth of Venus*, Lorca assessed Dalí’s new style in terms of the essential motivation of artistic and mythological expression:

Cadaqués has the joy and permanence of neutral beauties of the place where Venus was born, *but is no longer remembered*. [...] From here I can feel [...] the gentle trickle of the bleeding beauty in the forest of apparatuses [...]. The dissected woman is the loveliest possible poem about blood [...]. Your painterly blood and, in general, the whole plastic conception of your physiological aesthetics has such a concrete and so well-proportioned, so logical and so genuine air of pure poetry, that it acquires the category of *that which is necessary for us to live*.²³

Gibson, who is familiar with the meanings of Lorca’s poetry, does not hesitate to translate Lorca’s “bella sangrante” (bleeding beauty) as “Sleeping Beauty”, and I think we can consider a similarly flexible translation of *Cenicitas* as Cinderella (*Cenicientas*, in the usual Spanish form of her name).²⁴ This highlights the sense of awakened desire and looming sexual initiation that pervades Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, the *Birth of Venus* and the bound and exposed St. Sebastian.

Lorca’s letter coincided with the publication of Dalí’s ‘Sant Sebastià’ at the end of July 1927.²⁵ Despite having spent three months in Catalonia, Lorca was surprised and impressed by Dalí’s transformation of their dialogue on the martyr into a declaration of his own position, including its undeveloped, embryonic aspects.

‘Sant Sebastià’ is a theoretically and poetically infused prose work that presents its themes and perceptions within a dreamlike, metamorphosing scene without narrative progression. Sebastian is not a fixed metaphor for anyone or anything; rather, the dynamic description of his static figure is a focalising device for Dalí’s aesthetic considerations, illuminated with flashes of visual and sensual impression motivated by unseen fears and desires. This formlessness reflects the complexity of identity – blamelessly but inescapably bound by the circumstances of its origins, yet blind to destiny – and particularly the complex, conflictual, dual identity at which Dalí had arrived, with Lorca, through their dialectic of Sebastian.

Sebastian's enforced confrontation with the question of his circumstances, and his identity as a sentient, sexual and mortal body, is thus comparable to that of Oedipus, and the extent to which themes and images of vision and blindness, of sin and castigation, of decapitation and castration – all belying the destructive force of desire – infuse Dalí's paintings of 1927-8 show how firmly set he was on the path to Surrealism. By their presentation within the theme of St. Sebastian, they also indicate Dalí's awareness of the psychological factors that motivated religious image-making in the first place.

The Birth of Venus is nominally a profane theme, despite the parallel associations attached to Venus and the Virgin Mary, but the Gowans volume on Botticelli presented it as part of a tapestry of religious and mythological meanings which offers rich pickings for psychoanalytical interpretations. It contained a sublimely indifferent Sebastian; a Salomé with the head of John the Baptist; and two images of the decapitation of Holofernes. There is even an accidental decapitation in a detail of the *Birth of Venus*, in which the west wind Zephyr's head was truncated by the photograph's editor. Together with his readings of decapitation in Bouts and Bruegel, there is plenty of evidence that Dalí read scenes of martyrdom and decapitation as literal separations of reason and desire, representative of the ill-matched dichotomy of mind and body.

The role of Lorca in guiding Dalí towards the stage at which he was in 1928 – ready to cross the threshold into Surrealism – has always been clear, and has been studied in depth. What had not been fully reconciled were the apparently incompatible tandem influences of Lorquian religiosity and Freudian objectivity. This occurs with the revelation of the sources of Dalí's physiological and psychoanalytic aesthetics in the allegorical and gestural, art of martyrdom; in the warnings of the corrupting power of desire found in didactic, religious art.

Notes

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- ¹ See appendices 1 and 2.
- ² Poesía, p. 46. Santos Torroella dates the letter 18/20 January 1927.
- ³ See Poesía, 130-1, note 3. Santos Torroella mentions the Cadaqués magazine *Sol Ixent – periodie de casa*, edited by Dalí's friends, which carried an article, 'Sant Sebastià patró de Cadaqués', on 15th January 1927, 'La patacada', by Gaietà Rahola, on 26th January 1927 and a poem by Víctor Rahola dedicated to Mt. Pení, on 12th February 1927.
- ⁴ According to Santos Torroella, the advertisement was well known. Dalí used it again for the cover of his 1934 exhibition at Julien Levy's gallery in New York.
- ⁵ Letter at the start of March 1927. Poesía, 48-49.
- ⁶ *GLPD*, 366-7.
- ⁷ Letter from Barcelona, end of July 1927. Spanish in *L-D*, 180-2, *RES*, 176-7. English in Maurer, 74-6
- ⁸ *DJDG*, 130
- ⁹ *RES*, 48
- ¹⁰ *RES*, 48
- ¹¹ Buñuel, 62-3. Ramón y Cajal frequented the Café del Prado, where the "ultraístas" would meet, including Buñuel and other friends of Dalí. Buñuel recognised the neurologist as "one of the most brilliant men of his time". Bello's father Severino had contributed to a volume compiled by Joaquín Costa discussing Oligarchy and Caciquism as the form of government in Spain, to which Unamuno, Ramón y Cajal and others also contributed. (*RES*, 52). 16th April 1953, in an interview with Del Arco regarding a planned bullfight, Dalí said the arena would be decorated with large portraits of Spanish geniuses: "Falla, Monturiol, Juan de la Cierva, García Lorca, Ramón y Cajal, Verdaguier, Gaudí, Picasso, etc." (Del Arco, 'Dalí en el Parque Güell'; Barcelona; *Revista*, 16th April 1953, in *Mas*, 120-2)
- ¹² Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, New York; Bullfinch; 1998 [1963], 22
- ¹³ Descharnes, *The World of Salvador Dalí*, 138. National service included three months' leave, meaning that it took a year to complete 9 months' service.
- ¹⁴ Sebastià Gasch, 'Les fantasies d'un reporter', en *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 20, 30th November 1927. My translation; "de nature" in French in the original.
- ¹⁵ Adès, 'Morphologies of desire', 144. Gibson concurs, and also recognises Juan de Bolonia's bronze *Mercury*.
- ¹⁶ Giovanna Giusti Galardi, in *The Myth of Venus*, 90
- ¹⁷ End (31st?) July 1927. Spanish in *L-D*, 180-2, *RES*, 176-7. English in Maurer, 74-6, my translation modifies Maurer's.
- ¹⁸ See Gershator, *passim*, for numerous instances of Lorca's self-recrimination.
- ¹⁹ Dalí suggested this title to Robert Descharnes in 1970. See *Poesía*, notes, 142-3
- ²⁰ Quoted in Pla, *Cadaqués*, 96
- ²¹ Gershator, 55, and footnote, 56
- ²² Anthony John Keily translates the painting's title as *Cinderella* in Giménez-Frontín, but I think this is coincidental. Dalí would have also been made aware of the element of fetishism in the Cinderella story by his reading of Breton's *Nadja*, which became a favourite of his during 1928. He had certainly read it by the time the title *Cenicitas* was given to the painting, and also wrote about the slipper-spoon that turned up in *L'Amour fou* (1937) in *Documents* 34 (June 1934), in 'Equation de l'objet trouvé.' Finding the "slipper spoon" in a flea market, Breton was reminded of an automatic phrase, "cendriller Cendrillon" – "Cinderella ashtray" (ashtray = cendrier). Breton noted the implications of the fetish's association with the Cinderella story. Hal Foster follows the Bretonian and Freudian implications of this object (Foster, 36-46).
- ²³ End (31st?) July 1927. Spanish in *L-D*, 180-2, *RES*, 176-7. English in Maurer, 74-6, my translation modifies Maurer's.
- ²⁴ Gibson, 1997: 164
- ²⁵ *L'Amic de les Arts*, no. 16, 31st July 1927, Sitges, pages 52-54. See appendix 2.

Part II: St Jerome

As Dalí became absorbed in Surrealism, he continued to explore the problems of the sexual and mortal self that had motivated his art since 1926, but with this self now understood primarily as a mind rather than a body. While his Surrealist paintings can and indeed should be deciphered in terms of the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, Rank and Lacan that steered Dalí through this new conception of the self, it is intriguing to find that many of the images that Dalí conscripted to give his thoughts form are still traceable to specific areas of traditional, religious art – from his first avowedly Surrealist works of 1929 through to his declared return to classical art at the start of the 1940s. As early as 1934, Dalí insisted on the Surrealist *marvellous* lurking beneath the surface of traditional art, as when discussing his on-going study of Millet's *Angelus*:

My ambition is to give the world of the imagination the same degree of objectivity and of reality as the ordinary world. [...] I turn to the traditional means of expression. It is the themes – derived from Freudianism – which are new. So, adopting the most familiar and traditional means, images are more efficacious and convince more. Abstraction has led to decorativism, while my way of doing things rediscovers the great sources of painting. Now I look at the paintings of Vermeer, Leonardo, etc., and – besides the execution – I concentrate on the enigmatic side, which must be understood anew, in a different way... in a word, it is necessary to rewrite the history of painting.¹

The history of painting that Dalí referred to was the history of Western European art as plotted by Reinach and Berenson. At the core of that narrative is Christian religious art and – as he had arrived at a “physiological aesthetics” through unravelling the iconological network enmeshing Sebastian – Dalí shaped his psychoanalytical aesthetics with the help of other Christian iconography: that of the desert hermits, epitomised by St Jerome. This is essentially a more sophisticated engagement with the same problems of knowing oneself sexual and mortal; in Dalí's struggle with the problem of fatal desire, the aesthetic of the ascetic replaced the aseptic aesthetic of 1927.

Although Dalí did not address him directly, as he had Sebastian, Jerome's iconographic identity can be unmasked in paintings – his standard depiction as an ageing, bearded figure of authority, isolated in a barren landscape, and his attributes of lion, skull, stone, book and inkwell are at the core of Dalí's Surrealist lexicon. These symbols support Jerome's deeper significance as a model of resistance to desire, and of the creation of meaning – through his transcription of *Logos*, in the Vulgate Bible – and provided pointers for Dalí's exploration of the representation and sublimation of instincts, fears and desires.² Dalí recognised that the fundamental concerns with origins and identity exposed by psychoanalysis were already discernible in religious art, and are the ontological concerns that had shaped religious mythology in the first place. This is especially apparent in paintings of 1929-32, when Dalí shuffled those Hieronymite symbols with others, testing ways to represent a personalised mythology of oedipal and Biblical inspiration.

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The structure of this part is different to the two that bookend it. Because of the labyrinthine tangle of associations and allusions that is the essence of Dalí's psychoanalytically informed Surrealism, it is impractical to follow all of the paths that cross it, bearing marks of religious symbolism of varying relevance. Not all of these lead anywhere meaningful, and they do not follow the uniform, linear progression noticeable in the earlier and later periods. However, consistent with the theoretical framework for his paintings that Dalí developed as his “paranoiac-critical method”, there are certain persistent traits that reveal the directing personality of the thinker, and reveal the relevance of Jerome as a model. To demonstrate the general Hieronymite flow of Dalí's thoughts, through eddies and crosscurrents, I relate two paintings usually considered as belonging to two very different moments in Dalí's trajectory. The first is one of the key paintings from Dalí's first flush of Surrealist image-making, *The Enigma of Desire* (1929), in which Dalí presents a vulnerable self of obvious

psychoanalytic construction – made of Narcissistic introspection, primary loss, fears and desires – isolated in an imagined mental landscape. The second painting, *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* (1940), reveals Dalí at the cusp of his commitment to exclusively religious art. In fact, both paintings were built on the iconography of ascetic, hermit saints, and in particular, on Jerome's contemplation of mortality and desire.

At first, Breton and the Surrealists were impressed not only by Dalí's paintings and film, *Un Chien andalou*, but also by his theoretical writings. These were built on a base of Freudian psychoanalysis, and the first few paintings that Dalí presented to the Surrealists were visualisations of oedipal drama, childhood memories, castration threat and troubled family relationships, and this is how they should be understood. However, I try to restrict psychoanalytical readings of these Hieronymite paintings as much as possible, to focus on his sources in religious art.

The emphasis in this part is on the reinterpretation of familiar Surrealist paintings, bearing in mind the general area of Hieronymite iconography. Jerome's significance is not as obvious, specific, concentrated or locally defined as Sebastian's. It was more diffuse, and nourished by Dalí's familiarity with the collections of Madrid and Paris, and soon Italy, London, New York and beyond.³ The debt to tradition – disguised in 1929; explicit in 1940 – typifies a constant tension at the core of Dalí's Surrealist activity, creating a rather elastic relationship with other Surrealists that had snapped by the time he declared a return to classicism in 1941, maintaining that his was the authentic Surrealism.

Notes

¹ Dalí called Millet's *Angelus* "a work of seeming insignificance, banal and banalised by thousands of reproductions, and which is a putrefaction..." (J.C. – Joan Cortés or Just Cabot – 'Una estona amb Dalí abans d'anar a Nova York'; Barcelona; Mirador, 18th October 1934, in Mas, 47-50)

² Compared to martyrdom – as opposed to martyrs – the subject of ascesis in painting is supported by a vast amount of literature. This includes the lives of saints and hagiographic theatre, which document or dramatise their struggles, but also saints' own apologies and tracts.

³ Nevertheless, when pertinent examples are found in the Gowans collection, this is highlighted to underscore the lasting importance of their impression on Dalí.

Chapter 4. Self-analysis: Constructing a Surrealist Self

Dalí formulated his definitive Surrealist style of painting during several months of intense activity and personal turmoil in 1929, culminating in his breakthrough exhibition in Paris in November. An examination of the personal circumstances that drove Dalí through that period is fundamental to an understanding of the concerns that motivated his paintings and defined the character and concerns of the psychoanalytical self that he represented in them, and for which I contest Jerome provided a pertinent model.



Fig 76
Salvador Dalí
The First Days of Spring (1929)

4.1 The First Days of Spring

In spring 1929, Dalí spent six weeks in Paris and met important Surrealists through Buñuel, Miró and other Spaniards living there. Buñuel was filming *Un Chien andalou*, following the screenplay written with Dalí at the start of that year.¹ Carrying copies of the Surrealist issue of *L'Amic de les Arts* for which he was principally responsible and samples of his paintings as credentials, Dalí secured an exhibition that November at the gallery of Camille Goemans, who accompanied Surrealists as important as Paul Éluard and René Magritte to Cadaqués in the summer.²

Dalí's return to Paris, which had initiated such a dramatic change in his art when he had visited Picasso and the Louvre in 1926, proved almost overwhelming, and this was reflected in the paintings he produced for the Goemans exhibition.³ He later described his overexcited state of mind and uncontrollable laughter at the time as a regression to childhood.⁴ Dalí was euphoric but under pressure to produce a batch of paintings on which his future would depend, and he worked frenziedly to apply his recent theorising on Surrealism to his overwhelming experiences of Paris, and to materialise it all on canvas.⁵ In paintings such as *The Lugubrious Game* or *The Great Masturbator*, Dalí consolidated his Surrealist visual language, reworking ideas and images sketched in notes, drawings, paintings and his film script, and he appropriated models from religious art to help give form to fears and desires, and to feelings of isolation and vulnerability that he was analysing according to his understanding of Freud.

While still wary of the Surrealist call to unmediated abandonment to chance, or Lorca's lyrical abandonment to emotion, Dalí was increasingly receptive to the idea that artistic creation involved subconscious interventions of desire, love, and memory in its work of apparently rationally directed cultural production. Given a theoretical basis by Freud's investigations into the libidinal foundations of identity and the functions of "dream-work" described in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Dalí soon developed an understanding of his relation to the world as the personal and paranoiac interpretation and representation of images of memory and reverie. Dalí's Surrealist method was essentially to mimic the mechanisms of dream-work – with meanings constructed self- and cross-referentially. As he ruminated on the nature of the Freudian subconscious, Dalí recognised that traditional art, seen, studied and absorbed, is also valid as personal memory in the currency of Surrealist imagery; he could thus rely on a platform of scientific objectivity while analysing, condensing, and projecting images laden with subjective significance. Childhood memories and obsessively reprocessed images spilled into Dalí's paintings between May and November 1929, and this naturally included images absorbed from the pages and walls of art history, albeit filtered through six years' of studying Freud, and spiced with a smattering of Residencia humour. Many purportedly spontaneous, deliriously conjured images can actually be traced to paintings Dalí had known since childhood, loaded with personal meaning, consciously filtered through his nascent *paranoiac-critical* method.

Dalí's first painting in his new style was *The First Days of Spring*, which he seems to have worked on in Paris and finished back in Cadaqués. Although he had been fully occupied with his edition of *L'Amic de les Arts* until the middle of March, it is possible that he began the painting before travelling to Paris – perhaps preparing the background as a stage set for a drama of approximately Freudian inspiration. In any case, its sense of emotional desolation, phobic strangeness and looming danger of awakened desire seem representative of the real impact of the social paralysis and alienation that he felt in Paris and described in the *Secret Life*. With this painting, Dalí sets the stage for the paintings he would produce for Goemans.

Whether genuinely reminiscing or striving to affect a self-analysis compatible with Freud, Dalí asserts the central place of childhood memories in those paintings, beginning with the *First Days of Spring*. He must have affixed the photograph of himself as a child at the centre of the composition back in Cadaqués – he is unlikely to have been carrying it in Paris – and the chromolithograph of a deer and childlike drawings of birds are meant to appear dredged from his memory banks. Once deciphered, this first formulaic attempt at Freudian self-portraiture is almost literal – the infant Dalí is boxed into an oedipal tableau of castration threat, with signs for the maternal, for desire and anxiety, while figures of paternal authority are simultaneously revered and ridiculed.⁶

The intention in 1929 to make Freud fundamental to his paintings overrode the influence of contemporary artists that had steered Dalí during his tentative acceptance of Surrealism over the previous three years. Miró, Arp, Ernst and Picasso had been useful models while Dalí's protosurrealist paintings were violating the integrity of the body – splitting, doubling, deforming, mutilating, flaying, or decapitating it. Appropriate to the character of those paintings, Miró's introduction to the Paris Surrealists had first urged Dalí towards the dissident group connected to George Bataille and the review *Documents*, which, in September 1929, reproduced the second *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* – a painting representative of the conception of Surrealist painting that Dalí carried with him to Paris.⁷ However, if Bataille represents the focus on the body and Breton on the mind, then it seems that Dalí soon decided that the latter was the line his Surrealism would follow, as he shifted attention to the subconscious mental constructs that govern the actions of the lumps of meat that were his previous concern. Of the Surrealist painting that Dalí encountered in Paris, *The First Days* is stylistically closest to Magritte and de Chirico – artists whose paintings were more textual and philosophical than the more visceral earlier models.

The change in Dalí's style seems less dramatic if we instead consider the first version of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, which has enough similarities to *The First Days* to suggest that Dalí did in fact deliberately double back to that composition, before taking his painting in a different direction to the one it had taken between 1926 and 1927, towards the busy, second version that captured Bataille's attention and beyond it to near abstraction in 1928. The less cluttered composition of the first version, its colours, the buzzing flies and the tilting, decapitated head are reprised in 1929, when Dalí cleared the stage for the psychodramas of his re-imagined Surrealism.

The Goemans exhibition met expectations raised by *Un Chien andalou*, which was shown in Paris after his return home, and established Dalí's place in the Surrealist group. The scandalously blasphemous character of the film and some of Dalí's paintings delighted Breton, who wrote the preface to the Goemans catalogue and bought *Accommodations of Desire* before the exhibition opened.⁸ Breton was excited too by Dalí's theoretical writings, which underpinned the psychoanalytical validity of his paintings – as visualisations of oedipal drama, childhood memories, castration threat and troubled family relationships, they suggested new possibilities for the future of Surrealist painting. He naturally presumed Dalí was a brother-in-arms in contempt for authority, tradition and especially religion, an impression Dalí had endeavoured to nurture in talks and essays. Dalí certainly enjoyed the shock value of blasphemy, but the eagerness to impress Buñuel or Pepín Bello with irreverent banter that has survived in correspondence with them and which he probably affected in the company of Parisian Surrealists, was not necessarily representative of Dalí's complete attitude towards religious art. A closer look at the paintings in the Goemans exhibition reveals a more subtle tension between the sacred and the profane that would remain a feature of Dalí's Surrealism.

Notes

¹ Dalí arrived in Paris a few days after Buñuel began filming *Un Chien andalou* on 2nd April 1929.

² Written in Catalan, it is unlikely Dalí's magazine would have interested anyone other than Spaniards already familiar with Dalí's work. Although Dalí later wrote that he had shown his paintings around, it is most likely that he took photographs. These were probably paintings of 1927-8 – heavy with the influence of Miró, Tanguy and Arp – hanging since 20th March in an exhibition of Spanish artists "resident in Paris" at the Jardín Botánico in Madrid, organised by the Residencia de Estudiantes and Sociedad de Cursos y Conferencias. The paintings at Madrid were *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, *Sterile Efforts* (later *Cenicitas*), *Feminine Nude*, *Feminine Figure and Masculine Figure on a Beach (Unsatisfied Desires)* and *Apparatus and Hand* (DJDG, 333). When Bataille reviewed *Un Chien andalou* (Documents, no. 4, September 1929), he illustrated the article with a photo of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, so it was probably one of the paintings Dalí had shown in Paris. Robert Desnos apparently found Dalí's paintings to be "different to everything being done in Paris", despite the obvious influence in those paintings of Miró, Ernst, Arp, Tanguy and others. In the *Secret Life*, quoted in L-D, 231, DJDG, 340-4. Dalí visited Desnos at home ('Documental IV', La Publicitat, 23-05-1929. In *L'alliberament dels dits*, 205-8). Miró had presented Dalí to Camille Goemans and Magritte, and Goemans presented Dalí to Éluard, sometime in May. Dalí's father, who was following Dalí's 'documentaries', wrote to Miró on 17th May 1929, asking his honest opinion about Dalí's chances. Miró's reassuring reply, on 20th May, is reproduced in Aguer, 16. Soon after, on 22nd May 1929, La Veü de Catalunya reported Dalí's contract – signed on 15th May – giving Camille Goemans exclusive rights until 15th November 1929, in return for 1,000 francs monthly, with an exhibition during the 1929-30 season. (L-D, 232, DJDG, 344-6)

³ Goemans exhibition, 20th November – 5th December 1929. The 11 paintings that Dalí exhibited were

The Lugubrious Game
The Accommodations of Desire
Illumined Pleasures
The Sacred Heart
The Image of Desire (The Enigma of Desire)
The Face of the Great Masturbator
The First Days of Spring
Man with a Sickly Complexion Listening to the Sound of the Sea
Portrait of Paul Éluard
Sterile Efforts (Cenicitas)
Apparatus and Hand

⁴ See the *Secret Life* for Dalí's description of his mental state. Dalí was given a medical prescription on 23rd May, either in absentia or having already returned, for a selection of powders for problems with his tonsils and angina, caused by "nervous exhaustion" (Gibson, 210). Prescription preserved in Dalí father's scrapbook, at the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí. (L-D, 347-8) Without venturing an amateur diagnosis, we can bear in mind some illustrative terms currently used to describe similar states of slippage into inappropriate emotional reaction: *affective*, *emotional* or *pseudobulbar lability*.

⁵ In contrast to the compilation of a complete issue of Surrealist texts before making contact with the Surrealists in Paris, there are no published works between the last of his "documentaries" sent from Paris in May, and 24th October 1929, when his 'Un Chien andalou' rationalised the film's production earlier that year (Mirador, Barcelona, in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 217-9) In fact, there was no published expression of his thought once integrated into Surrealism until 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', March 1930.

⁶ It has been suggested that Freud himself makes an appearance. See, for example, Ian Gibson, (L-D, 231, DJDG, 340-4)

⁷ Adès, 67

⁸ Breton wrote the introduction to the catalogue, with the epigram 'Stériliser' quoting Dalí. In the *Unspeakable Confessions* (1973), he said that already on his trip to Paris he had met Breton, who became a new father: "In my eyes he immediately became a second father ... I had been granted a second birth. The Surrealist group was for me a sort of nourishing placenta and I believed in Surrealism as if it constituted the Tables of the Law." There was however no mention of Breton in the series of 'Documental' reports Dalí sent J. V. Foix for publication in La Publicitat.

4.2 The Lugubrious Game

Dalí was aiming for psychoanalytical legitimacy in his embryonic Surrealism, but he was attempting to visualise Freud's subconscious in a way without direct precedents in art. The charge that he did little more than illustrate the *Interpretation of Dreams* is sometimes difficult to refute, but a little digging usual reveals a foundation of memory and affective experience that confirms his personal investment. In his search for models, Dalí found a richer seam to exploit when he looked back beyond contemporary Surrealism to the historical art that he had studied and thoroughly absorbed. This is easier to understand if we consider that the evolutionary change in Dalí's art occurred away from Paris and Madrid, back in provincial Cadaqués with his Gowans and other books and magazines as principal reference material.¹

The artistic or cultural manifestations that are pivotal to the painting I look at in this section are not strictly religious. My focus is on Dalí's reaction to his isolation in Paris, and it is the representation of the threatening urban milieu that is paramount here. The importance of this backdrop is that it defines the personally affective themes of Dalí's subsequent, visualised self-analysis; the thematic and stylistic consistency of Dalí's Surrealism further vouches for the authenticity of his efforts. We shall see in following chapters that many pictorial solutions to which he turned were from the history of religious art.

One constant focus of his paintings is an individual's reaction or attitude to the dual threat of sexuality and mortality – the threat to which Sebastian was already exposed. The iconography of St Jerome reveals an individual engaged in similar ontological struggles. Dalí's subject, whether self or other, might be aroused, disgusted, ashamed or terrified, but always struggles against forces inside himself, but outside his control. This strand runs from the *Enigma* to the *Book Transforming Itself*, and is already the unifying motif of the paintings Dalí worked on over the summer of 1929.

When Goemans, Magritte, Paul Éluard and Gala arrived in Cadaqués in August, they found Dalí working on the *Lugubrious Game*.² This painting is loaded with Freudian symbolism to the extent that it seems detached from any personal relevance to Dalí, despite orthodox psychoanalytic explanations that remind us of the defining role of memory and oedipal intrigue within the family, epitomised by the equivocal fatherly embrace at the lower right.

Despite an increasingly difficult relationship with Salvador senior, Dalí's emphasis in this painting is on representing *the Father*, rather than portraying his own. This *Father* is a stock character in the oedipal drama, driven by aggression and desire, sporting a costume beard as a mark of authority and threatening castration with a wide-eyed grin. He is a pantomime villain, demanding respect but destined to be debugged and defeated.

The embrace is recognisably inspired by that of a stone father and his mannequin prodigal son in the series painted by de Chirico that had been so influential on Dalí's visualisation of Sebastian.³ Beyond the embrace rise monuments to paternal authority, to measure and respectability: on the left, a parody of their physical manifestation in the civic architecture of statues and plinths; on the right, an imaginary monument to the essentially sexual motivations that have been sublimated in the process

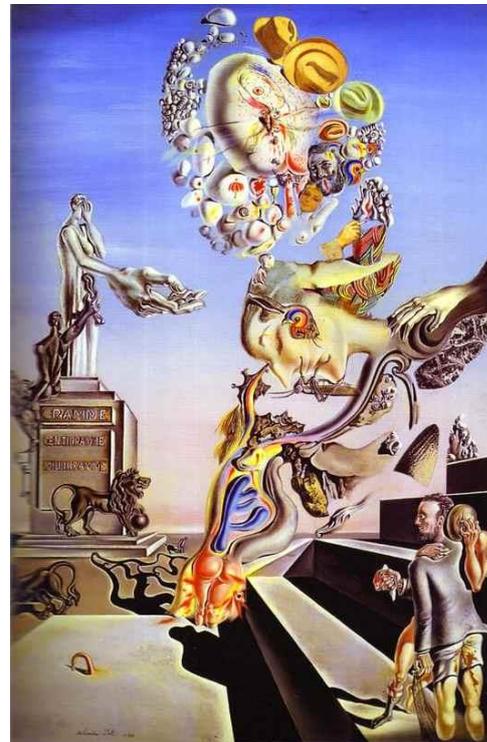


Fig 77
Salvador Dalí
The Lugubrious Game (1929)

that has dressed them as art, following the Freudian schema. Elements of religious iconography and high culture are juxtaposed with the rampant desire allegedly at their origin: the Consecrated Host is met with anal penetration; hats, symbolic of respectability, are hermaphroditic sexual organs; an open umbrella is not just an umbrella. Even the solid stone statue opposite struggles not to be drawn into this undignified drama of sex, shame and hypocrisy.⁴

The real personal relevance of all this lies in Dalí's need to explicate the strangeness he felt in a world interpreted through Freud – a sensation exasperated in the culturally sophisticated world of Paris. This would soon become clear as a face Dalí painted at the centre of the swirling vortex of fantasy, phobia, fetish and memory emerges from the maelstrom to become an emblematic self-representation – definitively identified as the Great Masturbator in the eponymous painting, and its companion-piece, *The Enigma of Desire*. The Masturbator already loomed over the infant Dalí in *The First Days of Spring*, as a sort of explanatory caption referring the viewer to Freud, but in the *Lugubrious Game* it assumes the place of the photograph in that painting, taking over the role of psychoanalytic self-portrait. Dalí imagines the fundamental, psychic kernel of the self – the autoerotic, primary narcissistic, polymorphous perverse infant – swept into a world of strange cultural manifestations and debilitating shame. The inadequacy and alienation that Dalí had felt in Paris lead to tragic introspection – eyes closed, the Masturbator is a voyeur to introverted images of desire.

Dalí's reiteration of childlike drawings and other images of easily assigned Freudian significance, already tested in *The First Days of Spring*, reveals a conscious effort within his developing style, rather than the spontaneous outpouring that Dalí recalled in his autobiography.⁵ This has often been raised as an objection to Dalí's method – beginning with Surrealists who championed *automatic* methods – but the objection can be dismissed if we keep within the context of Dalí's paranoiac-critical method, independent of other definitions of Surrealist painting. What concerns us is Dalí's conscious, methodical self-analysis, in which he considers his own experiences and constructs representations of the enigmas of his existence.

Central to this methodology was Dalí's recognition and reinterpretation of sublimated fear and desire at the origins of the signs of civilization – especially in art – so that his appropriation of much of the content of his paintings is built on its established iconography. This, in turn, invites speculation on the underlying sexual motivation for the popular dissemination of those images in the first place. If, for example, Dalí encloses the *Lugubrious Game's* sexual vortex within the contours of a donkey's head, as Gibson has suggested, then we should remember that Dalí had already explored the meanings associated with the donkey in religious art in paintings and texts.⁶ In Christian thought, this humble animal marks Christ's as a religion of the people, of the mortal world. When Dalí interprets this *ad absurdum* by making his donkey a rotting, fly-infested corpse, he may well have had in mind an idea as orthodoxly religious as that sexual thoughts lead to the corruption of the flesh. Sometimes an umbrella is not just an umbrella, and sometimes a donkey is not just a donkey.

In contrast to the rotting donkey, the lion – powerful, masculine, fertile and deadly king of the beasts – that appears in many of Dalí's Surrealist paintings, and which makes a special contribution to the iconography of St Jerome, makes its first appearance in *The Lugubrious Game*, where two sculpted specimens stand at the foot of a statue. Gibson has rightly identified these with the ones guarding the entrance to the Palacio de las Cortes, which houses one chamber of the Parliament in Madrid.⁷ That is to say, Dalí chose to use lions standing on the Carrera de San Jerónimo (St Jerome Boulevard) between the Academia and the Prado, which he must have seen hundreds of times – and probably saw again on his way from Paris to Cadaqués.⁸ He would have seen them for the first time in September 1922, when he visited Madrid for the entrance exam to the Academia, on what was probably also his father's first visit.⁹ To his notary father, Parliament perhaps meant as much as a seat of authority as the Prado to his son. Of course, the lions outside Parliament are far from the only ones Dalí knew, but their significance is actually bolstered by their ubiquity as symbols of power and authority – in paintings, architecture, myth, monuments and heraldry. Leonine mascarons festoon the facades of palaces and banks, and the lion that rests its paw on an orb guards the entrances to centres of power and authority throughout the world. Dalí knew ones sculpted in relief above the entrances to the Prado, and on trips to Girona, he would have seen the lion-topped column commemorating the city's

defenders against Napoleon’s invading army, the inauguration of which he might have attended with his father in 1909.

For Gibson, Dalí’s lions “tend to symbolise the enraged father”, implying that Dalí depicts his own father as a lion in a literal but coded autobiographical narrative, but this does little justice to the reach of the lion’s significance in art, and does not quite fit with the Freudian schema. In subsequent canvases, as Dalí unravelled the layers that concealed the underlying significance of the lion, it would lose its orb and merge with the body of a woman in various ways, or rear its lascivious tongue to lick the lips of its jowls, as it does in the *Enigma of Desire*, metamorphosing through an elastic identification that draws on sources more base than civilised authority and the Law of the Father.

In Freud’s terms, Dalí’s lion was more id than superego. It represents the instinct that paternal authority seeks to control, and to sublimate as art. Here, we anticipate the relevance of Jerome as the Christian iconographical representative of the directing forces of rationalisation and culture, contemplating his own struggle with his inner beast.



Fig 78
Salvador Dalí with one of the lions
outside the Palacio de las Cortes



Fig 79
Monument to the defenders of Girona, “El lleó”

The Uncanny City

In Cadaqués, Dalí’s lion came alive as a wild, panting beast, but it first appeared as another element of cold, grey civic architecture among the slabs, steps, plinths and statues that are the backdrop to the first few paintings of his nascent style. De Chirico’s influence is clear here – his metaphysical paintings of stiffly animated statues, long shadows, and brutal architecture suggested ways Dalí could represent the alienation of his stay in Paris that he described in the series of “documents” he posted for publication in *La Publicitat*.¹⁰ He probably already had De Chirico in mind when he asked his readers



Fig 80
Giorgio De Chirico
The Enigma of a Day (1914)

for comments on the “enigma” of his observations (the Italian’s paintings were often titled after various enigmas). More specifically, after observing people in the Jardin de Luxembourg, Dalí referred to “the passion for enigma experienced by people who live in big cities.”¹¹

De Chirico’s *Enigma of a Day* (1914) is certainly one of Dalí’s models for the statue hiding its face in the *Lugubrious Game* – an actor in this enigmatic urban drama. Its sense of uncanny alienation in a strange city attracted Breton to acquire it around the time that Dalí was in Paris. We have no record of Dalí seeing it in Breton’s apartment in 1929 (which would be a strange omission from the documentaries, in which he does mention De Chirico) but he must have seen reproductions, if not the original.¹²

Breton’s position regarding De Chirico is well-documented – while praising the metaphysical paintings of 1914-7, by 1929 he was scathing about the Italian’s subsequent neo-classicism. Spector has suggested that with his statue, Dalí mocks De Chirico, in order to ingratiate himself with Breton.¹³ However, Spector’s evidence is

weak, and the fact that the paintings supposedly mocked are just those that Breton still praised – and indeed bought – annuls this hypothesis. In fact, Dalí’s interest in De Chirico preceded his interest in Surrealism, and Dalí not only knew the Italian’s art but had been following his writings since 1921. In *Valori Plastici*, for example, Dalí read De Chirico’s approval of Schopenhauer’s suggestion to place statues at ground level, so that people would share the urban space with them.¹⁴ These writings had been fundamental to the representation of Sebastian’s impermeability to desire through Dalí’s depiction of him as a marble Apollo, and the influence lingers in the *Lugubrious Game*.

Nevertheless, there are subtle differences in how Dalí and De Chirico perceive and represent the strangeness of the city. Generally, in De Chirico’s compositions, vast objects are at the sides, hemming in a central space. Still generalising, Dalí tends to present a central character – and in the paintings that we shall look at, this is a self-representation – surrounded by emptiness. That is the shape of alienation as Dalí imagined it in his enigma. The stress moves from the alienating city to the alienated self. Also, the dominance of massive blocks and hard edges that Dalí took from De Chirico – the architecture of masculine authority, of capital cities Paris and Madrid – dissipates in Dalí’s succeeding paintings, when he looks to Barcelona, Gaudí and the rocks of Cap Creus to imagine a “soft architecture” that opens this allegorical stage-setting to thoughts on the feminine.

Before that happened, Dalí was steered towards a consideration of statues as companions by his immersion in Breton’s novel *Nadja*, in which the reader is taken on a sexually charged tour of Paris, directed by “mad love” for the mysterious protagonist. This served as Dalí’s guide to the affective strangeness of the city, as it had earlier oriented him through the world as metaphorical forest. Dalí now inhabited the pages of the book, and meeting Surrealists such as Paul Éluard and Robert Desnos, whose portraits illustrated it, and must have imagined being drawn into experiences similar to those described by Breton.

In *Nadja*, Breton remarks on the eerie presence of statues in squares – illustrating this with a photograph of a statue outside the Hotel Grands Hommes, where he had lived around 1918.¹⁵ Needless to say, the statue bears an uncanny likeness to De Chirico’s in the painting Breton bought soon after publishing *Nadja*, and to Dalí’s in the *Lugubrious Game*. Several other models vie for importance as contributory sources for Dalí’s statue, adding or multiplying layers of significance. Dalí might have been reminded of encounters around the monument to Narciso Monturiol erected in 1917 in the Rambla in Figueres – the sentimental laboratory of his youth. This monument’s water-nymphs add their influence to De Chirico’s strictly masculine statue, along with other mythological goddesses. Perhaps Dalí was prompted in this direction by one encounter with *Nadja* in the Tuileries gardens, illustrated by Breton with a photo of a statue of Venus beside a pond. Although unlikely, it is not impossible that Dalí already knew a small painting by Henri Rousseau – another favourite during

preceding years; *La Statue de Diane au parc* (c. 1909) not only represents a statue of a goddess in the Tuileries, but also contains two central characters of Dalí's later Surrealist repertoire – a boy in sailor's uniform with a hoop and stick, and a seated nurse-maid.¹⁶ The relative importance of these sources may be debated, but they are all suggestive examples of how Dalí turned to art for orientation in the emotional labyrinth of Paris.



Fig 81
Hotel Grands Hommes
Photographic illustration to André
Breton's novel *Nadja* (1928)



Fig 82
Enric Casanovas and Ricard Giralt i
Casadesús, monument to Narcís
Monturiol (1918), Figueres,

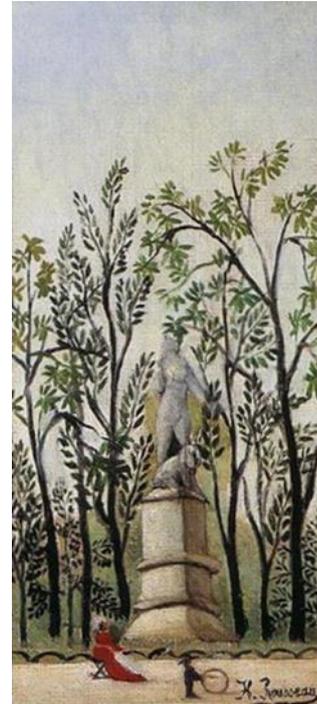


Fig 83
Henri Rousseau. *La Statue de
Diane au parc* (c. 1909)

The scene is now set for the entrance of probably the most personally meaningful of Dalí's multiple sources for the statue – Titian's *Worship of Venus*. As Michael Taylor has shown (although with Ariadne in focus, rather than Venus), De Chirico's metaphysical paintings already pointed the way towards Titian.¹⁷ Dalí knew the *Worship of Venus* well, from the Prado and from the Gowans series, and he could have seen it again either side of his trip to Paris.¹⁸ As we have seen, Venus was not new to Dalí's canvases, but the awkwardness of his previous representations of the goddess of love – as a deadly antagonist to Sebastian – reveal the difficulty with which he imagined sexual encounters with the opposite sex. Witness the mutilation inflicted on her body in his *Birth of Venus (Cenicitas)*.

Dalí's descriptions of his state of mind in Paris show that this difficulty in representing a positive image of feminine sexuality reflects a real difficulty in the physical world. However, his treatment of the body of Venus in the *Lugubrious Game* has taken a very different route to the one it was on only a few months earlier, when his flayed bathers might also have been influenced by Titian, whose "Venuses of golden flesh stretched on folds of fine and costly dresses" he had admired in Gowans even before he had seen them in the Prado.¹⁹ In the new, emotionally cold treatment of Venus as a statue, her femininity is resolutely maternal, but hardly erotic – she has huge breasts, but is covered with a full-length dress. Her hair is shorn, her face covered and there is no hint of sensuous *contrapposto*. Despite this lack of sensuality, the Freudian localisation of the origin of desire in the maternal body of Venus is only made clearer by the contrast with the swirling sexual signs in the

imaginary monument opposite her. In Titian's Bacchanalian scene, Venus is immersed in a visual dialogue of vessels, bodies and liquid desire – water springs from the base of her plinth.



Fig 84
Titian
The Worship of Venus

Another sculpted figure climbs Venus's pedestal, in Dalí's painting, in a futile attempt to sexualise her – extending an object with its origin in Titian's painting, but which could resemble either a male or a female sexual organ (a comment on the conch shell held by Titian's Venus). A remnant of Dalí's thoughts on Sebastian, perhaps – another *Eros con bastón*? After all, in his other hand he holds an anchor. Hello again, sailor! Lahuerta makes a strong case for this lingering presence of Sebastian in the *Lugubrious Game*, and identifies a drawing on the back of its canvas as Lorca's "final Saint Sebastian".²⁰ The suggestion of Lorca's persistent influence allows us to speculate, once again, on the wild and witty interpretations that Dalí, Lorca, Buñuel and Bello might have weaved as they stood before Titian's painting in the Prado. They could hardly have overlooked that a "sacrifice to Venus" is a time-honoured euphemism for masturbation, an allusion Dalí seems to acknowledge with the enormous hand that Venus extends towards the Great Masturbator opposite her.²¹

Desire and the Castrating Father

At that time, a "sacrifice to Venus" must have seemed the only form of sexual activity available to Dalí and even this seemed impossibly daunting to him. The fear and anxiety connected to desire is clear in the lower right corner of the *Lugubrious Game*, where a mortified youth clutches his trouserless father, who leers lasciviously at Venus. At some level, this equivocal embrace refers to Dalí and his own father, but simply deciphering this as a coded double portrait before moving on to the next puzzle does not lead us into the painting but out of it. Their relationship may have been strained, but *The Lugubrious Game* was painted several months before it reached breaking point. Rather, a more general impact of Dalí's stay in Paris, against a background of theorisation, is the main impulse. Reference to any specific disagreement between father and son would be anecdotic, and there is more to be gained by leaving the identification as an abstract *father-son struggle*, with its weight of Freudian, mythological and Biblical meaning.

Dalí was absorbed in his project of constructing psychoanalytically coherent schema for his new paintings that would impress the Surrealists whose visit to Cadaqués was imminent. That Dalí's family must have partly blamed them for the agitated state in which he had returned from Paris can only have increased the tension between father and son, but this was effect and not cause of the struggle envisioned in the painting.

The embrace was another motif Dalí borrowed from metaphysical paintings such as *The Prodigal Son*, and this title reminds us that De Chirico was already treating themes established in Christian art. In his appropriation of De Chirico's appropriation, Dalí is two steps removed from the Biblical origin, but his use of the embrace – together with the desecrated Host above it – shows that, from the start of Dalí's Surrealist adventure, religious art provided ready material for treating themes of problematic desire in these paintings.

The Surrealists came and went, and Dalí continued to paint for the Goemans exhibition, pursuing notions of paternal authority central to Freudian thought. As he tested ways to represent family relationships within a structure of oedipal dynamics, the embrace developed into a standard device of his early Surrealist paintings, with clusters of melded figures suggestive of uncomfortably remembered oedipal intrigue. In these constructions, the threat of castration comes from a knife-wielding father figure entangled in the family embrace, but encouraged by the leering lion at his shoulder.

Over the following months, the line between theory and reality was blurred as a crescendo of real incidents left its stamp on Dalí's life and paintings. When Gala began her affair with Dalí, three months after they had met, she gave material substance to the theoretical problem of desire that had infused Dalí's work since 1926.²² Tensions between father and son increased, eventually leading to Dalí's banishment, in the aftermath of the Goemans exhibition, and over the following year or two Dalí gave shape to the drama of his life in paintings that represented his own as much as the mythical *Father*.

During the search for an adequate mythical representation, variations on the theme of a father's sacrifice of his son were thrown into the pot. His father was the secular Guzmán el Bueno, for example, throwing down his dagger for his enemy to kill his son; he was the mythological Saturn devouring his children.²³ However, it was precedents in religious art that were decisive. After all, all Christian art is ultimately based on the metaphor of God sacrificing Christ – not least the iconography of martyrdom that engendered Sebastian, with which Dalí had been so engaged over the previous years.

When Dalí depicted his banishment by his father in a series of paintings that were based on real events, he settled on the apparently secular myth of William Tell. But, as anticipated in the preface, the definitive painting of the series, *William Tell* (1930), was actually based formally on Andrea del Sarto's *Abraham's Sacrifice* – once again, a religious painting that Dalí knew well from both Gowans and the Prado.²⁴ As Dawn Adès has pointed out, religious imagery is subtly infused throughout *William Tell*:

Dalí also quotes deliberately from religious iconography, presumably to underline the Abraham/God the Father parallels: the shamed son, hiding his face and with a leaf in place of his genitals, reaches a finger towards the extended hand of his father in a gesture reminiscent of Michelangelo's Adam in the Sistine ceiling.²⁵

Adès' observation reminds us that one of the lessons of art history that Dalí had absorbed was the didactic use of facial and hand gesture. The hand over the face is one such gesture, already assigned to the son in the *Lugubrious Game*, and it is retained to dramatic effect in *William Tell*, as the son turns away from his father. This rupture of the father-son embrace in *William Tell* recalls the *rhetoric of the halo* that had been fundamental to Dalí's exploration of personal relations and identity only a few years previously.



ADAM AND EVE (FRESCO) ADAM ET ÈVE (FRESCO)
(Carmine, Florence) (Carmine, Florence)
ADAM UND EVA (FRESKE)
MASACCIO (Florenz, Carmine) G. Bregi, Photo.

Fig 85
Masaccio
Adam and Eve

Dalí did not need to look far for his models, and the familiarity of his sources adds significance to their use. Leafing the pages of his Gowans books, he would have seen Michelangelo's Adam reaching out his finger, and Masaccio's *Adam and Eve* expelled from the Garden of Eden.²⁶

By the time Dalí painted *William Tell*, he had returned to Paris several times and reacquainted himself with the parks and statues where these themes had first begun to take shape in his mind. In the Tuileries – scene of an encounter between Breton and Nadja, next to the Louvre and overlooked by the Hotel Meurice, where Dalí would later reside when in Paris – stands a statue of Cain hanging his head in shame that cannot fail to have made an impact on Dalí if he saw it then (it has only stood in the Tuileries since 1982). Even this myth of Cain and Abel had played a central role in Dalí's earlier exploration of identity through shared and ruptured halos.

In fact, Dalí found many readily available images in religious art that relied on gesture for their significance and which, with a little tweaking, could be adapted as hieroglyphs for psychoanalytical concepts and dramatic events. For example, when Adès notes that "New sets of symbolic imagery which enter his work in 1930, often in association with the now familiar imagery of the 1929 pictures, are often still drawn from Freud", she gives the example of the key. Adès notes that "For Freud, the key in common dream symbolism related to the association between a woman and a room, which may be 'locked' or 'unlocked'."²⁷ What is more, as Lahuerta comments, Dalí occasionally places the key at the entrance to a vagina swarming with ants, obviating interpretation. We should not forget that Dalí had already used the key to represent similar ideas in 1926, when he borrowed from the iconography of St. Peter and his keys to Heaven.²⁸



Fig 86
Henri Vidal
Cain (1896)

Dalí was back in Figueres before the Goemans exhibition closed on 5th December 1929, and was joined by Buñuel, eager to start work on another film. Dalí's father was already aware of the scandal caused by *Un Chien andalou*, when unpalatable rumours about the exhibition started to arrive via acquaintances in Barcelona. Wary of his father's temper, Dalí withdrew to Cadaqués with Buñuel.²⁹ Dalí's father might have already been worried about the paintings he had seen leave for Paris, but nothing had prepared him for a last-minute addition to the exhibition, *Sacred Heart* – an ink drawing on canvas, across which Dalí scrawled the words "Parfois je crache par plaisir sur le portrait de ma mère" (Sometimes I spit for pleasure on the portrait of my mother), within an outline of Jesus with a flaming heart.

Dalí affected this scandalously blasphemous attitude in texts and paintings, making his parents the targets of his rage, but how much does this reflect his real life situation and experiences, and how much were his visualised struggles with *the Father* and impotent rage against the *lost Mother* simply theoretical exploration of the overlap of oedipal and Biblical mythology?

Dalí was obviously posturing, making as blasphemous a statement as possible, *à la Péret*, flirting for the attention of Surrealists and Residencia friends alike. It hit the right note, and Breton was delighted.³⁰ Meanwhile, Eugenio D'Ors had seen the work in Paris, publishing an account on 15th December of the perceived insult to Salvador's deceased mother Felipa. He must have given advance warning to Dalí's father, who had heard enough by the start of December to write and disinherit his

son, banishing him from Cadaqués under threat of violence. Dalí's father had no sympathy for his son's explanations or the conceptual games behind the image, which Dalí later claimed corresponded to a misunderstood "pamphletary" intention.³¹ In the wake of his banishment, Dalí dwelt on his position as a martyr to the cause of Surrealism, exiled and abandoned to his fate by a vengeful father. Events were aligning nicely for representation in terms of appropriately tragic classical or Biblical legends.

Buñuel left around the 6th December, but not before taking a photograph of Dalí balancing a sea urchin on his shaved head, apparently colluding in the identification of Dalí with William Tell's son.³² In the legend, William Tell is forced to shoot an arrow at an apple balanced on his son's head. To reinforce the sense that Dalí was presenting himself as a martyr, Santos Toroella has pointed out that the sea urchin was the symbol of St Sebastian, as Dalí no doubt knew. The *Golden Legend* says he was shot with so many arrows that he resembled an urchin: "ut quasi ericlus videtur".³³

This identification with William Tell had fermented for at least three years before Dalí took it up in his paintings, with its origins traceable to Dalí's detention in Girona in 1924. Dalí's father later referred to his son's arrest as intimidation aimed at him, making him "a sort of Guzmán el Bueno".³⁴ The tale of Guzmán is a notorious episode in Spain's history that differs from that of William Tell in that Guzmán was prepared to sacrifice his son in the name of his nation. Tell, on the other hand, was determined to save his son, and it is worth noting that he was a positive character – a political hero and leader of Swiss independence.³⁵ Lorca met Dalí senior a few months after that incident, and would have heard the father's version of events, perhaps even assisting with the identification with Guzmán, Tell, or both.

By the time Dalí visited Lorca and other friends in Barcelona in 1927, the identification with William Tell seems to have become a trope. One evening, Dalí signed a drawing of a "putrefact" in a restaurant visitors' book as "ex-prisoner," with "G. Tell" added alongside (William in Spanish is Guillermo). Whether or not this was written by Dalí, it is clearly appended to his contribution.³⁶ Lorca, who drew a sailor, signs as "potential prisoner," and the politically engaged Miravittles, "ex and future prisoner." We might surmise that the friends had been discussing the episode of Dalí's imprisonment in Girona. Ironically, considering his part in Dalí's banishment, the political aspect that made the Tell legend apt was brought to attention by Eugenio D'Ors, whose play *Guillermo Tell. Tragedia política* had been a great success in 1926.³⁷

However relevant to Dalí's real situation, the legend of William Tell served as a foundation for several paintings in which he elaborated a personal myth according to psychoanalytical precepts. The authenticity or coherence of the myth was of minor importance.³⁸ Rather, Dalí concentrates on the underlying fears and desires that motivated the characters, according to Freud. He might also have known that Otto Rank had discussed Schiller's *William Tell* in *The Incest Theme in Literature and Legend* (1912).³⁹ Dalí found precedents in religious art that could serve as models for the exploration of these themes. In the paintings of the William Tell cycle, he drew not only on the expulsion from Eden, of martyrdom and sacrifice, but from a wide range of Biblical imagery. As Adès writes,

The faint hints of an expulsion from the Garden of Eden in *William Tell* are made much more explicit in *The Old Age of William Tell*, where the young and sorrowing couple depart banished like Adam and Eve. But in place of Paradise is the old man, the father, tended by two women, in a scene which recalls the story of Lot and his daughters. Secret and ambiguous sexual activity takes place behind a sheet, as in a dimly recalled childhood memory.⁴⁰

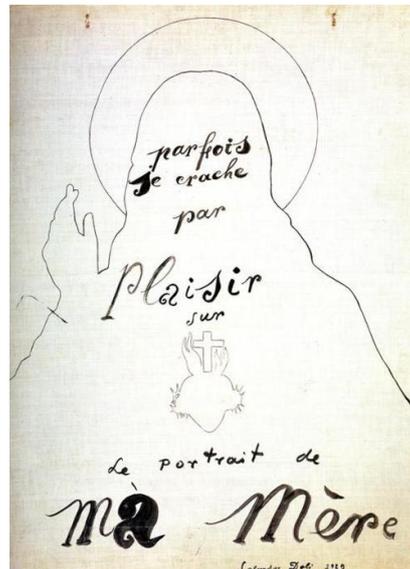


Fig 87
Salvador Dalí
Sacred Heart (1929)

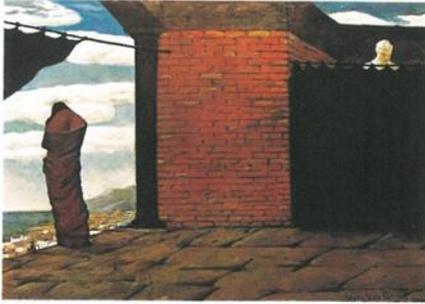


Fig 88
Giorgio de Chirico
The Enigma of the Oracle (1910)

Adès draws attention to a psychoanalytical interpretation of the concealing sheet. Dalí might have borrowed this device from De Chirico's earliest "metaphysical" work, *The Enigma of the Oracle* (1910), which Dalí must have known. Willard Bohn has shown that this work leans on areas of obvious interest to Dalí – Böcklin, Heraclitus, and Nietzsche's conception of the *Apollonian*.⁴¹ There would seem to be plenty of theoretical weight behind Dalí's use of the sheet, then, but purely formally there is another example that resembles Dalí's painting, and which was available to Dalí in the same Gowans volume as *Adam and Eve* – Masaccio's *Predella from the Pisa Altar*, where witnesses to martyrdom stand behind shields. If this was a direct source for the sheet in the *Old Age of William Tell*, then we can see how Dalí's investigations oscillated

fruitfully between religious art and psychoanalysis – for he was fully conversant in the association between decapitation and castration.

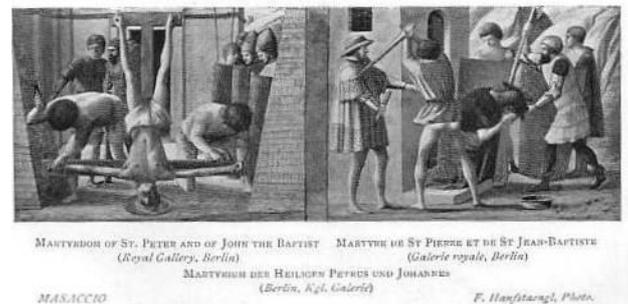


Fig 89
Masaccio
Predella panel from the Pisa Altar (1426)
in Gowans no. 41

Profanation

In light of Dalí's engagement with the fiercely atheistic Surrealists, his readiness to borrow from religious iconography to represent psychoanalytical concepts, and his eventual dedication to exclusively religious art, the question remains: what was Dalí's real attitude towards religion during the formation of his own Surrealism?

In June 1929, around the time he painted the *Lugubrious Game*, Dalí was looking forward to Bello visiting Barcelona. Dalí had returned from Paris, exhausted, and was on his own in Cadaqués. He expected Bello to visit him there, and awaited him "very happy and with my finger (as always) stuck in the renowned hole which is the arsehole and none other."⁴² As far as we know, the visit did not take place, but its promise confirms the input of Residencia humour into Dalí's mind-set that summer, particularly in regard to the attitude towards religious symbolism that Dalí was nurturing or affecting at that time. This attitude takes concrete form as visual and verbal *profanation of the host*, a pastime that panders to Buñuel and Bello, as much as the Surrealists, and not one with which Dalí would persist.



Fig 90
Paolo Uccello
Story of the Jew and the Host (panels 1 and 2)
In Gowans book 41

At the start of 1929, Buñuel sent Bello a list of obscene titles for poems that he thought would amuse him, which he and Dalí had come up with in Figueres, all *profaning the host* in some way or another. They were probably set off by a contribution to the Surrealist 'Investigations into Sexuality' by Benjamin Péret, who said that, having entered a church to make love, he "would like to profane the Hosts and, if possible, leave excrement in the chalice."⁴³ The image of a finger about to penetrate an anus, alongside a chalice and host, made it into the vortex of sexual thoughts in the *Lugubrious Game*.

Dalí was familiar with several images of the consecrated host, including Ingres' *Virgin with the Host*, which he could have seen in Paris that spring, and which was reproduced in Gowans. Ingres had been one of his favourite artists for several years, and Dalí must have spent many hours deciphering this picture, which lends itself readily to psychoanalytical interpretation. In Ingres' painting, the Madonna smiles lovingly at the Host – which the Church proclaims is not merely a symbol for, but actually *is* her son's body – before she devours it. Bringing Freud into the equation, Dalí implies that an erotically charged, reciprocated oral stage is represented at the centre of Christian mythology. The mother-child symbiosis is not only the locus of the origin of sexuality, but also of the sense of self and of communication with others. Further along this line of thinking is Freud's theory of the sublimation of unimaginable truths into imaginable art.

Once more, Nadja helped channel Dalí's thoughts. Breton reproduced a postcard in the book, sent from Italy by Louis Aragon, showing a detail of Uccello's *Profanation of the Host*.⁴⁴ In a footnote added to the revised edition of 1962, Breton explained that he didn't see a reproduction of the whole painting until several months later, but had been struck by the suggestive nature of the detail, cropped to show a family group waiting by a doorway.

Despite Breton's incomplete knowledge of Uccello's work, he was the only painter from the past named as a forerunner in the first Surrealist Manifesto, in 1924. When Dalí got to grips with the Manifesto, he could turn to his Gowans's Art Book no. 41 to see all six vignettes of Uccello's narrative predella, there titled the *Story of the Jew and the Host*.⁴⁵ The awkward perspective rendition of the architecture in the panel probably inspired another of the paintings for the Goemans exhibition, *Man with a Sickly Complexion Listening to the Sound of the Sea*. In another panel, Uccello's Jew and his family are burnt together at the stake for their alleged crime of profanation, and that family group is surely the origin of the multi-headed Masturbator creature in Dalí's own *Profanation of the Host* (1929), included in the Goemans exhibition.

The fact that these images of sacrilege and outrage are connected to Freudian musings on motherhood and the family group, suggests that a real affective engagement is at work within Dalí's apparently arbitrary attitude of profanation. Dalí's focus was certainly on applying psychoanalytical concepts to his own situation – coming to terms with a real absence of his mother, in a life situation defined by a real conflict with his father. To accomplish this, he turned to the pictures on his bookshelves, on the walls of museums he visited, and to his mnemonic stock as a reference library of ready-made pictorial solutions. Just as Freud had found a useful framework for the elaboration of his theories in classical myths such as Oedipus, Dalí turned to iconographic representations of Christian mythology for help. These too have their origin in similar, universally applicable, psychological experiences of birth and identity in the bosom of the family.

Dalí's *Sacred Heart* is an expression of real oedipal rage directed at his absent mother, with its theoretical justification in Freud's ideas on the artistic sublimation of mourning and loss. In an



THE VIRGIN WITH THE HOST [1841] LA VIERGE A L'HOSTIE
MARIA MIT DER HOSTIE
(Académie des Beaux-Arts, St-Herberg)
J.-E. Sirey, Photo.

Fig 91
Ingres
The Virgin with the Host
in Gowans book no. 47

objectively tempered analysis, Dalí's provocative slogan should be considered alongside other appearances of the words "ma mère", most notably in *The Enigma of Desire*, where they are exposed as a scream echoing to a fade across the strange, bulbous object at centre, as we shall see in the next chapter.



Fig 92
Paolo Uccello
Story of the Jew and the Host
(panel 5, detail)

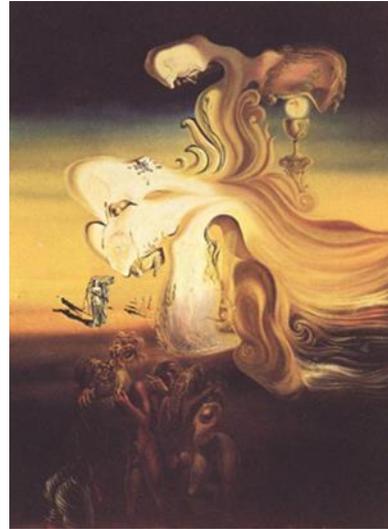


Fig 91
Salvador Dalí
Profanation of the Host (1929)

Notes

- ¹ Gibson speculates that the entire Gowans collection remained in Figueres and was lost to Dalí when he was banished (Gibson, 240). The continuing importance of the images in the collection in Dalí's subsequent paintings, suggests that this could be wrong, and elsewhere it is attested that they were actually in Cadaqués rather than Figueres. On the other hand, this could prove how deeply ingrained the images were.
- ² René Magritte and wife; Camille Goemans and girlfriend; Paul and Gala Éluard and their daughter Cécile arrived at the start of August. Dalí painted a Portrait of Paul Éluard that summer, possibly with the photo that appears in *Nadja* as a model. It was Éluard who suggested the title *Les Jeux lugubres*, which later became *Le Jeu lugubre*. Dalí said in the *Secret Life* that he had put "body and soul" into the the *Lugubrious Game*. He also put a little excrement in – more body than soul – which caused some concern. (SL, 246, L-D, 237).
- ³ De Chirico's *Prodigal Son* was painted in 1922, but embracing mannequins such as *Hector and Andromache* were central characters in his metaphysical paintings of 1914-7. See page 76.
- ⁴ Although it might not have been a source, as such, of this statue, there is an interesting visual parallel with the statue that comes alive and drags Don Juan down into hell at the end of Tirso de Molina's *El burlador de Sevilla o El convidado de piedra*. Disappointingly, in the version by Zorrilla which Buñuel and Dalí had interpreted in Madrid, Don Juan's soul is saved and ascends to heaven. As further evidence that the parallel is worth pursuing elsewhere, we note that in the legend, Don Juan is also disowned by his father.
- ⁵ This was noted by Dawn Adès in 1982: "How far, then, does a painting like *Dismal Sport* consist of images springing directly from the unconscious, or are they rather images which have already been digested and analysed?" See Adès, 74
- ⁶ DJDG, 361; L-D, 239. See chapter 3.
- ⁷ DJDG, 362
- ⁸ Dalí must have travelled via Madrid in May 1929, if he collected paintings that were exhibited in the show at the Jardín Botánico that had finished in April while he was in Paris, and left poems with Ernesto Giménez Caballero which were published shortly afterwards.
- ⁹ DJDG, 127
- ¹⁰ These are published in *L'alliberament dels dits*.
- ¹¹ 'Documentaries' V and VI, *La Publicitat*, 7th and 28th June 1929. In *L'alliberament dels dits*, 209-15.
- ¹² Miró said that he presented both Dalí and Buñuel to Breton, without saying when. See *Conversaciones*, 101. Breton acquired the painting between 1928 and 1933, according to MoMA's Provenance Research Project.
- ¹³ Spector, 115-7
- ¹⁴ De Chirico, 'Sull'arte metafisica', *Valori Plastici* (Rome) I: 4-5 (April-May 1919), 15-8, translation in Chipp, 452.
- ¹⁵ *Nadja*, revised ed., Paris; Gallimard; 1964 [1928], 23
- ¹⁶ See Elizabeth Cowling, et al, *Surrealism and After*, 122, and plate 43.
- ¹⁷ See Michael Taylor, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Myth of Ariadne*
- ¹⁸ Titian's painting is based on a passage by Philostratus - *Imagines*, I, vi, See David Jaffé, 'The Worship of Venus' in *Titian* (London: National Gallery, 2003), 110
- ¹⁹ See AMD, *Noves imatges de Salvador Dalí*, 74-5. Gibson, 42
- ²⁰ Lahuerta traces the title to an eponymous text published by Ernst and Éluard in December 1922, in issue 7 of *Littérature*. The text and its illustrations by Ernst
- parody those found in manuals of gymnastic exercises and describe a woman in different postures, obediently reacting to the stimulus of the object presented to her by a man: [...] The object is long, as the pictures show, and has protuberant ends, somewhat like a bone. Years later, in 1929, Dalí painted a man futilely showing a similar object to a woman made of stone, a statue. On the back of the picture there is a drawing by Federico García Lorca, which clearly was there before the painting – this is clearly the final Saint Sebastian.
- Lahuerta points out that it was Éluard who named this painting *Le jeu lugubre* (Lahuerta, 'Sacred Objectivity', 290). However, as Lorca would have made the drawing in Cadaqués before moving on to Barcelona, from where he continued their correspondence, I hesitate to agree with Lahuerta's assessment of it as "clearly the final Saint Sebastian".
- ²¹ In the Prado, the painting has the title, *La ofrenda a la diosa del amor – The Offering to the Goddess of Love*, although previously – perhaps while Dalí was in Madrid – it was known as *The Offering to Fecundity*.

- ²² Gibson has traced the flowering of their affair. It seems that Dalí had travelled to Paris in the autumn of 1929, and then left for Barcelona, with Gala, just before 20th November. They moved on to Sitges on 24th November, and it was there that they consummated their relationship. After that, Gala returned to Paris and Dalí to Figueres (DJDG, 397).
- ²³ The association with Saturn spreads into a number of areas that overlap with the iconography of Jerome. This seems to be because of fundamental interests of artists – Dürer is a good example – found expression through these figures. The full meanings of Saturn and Jerome have little in common. Both are bearded elders, often shown with an hourglass, but whereas Saturn is a type of Father Time, Jerome contemplates passing time as something over which he has no control. Panofsky, following Petrarch, has shown that at some point Saturn was confused with Chronos. “As Father Time, the agricultural protector Saturn retained his scythe and symbolised auto-cannibalistic consumption. Traditionally, the sickle already carried one meaning as an instrument of castration.” (Panofsky: 1972, 73-5). In astrology, Saturn was considered a malignant sign to be born under, and he was represented as an old man, or given a cripple’s crutch. While Panofsky shows the iconography of Father Time to spread into several areas, under the influence of classical sources, astrology, reinterpretations, etc., its main characteristics are time, cannibalism, castration, and the need for a crutch. By coincidence, Panofsky published these observations in 1939, just as Dalí was exhausting such associations in his paintings.
- ²⁴ See illustrations in the Prologue.
- ²⁵ Adès, 92.
- ²⁶ In the Gowans reproduction, Adam and Eve still wear the fig-leaves ordered by Cosimo III de Medici. Their nakedness was not restored until the 1980s.
- ²⁷ Adès, 85. Dalí might even have known that Otto Rank, who helped Freud with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, had trained as a locksmith.
- ²⁸ See p. 55, and fig. 33. Regarding the metaphor of the key, in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto*, Breton calls to artists for
a new *awareness*, to perform an act of self-observation, which in their case is of very exceptional value, to compensate for what is insufficient about the penetration of so-called ‘artistic’ states of mind by men who for the most part are not artists but doctors.” Breton suggests a productive understanding of the mechanism of Freudian sublimation, and its spontaneous offerings to consciousness, might provide “a key capable of opening indefinitely that box of many bottoms called man, a key that dissuades him from turning back, for reasons of self-preservation, when in the darkness he bumps into doors, locked from the outside, of the ‘beyond,’ of reality, of reason, of genius, of love. (*Manifestos*, 161, 163)
- ²⁹ DJDG, 397-8
- ³⁰ To mark his disgust, Breton reproduced the *Sacred Heart* in 1952, appending an article announcing Dalí’s conversion to Catholicism.
- ³¹ J.C. – Joan Cortés? or Just Cabot? – ‘Una estona amb Dalí abans d’anar a Nova York’; Barcelona; *Mirador*, 18th October 1934, in *Mas*, 47-50
- ³² DJDG, 400
- ³³ RST: 1998, 37. Benozzo Gozzoli’s *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (San Gimignano, Colegiata), reproduced in Gowans, is an example of a painting Dalí knew that showed Sebastian riddled with arrows, matching the description in the *Golden Legend*.
- ³⁴ Account published 4th May 1931, after the proclamation of the Republic, entitled ‘Cosas de la dictadura. Para muestra basta un botón.’ Banned from Sport Figuerense since not dropping a case under threat. (*LDAT*, footnote, pp. 66-7)
- ³⁵ Dalí had exhibited in Switzerland just before these events unfolded, which may have reinforced Dalí’s identification with the story of William Tell. At the start of September 1929, *Un Chien andalou* represented Spain at a film festival in Switzerland. See *¿Por qué...?* 300, note. Dalí’s painting *Bathers* (1928) was included in the *Abstrakte und surrealistische Malerei und Plastik* exhibition in the Kunsthau in Zurich, 6th October – 3rd November 1929.
- ³⁶ Visitors’ book of the restaurant El Canario de la Garriga, Reproduced in *LDAT*, 55
- ³⁷ D’Ors’ play was written in 1923, the year of Primo de Rivera’s coup d’état, and of D’Ors’s defence of Dalí after his suspension from San Fernando.
- ³⁸ “With the Old Age of William Tell, our youth began. The real shadow of a lion threatened us steadily. For me, the essential thing was to tell our life by any mythological means.” See *WSD*, 157
- ³⁹ The second edition was published in 1926, when Dalí seems to have taken notice of Rank, but I have found no evidence of a translation into either Spanish, French or Catalan.
- ⁴⁰ Adès, 92
- ⁴¹ Bohn, 94-6

⁴² RES, 229-30, my translation. Rafael Alberti told Ian Gibson that when Lorca heard about Dalí's relationship with Gala, in late summer 1930, he commented, "But he only gets an erection when someone sticks a finger up his arse!" (L-D, 254-5, conversation with Alberti, 4-10-1980)

⁴³ 'Recherches sur la sexualité', first session, 27 January 1928, in *Investigating Sex: Surrealist discussions 1928-1932*, p. 14. A notorious photograph of Benjamin Péret insulting a priest had been published in *La Révolution surréaliste*, in 1926.

⁴⁴ The panel is one of six in Uccello's predella to the Urbino Confraternity of Corpus Domini altarpiece, now in the Ducal Palace there, its current title being *The Miracle of the Profaned Host* (1467-8).

⁴⁵ This included not only Uccello's paintings of battles, which had captured the attention of the Surrealists, but also the work of three other artists who left their mark on Dalí's paintings: Domenico Veneziano, Masaccio, and Andrea del Castagno.

Chapter 5. Diagnosis: Visualising the Surrealist Self

In this chapter, we turn our attention to the first of the two paintings that are the focus of this second part of my thesis, the *Enigma of Desire* (1929).¹ Completed only a few months after taking the plunge into Surrealism, the *Enigma* is already the epitome of his mature Surrealist style, and Dalí looked back on it as one of his ten most important paintings.² The foundations for this painting were laid in the *First Days of Spring* and the *Lugubrious Game*. Those were hard work – painful self-analysis that exposed Dalí's debilitating alienation in a world driven by desire. In them, he annotated the pathological effects of these forces – as a psychoanalyst takes notes – and pictured the symptoms.

The Enigma of Desire is his diagnostic report – a psychoanalytical study of himself as an actor in an oedipal drama. That is not to say that we should accept his images as evidence of madness. He did not become subject to a range of pathological symptoms in 1929 that matched Freud's theories, and remain so until a miraculous cure in 1947. Despite his anxieties, he was functional throughout 1929 – he travelled to Paris, met important contacts and convinced them of his capabilities; he wrote extensively on the theoretical background to his paintings; he put together a coherent body of work that has defined Surrealist painting and that we still discuss ninety years later. Rather, he used psychoanalysis creatively, as a figurative language to contemplate and represent himself. Perhaps he felt susceptible to dangers described by Freud, but at the same time he was conscious of the positive aspects of self-analysis; of self-representation as catharsis; of art as a coping strategy or sublimation of difficult thoughts; as a therapeutic rather than traumatic enterprise.

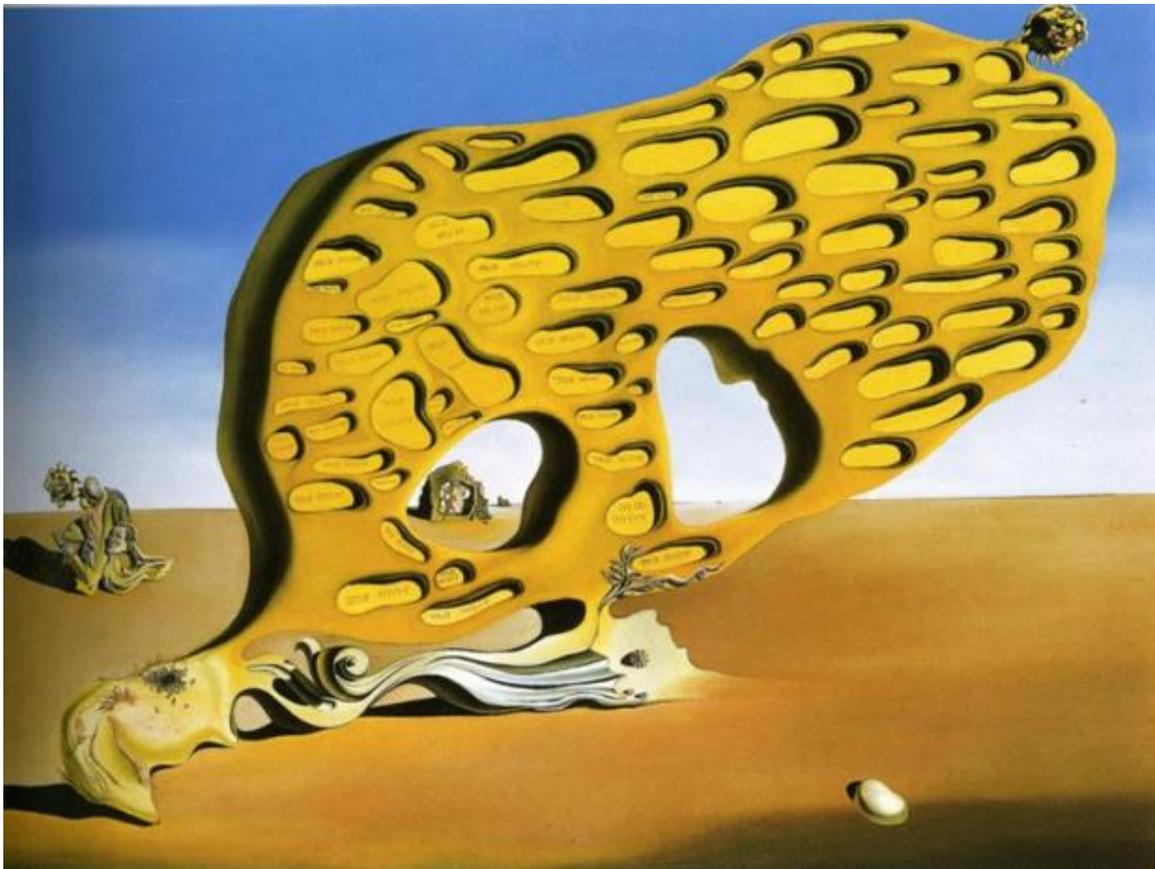


Fig 94
Salvador Dalí
The Enigma of Desire (1929)

5.1 Desire: the Great Enigma

Dalí crystallised his self-image as the ‘Great Masturbator’ in its eponymous painting and in the *Enigma of Desire*, which he painted alongside it.³ The emblematic ‘Masturbator’ face evolved over several years out of Dalí’s shared identification with Lorca, and it is best known for its appearance among soft watches in the *Persistence of Memory* (1931). Of the two 1929 paintings, the *Great Masturbator* probably attracts most attention, but the *Enigma* is a more honest and revealing synthesis of his self-image, while sticking even more closely to the Freudian script. It is a pathetic self-representation, based on Freudian models of the mind. The face is reduced to an appendage to the pulsating network of associations and affective experience that define it. Eyes closed, it contemplates an inner self beyond its control, its ego subject to superego and id. This inner self is formless, an amoeboid organism animated by mysterious impulses of animal desire.

That Dalí pictured an amalgam, or aggregate of these processes does not mean that he fully understood them, or even aimed to conform to them, but their incorporation was fundamental to his nascent Surrealist method, and to his project of visual self-analysis. Laplanche and Pontalis could as well be describing Dalí’s guiding principles in 1929 when they say of the “primal phantasies” that they are not necessarily experienced by an individual, but still exist as an organising principle for individual fantasies:

If we consider the themes which can be recognised in primal phantasies (primal scene, castration, seduction), the striking thing is that they have one trait in common: they are all related to the origins. Like collective myths, they claim to provide a representation of and a ‘solution’ to whatever constitutes a major enigma for the child.⁴

Neither must we be too careful not to mix our metaphors or labels. We are not psychoanalysing Dalí – our focus is on identifying and investigating the ways that Dalí found his knowledge of religious art useful to this project of picturing the self as described by Freud. An iconological analysis of the constituent elements of Dalí’s self-depiction in the *Enigma* reveals that even this work of such apparent Freudian inspiration was informed by that knowledge, and we gain by revealing what Dalí knew of their traditional meanings when he added them to his visual repertoire.

To represent a mental self defined by sexuality and mortality, Dalí borrowed from the iconography of contemplative saints and desert ascetics – isolated, struggling to comprehend death and to renounce desire. Specifically, the component elements of the *Enigma of Desire* are identifiable as the iconographical attributes of St Jerome: an isolated figure in the desert, skull, lion and stone. Only the saint’s inkwell is missing and that is implicit in the handwritten captions, “ma mère”. It would later appear explicitly in other paintings, together with other elements of the traditional representation of ascetic saints associated with Jerome: bread, and bearded figures of authority. Less directly, the problematic mental representation of the female body is an essential part of the meaning of St. Jerome.

The notion that Dalí could so coherently and rationally have composed his self-image from the iconographical canon of religious art is not necessarily incompatible with Surrealism, if we allow that he had absorbed the images of art history to the extent that they did indeed emerge from the subconscious, ready-processed, flowing naturally as the language of his thoughts. His training in wild association, in the company of Lorca and Pepín Bello, had been ideal preparation for his Surrealism.

The figure in *The Enigma of Desire* is, following Freud, defined in time and space by the circumstances of his birth, and his attachment to meanings forged through the trauma of his primary loss. Dalí’s self-depiction as a vulnerable, physical and psychical self – which we refer to as the Masturbator in the guise in which we see him in this chapter – was informed by his knowledge and interpretation of the confrontation with mortality and desire in Western religious painting.

Birth of the Masturbator

The evolution of Dalí's Masturbator face as a self-representation can be traced back to around 1925. Its first manifestation is perhaps in *Departure (Homage to Fox Newsreel)* (1925), where the spectral profile of a sailor kissing Venus is already a mythical representation of enigmatic desire.⁵ It metamorphosed through the palimpsest, split and double faces of the Lorca-Dalí identity, and lingered in proto-Surrealist works of 1928, but there is a mutational leap in 1929 with the assimilation of psychoanalytical self-conceptualisation. Dalí was motivated by a search for an adequate self-representation, and the images that he incorporated into this were never neutral or arbitrary but loaded with significance.

Under the sign of Sebastian, Dalí had tended to present a physical central figure – notwithstanding its degradation from impenetrable marble to fragile dummy, culminating as a mutilated, decapitated torso in the *Birth of Venus (Cenicitas)*. Freudian theory is applicable to that development – the mortal body was a sexual body; decapitation was castration – but what Dalí painted between 1926 and 1928 was *physical* vulnerability and impotence. That he considered desire a threat to be nullified and made impotent is reflected in *Cenicitas'* second title, *Sterile Efforts*, as it was still called in the catalogue to Dalí's Goemans exhibition. However, in 1929, the focus of Dalí's investigation shifts from the torso to the flaccid, severed head. More than that, it is the mind that he paints: the Masturbator is a self-representation as embodied psyche on a dissecting table.⁶

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Dalí adjusted the evolving head to approximate the shape of the Cullero rock on Cap Creus, most obviously in the *Great Masturbator*. Dalí gave a glimpse of what it meant for the Masturbator to resemble this rock in the *Unspeakable Confessions* – they were similarly immobile against the waves of the sea, he said. He wanted, then, to emphasise the resilience of this self-image. Certainly in the *Great Masturbator*, where it stands rigid, supporting the weight of the sexual scene unfolding on its nape, it appears solid, monumental on its plinth. The same cannot be said for its appearance in the *Enigma*, where it is punctured, deflated, pathetic... practically an appendage to the limp pedestal that barely supports it. To paraphrase 'Saint Sebastian', this soft, bulbous head is more jellyfish than solidified whisky.

The contrast introduces a dichotomy that would become a trope over following years – of the hard and the soft, of permanence and transience. More than a question of compositional balance between contrasting textures, this dichotomy has a metaphorical aspect and poses existential questions. The "hard" was allied to certain experiences, and the "soft" to others. In the case of the *Enigma*, any intimation of softness in the rocky sea-shore brings to mind the aspects of the maternal and the sensual attached to the sea, especially, for Dalí, at Cadaqués. It was the sea of his childhood paradise that embraced the marble body of the *Composition* in 1926, and gave birth to the mutilated Venus in *Cenicitas* a year later. In the last line of 'Saint Sebastian', which already played on these contrasts of soft and hard, and which synthesises Dalí's feelings on resisting sensuality, the first person narrator finally achieves a sort of softening, and acceptance of "tenderness": "I stretched out on the sand. And the waves reached the shore with soft murmurs of Henri Rousseau's *Bohémienne endormie*."

Dalí was painting for a francophone audience that he would expect to recognise the homonym *mer* (sea) in "ma mère" (my mother).⁷ The sea that is conspicuous by its absence from the coastal setting of the *Enigma* and the *Great Masturbator* – implied by the protagonism of the Cullero rock – is merely disguised, coded as an allusion to the liquid, lost intrauterine paradise of his mother's womb. With Lorca as his guide, Dalí was too well-versed in the poetics of the sea and the land for his remark about the Masturbator's resilience not to hint at a will to open up to tenderness in the *Enigma*, in which the hard face of resistance softens when it recognizes the maternal origin of sensuality.

Sexual and Mortal Body and Mind

The emphasis in the *Great Masturbator* is on the body as sexual, and in the *Enigma of Desire*, on the body as mortal. Yet the erotic is not absent from the latter – the soft body of the Masturbator spreads its sensual curves and hollows across the sand like the previous summer’s crude slabs of flesh. These betrayed Dalí’s fear of the sexual body as a harbinger of death; paintings such as *Baigneur* (1928) anticipate the issues at stake in the ascetic’s contemplation of the corruptibility of the flesh, studied in the next chapter.

The same shape I have described as a feminine body with sensuous curves stamped “mother”, can also be read as a distorted skull, with empty eye sockets and a slippery grimace. This was in fact just the first in a series of paintings and drawings of elongated skulls that together constitute an essay on the perception and reality of death and desire. The skull is of course one of the attributes of Jerome, who is often depicted contemplating this symbol of human mortality.

One particular skull of many in the history of art played an important role at this point, coupling thoughts on perception with those on death: the *anamorphic* skull that stretches across Holbein’s *Ambassadors*. Dalí had this image to hand in his Gowans collection when he painted the *Enigma*.



Fig 95
Hans Holbein the Younger
The Ambassadors (1533)

Holbein relates his skull to other objects which – to those conversant in the hieroglyphic language of religious iconography – make this apparently secular painting a tract on *vanitas*. He surrounds his ambassadors – men of the world – with signs of the other world. The skull and a partially concealed crucifix are *memento mori* in the orbit of Jerome’s meanings, while others comprise a tableau of scientific and musical instruments – apparatuses of measure and pleasure that Dalí had used frequently and consequentially in paintings of 1926-7.

Holbein’s skull introduces the technique of *anamorphosis*, or elongation, that Dalí would use frequently over the following three or four years. This was a period in which Dalí exchanged views with the young psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, concerning Dalí’s paranoiac-critical theory. Lacan later held a seminar on ‘Anamorphosis’, in which he mentions Dalí’s extended loaves and watches for comparison, but without directly relating them to Holbein’s

anamorphic skull.⁸ Had Lacan identified Holbein’s skull in the *Enigma*, we imagine he would have found plenty to say on Dalí’s painting. In lieu of that, we could apply his comments on Holbein’s skull to Dalí’s painting:

[Holbein/Dalí] makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated – annihilated in the form that is, strictly speaking, the imaged embodiment of the *minus-phi* [...] of castration, which for us, centres the whole organization of the desires through the framework of the fundamental drives.⁹

Dalí no doubt had similar concepts in mind when he brought the anamorphic skull into his painting, although he was more attuned to the iconography of Holbein's painting in 1929 than Lacan in 1964, his art-historical knowledge counterbalancing the algebraic bias of Lacan's discourse.

Although Dalí was already familiar with Holbein's painting, he was further alerted to anamorphosis when his two beached carcasses of 1928, *Bathers* and *Female Nude*, were reproduced in *Documents* in September 1929, alongside a 16th century anamorphic painting, *St. Anthony of Padua and the Infant Jesus*.¹⁰ Carl Einstein wrote on the *St Anthony* without connecting it to

Dalí's paintings, but the juxtaposition of the images must have been deliberate. In the same issue, Bataille wrote on *Un Chien andalou* and reproduced *Blood is Sweeter than Honey* (sic.), so Dalí paid close attention to this issue, published around the time he painted the *Enigma*. There must have been contact with Dalí prior to publication of photos of his work, so it is possible that Dalí had already discussed bodily distortion when he met Bataille in the spring. After all, the first issue was current then, and in it Bataille wrote on the 'Informe' or 'formless'.¹¹

The brief article by Carl Einstein that accompanies the juxtaposed reproductions of bathers and anamorphic saint does not draw on psychoanalysis – this was left to Dalí. Einstein highlights the religious meaning that underwrites the visual trickery of the anamorphic painting, with double images used to indicate the ascetic life chosen by the Infant Jesus as a path to heaven. The Saint's girdle can alternatively be read as a bridge, and "the cross, below, is also a bridge because suffering is a bridge to God. To the right, a book represents the Logos which leads to Christ. At the bottom, larvae and insects form the lily of innocence, symbol of the Virgin."¹² These same insects are usually indicators of inevitable decay and, by implication, regeneration. The article, then, explained the highest purpose of life on earth as an endless repeat of birth and death, its hidden truths concealed from our inadequate perception.

Adès has drawn attention to the parallel between the religious and psychoanalytical ramifications of anamorphic distortion that Dalí could have taken into account. The technique questions our perception of the world, she writes, and "posited a 'hidden reality' which was to suggest analogies with the unknowable of the unconscious."¹³ Adès traces the part played by such Freudian "hidden reality" of fears and desires in Dalí's depiction of elongated body parts in the early thirties. These place anamorphic skulls in connection with coffins and (conjugal- or death-) beds.

The distortions are often sexually charged, ranging from erect penises – actual, or implicit in some phallic or digital distension – to the contorted face of a woman in agonistic orgasm that he drew in a letter to Paul Éluard that dealt with "atmospheric-skulls."¹⁴ Other drawings in this letter and elsewhere, and several paintings that further probed these questions, suggest that the shape in the *Enigma* was already motivated by these musings on the anamorphic skull.

Dalí's death's head attains its full significance through its visual and conceptual confusion with the sexual and mortal body of the mother in these anamorphic experiments. This is expressed most clearly in *Diurnal Fantasies*, where the Masturbator profile – Dalí's primal self – is embedded in an elongated skull/stone/tomb, but as if seen through the translucent red membrane of a womb. This is the embryo as *memento mori*, attending to a phobic transference characteristic of Dalí, where reference to origins evokes the inevitability of death. As he told Pauwels, regarding infants, "they look like the embryos they once were and at the same time like the old men they will become; and everything that evokes the beginning or the end causes me an unbearable discomfort."¹⁵ David Lomas wonders whether even



Fig 96
Salvador Dalí
Baigneur (1928)

the Masturbator profile in the *Enigma* was meant to resemble an embryo, influenced by Gaudí's use of casts of stillborn babies in the adornment of his *Sagrada Familia* church.¹⁶



Fig 97
Salvador Dalí
Diurnal Fantasies (1932)

Contemplating the self

Christian iconography and Freudian psychoanalysis overlap as explanations of the development of a human life through the cycle of reproduction and death. They coincide in their concern for an individual defined by birth to a particular mother at a particular time, and aware – dimly or vividly – of inevitable death. The foundation of the Western tradition of art is the representation of the paradigmatic birth and death of Christ and through the Renaissance and into the Baroque, much of it represented the corruptibility of the flesh, inviting us to contemplate our carnal vulnerability and to trust in a higher meaning for our fleeting appearance on Earth.

Contemplation of the *mortality* of the flesh is an explicitly stated element of Hieronymite iconography, but the repression from that iconography of the *sexual* aspect of carnal vulnerability is not matched in Jerome's writings or in his significance to the Church. The ascetic iconographic identity was defined by monks and cardinals schooled in abstinence by Jerome and Augustine, who both wrote extensively on the problem – or *enigma* – of desire. In fact, the depiction of a withered, half-naked anchorite insinuates the struggle against temptation, with the feminine body implicated in original sin and blamed for the corrupting power of desire. The establishment of a positive image of woman as Virgin Mary, rather than sinful Eve, was evidently and instructively problematic for the Church.

In a parallel context, Freud posited similar difficulties in imagining our relationship to the mother's reproductive and mortal body as basic to our contemplation of origins and identity, and sense of selfhood. Within the context of these psychological difficulties, we have seen how Dalí pondered Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin* as an example of the ironic emotional distance that he was debating

with Lorca.¹⁷ We turn to Dalí's embrace of the Christian framework for these concerns in Part III. First, we shall see how similar ideas were already central to the psychoanalytical Surrealism of the *Enigma*.

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At the start of August 1929, Dalí's attempts to imagine the place of his own (deceased) mother within a Freudian mental schema were further complicated by the eruption of desire into his life, with the presence at Cadaqués of the real female body of Gala, who came with Éluard and their daughter Cécile.¹⁸ This seems to have triggered, or at least coincided with, a change in Dalí's attitude towards the female body, reflected in the *Enigma*, where the horror expressed in 1928 has subsided to allow a more measured consideration of the tragically conditioning circumstance of primary loss. Dalí's amorphous, psychic self has buckled under the debilitating weight of its internalised, lost symbiotic relationship to the primary object, etched across its body as the perpetually repeated lament, "ma mère". The meaning of these words should be compared with the sense of official approval in the inscriptions of the standardised weight of paternally dictated culture on the pedestal in the *Lugubrious Game*, "gramme – centigramme – milligramme". The *Enigma* delves deeper to gauge the specific weight of the maternal in shaping art.

The contrast between the tone of these inscriptions – of the paternal law of stipulation and the maternal poetry of affect – may be a historically ubiquitous dichotomy in discussions of artistic expression, but it also specifically evokes the games of quantification of emotion played with Lorca and Bello, as well as apparatuses in drawings and paintings, and described in 'Sant Sebastià', that preceded the *Enigma*. For Lorca, the "desire for forms and limits" was a fundamental and admirable characteristic of Dalí, the "man who checks with a yellow ruler".¹⁹ This literal understanding of temperance as metric measure is one that both Lorca and Dalí felt appropriate to Dalí's fear of abandonment to emotion, and it feeds into Dalí's subsequent attempts to represent himself as a Freudian subject, defined by the push and pull of conscious and subconscious pneumatic forces.

Freud worked in a discipline and among peers that understood mental illness as physiological disease, and he described the unconscious using a scientific language that encouraged Dalí to imagine an inner world of tangible structures and measureable processes, susceptible to Newtonian laws and accessible to inward, empirical observation. The numbers and letters that label works in the *physiological aesthetics* of 1928 – borrowed, I contest, from Ramón y Cajal – represent one stage of Dalí's project of imagining access to this inner world. The viability of Dalí's diagrammatic approach as universally applicable, scientific methodology is irrelevant. At stake is something more personally important to Dalí – Freud revealed the existence of the internalised, lost primary object as active, if not alive, within the subconscious. This suggested a way for Dalí to recuperate loss through imagination – by picturing this inner world of objects, lost and found, constitutive of the subject. Psychoanalytically coherent Surrealist painting could help Dalí regain a sense of the presence of his mother in his world, and Dalí attempted no less than this in the *Enigma*. This is why Dalí judged this painting one of his most important.

As Adès suggests, Dalí had already depicted himself at the threshold between subject and object in *Cenicitas*, as both observer and observed. However, to do so he had painted two aspects of himself separately – as a dreamer with closed eyes, and as a staring head in profile. Adès observes that "the contrast is between the passive 'dreamer' and the active 'seer'."²⁰ The answer to where Dalí might see this seer relative to the seen is naturally elusive, and the line of questioning entangles us in the dynamics of subject and object that he was testing. That the primary object participates in these dynamics is clear: "At the same time," Adès continues, "the 'seer' is depicted in the same manner as the plethora of hallucinatory elements and shares their partial transparency. Part of his head encloses another pair of breasts."

By the time Dalí painted the *Lugubrious Game*, the division between dreamer and seer has faded, and the self is swept up into its own swirling, inner vision of sexual objects. In the *Enigma*, painted a few months later, Dalí has cleared the table of the "plethora of hallucinatory elements", to concentrate on the relationship itself, of the self to its mental objects. Dalí has relaxed his phobic affective resistance. This is perhaps partly due to his meeting Gala, but the evidence of his paintings is

that the change is part of the development that follows Dalí's deepening understanding of the psychoanalytical concepts that we have looked at above, and that underpinned his Surrealism.

This more sophisticated method of representing the geometry of desire according to the dynamics of subject/object relationship, rather than with numbered, technical diagrams, carries an echo of the philosophical perspectivism that Ortega y Gasset applied to art historical development, that resonated in the halls of the Prado as much as the laboratories of the Residencia. We saw, for example, how the influence of Ortega on Dalí dovetailed with that of de Chirico's writings on the mystic vision of the Quattrocento artists.²¹ The sum of these influences, plus Freud and Surrealism, is the idea of looking inward for meaning, in search of an elusive, internalised absence.

The act of painting makes this inner vision a real object in the world, and makes the viewer's eye (read *mind*) another coordinate in this dynamic act of vision. Dalí sets up his own philosophical perspectivism to provoke an active engagement of vision similar to that later described by Lacan as demanded by Holbein's *Ambassadors*. The passage in 'Anamorphosis' quoted earlier continues,

But it is further still that we must seek the function of vision. We shall then see emerging on the basis of vision, not the phallic symbol, the anamorphic ghost, but the gaze as such, in its pulsatile, dazzling and spread out function, as it is in this picture.²²

In the *Enigma*, Dalí establishes the essence of his *active* Surrealist vision – the foundation for the paranoid-critical method that struck a chord with Lacan in 1930.²³ Our gaze follows Dalí's, to contemplate his representation of a self in physical and affective isolation in a barren mental landscape, devoid of reference points in mechanical perspective. For orientation, we rely instead on our philosophical perspective on its inward contemplation. We participate in the introspection of the Masturbator as dreamer/seer; we too see its internalised absence, inscribed across its death's head body.

We are privileged to be allowed this insight by Dalí – the Masturbator's own gaze meets shuttered eyelids, and the only viewpoint available to it is introspection. The nature and direction of its seeing is paranoid and self-referential. As we saw, Dalí had been testing the establishment of the tragically narcissistic position in his paintings since 1924, but now he has moved from cold mechanical methods to a "pulsatile, dazzling and spread out function" of the gaze, like that described by Lacan. This development reflects the evolution in Dalí's concept of the self, from physical entity to mental.

Now that Dalí was immersed in his psychoanalytical Surrealism, the mortality and sexuality of the body were also treated as mental constructs that define the self from within, as much as assail it from without. The parallel with the themes of Jerome's contemplation are apparent, but how consciously and deliberately Dalí might have selected Hieronymite attributes as the building blocks for his visualised constructions, at the outset of his Surrealist project, is not as clear. A quick look at some of those attributes seems to suggest that Dalí did indeed take into account the meanings these symbols carried in an art-historical context. Closer examination in following pages will confirm their pertinence to Dalí's Freudian Surrealism.

The Lion: masculine/feminine instinct

The lion is an important Hieronymite iconographic attribute with a clear symbolic function – its natural aggressiveness overcome by Jerome's faith, as he controls his own base instincts. We can nicely précis it here by saying that it represents the *threat of desire*. For his part, Dalí included the lion in many of his early Surrealist paintings as a totem for similar meaning. The elusiveness of its meaning in those paintings is partly due to the complexity leant by Dalí's experiments in mimicking Freudian dream-work, so that the lion participated in a deliberate process of *condensation, displacement, transformation of thoughts into visual images* and *secondary revision* that informed Dalí's

compositional method.²⁴ In the end, it is the fact that the lion's head already carries culturally defined significance that makes it a useful symbol for a dreamlike *displacement* of roles.

The lion's head attached to the far end of the Masturbator's embodied mind in the *Enigma* is certainly a threatening presence, but if Dalí's construction were an attempt to visualise a Freudian model of the mind, made up of ego, superego and id, then it is difficult to see how the lion could represent one of those component parts. In 1929, Freud's "structural model" was a fairly recent development, and it is irrelevant to Dalí's main source of inspiration, the *Interpretation of Dreams* and other texts available in the *Biblioteca Nueva* collection.²⁵ More pertinent is the concept *instinct*, which Freud already used in texts contemporaneous with the *Interpretation*.²⁶ The term's usage was established in zoology, and Freud used it to draw analogies between "inherited mental formations" in humans and animal behaviour. The analogy with the animal world appears to have found a foothold in Freud's thinking, who added the following thoughts to the 1919 edition of the *Interpretation*, as Adès has pointed out with reference to Dalí's lions:

Wild beasts are as a rule employed by the dream-work to represent passionate instincts – of the dreamer or of other people – which inspire terror in the subject; that is to say, with a minimum of displacement, the very people to which those instincts correspond. It is just one step from this to the representation of the *father* by ferocious animals, dogs or wild horses – representation which reminds us of totemism. It might be said that wild beasts are used to represent the *libido*, a force dreaded by the *ego* and combated by means of repression.²⁷

Ultimately, the symbolic lion encircles and escapes definition, as a good metaphor should. It is a species of the Freudian genus – threatening and sexual, but neither masculine nor feminine; a polymorphous, elusive, dominant force, eluding personal and cultural control.

Dalí tested the totemistic quality of the symbol, portraying the lion in a number of ways – most comprehensively in *Accommodations of Desire*. His later, sketchy accounts of when and why he painted this canvas give a mere glimpse of the lion's significance at that moment. In the *Secret Life*, he wrote that he began the painting while Gala was still in Cadaqués, and that it expressed his anxiety about sex with her. He later said that it reflected "all his prenatal/prenuptial expectations".²⁸ There is of course more to be said on the lion's place in such a methodical study of Freudian libido, and which might illuminate Dalí's thoughts on desire, especially regarding its paternal and maternal aspects.



Fig 98
Salvador Dalí
Accommodations of Desire (1929)

Like other Surrealist paintings we have looked at, there is a solid, autobiographical basis for *Accommodations*, and a coherent attempt at a visualised analysis of the mental effects of his life circumstances. In this case, it is clearly stated that these effects are instigated by *desire*, but what does Dalí mean by its *accommodation*? The concept was developed in works published in Paris by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, which we would expect to have been of interest to Dalí at that time. In *La représentation du monde chez l'enfant* (1926) and *La causalité physique chez l'enfant* (1927), *accommodation* was explained as the modification of mental schemas by new experiences, as opposed to *assimilation*, by which new experiences are incorporated into existing schemas. If this is the understanding of accommodation that lies behind Dalí's variations on the lion, then it suggests he was aware that his circumstances had altered to the extent that he must accept and rethink, rather than consolidate, his denial of the erotic.

Not long after painting *Accommodations* – perhaps even before naming it – Dalí used the concept in a way that resembles an early, sketched formulation of the paranoiac-critical method:

That events in life seem coherent is the result of a process of accommodation very similar to that which makes thought seem coherent, while its free way of working is incoherence itself.²⁹

Dalí was aware then of his own efforts to unravel and replicate the apparent incoherence with which desire disguises its traces; the elements in his supposedly dreamlike tableaux were coherently coded signs for the pieces of his shattered childhood memories, which he rearranged in order to accommodate unfamiliar pieces of a larger puzzle. The seemingly incongruent attachment of a lion to the soft formations in the *Enigma* and the *Great Masturbator* can be seen as a perfectly coherent move, if we bear in mind that these were partly based on the familiar rock formations of his childhood paradise at Cadaqués. One of these was the Cullero – “ladle” – that helped to define the head of the Masturbator. Another was the Lion's Head.

Other sources for the totemic identity of the lion act as anchors in Dalí's real world, without fully explaining it. For example, Bataille called Breton a “castrated lion” in the pamphlet ‘Un cadavre’ that he wrote during the summer of 1929 (although it was not published until 1930), in response to personal attack in the *Second Surrealist Manifesto*, and it is possible that Bataille referred to Breton in similar terms during discussions with Dalí that year.³⁰ Breton cannot have suspected any personal

slight as he bought *Accommodations*, describing his fascination with Dalí's lions, and related images, in his introduction to the Goemans exhibition catalogue: “the sight of this lion's head, large as anger, or of this mask with a handle to it, which still makes me wonder what it can be (for I am afraid).”³¹

It is possible, though, that Breton had unwittingly contributed in another way to the agglomerations of lions and masks to which he alludes. Dalí painted several combinations of related objects, but of the paintings exhibited at Goemans, the mask that frightened Breton – in the *Portrait of Paul Éluard* and *Illumined Pleasures* – is a hollow head of a woman, with a handle that “turns her into a jug-container.”³² The

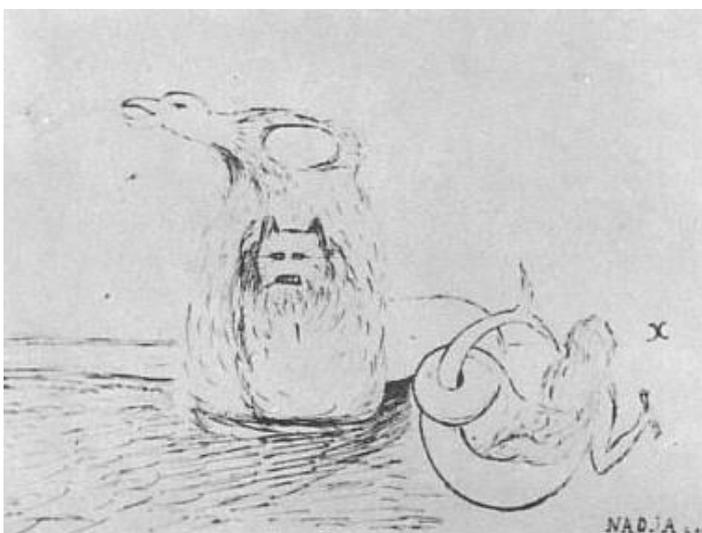


Fig 99
Drawing by “Nadja” illustrating André Breton
Nadja

maternal nature of this female container is confirmed by its reappearance in *The Font* (1930), where it grins at a glowing host in a chalice on an altar – a grotesque caricature of Ingres' Virgin Mary. In the paintings that Breton saw, this maternal face was pressed against that of a libidinous lion, which makes us wonder what, or who, it can be that he is afraid of (for he is afraid)!

These constructions reach their apogee in the *Imperial Monument to the Child-Woman*, which Dalí began in 1929.³³ This monument culminates in a rocky extension that links the lion, the woman-jug and an eagle's head to an agglomeration of staring faces familiar from other paintings – but with the addition of an unfamiliar cat – representing fear, desire, oedipal intrigue and shame. Once again, *Nadja* contributed to the evolution of Dalí's images. In the book, Breton reproduces drawings by Nadja, one of which is "a symbolic portrait of the two of us", in which a siren "holds a scroll in her hand, the monster with gleaming eyes [emerging from] a kind of eagle-head vase, filled with feathers representing ideas."³⁴ Dalí's *Imperial Monument* reveals that Breton/Nadja's feline "monstre aux yeux fulgurants surgit d'une sorte de vase à tête d'aigle" was the source of the libidinous "lion's head, large as anger" and the maternal "mask with a handle to it" that had confused and frightened Breton.

The meaning of the lion may have been mysterious to Breton – perhaps he did not want to recognise it, but that is another story – but less so for Dalí, for whom the paternal, maternal and oedipal aspects of the "monster with gleaming eyes [emerging from] a kind of eagle-head vase" were obvious. These were assimilated into a nexus of meaning assembled from the Gowans books and Freud, and from the picture books of his childhood. Even the Eagle is another rock formation on Cap Creus, registered and annotated in Dalí's mnemonic archives.

When Dalí introduced the lion to his repertoire in the *Lugubrious Game*, he had used it as a marker of paternal authority, as the emblem of royalty and the law, of earthly and heavenly power. As he continued to cajole personal significance from its combination with various other elements, Dalí soon distilled the sign of the lion to its fierce face, set in its thick mane. This concentration on the lion's head, in compositional dialogue with container-women and bearded men, increases the sense of identification with the paternal figures in these paintings. Many of the father figures that Dalí had looked up to were bearded – Freud has already been associated with a figure in the *First Days*, but others such as Ramón y Cajal and Dalmau, reinforce the sense that the beard was a general sign for venerability and the Law of the Father.³⁵ Of course, Dalí's own father fitted into this schema, and he did in fact have a beard when the artist was a boy.³⁶ However, the associations Dalí makes between the signs of bearded face, lion and container-woman rely on the wider, cultural significance of these for their effectiveness. Dalí would not have arrived at his form of Surrealism by simply portraying his family in naturalist, narrative ways, without the interpretative help of Freud or the store of psychologically loaded imagery recorded in art history.

Even in paintings which explored his banishment from home, developed as the personalised myth of William Tell, Dalí does not attempt to portray his father's features, but builds a sort of caricature of *the father*. We saw the genesis of this bearded figure of paternal authority – which Authority imagines itself a lion – in the *First Days* and *Lugubrious Game*, and the type was sufficiently representative to suffice as William Tell, and at the same time open enough to cover the necessary associations with Freud's oedipal schema. We have seen that Dalí wrung every drop of oedipally infused drama he could from paintings by Masaccio, Andrea del Sarto and Michelangelo for *William Tell* (1930) – religious art, as seems to have escaped the notice of André Breton, who bought the painting.

The most visible – and, paradoxically, perhaps the least problematic – side of the oedipal drama that Dalí represented was the relationship with the father, as represented by William Tell, Abraham or



Fig 100
Roman ceremonial jug,
with lion handle and Dionysian motifs,
50-150 AD
Found at Palamós.
Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya



Fig 101
Salvador Dalí
Memory of the Child-Woman (1932)

lion at lower left possibly reveals a source of the lion from Dalí's childhood – “a lithograph which hung in Dalí's room when he was a child, showing a girl at a well with a pitcher. The moulded relief on the well of a snarling lion's head dribbling water, [...] positioned in proximity to the girl's thighs.”³⁷

The grinning lion soon sank out of view in Dalí's paintings, but its implications as masculine/feminine *vagina dentata* were carried forward and absorbed into the bearded figure of William Tell. By 1932, Tell has been reduced to a bust in *Memory of the Child-Woman*, in the same way that the lion was distilled, and his grinning face made to resemble the lion's. Dalí has now amalgamated the images of man, woman and libido that he had earlier depicted as separate but related. The bust of Tell is feminised by the addition of a woman's breast – Lubar calls it a “hermaphroditic bust”³⁸ – and attached to a rock of Cap Creus, similarly to the lion in the *Enigma*.

It is possible that this bust had a more specific, localised origin. A postcard sent from Lorca and Dalí to Bello, on 14th April 1925, on Lorca's first visit to Cadaqués, shows a view from the small island of S'Arenella, with plant pots and the bust of a man, his head turned to the right, mounted on plinths.³⁹ As usual, it is intriguing to speculate on how Lorca's commentary might have breathed life into this bust and its flower-headed companions. We can extend our speculation to a set of other busts familiar to Dalí, and that the two friends saw together that year – the 'Tomb of the Four Martyrs' in Girona Cathedral.⁴⁰

Any conversations about these decapitated, bearded saints in 1925 would have taken place as the friends embarked on their dialogue on martyrdom, marble, flesh and desire. Four years later, in the context of his Freudian Surrealism, Dalí reprises those themes; his ‘hermaphroditic bust’ mocks paternal authority by caricaturing it as a decapitated martyr or, to put it another way, as a castrated lion. Even venerable saints are unmasked as hypocrites and humans, driven by the same libido they deny.

This is the context for Dalí's most brutal exposure of the oedipal forces active below the surface of paternal culture – his defacing of Christ in the *Sacred Heart*. The phrase “Sometimes I spit for pleasure on the portrait of my mother” raises the question of its relationship to the image it is scrawled over. Is it possible to think of Christ as a

God. However, an oedipal drama only makes sense with the inclusion of the mother, and with Freud in mind, we should interpret the difficulty with which the feminine role is depicted – as a cracked jug attached to *Paul Éluard*, or as a faceless name in the *Enigma* – as evidence of repression and mimicked dream-work, rather than her real marginalisation. Indeed, the apparently masculine lion is often attached to a woman as an incongruous appendage, like a sign warning of the danger of desire.

Adès has shown that Dalí represented “the female genitals as toothed and threatening, the classic *vagina dentata*” in *Accommodations*, in what amounts to an essay on the lion as a symbol of threatening sexuality: one lion takes the place of a woman's genitals, at top right, while the collaged

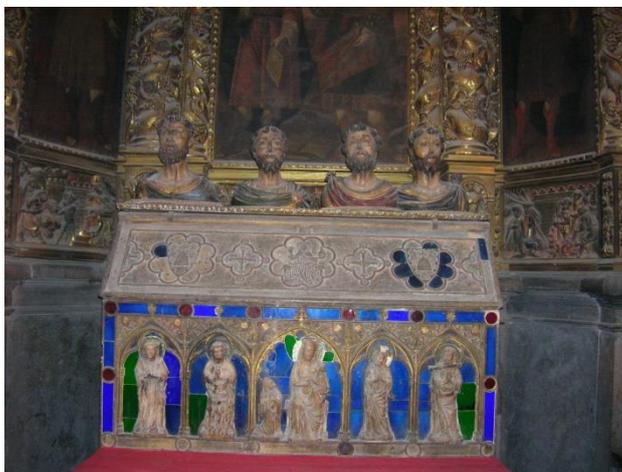


Fig 102
Anonymous, 17th C
Tomb of the Four Martyrs, Girona Cathedral

representation of Dalí's mother? She took Dalí to mass, while his father was an atheist; if not overtly feminine, the bearded, long haired Jesus is almost always meek and mild; as the archetypal son he implies motherhood. If we take into account the images that Dalí was associating with the image of the mother at the time, then the identification becomes more plausible. Lorca, at least, would have known the reference to Christ as Lion of the tribe of Judah in *Revelations*.⁴¹ This, together with Christ's beard and long hair, may have allowed him to slip into association with the dreaded *vagina dentata*. After all, Dalí depicts Jesus without a face, in a similarly superstitious and dreamlike act to the excisions of lion's face in *Accommodations*. Could realisation that the image of Christ masks such displaced reminders of the sexuality and mortality of the mother have induced Dalí to erase the face and spit – metaphorically and superstitiously – on the image of Christ?

For Breton, the *Sacred Heart* was an attack on the atrophied, ethical order of paternal Law in line with Dadaist and Surrealist revolt. That much can be said for sure, but Dalí's real motivation was not social revolution but personal restoration. The dialogue on the masculine, the feminine and libido that runs through the Goemans paintings debunks authority according to Freud not Marx.

Dalí drew the *Sacred Heart* in ink on canvas – an unusual step, which calls for explanation. The scrawled message about the mother immediately brings to mind the inscriptions in the *Enigma*, and here, the apparent importance of handwriting is redoubled by the use of ink. Considering the later ubiquity in paintings of quills and inkwells – generally acknowledged as signs for Dalí's father's profession as a notary – it seems that ink and writing are already related here to paternal culture. This points toward a type of character that carried forward meanings attached to William Tell and the *Enigma* – the moustachioed “average bureaucrat”, with a bald, anamorphic head, which we return to below. This figure of masculine venerability is devoid of all sensuality; the lion's mane and staring eyes are gone. The sarcastic label attached to this representative of officialdom reveal the emptiness of its defeat of libido.

Yet Dalí cannot have forgotten the fact of the bureaucrat's hidden libidinous motivation. *Logos* – the endless streams of ink that flows from the Church Fathers and the Father of Psychoanalysis – writes the truth of Paternal Law, but disperses and dissolves when it reaches the vast sea of the maternal. Despite himself, desire had breached Dalí's defences and Sebastian's stance was untenable. In Dalí's Surrealist visualisation of the self, the libidinous lion within has to be accepted, contemplated and defeated by thought. Jerome takes over from Sebastian as the appropriate iconographic model.

Stones of solidified desire

Traditional representations of Jerome are spread along a spectrum emphasising the bureaucratic at one end – the scholar in quiet contemplation in his study, transcribing the Vulgate Bible – and the sensual – the half-naked anchorite in the desert, bemoaning the corruptibility of his flesh. The rating on this scale of any particular image of Jerome is established by the prominence of the attributes that accompany him. At the bureaucratic end, we have the quill and Bible; at the sensual end, the saint's naked flesh and the lion. The skull and crucifix appear across the spectrum, and other attributes crop up arbitrarily.

As we saw above, the attributes of the bureaucratic Jerome, allied to paternal authority, soon crept into Dalí's paintings, but it is the signs of sensuality that are most relevant to the Goemans paintings, and most obviously, the libidinous lion. We can summarise its role in those paintings in Adès' words:

the lion could be read both as a now slightly more disguised reference to the terrorizing effect of the female genitals, combined with a reference to that other source of sexual anxiety and fear, the father. Freud links the dream symbol of the lion to violence, passion and authority, all of which can constitute the paternal relation. [...] The lion's head becomes a sexually ambivalent symbol, and in so far as these paintings seem to turn on problems of gender and sexual identity, shifts its significance.⁴²



Fig 103
Lorenzo Lotto
St Jerome in Penitence (1546)

In standard representations of the anchorite, Jerome's response to the threatening presence of desire, in the mind and in the body, is to beat his chest in penitence with a stone. The docile lion usually lies beside him. More often than not, the artist leaves the viewer to imagine this mortification of the flesh – Jerome kneels half-naked, with a smooth, white stone on the ground beside him, as he prepares to beat his chest in penitence, as for example in Lorenzo Lotto's *St. Jerome in Penitence*, in Gowans and in the Prado.

One tentative suggestion of how Jerome's mortification of the flesh with a stone might have become linked in Dalí's mind to shame arising from the primary relationship is provided by an anecdote told by a school friend. Dalí entered puberty as a pupil at Els Fossos, where, from six to thirteen years old, his classes were in French. Pupils caught speaking Spanish or Catalanian – Dalí's two mother tongues – were made to carry a stone called *la parleuse*, 'the talker'.⁴³ It is worth bearing in mind that both the Mother, in psychoanalysis, and Jerome, in his iconographic identity as transcriber, are important as originators of the Word.

Solitary stones similar to Jerome's appear in many of Dalí's paintings, with a specific function within a wider dialogue on the *soft/hard* dichotomy, in which the artist often labelled stones or stone architecture "solidified desire".⁴⁴ He does this most obviously in *Accommodations of Desire*, recording the shifting significance of the lion as it flashes in and out of view on a collection of smooth, white stones. Adès suggests the image is "screened" onto these, as if seen in a hallucination while staring at the pebbles on the beach.⁴⁵ This fittingly invokes the terms of Freud's dream-work, appropriate to the place of these obscure objects of desire on the psychic stage-set of Dalí's oedipal dramas.

The stones' pertinence in this context snowballs if we trace them back to the origins of Dalí's thoughts on desire. To Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* we might add Lorca's interpretation of the landscape of Cadaqués when he visited Dalí. Gibson relates an anecdote of Lorca enchanting children on the beach by "reading" a stone handed to him, as if it were a letter, and Adès has suggested a relationship between this anecdote and the pebbles in *Accommodations*.⁴⁶ This probably happened in 1927, when he was there in the summer and the friends spent more time on the beach, and Ana Maria fondly remembered collecting stones and shells with Lorca on the beach of La Confitera, "the confectionery".⁴⁷ This was the childhood paradise that she fondly remembered, of summers spent with Salvador at the water's edge, under the double maternal watch of Felipa and La Tieta.⁴⁸



Fig 104
Salvador Dalí
Au bord de la mer (1931)

Lorca revived those blissful memories in 1927, in the summer of Sebastian, when discussions with Dalí revolved around desire and the seashore. The two friends' correspondence alludes to a sexual encounter on the beach, and Dalí's paintings were packed with shells, stones, sand and sex for a year afterwards. Following Lorca's visit, all of these elements contribute to *Cenicitas*, in which we detect the embryonic apparition of the symbolic white stone in the oval shapes that are a new addition to Dalí's visual repertoire. This opens a portal into a wider associative network of *the spherical*, with paths into biological, poetical, psychoanalytical, mathematical and subatomic domains. We only need mention the skull, the eye and the womb to see where realisation of the suggestive power of the sphere would lead Dalí.

When Dalí painted *Cenicitas*, he did not picture the problem of desire as a confrontation with a lion, but with the sea. It was conceived as a *Birth of Venus*, and the origin of its egg-shapes in the sea leaves no doubt about their association with fertility and the mother's body. If we jump forward four years from then, we find a

series of paintings of barren landscapes haunted by ‘phantoms’ or ‘spectres’ in which an apparently insignificant, smooth stone often occupies a prominent place.⁴⁹ The title of one of these paintings, *Au Bord de la Mer* (1931), reprising the sea/mother pun from the *Enigma*, shows how powerfully loaded with meaning this oval stone was for Dalí, helping him to visualise melancholy nostalgia for the womb.

In 1962, with reference to another painting, *Shades of Night Descending* (1931), Dalí confirmed that these solitary stones were indeed “candy-stones” that he would collect with his mother on the beach of La Confitera. At the same time, he reinforced the significance of these, in connection with his mother, by qualifying the smooth stones in *Illumined Pleasures* as “sugared almonds symbolising desire”.⁵⁰ Dalí revealed more about the stone in 1962, when he leads us back from these images of mourning to the *Enigma of Desire*, commenting, albeit obliquely, that “The sugared almond of the Playa Confitera tantalises onanism, and even achieves balancing acts on the tip of the skull.”⁵¹ This seems to place the stone on the ground before Jerome.

Our ongoing dissection of the *Enigma* helps translate this seemingly glib comment into a fair description of that painting and others in its orbit:

- The basis of desire is birth to a mother, followed by attachment to and loss of her as primary object [Dalí emerges from the watery womb onto the Confitera beach]
- Its next stage is autoeroticism [Narcissistic introspection of the body stamped “my mother”]
- At the next stage, the sexual self teeters between tragic Narcissistic isolation, and successful projection onto appropriate exterior objects – between the Masturbator’s nostalgia for its original symbiotic relationship [*ma mère* – my mother/the sea] and the obscure objects of desire confected from the sweet memories of primary sybiosis [sugared almonds]
- Successful projection of love onto an appropriate object of desire even has the potential to defeat the anxiety caused by knowledge of our mortality [contemplation of the skull]

In the midst of this is awareness that the threat of desire comes from within; the internalised objects of autoerotic desire are built on mental images of the Mother, hence the shame attached to masturbation. What Freud taught Dalí was that narcissism is not simply love of oneself, but a paralysing love of the internalised Mother. The myth of Narcissus that was the framework on which Freud built his theory presents a literal version of this problem of internalisation, as Narcissus is limited to introspection through his own reflection. It is understood then as a question of vision, of the direction and function of the Gaze, in Lacanian terms.

Jerome’s contemplation is a more successfully directed vision. Narcissus’s introspection teaches him nothing about himself or the outside world, while Jerome’s focussed vision – staring at a skull or a crucifix in order to put one’s own existence, sexuality and mortality into focus – links outwardly directed sight to self-knowledge. The tension between these aspects of vision, or Lacanian Gaze, is an important part of the dynamic composition of the *Enigma*. The theme of sight is also fundamental to the other myth which contributes to the painting’s dynamics, via Freud – that of Oedipus, whose insight into his own sins leads him to blind himself. The meaning of this action, according to Freud, can be read in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, where dreams of loss of sight refer to fear of castration.

Vision ricochets meaningfully through the dynamic composition of the *Enigma*. The Masturbator’s introspection meets the image of the lost Mother. Our Gaze traverses the empty eye sockets of the death’s head. The family group to one side threatens castration, or blindness. Hieronymite contemplation of the skull invites us to recognise, confront and overcome the enigmatic danger of desire.

Dalí had been exploring the representation of sexuality and mortality of the mother in terms of blindness and sight for several years.⁵² Sexual anxiety permeates *Un Chien andalou*, notorious for the linking of a cut eye, castration, and the maternal moon. A scene in which a book falls open at a reproduction of Vermeer’s *Lacemaker* reveals the presence of Dalí’s mother in his thoughts – his obsession with this painting possibly stemmed from 1920, when he had painted Felipa sewing, in a pose that recalls the *Lacemaker*, and at a time when they both knew that she was dying. Even the

castrating cloud slicing through the moon refers obliquely to a dying mother, if Gibson's observation that Dalí had borrowed the sharp cloud from Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin* is correct.⁵³ This takes us neatly back to the Prado and the Residencia, where Dalí first discussed Freud and Surrealism, and where much of the imagery and ideas that persisted into his Surrealism originated.

Dalí's conversations with Lorca linger still, infusing the dialogue on the body, desire, vision and death. This applies to the meanings of the spherical – of *sugared almonds*, smooth stones and shells – that span Dalí's iconography of Sebastian and Jerome. The shell that delivers Botticelli's Venus from the sea is a sign of our difficulty in imagining our origins and identity. At once a euphemism for the vagina and a symbol of celibacy, it attaches to statues of Venus, Sebastian in his hermitage, and the Virgin Mary. The taxonomy of desire at the water's edge, when Dalí, Lorca and Ana Maria gathered shells in Cadaqués, is present in the *sugared almonds*, smooth white stones and shells that *tantalise onanism* in Dalí's paintings. Ana Maria described her delight at finding 'Sabateta de la Mare de Déu' molluscs, and 'ojos de Santa Lucía' stones with Lorca.⁵⁴ These were "eyes of St. Lucy", so never simply stones. She links this simple pleasure to memories of an ideal childhood, and it is easy to see how Dalí could have seen these stones through a *psychoanalytic* lens as *solidified desire*, but Lorca's *poetic* lens was also indispensable. Lorca's response to Dalí's 'Sant Sebastià' is illustrative of this alternative understanding of the denial of sexuality and of death, 'St. Lucy and St. Lazarus.'

The enigmatic dichotomies of sexuality and celibacy, vision and blindness, subject and object, self and other, are the *raison d'être* of visual art, and they underscore Dalí's emerging Surrealism. Sebastian, at the objective focal point of the Gaze, and Jerome, as the subjective focal point, serve as alternative visualisations of the resistance to sexuality and denial of mortality, and as assertions of the truth of himself.

Notes

- ¹ This painting's first title, in the catalogue for Dalí's 1929 exhibition at the Goemans gallery was *The Image of Desire*.
- ² To Robert Descharnes, *Dalí*, 1985, Thames and Hudson
- ³ Adès, 89
- ⁴ Laplanche and Pontalis, 331-2
- ⁵ A more substantial, but child-size sailor sits in her lap. Dawn Adès has pointed out that Dalí would later depict himself in a sailor costume when confronted with the Spectre of Sex-Appeal, underscoring the origins of desire in the infant. It also situates this confrontation, once again, at the water's edge.
- ⁶ Linda Nochlin, looking at Géricault's depiction of severed heads – in which he consigns “human elements to the realm of the horizontal” – is reminded of what Rosalind Krauss had said about format: “the plane of verticality is the plane of *Pregnanz* ... the hanging together or coherence of form. ... Further, this vertical dimension, in being the axis of form, is also the axis of beauty.” The “desublimatory” horizontal plane is associated with “base materialism”. Nochlin continues that by “laying them out, in perspective, on a horizontal surface, Géricault consigns the mutilated heads to the realm of the object, plays their erstwhile role as the most significant part of the human body against their present condition as lifeless, gruesome fragments, deployed on a tabletop like meat on a butcher's counter or specimens on a dissecting table.” (Nochlin, 20-4. Krauss was writing about Cindy Sherman). Note the horizontal format for the ostensible self-portraits *The Great Masturbator* and *The Enigma of Desire*.
- ⁷ Surrealists might also have recognised the line “ma mère, ma mère, ma mère” from Tristan Tzara's ‘The Great Lament of my Darkness’ (1917).
- ⁸ ‘Anamorphosis’ seminar, held in 1964, published in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. See p 88
- ⁹ ‘Anamorphosis’, 88-9
- ¹⁰ *Documents*, no. 4, September 1929
- ¹¹ *Documents*, no. 1, April 1929, p 382
- ¹² Carl Einstein, ‘Saint Antoine de Padoue et l'enfant Jesus,’ *Documents*, no. 4, September 1929, p. 230, quoted by Adès, in *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 24.
- ¹³ Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 17.
- ¹⁴ See Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 21-22. Dalí's undated letter is reproduced there in figs. 13 and 14.
- ¹⁵ Pauwels, 155. Soby calls the Masturbator a “foetal creature” (Soby, 10). Dalí sketched a monstrous embryo in a physiology textbook that reinforces the feeling that this was another long-standing phobia. (At the Museu Abelló, reproduced in *Early Days*, 58)
- ¹⁶ David Lomas, talk on ‘The Polymorphous Perverse in the Lugubrious Game’, Essex University, 21/02/2005
- ¹⁷ See p 92.
- ¹⁸ René Magritte and his wife, Camille Goemans and his girlfriend also arrived at the same time.
- ¹⁹ In the ‘Ode’: see appendices 1 and 2.
- ²⁰ Adès, ‘Morphologies of desire’, 144
- ²¹ See the sections ‘Little things’ in chapter 3, above, and ‘Mystic perspective’ in chapter 8, below. In 1928, Breton published *Surrealism and Painting*, including a text by De Chirico. ‘Mystery and Creation’ (1913). Dalí was able to re-think De Chirico, whom he had read thoroughly, in the context of Surrealism. De Chirico, when he wrote for *Valori Plastici* was already the artist that Breton had turned against.
- To become truly immortal a work of art must escape all human limits: logic and common sense will only interfere. But once these barriers are broken it will enter the regions of childhood vision and dream. [...] What I hear is valueless; only what I see is living, and when I close my eyes my vision is even more powerful. (Chipp, 401-2)
- This is similar to what Berenson wrote on the Tuscan mystics, and is therefore a current of thought that we have already traced through De Chirico to Dalí.
- ²² Lacan, ‘Anamorphosis’, 89.
- ²³ While preparing his thesis on paranoia, Lacan contacted Dalí after reading his developed explanation of paranoiac-critical activity in ‘The Rotten Donkey’, published in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution* in July 1930. See Gibson, 254
- ²⁴ See Sigmund Freud, ‘The Dream Work’ in *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916)

²⁵ See note 2 on page 5.

²⁶ On Freud's use of *instinkt*, see Laplanche and Pontalis, 214-7. They refer to *The Unconscious* (1915) and *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918 [1914]). Freud first published the *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899, and reworked it through 7 revisions until 1929.

²⁷ See Adès, 78-9. I translate from the section 'Some examples – speeches and calculations in dreams' of 'The Dream-Work' in the Spanish edition of the *Interpretation of Dreams* available to Dalí. The italics are found in the Spanish text.

²⁸ *Secret Life*, 241; *WM*, p. 98

²⁹ 'Un Chien andalou' (*Mirador*, Barcelona, 24th October 1929, in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 217-9)

³⁰ Bataille, 'The Castrated Lion' (1930). See *The Absence of Myth*, 28-9

³¹ See Breton, *What is Surrealism?*, 44

³² Adès, 80

³³ Comparison with paintings of the following years suggests that Dalí began the *Imperial Monument to the Child-Woman* in 1929, but added elements to it that otherwise appear in paintings of 1932-4, and possibly even 1935. That is, during the period in which Dalí was in productive but conflictive involvement with Breton.

³⁴ *Nadja*, 121, and plate 30. I have modified the translation to more closely resemble the original.

³⁵ Facial hair carries enough weight as a marker of masculinity for Duchamp's bearded *Giaconda* to rupture the reassuring sense of maternal presence intuited in that image.

³⁶ See photographs in *Early Years*, 52

³⁷ Adès, 79

³⁸ Lubar, 2000, 66

³⁹ Reproduced, *RES*, 73

⁴⁰ Evidence that the 'Tomb of the Four Martyrs' registered its impact with Dalí is provided by a drawing that Robert Descharnes reproduces in *Dalí: The Work, The Man* (p. 206). 'Project for a Fountain-Monument' (1936), shows four faceless busts on tapered plinths. At least five of Dalí's close friends died in 1936 or just before, whom he could have meant to commemorate with this monument: Lorca, José María Hinojosa, Alexis Mdivani, René Crevel and Ignacio Sánchez Mejías.

⁴¹ Passage on the Lion and the lamb: *Revelations* 5:5-6.

⁴² See Adès, 'Morphologies of desire', 154, 157

⁴³ Told by Joan Vives to Gibson, L-D, note 46, p. 313, DJDG, 60-1. "Els Fossos" was the nickname of the Christian Brothers' Collège Hispano-Français de l'Immaculée Conception Béziers-Figueras, where Dalí studied 1910-17. See Gibson: 1997, 37-40.

⁴⁴ See, for example, 'L'Âne pourri', in which Dalí refers to Art Nouveau ornamental architecture as "a true realisation of solidified desires". In *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, no.1, July 1930, in *Obra Completa*, IV, 201-7.

⁴⁵ Adès, 78

⁴⁶ See Ian Gibson, *Federico García Lorca*, London, 1989, 188; Adès, 'Morphologies of desire', 157

⁴⁷ *AMD*, 123

⁴⁸ *AMD*, 23-30

⁴⁹ Dalí explained the difference between his *phantoms* and *spectres* in 'The New Colours of Spectral Sex-Appeal' (*Minotaure*, no. 5, February 1934).

⁵⁰ *WSD*, 52, 155

⁵¹ *WSD*, 62

⁵² Gibson, 1997, 194-7, DJDG, 324-5

⁵³ See L-D, 222; DJDG, 323. Gibson notes that Dalí painted a similar cloud pointing towards Buñuel's right eye in 1924, so he might have ruminated on this image for a while, possibly incorporating his reaction to a dream told by Moreno Villa once at breakfast in the Residencia, in which he had cut his eye while shaving. (Santiago Ontañón to Max Aub, 320). Dalí used the image of a knife cutting a girl's eye in his 'Dues proeses. La meva amiga i la platja' in 1926. "In 'To Spain, Guided by Dalí, p. 94. Dalí says that *The Death of the Virgin* [by Mantegna] was the painting in the Prado that most impressed Lorca, who said that it was painted 'with the light of an eclipse.'" (Gibson, 1997, 658).

⁵⁴ AMD, 23-30. 'Sabateta de la Mare de Déu' molluscs. The direct translation, Our Lady's Slipper, usually refers to a type of orchid, but in Cadaqués the name is given to the Ear Shell, which belongs to a univalve mollusc with a mother of pearl inside surface, *Haliotis tuberculata*. Dalí's awareness of this must lie somewhere in the origins of his painting *The Sistine Madonna* (1958), in which Raphael's painting of the Virgin Mary appears within the image of an ear. The 'ojos de Santa Lucía' stones are actually the eroded remnants of the hard base of a sea snail's foot, the *Astraea rugosa*, which is pulled in to seal the entrance to its shell. It is popularly assigned healing properties.

5.2 The Egyptian Enigma: “I want my mummy!”

Dalí painted the first few Goemans canvases in cold, blue-grey tones that portrayed his mental landscape as a hard-edged, semi-urban space, evoking the affective alienation he had felt in Paris and Madrid. This echoes the strangeness of existence painted by Dalí’s models of Surrealist painting at that time – the philosophically minded De Chirico and Magritte. However, over the summer of 1929, as he continued to probe the possibilities of psychoanalytically informed representation in the familiar surroundings of his childhood paradise at Cadaqués, Dalí delved deeper into his pictorial memory banks for reference, and the tones of his mental landscape warmed to ochres and browns.¹

Compared to his earlier engagement with the nurturing environment of Cadaqués, Dalí looked even more into his Gowans books for guidance than out of the window. Despite acknowledging the psychological importance of the beach in these paintings, with the inclusion of pebbles and shells, the water’s edge is not given the protagonism it had in the *Composition or Cenicitas*; although later paintings were meaningfully set in the wide open spaces of Roses beach, the landscape of the *Enigma* and similar paintings is not recognisably coastal. Neither are these paintings topographical representations of the Empordà plain. Clumps of vegetation in slightly later paintings signpost significant places around Figueres, but these are included for their psychological meaning, rather than as naturalistic features.

I believe that Dalí deliberately portrayed his originary landscape as an arid desert, and that he did so in meaningful reference to representations of desert hermits. As well as Jerome in the Syrian desert, these typically show Paul the Hermit or Anthony in the Egyptian Thebaid, where they were active – that is, the landscape around Thebes, necropolis of the pharaohs, City of the Dead. Jerome’s alternative, scholarly persona links him to another Egyptian, Augustine – his correspondent and sounding board for the discussion of passion and asceticism. This reminds us that the Holy Land described in the Bible and its art was not restricted to modern Palestine and Israel, but reached into Egypt for important aspects of its narrative and meaning (we need only think of Moses).

In Christian mythology, the desert is not just a geographical reference, but an extensive metaphor, as Dalí knew from its art and as he heard in the poetical commentary on life of Lorca.² In the summer of 1929, Dalí had reason to be reflecting on the poetic language of Lorca, which had caused such an impression when he made his entrance in Cadaqués only four years earlier, likening it to the Holy Land.³ The June edition of *La Gaceta Literaria* carried a review of *Un Chien andalou*, in which Eugenio Montes contrasted the “barbaric, elemental beauty” of Dalí’s desert landscapes – where “the desert roses are rotten donkeys” – with the flowery gardens of “French” decorative poetry. Even without Montes’ review, Lorca was sensitive to a perceived mocking reference to the folkloric elements of his art in the film’s title and might have felt alluded to by Montes. Dalí perhaps felt a little guilty that summer, and one of the poems in Lorca’s repertoire would have been especially poignant for him to remember, as he thought of his friend across the ocean in USA – one section of the *Poema del Cante Jondo* uses the metaphor of the desert for the memory of a lost love.⁴

We can only speculate on the input into the *Enigma* of this metaphorical desert, but it is interesting to see hints of poetic evocation shining through the cracks in Dalí’s professed scientific objectivity. After so much insistence on technological advances, we might expect his enthusiasm for Paris to have been focussed on the ultramodern, but the evidence of his paintings is that Dalí was drawn towards the archaism championed by Lorca: to mythology, to the Louvre and other museums. The assumption about Dalí evaporates when we turn our attention to the accelerating influence of Freud, and the part played by Greek, Roman and Biblical mythology in his books. The apparently culturally distant world of Ancient Egypt in fact infuses all those mythologies, and an excursion there helps throw light on some surprisingly significant sources for the themes and elements of *The Enigma of Desire*.

Invisible Men and Women

Dalí liked to think he had Moorish roots – no rarity in a land occupied by the Moors for seven hundred years, but apparently of significance to him. Elsewhere, he claimed links to Phoenicia or Greece, and this personalisation of art history seems to reflect a trait of Dalí – museums are thus enlivened, actualised and legitimated for absorption into his iconographic repertoire, categorised as memory rather than learnt fact.

This process was bolstered by Lorca’s erudite and evocative, interpretative observations, and Egyptian culture was especially significant within the Residencia milieu. Interest in the pharaohs was at a height after the discovery of the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1922, and Dalí and Lorca heard Howard Carter give a direct account of this at the Residencia just two years later, in November 1924.⁵ Dalí reminded his friend of this in 1925, and he was able to see the Louvre’s collection of Egyptian loot in 1926, and again in 1929, so the idea of Egypt was not abstract but anchored in lived experience of a sort.⁶ Among numerous possible sources of information on Egypt, an article in *Valori Plastici* in 1920 was probably significant; in ‘Espressioni d’Egitto’, Gilbert Clavel had discussed rites and religion, Nefertari, the art in the tombs of Thebes, hieroglyphs and the Sphinx.⁷

Dalí and his friends appear to have cultivated an image of Egypt that was more High Camp than High Culture, and they saw the Zarzuela musical *The Court of the Pharaoh* so often that they knew all the lines.⁸ Secret follows this association further and has interpreted a photograph in which Dalí is “pretending to be Nefertiti and wearing a skirt” as documentary evidence of him flirting with the feminine aspect of his relationship with Lorca.⁹ This may be true, but it is not arbitrary – the identification no doubt started with the observation that Dalí did indeed resemble the famous bust of Tutankhamun’s stepmother, Nefertiti, to whom Carter must have referred in his talk.

German archaeologists had found the bust of Nefertiti in 1912, led by Ludwig Borchardt, who disguised its importance in order to smuggle it to Germany.¹⁰ In 1923, a photograph of the bust in Borchardt’s *Porträts der Königin Nofretete* alerted the world, inside and outside Egypt, to its existence and appearance. Nefertiti’s beautiful features, slender neck and impossibly tall headdress must have been even more striking when the bust first appeared than they are today. Even more remarkable is the fact that elsewhere, when Nefertiti was depicted without her distinctive headdress, she has a similarly distended head... an anamorphic skull!¹¹

Think of the possibilities for wild speculation on this theme by the Residencia friends, or by Dalí alone. We know they joked along similar lines about a footstool in the Escorial that was supposed to have supported Philip II’s leg, but was evidently placed far across the room from his chair, and joked too that Ramón Pichot had a similarly extended leg.¹² Extended body parts continued to delight Dalí, and he would later paint the stretched buttock of *The Enigma of William Tell* (1933) and the leg of *The Ghost of Vermeer van Delft* (1934) so long that they needed to be supported. Was Nefertiti’s head distorted according to an ideal of beauty, or royalty? Was this really the shape of her head? Did Nefertiti have servants that helped carry her head? Did she need to support it on crutches?

The comically swollen head of Nefertiti (as well as her daughters, who were depicted with even more swollen heads) certainly resembles a type of distorted head that was common in Dalí’s paintings of 1932, enough to suggest that the Residencia views on Egypt were coupled to the implications of Holbein’s anamorphic skull, adding another layer of significance to the *Enigma* – perhaps the “cerebral sexuality” referred to by Gaultier.¹³



Fig 105
Thutmose
Bust of Nefertiti (1345 BC)
as it appeared in Ludwig
Borchardt, *Porträts der
Königin Nofretete*

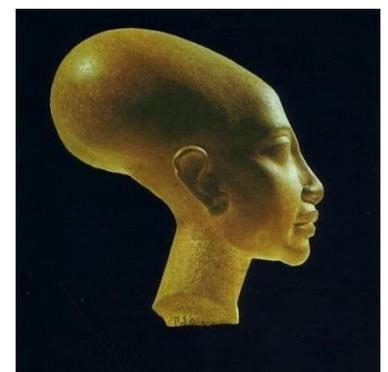


Fig 106
Portrait bust of a daughter of
Akhenaten and Nefertiti



Fig 107
Salvador Dalí
The Invisible Man (1929-33)

Dalí incorporated thoughts on Egypt into *The Invisible Man*, an ambitious painting that he had conceived in Cadaqués before his expulsion in December 1929, and which served as a blackboard for ideas until around 1933.¹⁴ In *The Tragic Myth of Millet's Angelus*, which Dalí wrote in around 1932, he said that the painting had been influenced by memories of a large colour illustration of an Egyptian landscape in a book, which had “affected me in an extraordinary way and even today remain very clearly in my memory”.¹⁵ In this way, it combined the work of dredging his childhood memories for images, as he had done in his first few Surrealist paintings, with a later interest in Egyptian culture that takes in Residencia humour, his relationship with Lorca, and more serious appreciation of Egyptian art. In about 1925 – a year after hearing Howard Carter, and just as he was embarking on a sustained engagement with Greek statuary – Dalí wrote that

Egyptian sculpture is completely opposed to Greek sculpture, nevertheless it is outstandingly beautiful. There is not only one kind of beauty, a kind of beauty was not discovered once and for all, aesthetic possibilities will always be new and unsuspecting.¹⁶

The stiff, seated pose of the *Invisible Man* is typical of Egyptian statuary, as Dalí well knew – just as he was aware of its parallel importance in Marian iconography as the *sedes sapientiae*, in which the mother is the Throne of Wisdom. The implication of an unseen Christ child adds another layer of suggestion to the multiple meanings of invisible man and visible woman wrapped around this figure, which has a nude woman, a womb-like pool and an illuminated pelvic jewel in its lap; the placental allusions are underscored by the two women with roses at their bellies that stand to the side. At the same time, for all its insistence on the regeneration of life, Egyptian art is overwhelmingly an art of funerary memorial, as Dalí was well aware. Dalí's awareness of these aspects of the pose of the *Invisible Man* shines a light on the more obscure commemoration of the mother's body in the *Enigma*.

Dalí was now embarking on his experimentation with double images, and compiled his theories in texts published as the *Visible Woman*, which title obviously mirrors that of the painting. At the end of his stay in Carry-le-Rouet, Dalí had sufficiently developed his thoughts on the “paranoiac” genesis and interpretation of double images to give a talk, 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', in Barcelona, in which he referred to his recent experiments.¹⁷ The first had been a sleeping woman combined with a horse, which he incorporated into the *Invisible Man*. The woman/horse later absorbed the lion, which had already established its place in Dalí's lexicon, and which already stood at the feet of the *Invisible Man* in a sketch, as part of Dalí's experiment to test his “degree of paranoiac intensity,” in discovering further hidden images, and then interpreting them.¹⁸

Despite never convincingly resolving this triple image, Dalí kept contorting these figures, and we might wonder why he was keen to present precisely this combination. Individually, the horse and woman are loaded with meaning, but they also have a long history of appearing in combination, as they do in Lorca's poetry and Picasso's paintings, to name two sources of absolutely central importance to Dalí. In their turn, these were already influenced by the long tradition of hybrid animals in classical art – centaurs, the Minotaur or the Egyptian gods. These suggestions are never too tenuous; Dalí had a solid base of art-historical knowledge which he was re-reading in the light of his recent Surrealist theorisation; only four years later would he write that “it is necessary to rewrite the history of painting.”¹⁹ Even if Dalí had been forced to abandon the Gowans collection when he left home, its images stayed with him and it is legitimate to cite them as sources for later developments. One seems to have assisted, or even directed, Dalí's efforts to force the woman/horse into shape – the

and which had influenced Dalí's depiction of the resistance to desire in the *Composition*. The Gradiva figure that featured in paintings of 1931, and which he added to the *Invisible Man*, was based on Ingres' painting, *Roger Rescuing Angelica*.²³ Dalí represented Gala as this Gradiva/Angelica, strapped to rocks like a female Saint Sebastian, reprising an image from 1930, in which a naked woman was strapped to a column.²⁴ In 1932-3, Dalí also tested a depiction of Gradiva as a desert hermit seen from behind, contemplating a skull.

The themes related to William Tell are clear in terms of the fears and desires addressed, and are defined by Dalí's attempts at consistency with Freud. Castration anxiety, a struggle with a father figure, and the depiction of the fatal sexuality of the mother's body are all central. We see these, for example, in a family group entitled 'The Butterfly Chase' in a separate drawing, and added to the *Invisible Man*. These are concepts that Freud developed with reference to the myth of *Oedipus and the Sphinx* – another theme painted by Ingres and reproduced in Gowans. As Dalí stood before this painting in the Louvre, with Freud in mind, his dream-work association reached its tentacles from Cadaqués to the Louvre to the Nile in search of the proper visualisation of his Self and circumstances.

The Sphinx was imported into Greek culture from Egypt, where it was often composed of a man's head on a lion's body – the best-known example is the Great Sphinx at Giza, which represents the pharaoh Khafra – but for the Greeks it was always a woman's head on a lion's body. Greek merchants commissioned statues in that guise, and Sophocles imagined a feminised Sphinx on Mount Phicium outside Thebes in Boeotia, for his interrogator of Oedipus. The Sphinx arrived at Sophocles' Seven-Gated Thebes laden with associations to the Egyptian city of the same name, distinguished in the Iliad as Hundred-Gated Thebes, close to the Valley of the Kings, at the epicentre of Egypt's mortuary cult.

Sophocles also set his story of Narcissus in his native Boeotia, implying an autobiographical dimension to his dramatized interrogations of origins and identity that enriches their psychoanalytical value as myths, for both Freud and Dalí. In Freud's schema, the oedipal myth describes a universal framework for individual development, while narcissism is a failure to successfully develop an individual self in affectively functional relationship to others, within that framework. Sophocles presented both myths as tragic – there is no ideal solution to the life circumstances of either Oedipus or Narcissus. Although it is possible to avoid the tragic outcome of Narcissus's situation, in Freud's interpretation, both *psychoanalytical* myths involve quests for a sense of self; for knowledge of origins and identity; for accommodations of the facts of mortality and sexuality in the body of the engendering mother. The two myths overlap in the *Enigma*, with the narcissistic introspection of the Masturbator intimating a failure to negotiate the demands of the oedipal contraption behind it.

In Sophocles' oedipal myth, identity is shown to be defined according to coordinates in time as well as space. The Sphinx asks what it is that walks on four legs in the morning, two in the afternoon and three in the evening? Oedipus is aware that he was born to a mother, would live as a man, and would become an old man, and one day die. We are all born of desire and will eventually die – the riddle challenges us to realise ourselves before we die.

The question is not asked by a wise old man, but a lion-woman – a polymorphous, hermaphrodite hybrid. The Sphinx's female head, in Sophocles and Freud – or her body in Dalí – emphasise the mother's part in the enigma of origin and identity. The mortal danger of instinctual desire is intrinsic in these questions, and is represented as a physical threat – that of being devoured by a slobbering *vagina dentata*.

The Soft Tomb and the Hard Womb

In Dalí's visualisation of a self shaped by mortal desire – a skull stamped "my mother" – woman does not only threaten death from outside, but has gifted it at birth as a condition of existence. The Egyptian St Augustine visualised the mortality inherent in birth similarly to Dalí when he reassured himself (and others) that death is necessary before rebirth into heaven; he wrote that the Virgin Mary, as the "house of God", was womb and tomb.²⁵ The mundane truth of this statement is that we are organic stuff that completes a life-cycle before returning to the earth, but on a literary level, the metaphor of the mother's body as womb and tomb relies for its effect on the same contrast between

the hard and the soft that Dalí developed in paintings and writings that explored the existential intricacies of origins and identity. In later discussions of his *soft watches*, which are another expression of the mortality of the body, and which he had already ascribed to the ingestion of Camembert, Dalí referred explicitly to Augustine as the source of his likening of the body of Jesus to “mountains of cheese”.²⁶ We can trace these soft cheesy thoughts back to Dalí’s visualisation of the womb as a soft tomb in the *Enigma*.

Augustine’s Egyptian legacy meant he had an image of the tomb *hardened* by the vestiges of Egypt’s mortuary monuments – the body is enshrined in sand and stone, not soft earth. Dalí picked up on this contrast when he painted *Suez* (1932), in the midst of his aesthetics of the soft and hard, just as he was adding Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* to his visualised dialogue on death and the mother’s body. Böcklin’s cypresses, together with the painting’s four mysterious figures – are they in togas or shrouds, martyrs or pallbearers? – peering into a deep, dry canal, contribute to the maternal-funereal quality of the painting, as Lubar has remarked:

Although the exact meaning of the little Egyptian desert scene immersed in a bucket in the centre of the womblike canal is not clear, it may signify the desire for regression itself through allusion to the most famous of ancient funerary monuments.²⁷

Dalí was still reminded of the hard tombs of Egypt “which elevated dead stone to commemorate death”, when he talked on Gaudí in the Park Güell, following the Suez crisis in 1956.²⁸ He contrasted these dead stones to Gaudí, who had visited Cap Creus and been inspired by the same rocks that Dalí used to construct his image of birth and death in the *Enigma*.²⁹ Gaudí was a constant reference point for Dalí’s thoughts on soft architecture, and this contrast with the hard architecture of Egypt illuminates the shift from the civic architecture of massive blocks and hard edges of paternal, masculine Madrid, and the soft, sensuous character of the *Moderniste* architecture of Barcelona.

Although Dalí’s father had grown up in Barcelona, I think *Lugubrious Game* is evidence enough that Dalí associated signs of paternal authority with Madrid, while the soft, placental architecture of the *Enigma* relates Dalí’s thoughts on Gaudí to the maternal. This is the gist of his description of Art Nouveau architecture as “solidified desires”, in ‘L’Âne pourri’, in July 1930:

No other collective effort has managed to create such a pure and disturbing dream-world as these Art Nouveau buildings which, independent of architecture, constitute by themselves authentic realisations of solidified desires, where the most violent and cruel automatism painfully betrays the hatred of reality and the need for refuge in an ideal world, along the lines of what happens in childhood neurosis.³⁰

That was published in Paris, and Dalí referred to buildings “scattered over the whole of Europe”, but we gain insight into the localised, personal motivation of his thoughts if we read him working towards this formulation a few months earlier, in the lecture he gave on ‘The Moral Position of Surrealism’ in Barcelona.³¹ This talk was held to explain the *Sacred Heart* incident and to defend Surrealism as a vital subversion of reality, underscored by Freud’s revelation of the “mechanisms” which turn things on their head and so reveal the sometimes overbearing weight of real love which can find expression in the impulse to insult that which we love most, hence the *expression of love and despair* of spitting for pleasure on the portrait of his mother. This vital disgust – a concept perhaps influenced by Ortega’s publication in Spanish of Aurel Kolnai’s essay on disgust in 1929, as ‘El asco’,³² – is opposed to the dull vacuity of an idea of art based on good taste:

Modernisme, which is represented exceptionally well in Barcelona, is what is closest to what we could today love sincerely; it is proof of disgust and total indifference towards art.

The talk and essay therefore present Dalí's thoughts on Art Nouveau architecture in the context of this wilful interpretation of despair over the lost object as a vital impulse. The talk was held at the Ateneu, where Dalí's maternal uncle Anselm was well-connected. For Dalí, in spite of the Prado, the Academia and the Residencia, Madrid was the city of official, patriarchal law, while Barcelona was the city of art, music and creativity. When Dalí published the talk as an article, he illustrated it with images of the Palau de la Música Catalana, another nod to Anselm, who was a co-founder of the Barcelona Wagner Appreciation Society and the Orfeo Catalá.³³

Barcelona was the city of birth of Dalí's mother, aunt Tieta and maternal grandmother Maria Ana, and his perception of the city as a feminine, nurturing environment was reinforced by family visits throughout his childhood, when the family would spend Christmas and New Year with his father's half-sister Catalina and mother Teresa, until her death in 1912.³⁴ The decisive factor in defining the importance of Barcelona in the context in which we are discussing its architecture is that, since 1921, it was the city in which Dalí's mother was buried. Felipa was buried, together with her husband's parents, in Poble Nou cemetery.³⁵ The family would not have visited the tomb very often, but the thought of her being buried there must have haunted Dalí's image of the city.

Gibson has called the hollows stamped "ma mère" in the *Enigma* "alveoli", remarking on their likeness to the stone that seals the Dalí family tomb in Figueres cemetery, where Dalí's dead brother, the first Salvador lay buried, forever separated from his mother in Barcelona.³⁶ He also noted the *Art Nouveau* flourish on the tomb, providing another clue for Dalí's curling of the pedestal in the *Enigma*, in contrast to the rectangular block in the *Lugubrious Game*. Dalí's thoughts of his dead mother, in her cold, hard tomb brought to life as solidified desire by this ornamentation, subverts the *hard* nature of Egyptian tombs, making *Moderniste* Barcelona a monument to female physiology.

This process, which underlies the texts mentioned above, relies on the Freudian "mechanisms" Dalí mentioned. It is not as simple as the tomb being hard and the womb soft. In the logic of dream-work, these unimaginable events of birth and death inevitably lead to repression and transformation – Dalí's preferred method being reversal, like his inverted Sphinx. The hard rocks of Cap Creus are as natural a symbol of the soft womb as is melting Camembert.

Nakht the Notary

Dalí was not interested in the zoo-anthropomorphic bestiary of Egypt as a theological system or from an archaeological perspective, but for how he might conscript certain of its imagery for his project of visualising himself and his circumstances in a way consistent with psychoanalytical concepts. He summarised his thoughts in the two articles discussed above, which revolve around *desire* and *paranoiac interpretation* as forces that determine the shape of surrealistically valid art arising from the friction between the *reality* and *pleasure principles*. In keeping with Freud, Dalí's Surrealism was concerned with *imagining* – and so making *real* – the denial of death.

This is the context in which the honouring of ancestry and the belief in an afterlife of Ancient Egypt is relevant. In its sepulchral art, we find symbolism that may have helped Dalí visualise the denial of death in the womb-as-tomb *Enigma*, and our detour through Egypt takes us to another image that might have helped with this visualisation, and which encompasses not only *the Father*, but *Dalí's* father. There exists a drawing of a funerary object that is remarkably similar to Dalí's picture, and to other anthropomorphic skulls that he painted. The object is a terracotta brick, with two indentations that resemble the eye sockets of the *anamorphic* skull in the *Enigma*. These are inscribed with hieroglyphs, like the recesses inscribed "ma mère" that Gibson likened to the "alveoli" of Spanish tombs. Another stamp at the thick end of the wedge recalls the elongated, mouth-like cavity in Dalí's painting. As we explore this object, the feasibility that the drawing played a part in the genesis of Dalí's image of desire increases.

The brick was found in the Theban Necropolis, in the tomb of Nakht, now identified as a middle-ranking official – a "scribe", with "sacerdotal duties" – but called a "notary" in the 1917 publication

that documented the excavation of his tomb.³⁷ Dalí would therefore have used a funerary object from the tomb of a notary, like his father, on which to inscribe memorial traces of his dead mother.

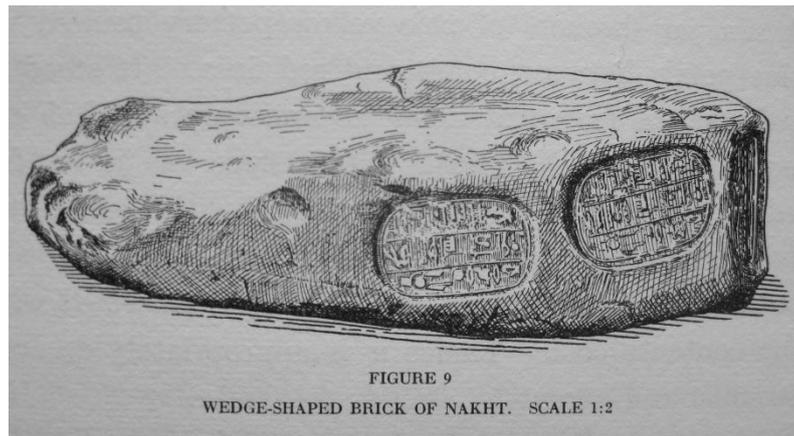


FIGURE 9
WEDGE-SHAPED BRICK OF NAKHT. SCALE 1:2

Fig 109
Norman de Garis Davies
'Wedge-shaped brick of Nakht'

A paranoiac-critical interpretation of the funerary objects in the notary's tomb would have meant they were not so distant from Dalí in time or space as an archaeologist might think. Dalí's formulation of his theory gives us licence to roam in this way, and although it may seem that we have strayed far from the theme of St Jerome, we stand in fact at the ancestral home of the desert hermit tradition, in the Theban necropolis.³⁸ This is also the ancestral home of the Sphinx's interrogation of Oedipus, before Sophocles' transference of the meanings of Thebes from the Egyptian necropolis to his native Boeotia. In turn, this makes it the ancestral home of Freud's interrogation of origins and identity through his psychoanalytical mythology of Narcissus and Oedipus.

Freud was happy to seek explanations of human behaviour in classical sources, and his views on Egyptian art and religion were informed by Reinach's books on "primitive" cults and religions, as well as the *Apollo* lectures on art history that were Dalí's textbook at the Academia. Dalí certainly had some level of interest in and knowledge of the necropolis rising from the excavated sands of Western Thebes in the 1920s. Assuming that interest was piqued by Freud, Reinach and Howard Carter, there are a number of studies that could have stoked Dalí's imagination, and which he could have seen at libraries, at the Residencia, at the Librairie Espagnole in Paris, owned by his friends Juan Vicéns and María Luisa González, or through his usual source – his Uncle Anselm.

Much of the art discovered in the tombs at Thebes was documented in folio volumes by a team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art under the direction of the Englishman Norman de Garis Davies. He and his wife Nina drew ink and tempera illustrations of their finds, and it is in one of these volumes, *The Tomb of Nakht at Thebes*, that we find the engraved illustration of the "wedge-shaped brick of burnt clay" that bears a resemblance to the womb-tomb in the *Enigma of Desire*.³⁹

The book also documented terracotta "funerary cones" found in the tomb. These cones are common in the Necropolis, and would have been inserted above the entrance to the tomb complex, yet their function is unknown. They could well be the origin of the "aerodynamic" cones in Dalí's paintings that are allied to his anamorphic skulls, and to images permeated with funereal cypresses and "atavistic remains" scattered over the Empordà plain. Dalí does not give many clues to the significance to him of the real burial mounds and chambers that he knew locally, only fleetingly mentioning "primitive art" at the end of 1928, while coming to terms with a Surrealism that had to do with Miró, Arp and Picasso – influences that seem to rear their heads briefly in paintings such as



Fig 110
Funerary cone from the tomb of Nakht
Cairo Museum

Atavistic Vestiges after the Rain (1934). However, he had seen the funerary monuments standing on the sierras of l'Albera, Rodes and Cap Creus, and the burial mounds around Espolla, to the north of Figueres, on route to Requesens – Felipa's retreat after the death of the first Salvador, which Dalí therefore associated with mourning and melancholy. Excavations in Dalí's lifetime revealed that these vestiges dated from the mid-4th millennium BC, contemporary with the first flourish of Egyptian civilisation. The dead in the mounds around Figueres were similarly buried with funerary objects, "aixovars", of terracotta, flint and stone.⁴⁰

Another object found in Nakht's tomb reinforces the pertinence of the brick to the *Enigma*, suggesting other routes back, again, to Oedipus and to Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, via the Sphinx. The tomb contained a statuette depicting Nakht kneeling and holding a stela with a hymn to the sun god Re. That he does so cannot but be an allusion to the *Dream Stele* erected by the reigning pharaoh, Thutmose IV, to commemorate his restoration of the Great Sphinx at Giza. According to the account on the *Dream Stele*, the young Thutmose, who was Tutankhamun's great grandfather, stopped to rest under the head of the Sphinx. He fell asleep and had a dream in which the Sphinx told him that if he cleared away the sand that buried him up to the neck and restored him, he would become the next Pharaoh.

Notes

- ¹ According to research subsequent to Dalí's Surrealism – but which he may have anticipated by personal observation – expansive, open landscapes – whether cold and blue or warm and brown – are a natural feature of memory construction, reconstruction and visualisation. (Passer and Smith, 277)
- ² The metaphor of the desert was by no means remote – it was essential to the hagiographic comedies of the Spanish Golden Age, which Lorca knew well. Eduardo Marquina, who was married to Mercedes Pichot and a frequent visitor to Cadaqués, wrote a revived “hagiographic comedy”, *Teresa de Jesús*. The genre favoured active rather than contemplative saints, and so helped promote Jerome's image as intrepid desert-dweller in, for example, Lope de Vega's *El cardenal de Belén*, in which Jerome moves to the desert and is accosted by tempting visions, with other episodes from his life including the taming of the lion. The drama finishes with the award of the Order of the Hieronymites. Lope de Vega also wrote *El divino africano* based on the early life of Augustine, as recounted in his *Confessions*. As with Jerome, the final scene shows Augustine with his attributes. (Leocadia, 3, 4, 30-4, 37-41)
- ³ AMD, 101
- ⁴ ‘Y después’, final section of ‘Seguiriya Gitana’ in the *Poema del Cante Jondo*, compiled in 1921, but not published until 1931.
- Los laberintos
que crea el tiempo
se desvanecen.
- (Sólo queda
el desierto.)
- El corazón,
fuente del deseo,
se desvanece.
- (Sólo queda
el desierto.)
- La ilusión de la aurora
y los besos,
se desvanecen.
- (Sólo queda
el desierto.
Un ondulado
desierto.)
- ⁵ Dalí to Lorca, Figueres or Barcelona, November 1925. Recalling times in Madrid, referred to Howard Carter (Poesía, 20-21)
- ⁶ Howard Carter published *The Tomb of Tut-ankh-Amen*, 1922-7. The French archaeologist J. Capart was active between 1905 and 1927. Capart and Werbrouck published *Thebes. The Glory of a Great Past*, New York, 1926. The *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, was published in French in Cairo. *Documents pour servir à l'étude de l'art égyptien*, vol. I was published in Paris, 1927.
- ⁷ Gilbert Clavel, ‘Espressioni d'Egitto’, *Valori Plastici*, Yr. II, no. III-IV, March-April 1920.
- ⁸ DJDG, 158
- ⁹ Secretst, 77. The photograph is reproduced in AR, Lorca Dalí
- ¹⁰ The discovery and investigation of Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten, and stepmother, Nefertiti, were carried out by German archaeologists, who held the official concession before the London-based Egypt Exploration Society took over in 1921.
- ¹¹ By 1929, Dalí had had six years in which to see a photo of Nefertiti. If Dalí had not seen one in 1924, it is possible that the image became available when Howard Carter returned to give more talks in Madrid in 1928, and donated photographic and film records to the Hispano-British Committee.
- ¹² In the 2nd half of August 1925, Emilio Prados wrote to Bello, recalling a visit together to the Escorial, when they had joked about the stool on which Philip II had rested his gout leg, calling it a “pudridero”. See RES, 92-3. If Dalí was not with them, he would have heard about Philip II's extending leg when they returned. Two years later, Dalí and Lorca joked to Bello about Ramón Pichot's stretched, erect leg. See RES, 170.
- ¹³ Alyse Gaultier says: “Often the crutch serves to hold up a cerebral sexuality. This is the case in *The Invisible Harp*, *Fine and Average* (1932), in which it supports an out-growth of the brain in the form of a penis.” Gaultier's book is cobbled

together uncritically, and filled with errors, but the concise nature of her *Little Book of Dalí* squeezes the odd felicitous phrase from her.

- ¹⁴ Dalí had gone to Paris, but felt the need to get away to work on the *Invisible Man*. On 11th January 1930, he and Gala travelled to Carry-le-Rouet, near Marseilles, where they stayed until March. (DJDG, 407). Dalí told Soby that it was painted between 1929-33. (Soby, 36)
- ¹⁵ Dalí did not publish this book until 1962.
- ¹⁶ *Lletres i Ninots*, 106. Eng. trans. p. 264. Minguet Batllori dates the notes between 1924-6.
- ¹⁷ 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', at the Ateneu, Barcelona, 22nd March 1930, (Published *Hèlix*, no. 10, April 1930, Vilafranca del Penedès, in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 221-6).
- ¹⁸ Taschen, 321. See Taschen 353-8 for sketches and paintings on the woman-horse-lion theme.
- ¹⁹ See 115.
- ²⁰ 'Giorgio de Chirico' First published in *Littérature*, no. 11, January 1920, but again in *Les Pas perdus*, 1924. Quoted in Spector, 98
- ²¹ Dalí distributed his pamphlet, entitled *Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness* from an aeroplane over New York.
- ²² Ana Maria wrote that Ingres, along with Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, was one of the artists that her brother spent most time admiring on his first visit to the Louvre. See AMD, 118.
- ²³ See Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 27. Gowans volume 47 reproduces 3 versions of *Roger Rescuing Angelica*, one of which is in the Louvre.
- ²⁴ Soby reproduces a photo of an "incomplete state" of the top half, in which the Andromeda/Gradiva figure has not yet been added. See Taschen 321-3, 351, 367, 371, 379, 382-4, and the book, William Jeffet et al., *Dalí: Gradiva* (Madrid; Fundación Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza; 2002)
- ²⁵ Augustine, *Sermon* 248, 'De Sepultura Domini', quoted by Schneider Adams, 70. Elaborate analogies between Joseph's unused tomb and Mary's unopened womb have been drawn since St. Ambrose. See St. Augustine (Sermon 248, "De sepultura Domini, PL, xxxix, col. 2204): "... No less honor is due to the tomb which raised the Lord than to the womb of Holy Mary which brought him forth." St. Augustine closes his sermon: "If indeed she received the Lord deep in her womb, he received him deep in his heart." See Hirn, *Sacred Shrine*, ch. vii, esp. 337ff. Hirn quotes the Ambrosian Easter Hymn: "Thou who wast before born of a Virgin, art born now of the grave"; and from Ephraim Syrus (ca. 306-378), who compares Christ's emergence from the sealed grave to the fact of Mary's anatomical virginity:
- Thus didst thou show, O Lord, by thy resurrection from the grave, the miracle of thy birth, for each was closed and each was sealed, both the grave and the womb. Thou wast pure in the womb and living in the grave, and Mary's womb, like the grave, bore an unbroken seal.
- In the verse from Crashaw's "Steps to the Temple," with which Hirn opens his chapter, Joseph of Arimathea is to Joseph of Nazareth as the sepulchre is to the womb.
- ²⁶ Elliott H. King has tracked down the origin of Dalí's claim, first stated in an essay written in 1960 called 'The Divine Cheese', in which he declares that Christ was made of cheese. King discovered that Dalí was
- making an abstruse connection to Book 9 of Augustine's *Confessions*, which he had encountered through the writings of the sixteenth-century theologian Luis de León. Fray Luis' book, *The Names of Christ*, written around 1583, addresses the Biblical image of Christ as a mountain, quoting Psalms 67:22-23, 'that mountain flowing with milk, that fruitful mountain' – literally monte incaseato, 'the mountain of curds'. The Latin Vulgate employs the word coagulatus, which Fray Luis explained to his readers originally meant cheese, leading St. Augustine to apparently read the passage as 'mountain of cheeses'. Thus Augustine had, in fact, described Christ as a 'mountain of cheese', just as Dalí said.
- I would like to add, of course, that it was St Jerome who was responsible for the translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible. See Homa Taj's interview with King, <http://museumviews.com/2010/09/interview-with-elliott-h-king-on-dali-the-late-works/>, accessed 17/02/2011.
- ²⁷ Lubar, 2000, 68-70.
- ²⁸ Dalí Gaudí, 78-83. Talk in Parc Guell, on 29th September, 1956.
- ²⁹ See Descharnes, *The World of Salvador Dalí*, p. 49, and H. Kliczkowski, *Antoni Gaudí/Salvador Dalí* (Barcelona; Loft Publications; 2002)
- ³⁰ See, for example, 'L'Âne pourri', in which Dalí refers to Art Nouveau ornamental architecture as "a true realisation of solidified desires". In *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, no.1, July 1930, in *Obra Completa*, IV, 201-7.

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- ³¹ 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', at the Ateneu, Barcelona, 22nd March 1930, (Published Hèlix, no. 10, April 1930, Vilafranca del Penedès, in L'alliberament dels dits, 221-6)
- ³² Aurel Kolnai, 'El asco', *Revista de Occidente*, XXVI:77 and 78, Madrid, 1929, pp. 161-201, 294-347.
- ³³ Gibson, 17-8
- ³⁴ DJDG, 52-3, 66
- ³⁵ Gibson, 82; DJDG, 120
- ³⁶ Gibson, plate 1
- ³⁷ Albert M. Lythgoe, ed. New York; Publications of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I; 1917, p. 42, fig. 9. The volume measures approximately 55x35cm. A photograph in the collection of the Metropolitan of the object, itself in the Cairo Museum, is reproduced in Abdel Ghaffar Shedid and Matthias Seidel, *The Tomb of Nakht. The Art and History of an Eighteenth Dynasty Official's Tomb at Western Thebes* (Mainz; Verlag Philipp von Zabern; 1996), fig. 9, p. 20. In 1889, the tomb was cleared by members of Antiquities Service, and its details recorded by Norman de Garis Davies between 1907 and 1910, for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and published in 1917. It was during this survey that Davies discovered that the Antiquities Service had missed the burial shaft and chamber, and he found the funerary objects in the debris there. Unfortunately, the steamship "Arabic" carrying some of the funerary equipment to New York was torpedoed and sunk in 1915, with the loss of the statue mentioned below. See also Abdel Ghaffar Shedid and Matthias Seidel, *The Tomb of Nakht. The Art and History of an Eighteenth Dynasty Official's Tomb at Western Thebes* (Mainz; Verlag Philipp von Zabern; 1996) 13, 15
- ³⁸ The tomb of Nakht is tomb TT52 in the Theban necropolis, on the western side of the Nile valley, opposite modern day Luxor and the Karnak temple complex.
- ³⁹ The Metropolitan Museum published the V-volume set of leather-bound books in an edition of 500, between 1917-27.
- ⁴⁰ ME, 14-5. Crematory urns, shown ME, 22-3. Perhaps first insight and objects included in collection of teacher Trayter, in house on the site of the Museu del Empordà, described in the *Secret Life*. See Gibson, 27-30.

5.3 The Landscape of Primary Loss

We have looked at the meaningful content of the *Enigma*, and our detour through Egypt hinted at the importance of the desert setting itself for anchorite iconography, emphasising our essentially individual existence in the world. Similarly, the setting at the water's edge was integral to paintings of Sebastian, which reflected Dalí's thoughts about the Self primarily as physiology, in contrast to the Self as psyche represented by Jerome. Of course, these are ways of considering the same self. The saint contemplating a skull ponders the corruption of the flesh or, stripped to the waist, admits himself organic matter in a world of others.

Inhospitable, craggy landscapes that might have reminded Dalí of the peaks of Catalunya, as he viewed them in the Prado, are integral to the meaning of Quattrocento Anthonys battling incarnate temptations, or the concentrated mental isolation of contemplative Jeromes, ruminating on their ontological parameters in space and time. This setting makes them pertinent precedents for the mental landscape of narcissistic alienation that Dalí imagines for the *Enigma*.



Fig 111
Ruins of the castle of San Salvador, overlooking Cadaqués

As Jerome's thoughts meander through the hollowed skull – contemplating the mortality of the body and the eternity of the soul; permanence and transience; the journey from the womb to the tomb – it is clear that the dimension of time is as important as those of space for this landscape. Its barrenness speaks of fertility, life-cycles, death and regeneration. The world will go on, but our time in it will end. This is a factor considered by some artists who painted Jerome with a sand-timer on his desk, as the martyr's mortality was marked by the Clepsydra in 'Sant Sebastian'.

With the input of psychoanalysis, the mortality of the mother's body is stamped into the soft rock of the mind in the *Enigma's* memorial alveoli. Dalí followed up these thoughts to make the mother's body a *Soft Watch* draped over an abandoned Masturbator in his *Persistence of Memory*. The moment we put our heads above the parapet and emerge into the hard, dry world from the warm, wet paradise of the womb, the sands of our time on earth begin to run out. Psychoanalysis helped Dalí understand the motivation of artists and patrons in representing the life-cycle in scenes of the Nativity, the Madonna and Child, and the Crucifixion. At the same time, Dalí's knowledge of more sophisticated iconographies helped him to understand and visualise psychoanalytical explanations of the ontological mystery of life.

Dalí's autobiographical visualisation of this mystery as the *Enigma of Desire* has its basis in his self-analysis, but it was constructed with awareness that the same problems had already been anticipated in religious art. The desolate mental landscape of dry ochre, receding endlessly beyond a flat horizon was an important condition for the morphology of his deflated Masturbator, trapped in introspective isolation and mourning its lost maternal symbiosis. However, there are lessons in other registers of religious art, and to which other landscapes are essential, that helped Dalí picture the individual in meaningful relationship to the world into which he is born in the *Enigma*.

Three small shells at the base of the pedestal remember the water's edge, and Lorca. To further underline the birth symbolism of this shell, and the secret presence of Sebastian, Venus and the Virgin Mary, the rounded features of Lorca kiss the mouth of the skull here, with Dalí's sharper features in the silhouette of the eye socket above. This birth symbolism of the sea – *mer* and *mère* – carries over into the watery womb of the *Invisible Man* and in even the most arid mental landscapes, "liquid desires" spurt from soft rocks and feminine jugs; and if we scratch the dry surface of the *Enigma*, we find the warm, wet, Christian birth imagery of the Garden of Eden. The desert setting is so emphatically not a lush Garden of Eden that this comparison must be meaningless, or the contrast meaningful. In a world created by dream-work, the latent content is as important as the manifest.

The Image of Desire

Through the body – or eye socket – of the structure, Dalí gives us a glimpse of a naked woman's torso, encased in rock. A woman summarised as breasts and womb. At the centre of the composition and at the centre of the mind, this may well be the focus point for Dalí's thoughts; the painting's first title was the *Image of Desire*. It is like a snapshot of the central panel of Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, a logotype for the Original Sin, expulsion from the Garden of Eden, earthly pleasure, shame and damnation that form the theological and psychoanalytical foundations of this iconography of the mind's eye.

One possible source for the woman's framed torso is Magritte, who visited Cadaqués in 1929, just before Dalí painted the *Enigma*. Beginning with *Le palais d'une courtisane* (1928), he painted similarly truncated female torsos that can also be read as a woman's face – anticipating Dalí's double images. David Sylvester has insisted on the Magritte's influence on Dalí's new, precise technique, but this is to ignore Dalí's aspirations to *paint well* of 1924-6, in imitation of Flemish and Dutch masters.¹ More to the point, accounts describe Magritte as a philosophical artist, one who would have discussed the meaning of his paintings and others', and the questions of reality and representation central to his cerebral surrealism. In Cadaqués, Dalí had the opportunity to speak to Magritte on the subject of the woman's body as an image of desire. Magritte also had thoughts about the landscape there, and painted wind instruments floating above the anthropomorphic rocks of Cap Creus, blowing a gay tramuntana tarantella. Dalí must have been eager to hear what his guests had to say about Cadaqués, and Magritte's observations on the hidden meanings of the landscape can have complemented Lorca's.

Like Dalí, Magritte was fairly isolated among the Paris Surrealists as having a thorough art historical education, and their conversations can have been based around shared admiration of Flemish masters, rather than principles of reality and pleasure, or castration anxiety. That does not mean avoiding questions of the latent sexual content of art. They might have discussed the sexual symbolism of items that made their way into Dalí's paintings from the art museums of Brussels that Dalí had visited three years earlier, via the pages of the Gowans books. Magritte was familiar with a very particular genre in which Gerrit Dou and Gabriel Metsu were specialists – pictures of a maidservant framed by an open window, pouring water from a jug, or offering the viewer grapes or a fish.²

It is telling of the dream-work mystification that Dalí engages in in the *Secret Life*, that he alleges to have a "memory" of a similarly framed image of desire, which he relates in 'The Story of the Linden Blossom Picking and the Crutch'.³ Dalí claims to have arranged events so that a maidservant who was picking linden-blossom at the Pichots' Moli de la Torre was obliged to position herself in such a way that his view of her body was cut off between the top of her thighs and her neck. All the while, Dalí euphemistically thrust his crutch into a ripe melon. The scene Dalí describes spans the overt image of desire in the *Enigma* and the implied eroticism of the framed scenes in Gowans.

The craggy rock that frames the torso in the *Enigma* takes us out of the shadows from which Dalí "observes" the linden-blossom picker, and

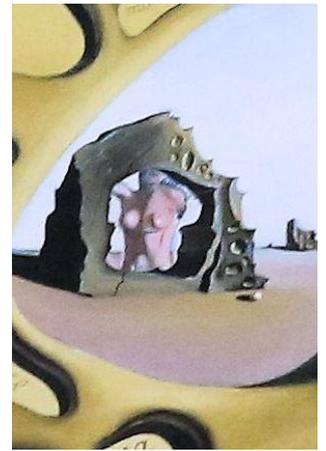


Fig 112
Salvador Dalí
Enigma of Desire (detail)



Fig 113
Joachim Patinir
St. Jerome in a landscape

into the open spaces of Patinir's landscapes. These were only loosely based on reality, and one feature that he meaningfully exaggerated were jagged rocks jutting out of lush green hills. Both Dalí and Lorca referred to these landscapes occasionally – perhaps because, although they were born of fantasy, they nonetheless resemble the crags of Cap Creus, as they must have observed in the basement of the Prado. It seems to me that Dalí was thinking about this when he situated the image of desire, in the mind's eye of the *Enigma*, within the hermit's grotto in Patinir's painting, *St. Jerome in a landscape*.

Dalí was perhaps predisposed to imagine this image of desire as encased within his originary landscape of Cap Creus, in the *Enigma*, by the same passage of the *Interpretation of Dreams* that had led him to represent the libido as a lion:

When the *unconscious*, as an element of the subject's waking thoughts, has to be represented in a dream, it may find an appropriate substitution in *subterranean* regions, which represent, in other cases [...], the female genitals or the maternal breast.⁴

Earthly Paradise

The landscape of Dalí's memories, the Empordà and Cadaqués, is present in the *Enigma* as it had always been in his paintings, but no longer as impressions of orange sunlight dancing on purple waves or sea breezes rustling olive branches. Rather, Dalí constructed a landscape in which to set a synopsis of personal space and time. With the help of Lorca and Freud, he had access to an underlying stratum of nuances in surveying and interpreting this as the landscape in and from which he was born, to a particular mother at a particular time.⁵ This landscape, and the ticking clock of mortality started at his birth, set the ontological parameters of Dalí's hermetic contemplation.

Reflecting the importance of this setting, Dalí likened his "mental landscape" to "the fantastic and protean rocks of Cape Creus", and one of several personally significant sources that contributed to the Masturbator's definitive physiognomy was the Cullero rock at Cap Creus.⁶ Other sources dear to Dalí contribute. A head by Carrà, illustrated in *Valori Plastici*, may have played a part in the morphosis, but there was a more significant model available to Dalí, the importance of which is related to its own landscape setting: the introspective Great Masturbator can be recognised at the shore of Eden's lake in the first panel of Bosch's triptych, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* – "the greatest and the most surrealist of all the pictures ever painted by Hieronymus Bosch" – with features formed from creeping vegetation and amphibians.⁷ This resemblance has occasionally been flagged, but the significance of Dalí's adoption of Bosch's scene of genesis in, and expulsion from the Garden of Eden has not been explored at length.⁸

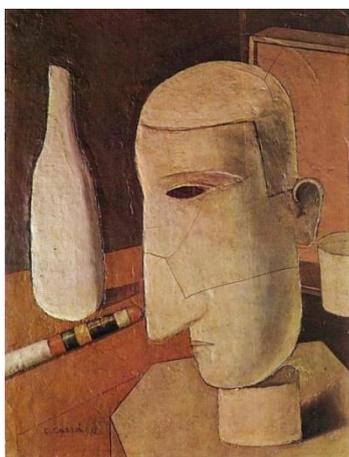


Fig 114
Carlo Carrà
Il gentiluomo ubriaco (1916)



Fig 115
Salvador Dalí
The Great Masturbator at 90°



Fig 116
Hieronymus Bosch
The Garden of Earthly Delights,
'Joining of Adam and Eve' panel, detail

Such Arcimboldian double images are not typical of Bosch, and it is not certain that he meant anyone to see a face there. However, Dalí certainly recognised one, and our speculation on his motives for assuming it as a self-representation unapologetically draws Biblical mythology into a web of meaningful association, along with Surrealism and psychoanalysis. Lorca, too, continued to have an input; despite the change in appearance of Dalí's paintings since his stay in Paris, it is clear that his conversations with Lorca still resonated and there is no need to focus on a distancing with his friend. This was more geographical than emotional – Lorca was in New York, and Dalí between Paris, Madrid and Catalunya. In any case, the influence of Lorca was ingrained in Dalí for life.

In spring 1929, as Dalí scribbled notes for the poem 'I don't see anything, anything concerning the landscape,' it seems Lorca's games of mythological and geological hermeneutics were on his mind (the pages even contain doodles that suggest shapes in the *Enigma of Desire*).⁹ Dalí wrote, "I've known this old landscape since I was a child and in time I've learnt to recognize all kinds of curious simulacra and the significance, [...] I know only too well that this has been put here to hide the true personality of my friends." The friends mentioned were ones from Madrid: J. Ma de Sagarra, F. García Lorca, Pepín Bello and Luis Buñuel.¹⁰ Dalí also describes "insects bristling with ants", and other images transcribed in paintings, pointing us towards the *little things* – "beastlings" – crawling over the otherwise monolithic face of the Masturbator face in Bosch's panel, and evoking Dalí's Franciscan love of his personal phobias. The locust in *The Great Masturbator* is the supreme example of this, and especially pertinent to us for its intimations of Biblical punishment in Egypt.

However, the flat emptiness of Dalí's 1929 paintings is a new and deliberate step; beastling locust aside, if the *Enigma* has to do with an expulsion from the Garden of Eden, there is little of the primeval forest or the "sylvan interior world" that Gómez de la Serna saw in the central panel.¹¹ The pathetic Masturbator has been expelled from its originary paradise. Although this is not primarily the real landscape of Dalí's childhood memories, but a stage set for their mythological representation, the rocks of Cap Creus played a role in this drama, and there are also more subtle contributions to paintings of 1930-3 from the few verdant oases in the generally featureless fields around Figueres.

In the *Secret Life*, Dalí writes of confusing his memories of walks to the "bosque", the Font del Soc and Vilabertran with scenes in his Gowans books by Watteau and Claude. The Empordà is hardly the lush Eden he describes, but the association of these places with the awakening of desire on youthful excursions, with friends and girlfriends, are signposted by the dark clumps of phallic cypresses that spring up from the flat, arid landscape of Dalí's Surrealist paintings, concealing mysterious sexual activities – the "birth of liquid desires", to quote a title of a 1932 painting. Walks



Fig 118
The Font del Soc fountain

between Figueres and Vilabertran, took Dalí and his friends via the Font del Soc, a fountain concealed by a leafy glade in the garden of his friend Narcís Hera – Narcissus, coincidentally or not.¹² Those excursions came to an abrupt end around the time of Dalí's mother's death, when he was transplanted from this Garden of Delights to Madrid. Amongst the consolations there, of course, was the Prado and its treasures in the cellar: Bosch's trauma of birth and Bruegel's triumph of death.

Dalí later denigrated aspects of Bosch's art in favour of Raphael, and called himself the "anti-Hieronymus Bosch", but as he approached Surrealism in 1928 he had championed Bosch's "imaginative and additional" method.¹³ At that time, Dalí set aside religious meaning, as did Surrealists as vehemently atheistic as Max Ernst, for example, who



Fig 119
The home of Narcís Hera, with the cypresses that conceal the Font del Soc

nevertheless carried his admiration for Bosch, Altdorfer, Grünewald and Dürer with him from Bonn to Paris. Breton, too, was happy to proclaim them forerunners of Surrealism. Yet Bosch was *not* a Surrealist, and his paintings *were* religious. Dalí's loan of Bosch's face was a deliberate appropriation, within a meticulously studied discourse on his own primary loss and its effects. That discourse took account of meanings inherent in Bosch's triptych that had a religious basis. Dalí's thoughts were presumably focussed in the direction inherent in the title it bore in the Prado at that time, *La Lujuria* – "Lust", one of the deadly sins.

Bosch's painting is meticulously detailed but nonetheless too fantastic to simply be an attempt to imagine paradise on Earth. It does however display the richness and fecundity of flora and fauna of God's creation, as best as Bosch could imagine it – in passing, we might note that an elephant, a giraffe, a lion and a swan are all featured in Bosch's Eden, and all acquire symbolic importance in Dalí's Surrealist bestiary. Dalí must have had such symbolic meanings, and the significance of their setting, in mind when he wrote of Bosch's "imaginative and additional" method.

The theme of the triptych is loosely based on Genesis, but not an illustration. The first panel, the *Joining of Adam and Eve* in the Garden of Eden is an image of innocence, not blame. Temptation and Original Sin are not overstated, and the couple are not dramatically expelled in the way Masaccio had painted them in his *Adam and Eve*, the model for Dalí's mythical expulsion and banishment into the wilderness, with hands clutched to faces to show the shame attached to original sin.

The second panel is the one deserving of the title *Lust*. Bosch presents fantastic scenes driven by sexual instinct – "a satirical comment on the shame and sinfulness of mankind", according to José de Sigüenza who described the painting in his 1605 *History of the Order of St. Jerome*. Whether the starting point was original sin or innocence, the inevitable outcome of mankind's subsequent sinful ways is shown in the third panel, *Hell*. It therefore follows the same three stages as formed the Sphinx's riddle and the Christian imagery of Nativity, Exemplary Life and Crucifixion.

The inevitability of Death in all these three-part narratives is the focus of Jerome's contemplation of the skull, and while it seems obvious that the artistic programme that the Hieronymite Order established for the austere Escorial should include exemplary images of contemplative saints – their programme laid down that paintings should "inspire devotion", that they should be "images of devotion before which one could, and even wanted to, pray"¹⁴ – it may seem surprising that Bosch's these images of wild sexual abandon were thought appropriate for contemplation by monks of the Order, and by Philip II.

It is less surprising that Dalí thought the psychoanalytical significance of this mythical landscape appropriate for contemplation, or that he saw in the phantom face kissing the shore of lake Eden an appropriate model for his visualisation of the tragic Narcissistic isolation of the Masturbator in the *Enigma of Desire*. In the ordinary setting of Bosch's Eden, and according to Freudian interpretation, the Masturbator is the face of original innocence not sin, for all it is born of and into a world driven by desire. Ultimately, Bosch offers no hope for an ideal renunciation of desire, and even the comfort of an awaiting afterlife other than Hell is absent – usually a basic motivation of Christian iconography. Desire is as intrinsic to the human condition in Bosch's schema as in Freud's.

Dalí painted the Masturbator expelled from the primal, placental paradise it occupied in Bosch's triptych, where it faced a pool as the mythical Narcissus had done. Dalí takes the desperation of Narcissus' situation a step further by denying him even a reflection. Eyes sealed, its vision introspective, the Masturbator can only attempt to replicate paradise in its imagination.

Lorca helped nurture Dalí's association with Bosch by invoking the "the dark forest of incredible forms" from which he said Dalí fled in the 'Ode', and even helped project these thoughts onto the coastal landscape as the two friends corresponded between 1925 and 1927. As we saw earlier, in the sonnet 'Narcissus', Lorca described the setting for Narcissus's pining for his lost sense of self as an impenetrable forest that concealed the lost intrauterine paradise.

It was around that time that Dalí became aware of Freud's essay 'The Uncanny', in which he acknowledged the contribution of Otto Rank to the acceptance of Narcissism as a normal part of sexual development; as an imaginary alienation from the self as another, which leaves traces in memory – a "kernel of strangeness" within even the most familiar.¹⁵ As the paradigm of the

“unheimlich”, Freud gives the uncanniness that certain male neurotics feel towards the female genitals: “the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning.”¹⁶

With these thoughts in mind, let us reformulate our description of the Masturbator in the *Enigma*, in a way compatible with the theology of the Hieronymite Order and the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud: Dalí shows the impossibility of the Masturbator, in its narcissistic state, in a landscape of primary loss, to imagine the uncanny memory residues of its primal, intrauterine paradise.

Imagining the intra-uterine return

Dalí acknowledged the influence of Otto Rank’s contribution to the study of the narcissistic condition in chapter two of the *Secret Life*, titled ‘Intra-Uterine Memories’, which he wrote with the benefit of conversations with Anaïs Nin while they stayed with Caresse Crosby in 1940. Rank had analysed both Nin and Henry Miller, who was also with them. Dalí writes, “It seems increasingly true that the whole imaginative life of man tends to reconstitute symbolically by the most similar situations and representations that initial paradisaical state.” His own memories agree with the “most general aspects of Rank’s thesis, as it connects and identifies the said intra-uterine period with paradise, and birth – the traumatism of birth – with the myth, so decisive in human life, of the ‘Lost Paradise’.” Birth, Dalí explains, is expulsion from paradise, and death is a return to the womb.¹⁷

Rank’s *Trauma of Birth* was published in French translation as *Le Traumatisme de la naissance* in 1928, and Breton recognised its immediate influence on the section ‘L’Homme’ of *L’Immaculée conception*, written with Paul Éluard, and on Dalí’s *La Femme visible*.¹⁸ Dalí had been aware of Rank for several years, beginning with Freud’s many references to him, and the gist of the original thesis of *Das Trauma des Geburt* (1924) could have reached him at the Germanophile Residencia. We can at least say that he was well prepared for the reception of Rank’s ideas, and these seem to have contributed to an epiphany in the summer of 1929, when Dalí adjusted his visualised psychoanalytic schema with the dramatic shift in emphasis onto the mother in the *Enigma*, compared to the father in the *Lugubrious Game*.

Certainly by 1932, Dalí had no doubt about the place of Rank’s ideas in the schema of psychological development of the individual. In notes for an unrealised film project, *Contre la famille*, Dalí spelled out the progression: intra-uterine life – birth trauma – infancy, and the “formation of complexes – the Oedipal complex, castration complex, knowledge of death and birth of the aversion feeling.”¹⁹ The film would have contained animated versions of some scenes in his paintings, including one part, ‘Prologue scene of the butterfly chase’, that describes the family group around the butterfly net that Dalí added to the *Invisible Man*, confirming the importance of womb symbolism to that painting.

This supports the idea that Dalí was already searching for an adequate image for a mythical understanding of the trauma of birth, at the time of his Rankian epiphany in 1929. The face that he perceived in Bosch’s panel suited this purpose, not least because it appears in a scene from *Genesis*. Personal experience, too, and the mythical models that already had a place in Dalí’s paintings contributed to this suitability. Bosch’s Masturbator faces a pool of water – like Narcissus, like Sebastian and Venus, like Lorca, Dalí and his sister, collecting sugared almonds and shells. The womb symbolism of this water is personalised for Dalí by the blissful memories of summers in Cadaqués, watched over by his mother and aunt. This identification with Bosch’s panel is added to by the swan approaching the shore, like the swans that accompanied the Pichots’ fantastic nocturnal concerts in the bay of Cadaqués that Dalí watched as a child with his mother.²⁰ If we take into account Dalí’s physiological aesthetics of only a year or two previously, and his penchant for scientific support for his theories, there is also a Darwinian argument for the face as a symbol of birth traumatism. Bosch’s panel seems to illustrate that all life did indeed emerge from the sea; the face’s features and identity have evolved from the flora and fauna that have crept out of the placental waters.

There is, however, no avoiding the tragic awareness of mortality that accompanies birth symbolism, in the psychoanalytically informed mythography that Dalí pursued in the *Enigma* – the

mother is both womb and tomb. If Dalí identifies with the face that emerges from the water in Bosch's first panel, and is driven through life by the libidinous forces of the second panel, then the conclusion is that life can only end in the fire and cold, black waters of the final panel. This awareness is tragic in the sense that Sophocles understood – death is the only and unavoidable end to the compelling search for origins and identity of both Oedipus and Narcissus.

Felipa is present in Dalí's paintings as *mer* and *mère*, and he constructed a myth of return to her body as best he could. He made his home and set the scene of his paintings in Portlligat – the “enclosed bay” at the coast of Cadaqués, and insisted that it was the only place he could live, as if bound to his own tragic mythopoesis.²¹ She also infuses the death symbolism of his paintings. Dalí once painted a black lake that referred to his dead mother, and that is absolutely related to his own tragic search for origins and identity. She was depressed after the death of the first Salvador and spent time at the lakeside Sanctuary of the Mother of God at Requesens, to convalesce. As the second Salvador was born nine months and ten days later, it is possible that he was conceived at Requesens. Dalí's mythical identification with the sanctuary is increased with the knowledge that it was the destination of an annual pilgrimage from the chapel of Saint Sebastian in Figueres. Dalí could have taken the sacking of the sanctuary during the Spanish Civil War as a very personal affront – he painted the black *Mountain Lake* of Requesens two years later, in 1938.

An anatomy of death and desire

The paternal bias of the oedipal drama that Dalí constructed in his first few Surrealist paintings was disrupted by the intrusion into his life of a real woman's body; Gala arrived in Cadaqués with her husband Paul Éluard and their daughter Cécile at the start of August 1929. Gala was 35, Dalí 25.²² A sexual encounter of some sort took place that summer – Dalí later said it was three months before they had sex – but there has never been any doubt that she was from the start as much a surrogate mother as a lover, and this is the guise in which their encounter slotted into the psychoanalytically informed mythology that Dalí was elaborating on paper and canvas.

Although he may not have known it when he painted the *Enigma*, one fact about Gala made his identification of her with his mother especially poignant and relevant to the themes investigated in that painting and others. By spring 1930, Gala was suffering from a “painful gynaecological problem”, which eventually necessitated a hysterectomy when a cyst was discovered the following year.²³ It was still less than nine years since Dalí's mother had died of cancer of the uterus.²⁴ In trying to understand both Gala's and his mother's illness, Dalí must have tried to visualise them, and many paintings of 1930-1 deal with his natural fear of re-living his mother's death.

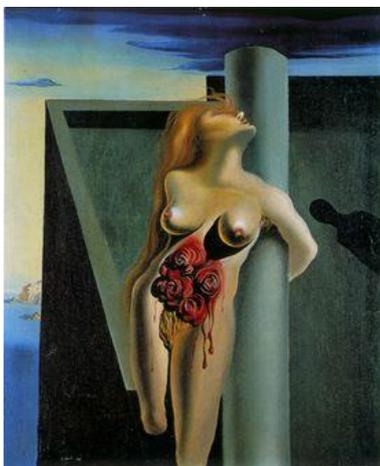


Fig 119
Salvador Dalí
Bleeding Roses (1930)

The most striking such phobic visualisation of the womb is the *Bleeding Roses* (1930), in which a woman is bound to a column, with blood trickling down her thighs from a bunch of roses at her belly.²⁵ Similar women are added to the *Invisible Man*, and the attributes of roses and bare breasts are even absorbed into the William Tell figure of *Memory of the Child-Woman* in 1932.²⁶ This shifting placement of Dalí's thoughts about Gala's fragile womb betrays his difficulty in processing its significance. Dalí merged images from secular and religious art in his attempt to find an adequate representation of his mythical rescue fantasy of Gala/Gradiva/Angelica – the predicament is that of Sebastian, while the pose is that of Angelica in Ingres' *Roger Rescuing Angelica*. However, the crucial source is one that goes beyond the secular to the scientific – a plate from Petro Berrettini's *Tabulae anatomicae* (1741), which Michel Leiris used to illustrate his 'L'homme et son interieur' in issue number five of *Documents*, in 1930. Leiris wrote:

One would be wrong to look at the anatomical plates that decorate old medical treatises from a strictly medical point of view; one should above all recognise the extraordinary beauty many of them possess – a beauty that has much less to do with the greater or lesser purity of the forms than with the fact that the human body is there revealed in its most intimate mystery.²⁷

Berrettini's drawing is of a woman – in the exact same posture “de la jambre libre” as William Tell in the eponymous painting, also of 1930 – coquettishly revealing a foetus in her womb, nestled in the splayed folds, like rose petals, of her dissected abdomen. As Dalí would know, Berrettini would have used a corpse as a model. It was certainly nothing new for Dalí to turn to anatomy books for inspiration and, besides Leonardo's drawings, we wonder what horrors he had been shown by Pepín Bello and other medical students at the Residencia, to complement his anatomy lessons at the Academia. Leiris' words hammered home the importance to Surrealism of certain images described in a book that we know helped orient him towards Surrealism in 1928, Ozenfant's *Foundations of Modern Art*:

the enchanted or ‘macabre’ islands of Boecklin, ancient and naïve treatises on anatomy dating from the Renaissance or Descartes, strange flowers, crawling and parasitic creatures, butterfly-fish, even Wagnerian flower-females.²⁸

In the soft recesses of the *Enigma*, we see some of the horror of the womb described by Dalí in 1967:

a woman's sexual organs will always be for me an obscure cavern where body fluids abound, from which children and embryos emerge, and which contain soft traps. Like Leonardo, I persist in trying to draw it without ever being able to put an end to the confusion caused by its forbidden aspects and uncertainties.²⁹

Dalí's reference is to the many drawings of dissected wombs and fetuses drawn by Leonardo. He illustrated his section on ‘Intra-Uterine Memories’ in the *Secret Life* with a page of drawings based on fetuses, dead or alive, that make formal and thematic reference to Leonardo (one foetus wears a parachute).³⁰ However, it would be unfair to ascribe Leonardo's scientific and artistic curiosity to the horror or confusion to which Dalí confesses. In fact, Leonardo wrote tenderly of the wonder of life inside the womb, where “one soul governs two bodies”.³¹

Dalí's impression of Leonardo's confusion was thanks in large part to Freud, who expounded the complicated theory of art as sublimation in his *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*. In support of his theory, Freud added a footnote to the 4th edition, including an engraved copy of Leonardo's drawing of a copulating couple, which he interprets as an “Ebenbild” – an “exact image” of Leonardo's infancy. He notes the reversed feet of the couple in the drawing, which he interprets as a sign of confusion resulting from his apparent bisexuality. This is the



Fig 120
Pietro Berrettini
‘De Foetu Formato’, tabula IV,
Tabulae anatomicae (1741)



Fig 121
Leonardo da Vinci
Anatomical drawings and notes



Fig 122
Leonardo da Vinci
'Copulating couple'

source of Dalí's ascription of confusion to Leonardo, yet the error is really by the copyist who embellished Leonardo's original, in which the feet are barely indicated.

The core of Freud's study – which Dalí more or less accepted as the legitimate psychoanalytic truth of the matter – is that clues in Leonardo's *Virgin and Child with St. Anne* reveal the artist's earliest memories to be a viper's nest of incestuous seduction, which left him fixated on his mother's breast and confused by heterosexual and homosexual impulses. Incapable of maintaining normal sexual relations, Leonardo sublimated his bisexual confusion into his artistic and scientific investigations. Dalí was also familiar with Leonardo's dissections of the skull, womb and genitals, male and female, which he could have turned to for further evidence of Freud's theory. However, Leonardo's consideration of the penis suggests that it would be fairer to describe his curiosity as asexual than bisexual:

this creature has often a life and intelligence separate from this man, and it would appear that the man is in the wrong in being ashamed to give it a name or to exhibit it, seeking, rather, constantly to cover and conceal what he ought to adorn and display with ceremony.³²

Freud's interpretation is based on the exchange of enigmatic smiles and an apparent double image in the folds of the Virgin's dress, which resembles the silhouette of a vulture if turned at ninety degrees. Dalí could see this for himself in the Louvre, and it no doubt contributed to his own search for double images. However, Freud's analysis breaks down immediately the "vulture" that he believed Leonardo to have recalled visiting his cot, is unmasked as a mistranslation of "kite", and the alleged relation to a hermaphroditic Egyptian mother-goddess that Freud, and probably Dalí, is lost.

Abell has further dismantled Freud's analysis, and shown there is not much left once the painting is contextualised with art-historical details that Freud ignored. For Abell, what remains of importance of the factors noted by Freud are the "subtle appeal of the smile" of St Anne and the comparable "veiled expressiveness" of the suffused background.³³ Even so, these are factors that Dalí would have appreciated in relation to other pictures of mother-child intimacy by Raphael, Botticelli, Filippo Lippi, and Leonardo's master Verrocchio.

Another remainder of Freud's analysis would have been of enduring appeal to Dalí – that is, the fusion of the Virgin Mary with her mother, St Anne, who looks barely older than her. Freud associates this "double mother" with the illegitimate Leonardo's knowledge that he was brought up initially by his blood mother, before being adopted by the wife of his father. We can see how Dalí would have seen himself reflected in these circumstances, and drawn in to his own search for hidden meanings in Leonardo's work.

We might be stretching our interpretative investigations to their limits, but it is interesting to speculate that Dalí might have applied a similar analysis to Freud's to another of Leonardo's images. To the possible sources of the Masturbator, we might tentatively add a shape in Leonardo's unfinished *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* – a dark profile that lies between Jerome's feet and the lion's open jaws. If only a coincidence, it is a convenient one for the contextualisation of Dalí's thoughts on the maternal and paternal forces that contribute to the sublimation of desire into art.

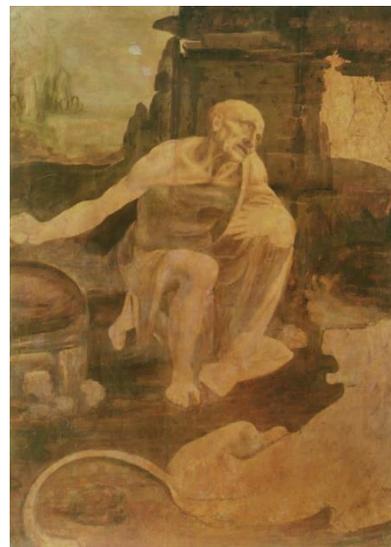


Fig 123
Leonardo da Vinci
St Jerome in the Wilderness (c. 1480)

As Church Father, Jerome represents the Word as Law, yet his search for a mythical explanation of origins and identity takes place within the *hard* architecture of his grotto, in Leonardo's and Patinir's paintings. Jerome and Dalí retreat through the cave entrance into the *soft* structure of the *Enigma*. It is the lost intrauterine paradise – the Love of the Mother, not the Law of the Father – that is the cradle of all meaning.

A womb with a view

Dalí did not share Freud's reticence regarding Rank's theories on the decisively traumatic moment of loss of the *pre-primary* intra-uterine state, and these were an integral and overlooked part of the psychoanalytical foundations of his Surrealist period. This is bookended by his Rankian epiphany in 1929 and his summary of sublimation and Surrealism in 1940 – "the whole imaginative life of man tends to reconstitute symbolically by the most similar situations and representations that initial paradisiacal state". In the *Enigma*, declared his intention to make all of perception and representation a terrifying visualisation of the traumatic emergence from the mother's body and the desire to return to it.

By the time he expressed his Leonardesque horror of the interior of the woman in 1967, Dalí had been able to discuss these ideas on the imaginary, scopic relation to the woman's body with Marcel Duchamp, who spent summers in Cadaqués from 1952, and regularly from 1958.³⁴ During that time, Duchamp elaborated his work *Étant donnés*, which he had begun in 1946 and completed in 1966. Dalí had discussed the fear and desire aroused by the "terrifying" aspect of the female body as womb and tomb since at least 1933, when Duchamp spent the summer in Cadaqués, while Dalí elaborated thoughts on the hard and the soft that had occupied him since 1929.³⁵

Their enduring dialogue on the psychology attached to our origins in the woman's body, and the hydraulic forces of the libido that are inherent at birth and emanate from the mysterious hollows of the mother's body, provide a useful perspective on Dalí's intentions in the *Enigma*. It is possible that Dalí and Duchamp collaborated on an investigation of the interior of the woman in 1936, with the plaster statue, *Venus de Milo with Drawers*, although this collaboration may not have gone beyond a meeting of minds, as no evidence has been found to support Descharnes' assertion that Duchamp helped to elaborate the finished object.³⁶

Perhaps the emphasis is on mental compartments rather than physical, but considering Duchamp's history of punning, it is possible that the two friends joked about the contents of a woman's *drawers*, meaning underwear.³⁷ On Dalí's part, this is one more step in a long engagement with Venus, here in the shape of the *Venus de Milo* which Dalí had known since childhood from the cover of volume one of the Gowans *Masterpieces of Sculpture*. It seems also to be another step in the visualisation of the intra-uterine, in which furniture, doors, drawers and keyholes had already joined jugs and pools of water to constitute Dalí's mental landscape. Regarding the *Venus de Milo with Drawers*, along with drawings and paintings of other "anthropomorphic cabinets", Adès suggests that

a new metaphor is evidently in play here; that of the hidden recesses, the locked compartments of man's inner mental life. [...] In carving out drawers in the most famous of female nudes Dalí here brings together the two symbolic ideas, of the woman-container and of the mysterious depths of the human psyche.³⁸

The metaphor is new, but it restates the same concerns as the *Enigma*. What the metaphor does add to the mental image of the mother is her ideal image in art. Dalí, like Duchamp, believes that *even high art* is motivated by the mind's *ideal* relationship to the world that has engendered it, rather than simply recording visual impressions of its appearance. The scopic relation to the woman's body goes beyond the mind's use of the eye as a threshold between self and not-self.

Asked about his "antiretinal attitude", on completing *Étant donnés* in 1966, Duchamp explained that he was reacting against

too great an importance given to the retinal. Since Courbet, it's been believed that painting is addressed to the retina. That was everyone's error. [...] our whole century is completely retinal, except for the Surrealists, who tried to go outside it somewhat.³⁹

Duchamp advocated a return to an earlier period, when "all painting had been literary or religious: it had all been at the service of the mind." This surely gives us a taste of the conversations he had maintained with Dalí in Cadaqués for over thirty years.



Fig 124
Gustave Courbet
The Origin of the World (1866)

That Duchamp should hold Courbet responsible for the overemphasis on the physical that he decries in art since Impressionism is unfair – many of Courbet's paintings are literary, if not religious. His naming of Courbet, when his thoughts on the antiretinal were focussed by *Étant donnés* on the prostrate body of a headless woman, leads us to suspect that Duchamp had Courbet's similarly posed *Origin of the World* in mind. If so, then it is intriguing that Duchamp did not think that Courbet's painting was painted "at the service of the mind". Baruchello has even pointed out that *Étant Donnés* is the first work in which Duchamp deals with "the earth and the female valences that are mythologically connected to the earth".⁴⁰ There is certainly space between Duchamp's cold, diagrammatic contemplation of the scopic relation to the mother and Courbet's brutal exposure of a simple truth, for Dalí's suggestive dream-work symbolism to occupy.

In different ways, both Courbet and Duchamp address the erotic energy that propels us through life from womb to tomb, and both leave unanswered whether the model is an image of seductive beauty, or a corpse on a slab in an anatomy class. On the one hand, there are Duchamp's antiretinal diagrams, which Dalí knew through Dalmau's exhibition of mechanomorphic works by Duchamp and Picabia in 1922. These, as Adés, Cox and Hopkins have pointed out, were partly inspired by Leonardo's "asentimental speculation" in the drawing of a copulating couple reproduced by Freud.⁴¹ On the other hand, there is Courbet's painting – so direct in its assault on the viewer, and so basic in composition and in its commentary on the artistic act, but in fact open to perpetual interpretation.

We shall return to Dalí's dialogue with Duchamp in a later section, but it is Courbet's approach which conveniently projects the metaphor of the body into the landscape for us. In *Courbet's Realism*, Michael Fried warns against drawing too reductive conclusions about the anthropomorphic aspects of Courbet's landscapes and still lifes.⁴² "Scholars", he says, "have often noted an analogy between Courbet's depictions of caves and grottos and certain overtly erotic paintings of female nudes centred on the vagina". *The Origin of the World* is the perfect example. The formal similarities between this painting and others of moist cracks between parted bushes are hard to miss, but Fried insists that the landscapes are not simply depictions of "a vagina-like opening or womblike enclosure", but invitations to the gaze to follow a "double movement [of water] into and out from the painting". If we bring Duchamp's diagrammatic approach into the equation, then Fried's notion of hydraulic penetration and withdrawal of the gaze in and out of the grotto would seem rather to support the sexual connotations than deny them.

Even if Courbet were blissfully unaware of these connotations, the comparison between grotto and vagina, between primeval forest and lost intra-uterine paradise, illustrates just the type of "paranoiac-critical" association that is legitimate according to Dalinian Surrealism, and which Dalí was looking to evoke with his springs of "liquid desires" and clumps of dark vegetation. In fact it is doubtful that Dalí even knew Courbet's painting, which disappeared from Paris in 1910 until Lacan acquired it in 1955.

Lacan kept the painting in circumstances that indicate a certain complicity with Duchamp's construction of *Étant donnée* behind a door with a peephole. Lacan's similar concealment of the *Origin*

of the *World* behind a door on which André Masson painted a representation of its hidden treasure, indicates the alertness to the processes of active and passive viewing that he shared with Duchamp. It is possible that both Lacan and Duchamp had the same model of antiretinal revelation of meaning in mind – Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* is also concealed within a cabinet, its doors painted with a wet globe like a womb, that opens to reveal the intra-uterine world of meaning within.

Lacan bought Courbet’s painting not long after he reprised a 1936 lecture on the ‘Mirror Stage’, in which he uses Bosch’s triptych to illustrate the concept of *imagos* within the mirror stage.⁴³ This, he explains is, is “an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image”. For this *imagos*, “the mirror-stage would seem to be the threshold of the visible world”. Lacan refers to Surrealism, to the “paranoiac” nature of human knowledge, and this idea of assuming an image for oneself – the function of which is “to establish a relation between the organism and its reality” – in terms so relevant to a study of the *Enigma* that I would be surprised if they could not be traced back to conversations with Dalí in the early 1930s.

In 1948, a year before he reworked the ‘Mirror Stage’ lecture, Lacan gave a talk in Brussels, which location might have stirred him to return to his 1936 lecture on Bosch.⁴⁴ Following a progression that reminds us of Dalí’s – from the concerns of his Sebastian period to those of the *Enigma* – Lacan uses the metaphors of statue and automaton for the immature, Ideal-I, as the basis for a fictional self, which is followed by certain *imagos* that “are constituted for the ‘instincts’ themselves.” As examples of these, he says, Psychoanalysis has discovered among Bosch’s “aggressive images” a prevalence “of images of a primitive autoscopy of the oral and cloacal organs” in the form of demons. “These are to be found even in the ogee of the angustiae of birth depicted in the gates of the abyss through which they thrust the damned, and even in the narcissistic structure of those glass spheres in which the exhausted partners of the garden of delights are held captive.”

As with his later examination of Holbein’s anamorphic skull, Lacan seems to wilfully avoid any mention of Dalí while treading ground that they may well have been through together. In any case, Lacan’s discusses the *imagos*, as a self-representation which seeks to establish meaning in relationship to its surroundings, with reference to the very painting that contains the model of Dalí’s *Masturbator imagos*. This is buffeted between imagery of cave entrances that signal the trauma of birth and narcissistic introspection, in order to “establish a relation between the organism and its reality”. Lacan may have been reluctant to apply his thoughts on the *imagos* to Dalí, but we need not share his qualms.

Both Duchamp’s *Étant donnée* and Courbet’s *Origin of the World* rely on meaningfully centric compositions. The gravitational pull of the works forces the viewer almost to resist looking into the painting, and to question their act of looking. What are we looking at, and why are we looking at it? Is this fear or desire? Is this a body on a bed or in a morgue?

Similar questions are posed by Dalí’s mental landscapes of the early 1930s, when clumps of dark vegetation spouting liquid desires appear among other anthropomorphic features of rock and furniture. All these elements combine to create an ominous atmosphere of fear and desire that emanates from the landscape itself, and this while Dalí considered that all “imaginative life” was aimed at reconstituting the “initial paradisaical state”. Dalí imagines, then, a return to the womb – a journey which can only lead to the tomb of Mother Earth, as Oedipus correctly guessed in his mythical search for the truth of his origins and identity.

In these paintings, Böcklin’s *Isle of the Dead* takes its place alongside Millet’s *Angelus* in the “tragic myth” that Dalí elaborated in contemporary texts.⁴⁵ These



Fig 125
Arnold Böcklin
Isle of the Dead (Basel version, 1880)

begin with the erotic fantasy 'Rêverie' that Dalí said he had written in October 1930, which promises a closer study of Böcklin's painting in a projected book, *Surrealist Painting through the Ages*.⁴⁶ Dalí did paint a *True Painting of The Isle of the Dead by Arnold Böcklin at the Hour of the Angelus* in 1932, but the title tells us more than the picture itself. Böcklin's phallic and funereal cypresses are prominent features of the sexual and fatal landscape over the following few years. Their incorporation is documented in another large painting that Dalí began in 1929, and then added to over the following five or six years, *Imperial Monument to the Child-Woman*. Dalí later said of this painting that "the exaltation of the libidinal force is here related to the feeling of death".⁴⁷



Fig 126
Patinir
Charon Crossing the Styx

The *Isle of the Dead* must have felt strangely familiar to Dalí, reminding him of the rocky islands off the coast of Cadaqués. In the basement of the Prado, Lorca had talked him through Patinir's painting of *Charon Crossing the Styx* across green waters in a landscape reminiscent of a lush Cap Creus. Cypresses were a familiar enough symbol to Dalí, and mark the site of cemeteries throughout Spain, and Böcklin's painting might have reminded him of his mother's tomb in Barcelona, or his own in Figueres – for, in the mythical truth of his origins and identity, Dalí was preceded in both womb and tomb by his dead brother, Salvador.

Dalí would then have read the *Isle of the Dead* as an uncannily familiar image of his mother's womb as his own tomb, and the journey across the water and into

the grotto between parted cypresses a return to the intra-uterine paradise. The Swedish artist Jan Håfström has described his realisation of the meaning of Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead* as he approached Venice with thoughts of Thomas Mann's novel *Death in Venice*. Böcklin has painted a longing, an emptiness, writes Håfström, "the journey to the other side is a meeting with love; death and the loved one's body are the same thing." The painting also speaks to Håfström of rebirth, for the opening between two cypresses that the boat is sailing towards is, he realises, a vagina – "*The Isle of the Dead* is a woman!"⁴⁸ A similar realisation must lie behind Duchamp's assertion that Böcklin was one of the artists that had influenced him most in 1912, the year that he saw an adaptation of Raymond Roussel's *Impressions of Africa* and began to think about his *Large Glass*.⁴⁹



Fig 127
The cemetery of Figueres spreads its
legs to welcome Salvador Dalí

'Rêverie' mixes memories of two scenes associated with his earliest erotic thoughts – the Moli de la Torre and the Font del Soc, where cypresses surround a gushing fountain. This fountain was concealed within a clump of vegetation that Dalí could see from his classroom, in a panorama of bell-towers and cypresses that he describes in the *Secret Life*. In the corridor outside the room was a reproduction of the *Angelus*. Using these cues to try to represent his "initial paradisaical state" meant marking out the territory of his desire with sepulchral signs of death, in cold stone, and rebirth, in the living earth.

Dalí's speculative visualisations of enigmatic, threatening desire, filtered through a Freudian prism but with a maternal bias asserted by Rank, were brought into focus by – or projected onto – the figure of Gala. In *Sugar Sphinx* (1933), Dalí identifies her explicitly with Oedipus's search – she sits on a rock, ready to pose her question to an *Angelus* couple, who stand in an empty landscape with just their wheelbarrow of desire (and death), and Böcklin's cypresses of death (and desire). In Dalí's tragic myth, the female of the *Angelus* couple is a praying mantis, demanding death in return for desire. She is the Eternal Feminine, he the Expendable Masculine.

*

The Enigma of Desire is a visualised essay on the psychological effects of our origins in, traumatic expulsion from, and desired return to the woman's body. Dalí found these to be the motivating forces behind many important artworks, indeed he concluded that a desired return to the intra-uterine paradise was the aim of all imaginative life.

We began by recognising the attributes of St Jerome in Dalí's *Enigma* – the skull, the lion, the stone, the word – and seeing how Dalí had understood these with the help of Freud. However, we noted that the painting marked a shift from earlier emphasis on the paternal forces that would normally be closer to the concerns of the Fathers of Psychoanalysis and of the Church, to a maternal bias. We traced this shift to the influence of Otto Rank's *Trauma of Birth*. This fed into Dalí's attempts to visualise an adequate image of himself in relation to his surroundings, which took the shape of a pathetic, narcissistically isolated Masturbator, attached to an inner vision of death and desire stamped with the primary loss of his mother, but threatened from within by a libidinous lion.

We noted an archaic remnant of Egyptian funerary cult underlying this visualisation of the self, which arrived via the Sphinx, Sophocles, Oedipus and Freud, and which influenced Dalí's thoughts on the mother's body as womb and tomb.

Egypt is also the seat of the desert anchorite tradition, and so we arrive back at St Jerome. His concerns, through and in his iconographical persona, are the similarly the search for an adequate representation – perhaps more *logos* than *imagos* – of the essentially isolated self, as an individual body and mind, assailed by fears and desires, from within and without. But the iconography of Jerome is not just the model for certain formal aspects of Dalí's Surrealist paintings – what we look at – but also for how we look, and what we think about. As Jerome stares at a skull, and as we stare at him, we are invited to imagine our own origins and identity, our sexuality and mortality.

Jerome's work is a work of the imagination and so, as Dalí understood it after Rank, of an imagined return to the mother's womb. It is in this sense that the iconography of St Jerome stands as a model for Dalí's Surrealist painting and helps us to understand Dalí's motivation to confront sexuality and mortality in his paintings. We noted that works with which Dalí engaged, during his search for mythical self-representation, were ones in which questions of desire and mortality are posed by a compositional structure of revelation that invites a movement in and out of the artwork, confounding the certainty of what and how we see.

Holbein's *Ambassadors*, Leonardo's dissected vagina, Courbet's *Origin of the World*, Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Böcklin's *Isle of the Dead*, Duchamp's *Étant donnés* are works of revelation of the Enigma of Desire that propels us through life from womb to tomb. These works, Dalí's Surrealist paintings, and the iconography of St Jerome, are not meant for simple retinal reception, but for contemplation.

Notes

¹ DJDG, 377-8

² Dalí later bought Dou's *Spinner* and *The Doctor's Visit*, and became obsessed with his experiments in stereoscopic painting.

³ SL, 89-111, in the 'True Childhood Memories' section.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'Dream-Work', in the *Interpretation of Dreams* [1919 edition]. I have translated from the Spanish edition available to Dalí. James Strachey preferred to write that these dreamed underground regions represented the "female body or womb".

⁵ "Dalí made morphology into a materialist analogue to the notion of the hidden forces of the unconscious mind." (Adès, 'Morphologies of Desire', *Early Years*, 129)

⁶ Pauwels, 232-3

⁷ 'To Spain, Guided by Dalí', *Vogue*, New York, 15th May 1950

⁸ Felix Fanès has hinted at the meanings by recognising that Bosch's work "also represents immersion in the obscure depths of Man's origins – based on an interplay of sexuality and death" (in Adès, ed., *Dalí*, exhibition catalogue, 2004, 118).

⁹ Published in *La Gaceta Literaria*, 1st July 1929. This was the poem in which a character spits on the photograph of his mother.

¹⁰ *Lletres i Ninots*, 72-9, Eng. Trans. 256-8.

¹¹ See pages 85-7. My emphasis here.

¹² Interview with Narcís Hera's son, Jordi Heras, 22nd January 2006. In 1973, the photographer Meli accompanied Dalí to the Font del Soc, and to the Molí de la Torre. A photo of Dalí sitting on the fountain and lost in reverie shows the enduring significance of this spot for Dalí. *Dalí a l'Empordà*, 33.

¹³ Dalí told Robert Descharnes: "While the monsters of Bosch are the products of music, of the forest, of the Gothic, of obscurantism, [...] A Pantagruelian way of protesting against Greco-Roman humanism. [...] With Raphael it is the conquest of the irrational, while the monsters of Bosch are conquered by the irrational." Robert Descharnes, *Dalí*, 1976, 90.

¹⁴ Prado guide book (Ministerio de Cultura, n.p.)

¹⁵ Lomas, 95. Lomas gives a list of studies on Surrealism and the Uncanny in n. 4, p. 233

¹⁶ Freud, 'The Uncanny' *Pelican Freud Library* 14: 368

¹⁷ *Secret Life*, 26-9

¹⁸ Quoted in Spector, p. 270, n. 250. Breton did not say which sections of the *Visible Woman* he meant.

¹⁹ Adès, 'Contre la famille', in *Dalí and Film*, 118. See also 'Why Film?' in the same book. The draft film script is published in *Obras Completas* vol. 3. The original is at the Fundació Gala-Dalí in Figueres.

²⁰ Later, Dalí established the swan in his personalised birth symbolism, with the painting of Leda and the swan. He also attempted to introduce swans to the bay of Portlligat, but they were killed by foxes.

²¹ This bay is sometimes named Port Lligat, but Santos Torroella informs us that Portlligat is the term in current use (*Corresponsal*, 47)

²² Mid August 1929. Buñuel in Cadaqués, saw effect on Dalí. Gibson on Gala, DJDG, 369-75, L-D, 240-2.

²³ Gibson, 262, 285. Dalí already referred to Gala as a "violent and sterilised woman" in 'L'Amour', written in 1930.

²⁴ Gibson, 82; DJDG, 120; Anna Maria Dalí, 70.

²⁵ DJDG, 432-3. See also RST. Magritte painted a similar image before finding his familiar style, *Jeune fille* (1924) shows a young woman, nude but for stockings, leaning on a table with a rose at her midriff.

²⁶ Gibson speculates that the women were probably added to the *Invisible Man*, in May 1930, during a five-week stay in Malaga.

²⁷ Adès, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, 249. Dalí might not have seen the issue of *Documents* before painting the *Bleeding Roses*, but he could already have known Berrettini's illustration from another source.

²⁸ Ozenfant, *Foundations of Modern Art*, 129

- ²⁹ Pauwels, 60.
- ³⁰ *Secret Life*, 28
- ³¹ Leonardo da Vinci (ed. Irma A. Richter), *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (Oxford; OUP; [1952] 1980), 'The Embryo', pp. 163-4.
- ³² Quoted in Paros, 40
- ³³ Abell, 8-21, for an expanded cultural setting for an examination of Leonardo's painting *Virgin and Child with St. Anne*
- ³⁴ In 'The Split Between the Eye and the Gaze', Jacques Lacan looks to the "scopic field" as identified by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty identifies the eye as the "guide" in his examination of ideas in the aesthetic world, and also points out the fundamental obstacle in understanding the "scopic field": "I see only from one point, but in my existence am looked at from all sides." [Lacan, Jacques. Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York, London: Penguin Group, 1977. 71] Lacan's split between the eye and the gaze takes place in the scopic field. As he continues to define this split in "Anamorphosis," he lays out the idea of the "scopic relation." [Lacan, 83] The experience of seeing oneself seeing oneself is thus the result of the experience of the scopic relation.
- ³⁵ Man Ray visited and took photos of soft architecture of Barcelona and the rocks of Cap Creus for Dalí to illustrate his article 'On the terrifying and edible beauty of *modern style* architecture', published in *Minotaure* in December, alongside 'The Phenomenon of Ecstasy'.
- ³⁶ Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 118. See her footnote on the lack of evidence of Duchamp's input.
- ³⁷ It could have an equally mundane basis in a technique used to repair plaster statues in which a block is hewed out and filled with fresh plaster. A plaster model of Rodin's projected *Monument to Whistler* in the Rodin Museum has a rectangular block in the muse's back that resembles a drawer, presumably to repair a fault.
- ³⁸ Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 118
- ³⁹ Cabanne, 43
- ⁴⁰ Baruchello and Martin, 113
- ⁴¹ Adès, Cox and Hopkins, 55. Another source cited is Raymond Roussel's play *Impressions d'Afrique*
- ⁴² See Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (1990), especially pages 209-22, on *The Origin of the World*, 238-54, on the landscapes and still lives, and a long endnote refuting the sexual, n. 45 on 340-1. Fried refers to comments by Neil Hertz in *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)
- ⁴³ 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (1949. The first version of this paper was read in Marienbad in 1936), in *Écrits*, 1-8.
- ⁴⁴ Lacan, 'Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis: Thesis II', in *Écrits*, 11-4. This was a theoretical report given to the 11th Congress of French Language Psychoanalysts in 1948, in Brussels.
- ⁴⁵ Böcklin painted five versions of this painting between 1880 and 1886.
- ⁴⁶ Dalí mentioned the project, *La peinture surréaliste a travers les âges*, in 'Reverie', published in *Le Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, no. 4, in December 1931. At the start of February 1932, he was still finishing the essay, 'Paranoiac-Critical Interpretation of the Obsessive Image of Millet's *Angelus*,' which was "an anticipation of *La peinture surréaliste a travers les âges*", although by the publication of *Babaouo*, in July 1932, he claimed that his *History* was about to be published. A letter from Dalí to Breton, reproduced in the catalogue for the Julien Levy exhibition at the end of 1933, suggested that the exhibition coincided with his current obsession with *La peinture surréaliste a travers les âges*. See RST, *Correspondance*, 91, 118.
- ⁴⁷ Morse 1958, 42
- ⁴⁸ Håfström 1993, 10. The announcement comes out of the blue, and must have been built on a theoretical foundation similar to the ideas discussed here. Håfström's revelation is unconnected to Dalí but, by coincidence, there are connections – Gala had known Thomas Mann, and the image of St Sebastian is central to the novel.
- ⁴⁹ Duchamp, *Ephemérides*, 19th June 1912. The other artist named by Duchamp was Lucas Cranach.

Chapter 6. Therapy: *Contemplating the Self*

During the 1930s, Dalí continued to develop themes within his Surrealism, but always within the same project of seeking an adequate representation of the psychoanalytical truth of himself in relation to his circumstances. Whereas the mythical monument to his own identity that he constructed in the *Enigma* was meant to stand on the foundations of ordinary circumstances that were set in (soft) stone, his circumstances later in the decade were in a state of flux. He was embroiled in squabbles with other Surrealists which had him swaying in and out of favour with them, and this was only a subset of the political turmoil around him.

He fled Spain for France when the Civil War broke out, taking the lives of Lorca and other friends, and as the countdown towards World War II began, he and Gala spent six months in Arcachon near Bordeaux, before moving to live for eight years in the United States. For some of their time in Arcachon, they were joined by Marcel Duchamp, one of the few artists from Paris with whom Dalí remained on good terms, and a crucial sounding board for him. Several paintings that Dalí completed there were related to the looming war, and one that is accepted as referring to Duchamp could also be said to be a response to the war – *Two Pieces of Bread Expressing the Sentiment of Love* includes a chess pawn beside the bread. Duchamp was a master of this rationalised war game.

Bread was already established as a symbol in Dalí's paintings – often in the form of a tumescent baguette with a condom underscoring its sexual connotations; often for its accepted meaning in religious art. This apparently simple painting is a discourse on sex, death and rationality, and we may assume that its reference to Duchamp was supported by a continuation of their theoretical dialogues, which had tended and would continue to tend to concentrate on the scopical relation to the body, of self and other.

Dalí extolled the culinary delights of Bordeaux in the *Secret Life*, yet chooses to show the most basic of food. Yet it is just this quality that raises bread to a powerful symbol within Christian iconography. These broken pieces of bread express love, not make it; if the intention was to show a sexual scene, why not an erect baguette like others he had painted? Perhaps the painting is simply based on the hope for peace – for the two sides to break bread together. Bread of peace? Piece of bread? Was Duchamp punning in English again? If the basis of the painting were no more than a case of breaking bread, then even this hope for political negotiations is set in religious terms, and this gives a glimpse of the range of possibilities for theoretical discussion of the representation of the body within the Christian tradition. Dalí had already dealt with the Host as the transubstantiated body of Christ in a context that included a castrating, cannibalistic, Oedipal mother, so he was not immune to the psychoanalytical implications of broken bread as a symbol. In these terms, it is a sexual and mortal body about to be devoured and returned to its mother's belly.

The question is already complicated enough in a theology *sans* Freud – the transubstantiation of the body in the bread of the Eucharist was a topic of fierce debate, asserted by the Council of Trent held 1545-1563. Protestants protested its significance as symbolic, and when the question turns to the *representation* of bread, turning the question over to the reality of representation, then we see how Duchamp could have had his mental fun. As far as Catholics were concerned, bread was a fact to be stated and restated in word, image and liturgical ceremony.

One example of its iconographic significance is as the basic sustenance of the desert hermit. In paintings of Paul the Hermit that Dalí knew well – by Velázquez, many by Ribera and the *Isenheim Altarpiece*, for instance, Paul is rarely without a piece of bread miraculously delivered by a raven. This Egyptian hermit was visited in the Thebaid by Anthony and Jerome and their iconological identities overlap – he is also often shown with a lion, which could easily devour the old man if it wanted. Bread, then, is a symbol of the vulnerability of the body that is built on the same foundations as other elements in the *Enigma*.

6.1 *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman (1940)*

Dalí and Gala were not merely fleeing the war; they were heading for the United States with a positive outlook. They had visited New York frequently since 1934, after Dalí had begun to exhibit annually at the gallery of Julien Levy the previous year. Levy had bought the *Persistence of Memory* in 1931, and included Bosch's *Temptation of St Anthony* in his first Dalí exhibition.¹ Levy lent his painting to A. Everett "Chick" Austin, Jr. to exhibit at the Wadsworth Atheneum that year and Dalí continued to take part in exhibitions organised by Austin over the following years, in which "the continuity between old masters and the moderns" was stressed.² Dalí visited these exhibitions and was given their catalogues.

In the same period, Dalí appeared alongside Duchamp and other contemporary artists, Surrealist or otherwise, together with Bosch, Bruegel, Leonardo and others at the 'Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism' exhibition at the MoMA in New York, between December 1936 and January 1937. Among the art that would have reminded Dalí of the basement treasures of the Prado – and kept his thoughts on an aesthetics of ascetics ticking over – were a *Study for a Temptation of St. Anthony* and a painting of *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, both attributed to Bosch, a *Descent into Hell* attributed to Bosch's school, and another *Temptation of St. Anthony* by Peter Huys. Since becoming a part of the Surrealist group, he had already had an opportunity to acquaint himself with paintings he had seen in Brussels in 1926, when he returned there in 1934.³

Dalí benefited from the support of Edward James and other wealthy patrons, while his relationship with the Surrealists was becoming fractious, distant and tedious – creative cooperation was increasingly stifled by political arguments. Dalí's inclusion in the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1938, organised by André Breton and Paul Éluard, was a swan song, and the rupture was complete by 1939.

Carmelite hermit

Dalí finished writing his *Secret Life* in summer 1941, and published it in December 1942. In the book he states that his move to New York will signal a renaissance as a Catholic artist. In fact he had already begun, and anticipated his rebirth with the announcement of his intention "TO BECOME CLASSIC" in the catalogue for his sixth and final Julien Levy exhibition, April-May 1941.⁴ The paintings shown were the first batch completed at a house Dalí and Gala rented near Carmel, California, for Dalí to use as a studio during the summers of 1940-2.⁵

Among the works that Dalí painted at Carmel were ones that we saw were relevant to the *Enigma of Desire – Family of Marsupial Centaurs* (1940), to which we shall return below, *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)* (1940) and *Original Sin* (1941), which he said was the most important of the exhibition.⁶ Influenced by the self-appraisal involved in writing his autobiography, Dalí returned beyond the *Enigma* to the period of 1925-6, when he first focussed on self-representation with reference to classical myths of origins and identity. There is a strong presence in the Carmel paintings of Dalí's guide to that self-mythologisation – Lorca, whose dark eyes stare out of several of them. The title of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* (1941) admits as much, and although the painting bears no formal resemblance to two earlier paintings of the same name, it does recall a *Nude* which Dalí painted on cardboard and gave to Lorca in 1925.⁷

The *Family of Marsupial Centaurs* also echoes compositions of 1925, such as *Venus and Amorini* and *Penya Segats*, which were equally "rigidly based on intersecting diagonals", as Soby noted.⁸ Dalí used the *Family* to illustrate his chapter on 'Intra-

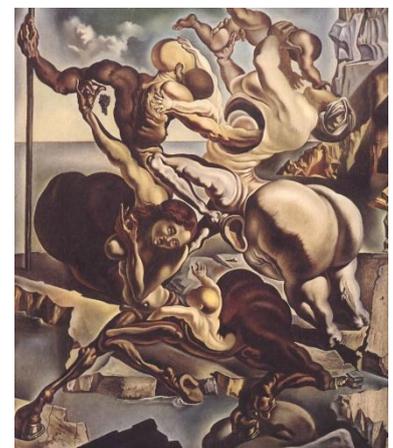


Fig 128
Salvador Dalí
Family of Marsupial Centaurs (1940)

uterine memories', with the caption "The children can come out of, and go back into, the maternal uterine paradise."⁹ He elaborated on this explanation in 1962 – the painting was "An allegory of the traumatism of birth, painted in tribute to Dr. Otto Ranck [sic]; the children being able, by the marsupial stratagem, to accustom themselves to it."¹⁰ The hybrid centaurs are a fusion of horse and woman (and one man) – a further reminder of concerns that accompanied the *Enigma*. The painting must have benefitted from conversations Dalí had about Rank with Anaïs Nin, just before he retired to Carmel. Rank had lived in New York for a number of years, but there is no record of an attempt by Dalí to meet him there, even though he met Freud in London in 1938. If he had similar hopes to meet Rank, he had missed his chance – Rank died in October 1939, a month after Freud. In any case, we can say that psychoanalysis – Freudian and Rankian – continued to be fundamental to Dalí's concerns, even as he dedicated himself to Catholicism.

Concurrent with Dalí's renewed focus on Rank in 1940, Austin arranged the last of his loan exhibitions, 'Night Scenes', including paintings from the Renaissance to the 1930s. The exhibition's centre-piece was Caravaggio's *St Francis of Assisi in Ecstasy*, which Austin eventually added to the museum's collection two years later. This focus on Caravaggio complemented Dalí's frequent travels in Italy with Edward James since 1935, and prompted the sudden chiaroscuro of his Carmelite paintings.¹¹



Fig 129
Salvador Dalí
Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman (1940)

Although it bears no resemblance to the *St Francis*, Dalí's *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* (1940) is the painting that makes the clearest reference to Caravaggio. It was included in the Julien Levy exhibition, in spring 1941, and was bought by a New York collector when the exhibition moved to Chicago.¹² Even in the light of Dalí's declared intention to "become classic", this is an early

example of what *looks like* a painting constructed exclusively from religious iconography. Needless to say, the iconography of desert landscape, ink-well, open book, naked body and single white stone is that of Jerome. At the same time, it seems to consist of images that have always appeared in his apparently secular Surrealism, and so casts revelatory light on earlier paintings.

Dalí made another attempt to use the iconography of the anchorite openly, in *Resurrection of the Flesh*, which he began in 1940 and signed off five years later. The painting falls short of its ambitions, but places Dalí's revived interest in asceticism in the context of his competing concerns – we could be looking at Jerome, Anthony, Paul the Hermit or blind Oedipus. The painting falls somewhere between Bosch and Tintoretto, with thoughts on sex, war and rationality thrown into the mix.¹³ It shows a blind anchorite at centre, supported by a crutch, his left hand raising a white stone toward a naked woman, with a treasure of shells spilling from her belly over a kneeling corpse. A skull is perched on a phallic umbrella.

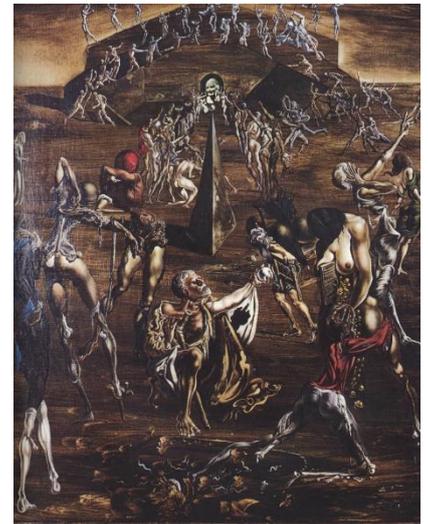


Fig 130
Salvador Dalí
Resurrection of the Flesh (1940-5)

At first sight, it seems the lion is missing from Jerome's attributes in the *Book*. True, it is not always present, but then again, it is a prominent feature of the *Enigma* and its descendant paintings. So the emphasis would seem to be on Jerome the scholar, transcribing the Bible. Yet libido is not absent – Jerome raises his stone to mortify his flesh as the vision of a naked woman appears before him. This is also the desert anchorite, then, battling the enigmatic forces of desire. To the side is a conch – another reminder of Lorca, Venus and desire on the shore at Cadaqués. This conch could instead be a white stone, opening like a flower to reveal a lion inside – a reference to *Accommodations of Desire*, which was included in Austin's 1938 exhibition, 'The Painters of Still Life'.¹⁴ Further evidence that Dalí was mulling over the *Accommodations* is provided by its reprisal in 1945 in *Three Apparitions of the Face of Gala*, in which libidinous desire has apparently been accommodated.¹⁵

Such quoting of a 1929 painting that can be read so clearly according to its Freudian symbolism would suggest that a psychoanalytical reading is available here too. The phallic implications of the two bookmarks, for example, has been noted, with the tongue-like ribbon in Jerome's blank book likened to the red one in De Chirico's *The Child's Brain* – a work that provided much impetus to the beginnings of Surrealist painting.¹⁶ The bookmark that parts the pages of the book that is becoming a woman is a knife, another familiar feature of Dalí's early Surrealist paintings, where it threatened castration. Here it implies a traumatic conception equal to the trauma of birth. In a discussion of De Chirico's painting, Bohn leads us to a possible origin of Dalí's knife in this context. He quotes Mallarmé: "The virgin folds of a book still lead to a sacrifice, from which the red edges of ancient volumes bled; the introduction of a weapon, or paper-knife, to establish the taking of possession."¹⁷



Fig 131
Salvador Dalí
Three Apparitions of the Face of Gala (1945)

If Mallarmé's image did not arrive directly at Dalí, then it could have gone via Picasso who, at the same time as he painted a *Temptation of St Anthony* in about 1909, painted a *Woman with a Book in a Landscape*, which Richardson calls a "mocking version" of El Greco's *St Mary Magdalene in Penitence*. As "blasphemous subtext", notes Richardson, Picasso's Magdalene marks the page in the book in her lap with a phallic finger.¹⁸ Picasso's dialogue with El Greco dates from the time of his close friendship with Ramón Pichot, and we find ourselves back, full-circle, in Cadaqués, where Dalí worked through these problems in 1929. At a time when Dalí included plenty of skulls in other paintings, here – where we expect to see it alongside other attributes of Jerome – it is apparently absent. Dalí perhaps deemed it superfluous when death is so heavily symbolised by the cypresses that lick around a church

in the background; the stone slab that suggests a tomb to one side; and not least by the body of the woman as womb and tomb. In fact, the associations we are following lead us to a phantom skull in Dalí's painting, for he knew full well that in several of the versions painted by El Greco, Mary Magdalene uses a skull as a bookmark. Further evidence that thoughts on the skull do belong together with a discussion of the *Book...* is provided by the title *The Temptation of St Anthony* given to a photograph in 1951, in which Dalí and Philippe Halsmann posed nude women to form a skull.

Images of Mary Magdalene in Penitence provide an interesting variation on the viewing dynamics involved in paintings of the contemplative saints. They bring the image of desire – flame-haired Mary – out of the imagination, out of its encasement in rock, and into the viewer's crosshairs. The theological point of Mary Magdalene is that woman is not to blame for man's desire. The psychoanalytical, corollary point is that woman is the root of all good, bad and everything else. She may not be to blame, but she is still the threat, because she engenders both desire and death. By placing her centre-stage, the artist also puts us into the same awkward scopic relation to her body as Holbein, Duchamp, Courbet and Böcklin do. We are voyeurs, made to question the in and out movement of our own Gaze.

An important part of what makes the iconography of Jerome so apt to a representation of psychoanalytical principles is that his work is mental. Unlike St Anthony, he *contemplates* problems of desire and mortality, he does not see them. That is not to say that this contemplation is an idle mind game; if the hermit battles with desire it is because desire is real – even if imaginary. Jerome's contemplation is in the realm of the *surreal*, the *surretinal*.

We can make a comparison with another iconological area that on the surface deals with a similar problem – paintings of respectable father figures ogling a young woman. We can take Tintoretto's *Susannah and the Elders* as an example. The story, from the *Book of Daniel* is known (and Jerome wrote commentaries on it) – it has a beginning, a middle and end. We are shown Elders spying on Susannah naked. The viewer understands that they will have their advances spurned and will try to blackmail her. Daniel proves her innocence, and they are put to death instead. Desire and death are at

stake, but there is no question of who is to blame for either. Our mental work consists of learning the story and knowing where blame lies, but we are not drawn into an active and reflective viewing experience – we judge the Elders' viewing from outside its bounds.

It has to be said that Dalí's *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* very nearly leads to a similar dead end. The woman's body may only be half visible, but we know more or less what the anchorite is thinking – there is no enigma to be contemplated. We are not usually shown a real object of Jerome's desire, like a temptation dangled before St Anthony. This is asceticism with a voyeuristic slant, and our viewing experience very nearly ends with the puzzle-solving that critics of Dalí find so banal. Our Gaze is only re-activated by additional information

about the double image – on Freud, Jerome, art history and Biblical narrative.

Even before we look at some of that background information on following pages, a reversal of the metamorphosis described in the title can breathe a little life into the painting – what if we were to think of the painting as *Nude Woman Transforming Herself into a Book*? Now we almost hear Jerome exclaim "ma mère!" as a woman's body metamorphoses into *logos* before his eyes, interrupting his Vulgate transcription of the Biblical mythology of genesis, original sin, death and resurrection. If Jerome had read his Freud, his Rank and his Lacan; if he had located the basis of all meaning in primal loss or the trauma of birth; if he had pictured his own introspective isolation as stamped with the sign of the mother, with the only sure co-ordinates an origin in the body of a woman and an end in Mother Earth, then the Church Father might have given the mother her due, and he might have found a another translation for John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the psychoanalytical Bible, as in the *Enigma*, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Mother, and the Word was Mother.



Fig 132
Tintoretto
Susannah and the Elders (1555-6)

Notes

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- ¹ RST, *Corresponsal*, 118. Hieronymus Bosch's *Temptation of St Anthony* in Lisbon was copied many times – more than twenty copies exist today. Bosch made several versions himself.
- ² The first exhibition Austin organised was 'An Exhibition of Literature and Poetry in Painting Since 1850', at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, 24-1-1933 to 14-2-1933. See Eric M. Zafran, "'I am not a madman": Salvador Dalí in Hartford,' in *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 43. See also, Zafran, 50, 52. The Wadsworth was the first American museum to acquire a work by Dalí.
- ³ A letter to Foix, dated c.11-16th May 1934, reveals Dalí had been in Brussels in connection with a Surrealist exhibition organised by *Minotaure*. (RST, *Corresponsal*, 131)
- ⁴ 'The Latest Scandal of Salvador Dalí' (Spanish in ¿Por qué...?, pp. 219-21, dated 21st March 1941). The Julien Levy exhibition contained 19 paintings, was held 22nd April – 20th May 1941. With some substitutions, the exhibition toured Chicago, 23rd May-14th June; Los Angeles, 10th September-5th October.
- ⁵ The choice of Carmel as a cocoon for this rebirth was probably based on its naming after the home of the Carmelite community of ascetics on Mount Carmel in Northern Israel, founded in the 12th century. Dalí would later be involved with Carmelites in Paris.
- ⁶ 'A Day With Dalí,' Times Herald, 23rd February 1941. Feature at Hampton Manor, in WM, 260. See also Morse & Morse, n.p.
- ⁷ Mas Peinado suggests this was painted while Dalí studied at Julio Moisés's academy, at the start of 1925 (Ricard Mas Peinado, 'Retratos de ida y vuelta,' in DLPM, 45).
- ⁸ Soby, 23
- ⁹ Plate between pages 72 and 73 of the *Secret Life*, where the painting is dated 1942.
- ¹⁰ WSD (1962), 172
- ¹¹ See Zafran, 56, 58. See also Eric M. Zafran, 'A Survey of Surrealism in Hartford', in *Masterpieces of Surrealism*, exhibition catalogue, 47-94) Austin was the first to buy a painting by Caravaggio for an American collection. It cost the Atheneum \$17,000 in 1942.
- ¹² Elliott H. King has drawn my attention to an unknown *St Jerome* listed in the catalogue of Dalí's 1939 exhibition at Julien Levy's gallery in New York.
- ¹³ Dalí also brought the Residencia excursions to Toledo into an interpretation. "Begun in 1940, this picture was not finished until 1945. Here we see Toledo, the Church of the Capuchins on the day of the Resurrection of the Flesh. All the people buried here come to life again." WM, 284 – no source given.
- ¹⁴ Zafran, 50. Dalí was shown alongside Bruegel, Meléndez, Picasso, Magritte, Miró, Arp and others
- ¹⁵ Dalí showed this painting at the Bignou Gallery, New York, 20th November – 29th December 1945, along with 10 other works, including several in a sketchy Renaissance Disneyland style. But *Basket of Bread* (1945), *Fountain of Milk Spreading Itself Uselessly on Three Shoes* (1945), in which a stylite, ascetic prophet squirts milk rather than preaches from atop a column, and the *Resurrection of the Flesh* (1945), show that he was giving serious thought to the iconography of asceticism.
- ¹⁶ Michael R. Taylor, 2004 catalogue, p 320
- ¹⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Quant au livre', *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris; Gallimard/Pléiade, 1945. Original French and Bohn's translation in Bohn, 100
- ¹⁸ Richardson, vol II, 118.

6.2 A Scholar and a Lion-Tamer

It should be clear by now that Dalí's 1940 painting was a more or less direct representation of St Jerome, conforming to a fairly orthodox iconographic scheme – even if the representation of the nude female body was unnecessarily literal. I hope I have also made a convincing argument for my more speculative identification of Hieronymite iconography in the *Enigma*, and that the enigmatic disguise that this iconography dons in the 1929 painting – apt for techniques of Freudian dream-work and Baroque mysticism – is perfectly compatible with a dynamic viewing experience that is fundamental to the purpose of that iconography: the contemplation of contemplation.

Dalí's interpretation and use of this religious iconography for apparently secular, psychoanalytic investigation and representation has the additional benefit of highlighting the influence of an artist's personal motivations within standardised iconographic schemas. There is also the more generally practical use of applying Dalí's "paranoiac-critical method" to art historical study of other iconographic identities besides Jerome.

Dalí reveals Jerome – the autonomous, iconographic identity Jerome – to be an icon of the contemplation of the self in its circumstances. In an interpretation that spans psychoanalysis and theology, Jerome stands for a form of Surrealist art – an active and reflexive viewing experience that draws the viewer into contemplation of the ontological conditions of existing as a mind attached to a sexual and mortal body. The identification with Dalí's Surrealism can be pursued into the two aspects of Jerome's iconography that we shall look at in this section, representing the self as mental and carnal. There is certainly an eremitic aspect of Dalí that stands in contrast to the public showman that he projected, and which his friends appreciated.¹

Although it is disappointing to see a decline in the level of sophistication of Dalí's engagement with Hieronymite iconography, between 1929 and 1940, we have linked his artistic activity to life circumstances that to some extent excuse this. At the same time, the revelation of this type of religious art as a guiding principle throughout Dalí's Surrealist period casts his paintings of the 1930s in a new light, and will perhaps unmask other iconographic identities that contributed equally, or more to the shape of his paintings.

*

Jerome is an important figure in Catholic art, representing a central theme of the language of painting that was available to Dalí as he searched for a form of Surrealist painting in 1929, following an earlier period in which the figure of St Sebastian had been the focus of his attention. Jerome has a long history in art, and not only for his real importance as a Church Father, but also because of the flexibility, scope and suggestibility of his iconographical identity. For both of these reasons, Jerome was important to the patrons who commissioned art, and who steered the evolution of representation.

The historical figure, Jerome, existed in a period preceding the occupation of Spain by the Moors, but the rise to popularity of his iconography took place in the period of Spanish Reconquista and Counter-Reformation. These circumstances should be taken into account alongside a timeline of stylistic development, when examining the character of the Jerome that evolved out of the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance and into the Baroque. As the depiction of Jerome became more concentrated and sophisticated, its two main aspects – of Jerome as a scholar and Church Father, and as a man of action, exposed to mortal danger and desire in the desert – reached a kind of equilibrium or fusion.

The iconographic Jerome is an old man with a grey beard. His bald pate barely conceals the skull from within which he contemplates another skull, placed like a mirror in front of him. To help concentrate his thoughts, Jerome holds the image of a crucified Christ, whose young body contrasts with his own withering flesh. His ageing features are a sign of wisdom and experience, but they also signal the impending end of his days. Unlike the crucified but eternal Christ, Jerome's flesh is mortal, because it is tainted by Original Sin. Jerome cannot escape the desire that is a condition of his

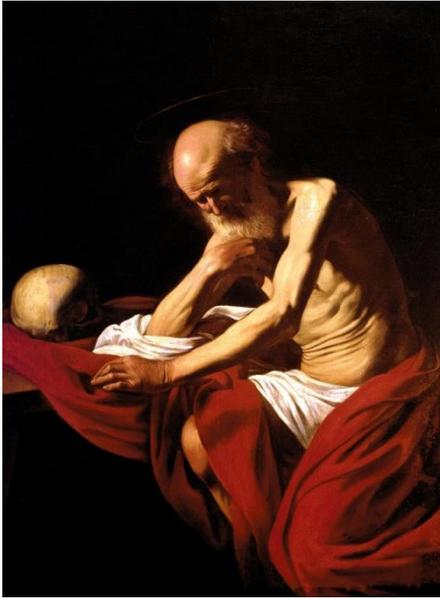


Fig 133
Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio
St Jerome in Meditation (c. 1605)

existence, but has a stone with which to mortify his flesh. At his side is a tamed lion, allegorically stating the danger that Jerome might be consumed by his desires. Open before him is the Bible that he is transcribing, an inkwell and a quill, as he searches for the right words, for the *logos*.

Dalí seems to have been brought back to this concentrated iconography of Jerome by Austin's 'Night Scenes' exhibition, built around Caravaggio's *St Francis*. Purely in terms of the tenebrism that was the theme of the show, Caravaggio's paintings of Jerome are some of his starkest, and Dalí knew two of the three surviving examples very well. One, *St Jerome in Meditation* (c. 1605), is at the Monastery of Montserrat, outside Barcelona, where it now hangs in the same museum as Dalí's *Composition*. This was followed by *St Jerome Writing* (c. 1605-6), which now hangs in the Galleria Borghese in Rome.²

The Montserrat painting emphasises a sense of impending mortality that may have an autobiographic accent – Caravaggio had recently killed a man. Jerome's contemplation of doom is so concentrated that it could be mistaken for rigor mortis. In the Rome painting, Jerome is slightly more active – he is writing – but even this act is a "powerful representation of death", as Bersani and Dutoit have pointed out. This, they say, is most emphatically stated by the saint's outstretched writing arm linking his head with the skull, across the expanse of his work of transcribing *logos*.

Caravaggio has represented neither a progression from life to death nor, even more banally, the vanity of human thought in the face of mortality, but rather the nourishing of thought by both life and death. The source of the intellectual energy being carried by Jerome's arm is both in the living man's consciousness and in his death. [...] We think, we write, we paint under pressure, a pressure that is in part the 'knowledge' the body has of its own death.³

Glory be to the Father!

The influence of the Hieronymite order is present in Spanish art, without there being any need to be aware of it. Apart from the paintings commissioned for more private devotion in homes and cloisters, images of Jerome are ubiquitous in churches – placed there with a didactic purpose, as part of a dedicated programme of dissemination and control of devotional imagery that took place first during the Reconquista, and then during the Counter-Reformation. Dalí knew that the Prado is so-named because it was built on St Jerome's Meadow, the Prado de San Jerónimo, opposite the church of the Hieronymites – which, if nothing else, demonstrates the spread of Hieronymite influence. More telling is that the collection inside the Prado contains over a hundred images of the saint.

Much responsibility for the popularity of the saint rests with the rise of the Spanish Hieronymite Order, founded in 1373. This was an order of hermit monks who lived according to the Rule of St Augustine, but who took inspiration from St Jerome. A contemporary and correspondent of Augustine, Jerome wrote epistles and commentaries that map the controversies that established the Biblical canon. Sometimes called the father of hermeneutics, as the arbiter of disseminated texts in several languages, Jerome's subjective interpretation carries the onus for the Christian mythology illustrated in religious art, and for arguments that continue to steer geopolitical decisions today.⁴

The Hieronymite Order received a boost when it was charged with overseeing the artistic programme of the Escorial monastery, built on Philip II's orders between 1563 and 1584, his coffers flush with South American gold and his Church threatened by the Protestant Reformation sweeping

across Europe. The Hieronymites' programme naturally promoted the iconography of contemplative, hermit saints, and particularly Jerome. The Escorial was an enormous, expensive project, and the Order bought and commissioned works from leading artists, to sit among gold-laden frames and altars. Ironically then, they made themselves targets of criticism from reformers – and from Counter-Reformers who were having enough trouble already – for the hypocrisy of promoting austerity and asceticism at such great cost.⁵ These polemics, together with the strict control of iconography by the Inquisition and competing and fluctuating centres of power within the Church and State, combined to form the particular iconographic identity of Jerome that became so popular in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Council of Trent, which opened in 1545 and closed in 1563 – the year that the cornerstone to the Escorial was laid –, was decisive. The Spanish clergy played a prominent role in the Council, which decided, among other things, on the moral and didactic purpose of art, and on its approved subject matter, which, according to Bishop Paleotti's *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images* (1582), was to be

salutary examples set before the eyes of the faithful. [...] The good painter must ... use a manner ... expressing the necessary particulars and thereby avoiding misunderstandings or any ambiguous figures, as much as possible ... Sometimes one tries to express things which by their nature cannot be expressed [in painting] ... the safest remedy in this difficulty is to abstain from such subjects as much as possible.⁶

The Council forbade nudity and pagan themes, which leaves few scenes of near-nudity in religious scenes available. Crucified Christ was permitted to be half-naked, of course, but so too were Sebastian and Jerome. The vulnerability of their flesh was deemed essential to their iconography, if in slightly different ways. The graphic display of the deaths of martyr saints was meant to shock – as something horrible, but happening to someone else – whereas representations of the scholar Jerome invite us to form a mental picture of our own mortality. Additionally, the image of the saint in contemplation was developed as a stimulant for devotion, leading artists to develop the viewing dynamics that we have discussed.

It is possible that Dalí was stimulated to pursue thoughts about Jerome by the saint's appearance in the second issue of *Documents*, which was published in May 1929. Dalí maintained contact with Bataille that summer, and most probably took the issue from Paris to Cadaqués. In it, Bataille showed an illuminated eleventh-century Latin manuscript, the *Apocalypse de Saint-Sever*, containing commentaries by Jerome on the *Book of Daniel* and on the *Apocalypse of St John* by Beatus de Liebana.⁷ Both texts were reminders of Lorca, who had brought saints alive for Dalí with his own commentaries. What's more, the second was another version of the illustrated *Apocalypse*, the *Codex Gerundensis*, which they had seen together in Girona Cathedral, in 1925. With the revival in 1940 of memories of Lorca from that time, then it is not surprising that Dalí should have refocused on other saints through a Lorquian perspective.

If Voragine's *Golden Legend* was not required reading at the Academia, then it was certainly suggested by both Lorca and De Chirico. It is in any case the source of many of the depictions of Jerome through the centuries. One way or another, Dalí knew its stories of Sebastian and Jerome. As usual, Voragine takes liberties with the truth and focuses on the colourful tales of his subject, which is part of his charm and attraction to artists. He includes the allegorical story of the lion, which stayed as a loyal companion to Jerome after the saint had healed its paw. Jerome wrote extensively and autobiographically, but never mentioned a lion. The story originally belonged to another saint, Gerasimus, but became attributed to Jerome due to similarity with his Latin name Geronimus. Some narrative depictions show Jerome taming the lion – for example Carpaccio's *St. Jerome and the lion*, in Gowans – in a token insistence on the historical veracity of the legend, but usually these details are jettisoned as the iconography was distilled.

What Jerome did write of – in a letter to his female devotee Eustochium, quoted by Voragine – were the “four years of this penitential existence in the desert”, during which he fasted and beat

himself in penitence to subdue “the fires of lust raged within” him. Jerome also corresponded extensively with Augustine, and wrote damningly of sex, although his conflictive feelings about it are revealed in a letter to Pammachius, in which he wrote, “I laud virginity to the skies – not that I possess it.” His lauding extended even to Eve, who he thought must have been a virgin – this was possibly the source of the innocence we saw in Bosch’s Eden panel. In his correspondence, Jerome helped cultivate an image of ascetic renunciation and the Council of Trent saw to it that his description to Eustochium of the temptations that plagued him did not transfer into his iconography. They are merely alluded to by the placement of the stone with which he “would beat my breast without pause until the Lord brought me peace again”.

The joint effect of Jerome’s descriptions of desire, and the suppression of them in his iconography, is akin to dream-work – so that, despite the repressive force of the Inquisition, looming over the artist, the manifest content of paintings is open to a sort of “iconoanalysis” that can reveal latent meanings within them. The results of this exercise are enriched by the fact that the essence of his significance, especially for the monastic orders, is that he represents the productive search for meaning, through the example of his contemplation, and through his work of interpretation and communication.

Against the backdrop of the adoption of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman state in 380, and its discussion at the Council of Rome in 382, Jerome’s compilation of the Vulgate Bible took place under inquisitorial pressure that anticipated the conditions of the Council of Trent, which affirmed Jerome’s version as the official canon of Scripture in 1563. This explains why his work of finding the right words to translate and transmit mental representations makes his distilled iconographic persona such a fitting model for Catholic baroque allegory.

With his education in art history, his friendship with great minds and hours spent with them in the Prado and the Escorial – where Dalí was a frequent visitor, since his first trip to Madrid in 1922 – it is natural that Dalí’s awareness of the iconographic identities of first Sebastian and then Jerome made them readily available solutions for the problems of Surrealist representation that he was pondering. Although we cannot imagine ourselves viewing either type in exactly the same way as a seventeenth-century Catholic devotee in Counter-Reformation Spain, we are still bound to essentially the same conditions as they were, as sexual and mortal minds and bodies. In many of Dalí’s comments on the creative process that he termed *paranoiac-critical*, he praises just the kind of strictures imposed by the Council of Trent as the ideal conditions for the imagination to arrive at personally charged visual representation.

The average bureaucrat

One way Dalí could have thought about Jerome was to ignore apocryphal stories of lions, and descriptions of temptations and hardships in the desert, and to reduce Jerome ironically to the status of “average bureaucrat”. This label crops up as early as 1930 for an eponymous painting, in which said bureaucrat bears a resemblance to Caravaggio’s Jerome at Montserrat. He stands in a desert landscape and has small shells in a cavity in his swollen head, so the painting is visually and thematically related to the *Enigma*. Besides the humour of dismissing the colossal work of compiling the Vulgate translation of the Bible – which took Jerome and a team of disciples over forty-five years to complete – as the job of a civil servant or notary, the label “bureaucrat” has a serious point, associated with themes of subversion of the paternal law that Dalí was exploring at the time.⁸ Extending the idea of the Church Father to cover Augustine as well as Jerome, Dalí might have recognised his father in images such as the corpulent writer at his desk, pen in hand, in Botticelli’s *St*

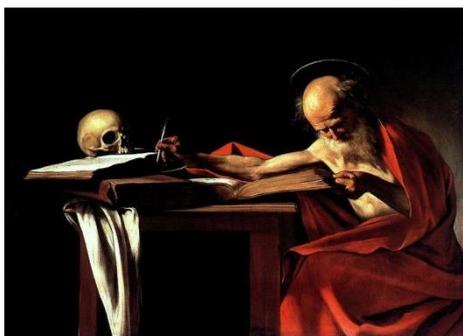


Fig 134
Caravaggio
St Jerome Writing (c. 1605-6)

Augustine in Meditation in Gowans.

The notion of the ascetic hermit saint, resisting temptations in imitation of Christ, was perhaps a romantic idea, but was already à la mode when Jerome claimed to comply with it. Jerome's time was the beginning of the monastic tradition, when small communities of monks and anchorites began to appear across Egypt and the Middle East, with hundreds flocking together to be alone in "the desert". Their prototypes were the Egyptians Paul the Hermit, who fled from persecution to the desert in about 250, and Anthony, the Father of All Monks, who went in search of Paul and established his Christian community in caves around the necropolis of Thebes – in the land of Moses, the Pharaohs and the Sphinx. Many came to compete in ascetic vigour, and in the luridness of their visions of demons and temptations.

Jerome's own sojourn in "the desert" began much later, in 375 – when even Anthony had died, at the age of 105 – in an area of Chalcis known as the "Syrian Thebaid" because of the number of ascetics there.

In reality, this was a monastic community, not a cave in the wilderness, and Jerome was able to continue his studies there before returning to Rome. He wrote prolifically and engaged in polemics for which it was expedient to emphasise his own asceticism, but of the personae that we see in his paintings, it seems the one closest to the truth was the scholar.

Perhaps not the "average bureaucrat", but this ascription came at the same time that Dalí was using Freud to scrape away the veneer of respectability of figures of authority to reveal the teeming temptations and desires beneath. What better target than a Church Father? A concentration on the scholarly pursuits of such a figure draws psychoanalytical attention to his hidden, sublimated motivations – the same hidden motivations of the monks and artists that conspired, subconsciously, to reveal the author of the Vulgate Bible to be human, shaped by the same conditions of sexuality and mortality as other men.

As befitting a Church Father, the iconographic identity of Jerome straddles notions of the paternal, making him an apt representative of psychoanalytical notions of the paternal that Dalí was pursuing in 1929. His image as a brave lion-tamer conforms to one standardised aspect of masculinity, and his image as an intellectual worker conforms to another. The contents of his writing reinforce this supposed primacy of the masculine – he warned against succumbing to desire as a sign of moral weakness in the face of feminine threat, and transcribed the story of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as fulfilling another of Pope Damasus's orders – to design the set liturgy for the year, for which "a *Gloria Patri* [Glory (be) to the Father] should be sung at the end of every psalm".

The status as representative of the Law of the Father, of Jerome as with Moses, Abraham and other "Elders", was traditionally signalled in paintings by his long, white beard. Dalí used this same device to mark his representatives of the Law. Even before he developed the characters of William Tell or the "average bureaucrat," that had clear associations with his notary father, Dalí included bearded men in scenes that referred to a more generalised presence of paternal forces. Bearded figures are ridiculed in *The First Days of Spring* and *The Lugalubrious Game*, before his expulsion from home by his father gave the figure an anchor in real life at the end of 1929.

The beard is never neutral in religious art, as Dalí could see in thousands of examples in the Prado, Louvre, Escorial and Gowans books. It marks the wisdom and the authority of Elders, and the power and virility of Kings; God even has the Spanish nickname, *el Barbado* – the bearded one. Picasso picked up on this to mark the virility of his bearded alter ego in artist-and-model drawings, for example. In the context of our study of Dalí's appropriation of this iconographic marker, we note that Jerome has a beard, Sebastian does not.

Besides the contrast between the iconographies of Sebastian and Jerome, we can compare representations of each within the oeuvre of individual artists. I take two examples of artists who used the saints' identities eloquently but in very different rhetorical styles – Ribera, who painted several versions of each of the saints in dramatic chiaroscuro, and Giovanni Bellini, who occasionally placed



Fig 135
Salvador Dalí
The Average Bureaucrat (1930)



Fig 136
José de Ribera
St Paul the Hermit (c. 1637)



Fig 137
José de Ribera
St Paul the Hermit (1640)

the chiaroscuro drama of the anchorite that had caught Dalí's attention after the 'Night Scenes' exhibition, within the cruciform, diagrammatic structure of several of the compositions that Dalí painted at Carmel. At centre, the saint's clasped hands, the tools of his earthly participation in life; at left, a skull resting on an open book; at right, the wrinkled flesh of his body; at bottom, a piece of bread; and at top, the saint's head, combining and contemplating the meanings of the other parts.

Another painting by Ribera with a clear diagonal composition, also in the Prado, shows St Paul inside his grotto, the opening of which looks out on the outside world, as if through an eye socket. This reminds us, as it may have reminded Dalí on a visit to the Prado before he left Spain for the USA, of his previous treatment of anchorite iconography in the *Enigma*. This provides an opportunity to compare this Baroque treatment with the other influential portrayal of Jerome mentioned above – the play of subtle differences between Jerome and Sebastian highlighted by Bellini, which will also lead us back to the *Enigma*.

In comparison to Ribera's dark, Neapolitan drama is the airy

the two in subtle relationship to one another within the same picture. As background to these different uses of iconography, are the rivalry of competing monastic orders and the ideals they promoted, linked to regional and political rivalries. The details of these are too complicated to go into here, but the essence of them is that they lend a tone of propaganda to art that infuses the stylistic migrations between, for example, Venetian and Spanish art.

In Part I we saw the part played by the devotion of sailors to the Virgin Mary as *Stella Maris*, Star of the Sea, which brought her into association with the guiding star, Venus. This influence followed a route from Italy to Spain via Catalunya that can be thought of as an iconographic trade route, as Dalí perhaps alluded to with the "Trade Winds and Counter Trade Winds" that washed Morandi's "Distilled apparatuses" onto the shore at Cadaqués, in 'Sant Sebastià'.

One such route brought the chiaroscuro of Caravaggio and Guido Reni into the studios of Zurbarán and Velázquez in Sevilla, via the work of José de Ribera. Pedro Girón, Duke of Osuna, was Viceroy of Naples until 1620, when he returned to Spain with several paintings by Ribera that had a huge impact in his native Andalucía, including a *Crucifixion* and an altarpiece that included a *St Sebastian* and a *Penitent St Jerome*, typical of his dramatic depictions of sacrifice – of martyrs and hermits. Velázquez made sure to visit his compatriot when he visited Naples in 1629-30 and 1650, and a *St Sebastian* by Ribera was amongst Velázquez's possessions when he died. As superintendent of the Royal Collection, Velázquez can be considered to have taken over the role of arbiter of Spanish art once held by the Hieronymites, and his admiration for Ribera's quiet drama helped shape his own art and that of the Spanish Baroque.⁹

This is the Baroque Jerome that we see in the *Book... A St Paul the Hermit* by Ribera in the Prado is an example that places

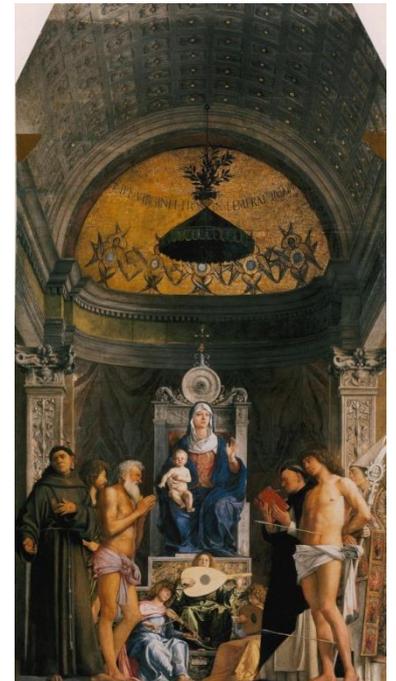


Fig 138
Giovanni Bellini
S. Giobbe Altarpiece (c. 1487)

Venetian influence that arrived on the “Sea Breeze”, to quote from ‘Sant Sebastia’ again, “constructed and anatomical like the parts of a crab”. Mantegna was the artist that Dalí mentioned at the time, but we can turn to this artist’s brother-in-law, Giovanni Bellini, for an insight into the clear articulation of the difference in significance between our two saints by Venetian artists. “Nothing was mysterious any longer”, wrote Dalí.

“The pain of Saint Sebastian was a pure pretext for an aesthetics of objectivity.”

Giovanni Bellini’s *S. Giobbe Altarpiece*, in the Accademia is one such diagrammatic description of the qualitative difference between the saints, although here it is Job who represents the ascetic ideal on one side, equilibrium with a serene Sebastian, lost in happy introspection. The musician-angels stare up at the saint with curiosity, and our eyes flick back and forth deciphering what it all means. It is tempting to think that this composition was a model for Holbein’s *Ambassadors*, or that Dalí might at least have made a comparison. Bellini’s *Holy Allegory* in the Uffizi, on the other hand, shows Sebastian standing side by side with a hermit saint on one side of a chequered marble floor, both looking across a scene of playing children, towards the Virgin. The precise meaning of the allegory is still open to some debate, but what is clear is Bellini’s diagrammatic method of composition, which, again, invites the viewer to read and decipher its meaning like a theological treatise.

Completing our brief survey of Bellini’s methods, his *St Jerome Reading in the Countryside*, also in the Uffizi, extends the use of architecture as an integrated unifying device – a sort of visual semantic structure within which he articulates his meaning – to include the natural architecture of the significant landscape. Bellini’s landscape here is of the type familiar from works of Mantegna and other Quattrocento artists, but also Patinir and other Northern European artists that similarly considered the landscape to be loaded with meaning. It is the type of landscape in which we have suggested Dalí might have recognised his own originary environment – the monastery and castle in the background resemble San Pere de Rodes and San Salvador above

Cadaqués – and which would have influenced his construction of a mythical space of the Empordà for his Surrealist paintings.

It has other features which, in the context of our study, seem too good to be true. First, there is the faithful lion at Jerome’s feet, in the stiff pose of a Sphinx, seemingly carved out of the rock that surrounds him. Then there is the lizard that creeps from the pool at Jerome’s side, toward the vegetation that climbs up the rocks to help form the features of a face. A familiar face. Bellini painted this around 1479-1485, twenty years or so before Bosch painted his similarly staged Sphinx-like questioning of origins and identity in the Garden of



Fig 139
Giovanni Bellini
Holy Allegory (c.1490-1500)

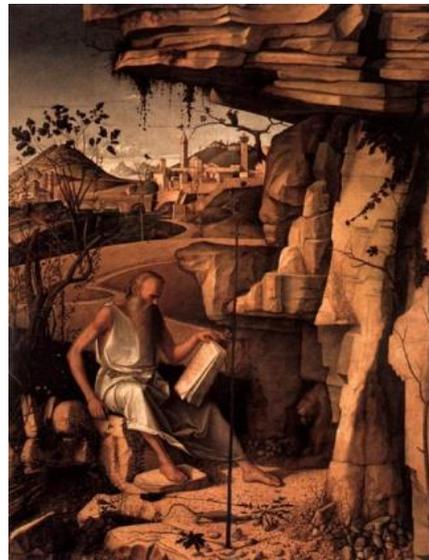


Fig 140
Giovanni Bellini
St Jerome reading in the Countryside



Fig 141
Giovanni Bellini
St Jerome reading in the Countryside
(detail)

Eden... the story of Adam and Eve, in the book of Genesis... the book of Genesis, in the Bible that Jerome translated and rests on his knee – perhaps at that passage – while he faces his question and questioner... Jerome, who was an influential figure in certain Humanist circles and who gave his name, Hieronymus, to a certain Dutch painter from s’Hertogenbosch... It is certainly possible that Bosch was aware of Bellini’s work – Johannes Gutenberg had invented the printing press around 1440, and there was a productive, triangular flow of influence between artists of the Low Countries, Italy and Spain in the second half of the 15th century.

We cannot say whether Dalí noticed this (possible) influence of Hieronymite Bellini on Hieronymus Bosch, but the comparison gives an idea of the depth of intellectual work that is now recognised as lying behind Bosch’s method – the Bosch’s “imaginative and additional” method that Dalí praised in 1928 – as opposed to the spontaneous apparition in the subconscious of inexplicable and autonomous monsters that would appeal to proponents of *automatic* Surrealism.

This takes us to a crucial difference between the figures that we have taken as the representative models of Dalí’s pre-Surrealist phase – Sebastian – and Surrealist phase – Jerome. The *Golden Legend* tells of Sebastian’s good works – he brought comfort to prisoners and was a good Christian, who suffered and died before his time, for the love of God. His image as a martyr evokes physical sacrifice, but his legacy is purely in the imagination of the devoted; he achieved nothing substantial. Jerome is also representative of a kind of suffering, and is also meant to encourage reflection on death and the value of life, but his is an example of how intellectual effort can lead to something substantial.

Sacra Conversazione

The contrast between Sebastian and Jerome is not only something that Dalí might have noticed between paintings of sensual violence and ones of quiet mysticism. It is a contrast that patrons and artists made a central theme in the type of painting known as a *sacra conversazione*, and rests on the interplay that we saw in Bellini’s paintings above. The genre was popular in Venice, which means there are magnificently painted examples, but it did spread across Europe and, as we shall see, Dalí was influenced very particularly by one painted by Dürer.

The *sacra conversazione* always has the Virgin Mary at its centre, flanked by strategically placed figures that share the same space as her, forming a visual dialogue that uses the various participants’ iconographic identities as its lexicon. These could be several saints, the donor of the painting or a deceased loved one that the donor would like the reassurance of seeing under the Virgin’s protection. These compositions aim to make clear statements – conversations of blessed objectivity – and the simplest are therefore the most effective. The typical *sacra conversazione* places an aged Jerome on one side, representing the intellect, and a youthful Sebastian on the other, representing physical love. The iconographic markers of the saints are usually understated, signalled by some token attribute such as a cardinal’s hat for Jerome, or a dart in Sebastian’s arm.

The “conversation” involves the viewer as much as the viewed, and it is also about this action of viewing. It has to do with subjectivity and objectivity, and the singular perspective of the artist as a reference point for a reality that is relative. Dalí examined these questions first in terms of the physical body, using Sebastian as the focus of his thoughts on vision and representation as *Blessed Objectivity*. Shortly after publishing ‘Sant Sebastià’, Dalí followed up his thoughts on “looking properly” in the essay, ‘Photography, Pure Creation of the Mind’, using Anthony as an example:

Van der Meer, a new St. Anthony, conserves the object intact with a totally photographic inspiration, the product of his humble and passionate sense of touch. Knowing how to look is a completely new system of spiritual surveying.¹⁰

Thoughts on vision smoothed the transition of Dalí’s focus to the other side of the conversation, to the introspective visual dynamics of Anthony and Jerome. When we look at Jerome, we contemplate the contemplator. Dalí’s consideration of Sebastian prepared him for the ironic objectivity of

contemplating a representation of another's subjective reflections on the object of his vision – a skull that once housed another contemplating subject, and is now exclusively object. We contemplate Jerome, the model contemplator, contemplating the model death of crucified Christ, loaded with mythical meaning, and the answers to all the Sphinx's questions of origins, identity, purpose and meaning. This is meta-contemplation, suited to metaphysics – a specular perception of the Self, represented in an Other.

Jerome's other facet is his characterisation as a desert ascetic, resisting the distractions of mental representations of fears and desires – in which his iconic identity is conflated with others such as Anthony or Paul. While Anthony was pursued by symbolic monsters or seduced by imaginary temptations, Jerome is represented in the presence of a real threat of imminent death, in the shape of the lion, and it is in relation to real, inevitable death that he seeks meaning.

In the *sacra conversazione*, the “conversation” about viewing the relative reality of oneself – this visualised dialogue of *Blessed Objectivity* – revolves around the figure of the Virgin Mary, the archetypal Mother, and the baby in her lap, which is often the real focus of the dialogue. It is a structure which attempts to reverse that of Holbein's *Ambassadors*, where we saw a phantom skull at centre, which we associated with the Mother in Dalí's *Enigma*. If we consider the Lacanian dynamics of ontological vision, the Mother is always a “lack” at the centre of the Gaze. In the *sacra conversazione*, then, that “lack” is emphatically denied. Lacan might say that the artist doth protest too much.



Fig 142
Albrecht Dürer
Dresden Altarpiece (1496)

The painting we consider next is not strictly speaking a *sacra conversazione*, but a rather less subtle interplay of the same three principle characters of the genre, in the *Dresden Altarpiece* which Dalí knew from his Gowans book of Dürer's paintings. The central panel of this triptych shows the Virgin and her Child, with the baby Jesus fanned by a miniature angel in coy *contrapposto*, seen from behind and wearing hot-pants – surely enough to warrant Dalí's attention. The right-hand panel shows Sebastian, surrounded by angels as a reward for his suffering. Opposite him is St. Anthony, surrounded for his part by the demons that tormented him. These saints are two sides of a coin in the currency of renunciation. They promote the physical and mental resolution of the exemplary life that the baby Jesus is going to lead. The triptych as a whole poses the questions of origin, identity and purposeful living as a mortal body, which were Dalí's motivation for using these religious images, and it poses these questions according to the three themes that I have identified as taking precedence in the three phases of his career – Sebastian, representative of Dalí's focus on the self as physiological entity; the anchorite, Anthony rather than Jerome, but equally representative of the self as mental entity; and Jesus, representative of the self as transcending the physical and the mental, as we shall see in Part III.

Our focus in this part is on Dalí's consideration of introspection – of contemplation as complying to an inner vision proper to the idea of the self as a mental entity – and it seems that this *sacra*

conversazione of Dürer's is another painting that played a formative part in the pair of paintings that mapped out Dalí's route through these questions, along a path already trodden in the aesthetics of asceticism. Shortly before Dalí painted the companion pieces, the *Enigma of Desire* and the *Great Masturbator*, he used Anthony's visualisation of his demons as an example of "spiritual surveying" equal to Vermeer's objective vision. A close inspection of the *Dresden Altarpiece* shows us that it was one of the paintings, among the treasure trove of his Gowans books, that guided Dalí toward his psychoanalytically and art historically informed self-representation as the introspective Masturbator. One of Anthony's demons is a leering monster that bears more than a passing resemblance to the libidinous lion's head, attached to the far end of the Masturbator's mind in the *Enigma*, and especially to the one in the *Great Masturbator*.



Fig 143
Albrecht Dürer
Dresden Altarpiece (detail)
In Gowans book no. 27



Fig 144
Salvador Dalí
The Great Masturbator (detail)

Notes

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- ¹ J.V. Foix, who had known Dalí since the end of 1926, and was his confidant throughout his initial involvement with Surrealism, referred to Dalí as the “solitario de Cap de Creus”, in 1932. See *Corresponsal*, 17.
- ² The third of Caravaggio’s Jeromes is in Malta.
- ³ Bersani and Dutoit, 33-5
- ⁴ “‘What is expected’ of ancient ascetics, Foucault reminds us in his lectures, ‘is humility and mortification, detachment with respect to oneself and the establishing of a relationship with oneself which tends toward a destruction of the form of the self.’” (Michel Foucault, ‘On the Government of the Living,’ (1980), in *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 157, quoted by Burrus, 5). Burrus on Foucault: “Foucault locates the distinctiveness of Christianity in the rise of a ‘hermeneutics of the self’ resting on practices of self-examination and confession in which ‘the problem is to discover what is hidden inside the self.’” (Burrus, 3-4, quoting Michel Foucault, ‘About the Beginnings of the Hermeneutics of the Self,’ (1980), in *Religion and Culture: Michel Foucault*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (New York: Routledge, 1999), 163, 168, 170)
- ⁵ The Hieronymites had to argue with the Pope for their brand of *practical* spirituality. In the atmosphere of the *Reconquista*, they argued that wealth and power enhanced their ability to perform good works. MacKay, 190.
- ⁶ Moffitt, 80-1
- ⁷ Adès, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, 249
- ⁸ Jerome translated from various sources and languages, and wrote commentaries on the Bible. His ‘Vulgate’ was the accepted version of the Bible in Roman Catholicism until the second Vatican Council of the mid-twentieth century – so Jerome was newsworthy in the 1940s and ‘50s. Lorca knew the *Golden Legend* well, and we can assume that Dalí, too, read what Jacobus de Voragine writes about Jerome, so that he had a notion of the scholar as well as the lion-tamer. The young Jerome, the son of a nobleman, had been an avid reader of Plato and Cicero – as he admitted in his own letters – and was flogged by a judge. He swore to never again read profane works. Ordained a cardinal priest in Rome, even suggested as Pope, but his enemies drove him to Gregory of Nazianzus, bishop of Constantinople, who tutored him. Jerome found himself as Pope Damasus’s “advisor” in Biblical interpretation. (Evans, 17)
- ⁹ On Ribera’s influence, see Moffitt, 103-4:
- In Ribera’s work, one sees the full Baroque synthesis of the terrestrial and the supernatural, naturalism being the tangible vehicle by which mystic revelation is expressed. Ribera’s concentration upon the experience of the individual – as opposed to an archetype – is a uniquely Spanish contribution; the psychology of the ideals of an often painful asceticism and solitary meditation is realised through a system based upon personal particulars.
- Other *St Sebastians* by Ribera are at Leningrad, Prado, Naples and Bilbao.
- ¹⁰ *L’Amic de les Arts*, Sitges, no. 18 (30 September 1927), 90-1

Part III: Christ

When Dalí returned to Spain in the summer of 1948, after eight years in the USA, he announced that he had rediscovered his Catholic faith and that he intended to make exclusively religious art.¹ The sincerity of his conversion is often doubted, and his religious art dismissed as a cowardly appeasement of hostile forces in Franco's Spain, opportunistic commercialism, or simply a descent into vulgar kitsch.² Dalí's praise for the regime responsible for the murder of his best friend Lorca was certainly distasteful, and his routine production of one religious show-painting a season over the following years was lucrative, but there is a coherence to the progression that he narrated in his first flurry of major religious paintings – *The Madonna of Portlligat* (1949/1950), *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1951) and *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* (1952) – that assert the authenticity of his motivation and the sturdy theoretical basis of these works.

In the three chapters of Part III, I interpret these paintings in turn as restatements of the fundamental anxieties that had driven Dalí's Surrealism, making use of the means and meanings of religious art, that were the scaffold of the European tradition of painting, to represent and resolve ontological enigmas of origin and identity.

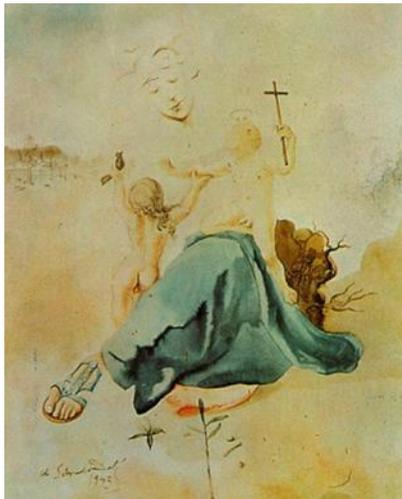


Fig 52
Salvador Dalí
'The Madonna of the Birds' (1943)

Dalí's orthodox Surrealist paintings staged his personal anxieties and obsessions as psychoanalysis did: tracing fears of castration or libidinous fantasies back to the loss of primary mother-child symbiosis. He came to recognise that traditional representations of the Madonna and Child, the authoritarian father or the sacrificed son were grounded in similar psychological insight.³ Dalí's religious period still comprehends the individual as buffeted between the paternal and maternal forces that shape the ego, leaving a legacy of fears and desires, but he largely dispensed with the lexicon of Freudian symbolism, which he had come to realise – with the help of an admonition from Freud himself – attended to *conscious* aims. Instead, he explored the same themes using the Catholic imagery of the Father, the Son and the Virgin Mother Mary.⁴

The paintings that I look at reduce the universally applicable meanings of Christian mythology to three standard iconographic moments of birth, death and ascension to heaven, within a three-part, personalised narrative that is Biblical in structure, but cognizant of psychoanalysis, without neglecting the familiar erotic and autobiographical aspects of Dalí's art. Each of the three chapters in this part is based on one of these stages and structured around the representative paintings mentioned above.

In chapter 6, I look at Dalí's two *Madonna of Portlligat* paintings in relation to his life circumstances and his differences with Surrealism. Dalí's first treatments of exclusively religious themes, excised of Surrealist tropes, included conventional ink drawings and watercolours of the Madonna and Child, made around 1943. He was still far from abandoning Surrealism, and those Madonnas vied with earlier concerns for his attention, as illustrated by the female *St. Sebastian* contemplated by a monk that he painted at the same time. It is still viable to analyse these ostensibly religious paintings in the light of psychoanalytical theories of primary symbiosis such as Otto Rank's, concerning intrauterine existence, or ideas from Freud, Lorca, Unamuno, Nietzsche and others that were applicable throughout Dalí's career.

In chapter 7, I examine a work which has attained the status of popular Christian icon. *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1951) gains in meaning when considered between the others in this series, as the *peripeteia* of the condensed life story – the point where the living body tilts towards its inevitable end. Dalí had cause to be thinking about his own mortality: his father had just died and, at 47 years old, he was aware that he had passed the mid-point of his natural life.

His return to the bosom of his family had not been the ideal restoration of childhood harmony that he had envisioned, and relations were further strained by the publication of his and his sister's rival biographies. These circumstances ensured Dalí's full emotional and intellectual involvement in the painting's layered meanings and, from the range of possible treatments of the theme, he selected to

evade the drama of death. Dalí meant to expose the mortal flesh of his crucified Christ to quiet contemplation rather than emotional response, appealing to parallel psychoanalytical and theological interpretations, and restating the concern for ascetic sacrifice and renunciation that had informed his aesthetics of Sebastian and Jerome.

Dalí declared his intention to paint a “beautiful” Christ, engaging with the problematic coupling of sexuality and mortality in Catholic art's display of the semi-naked bodies of martyrs, hermit saints or Christ. Dalí's Christ is an Apollonian body in control of its emotions, fastened within a rigid geometrical composition. The dichotomy of emotional control and abandon for which Dalí negotiated his geometric solution evokes concepts related to Nietzsche and Unamuno that I looked at earlier, and especially Dalí's conversations with Lorca on the function of religion and religious imagery. I look at two different conceptions of mystic vision that share this duality – the ecstatic mysticism typified by Bernini or Grünewald, and the quiet mysticism of Zurbarán or Velázquez. I present examples of Dalí's experimentation within each of these two tendencies.

Dalí identified his inspiration for the unusual perspective of his crucified Christ as a drawing by the Spanish mystic poet, St. John of the Cross, which had been brought to his attention by Father Bruno de Jésus-Marie, editor of the *Études Carmélitaines*. This magazine had been a unique and fascinating forum for a discussion of theology and psychology since the early thirties, and had produced issues dedicated to asceticism, mysticism, and other subjects of interest to Dalí. It carried contributions by figures related to Surrealism and art, such as Jacques Maritain or Michel Carrouges, and it published Dalí's text, ‘Reconstitution du corps glorieux dans le ciel’ in 1952, after it had involved itself in the polemic surrounding *The Madonna of Portlligat*.

While the mystical, interior vision of St. John of the Cross might have appealed to Dalí as a complement to Surrealist and Freudian revelations of subconscious thought, and as a remembrance of Lorquian poetics, there is actually little formal resemblance between St. John's drawing of the crucified Christ and Dalí's painting. I believe that the real, undisclosed source of Dalí's frontal presentation of a precariously tilting Christ on the Cross is a work by the Quattrocento artist Andrea del Castagno, *Holy Trinity, St. Jerome and Two Saints*, which Dalí knew first in Gowans, and later in Florence.⁵ This fresco shows Jerome and the lion contemplating Christ on the cross, while a hovering, bearded deity situates patriarchal authority on a higher plane. Below, the earthly body of Jerome is flanked by female saints, recalling the female parentheses around the sailor in Dalí's *Composition with Three Figures*.

Finally, in chapter 8, I consider *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* as the conclusion of the narrative. This painting coincided, by serendipity or design, with the official incorporation to heaven of the Virgin Mary's incorrupt body in 1952. Even before its approval as dogma after two thousand years

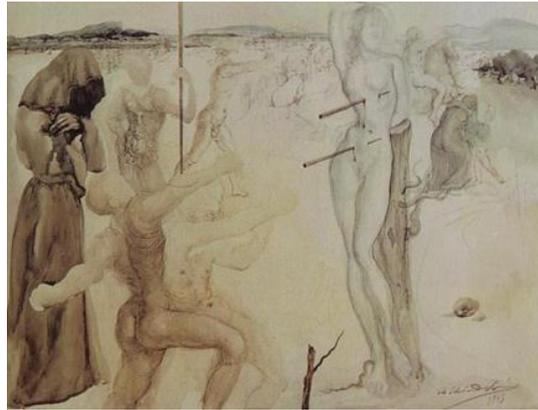


Fig 53
Salvador Dalí
'St. Sebastian' (1943)

of church history, the Assumption was a popular iconographic standard of Spanish Baroque art, swept to this position by the invisible but impelling Marian undercurrent within the patriarchal church. I refer back to the “Dormition” of the Virgin – which fascinated Lorca and Buñuel in Mantegna's rendition in the Prado – as a stage in the historical evolution of the theme of the mortality of the mother's body that made the Assumption's meanings more accessible to Dalí.

The traditional, dramatic image of the majestically soaring Virgin, in apparently rude health, insists on the sanctity and purity of the mother's body; desire is denied any part in the exemplary lives of Mary and Jesus. The theme invites meditation on the essence of existence, rather than the incidental details of origins and identity; here, psychoanalytical explanation cedes ground to metaphysical speculation. Dalí based his *Assumpta* on a painting by El Greco that he had seen with his friends on their trips to Toledo. El Greco's expressive elongation of the Virgin's anatomy – his mystic vision, contemporaneous and analogous with the poetry of St. John of the Cross – is analysed and rendered in Zurbaranesque detail by Dalí, drawing together the ecstatic and meditative extremes of Spanish mysticism.

The haziness of the concept of mysticism means that certain writings of Aldous Huxley, Jung and Rank, suited to metaphysical speculation, complement the dry science of Freud's mechanistic psychic system. Dalí knew the work of all of these, and it is especially useful to refer to them when looking at one key detail that he added to the traditional iconography of the Assumption – in Dalí's version, the body of the son is returned to the intrauterine paradise of his mother's womb for their symbiotic re-incorporation into heaven.

The pseudo-science that Dalí applied to his reinterpretations of religious art reinforces the point that Dalí appraised even mystic painting as “cognitive” art. His consideration of the Virgin's “corpuscular body” indicates the increasingly scientific slant of his 'Nuclear Mysticism', melding physics and metaphysics in a way that refers back to his Blessed Objectivity of 1926.⁶

Notes

¹ See Puignau, 31; A. Pastor-Foraster, ‘Salvador Dalí habla para *Ruta*’, Girona; *Ruta*; August 1948, in Mas, 66-9. Dalí and Gala landed at Le Havre on 21st July 1948. By 29th July they were in Figueres, and they spent summer at Cadaqués with Dalí's father, la Tietà and Anna Maria, while their home at Portlligat was being reformed (Lubar, 2000, 170). When Juan Gyenes Remenyi visited Dalí in 1951, the library was already filled with well-thumbed books. In a photograph in Gyenes' book we can see books on Bramante, Picasso, Raphael, Botticelli, and Leonardo, among others. On the wall is a reproduction of Raphael's *Deposition of Christ* and *Madonna del Cardellino*.

² When *The Last Supper* (1955-6) was displayed, Paul Tillich, professor of philosophy at the Harvard School of Theology, called it “a symbol of all the worst elements in what was termed the religious revival, sentimental and trite.” (*Evening Star*, November 1956).

³ Erich Fromm wrote, in 1950, that

One aspect of religious experience is the wondering, the marvelling, the becoming aware of life and of one's own existence, and of the puzzling problem of one's own existence, and of the puzzling problem of one's relatedness to the world. Existence, one's own existence and that of one's fellow men, is not taken for granted but is felt as a problem, is not an answer but a question. (Fromm, 91)

⁴ In a filmed interview of the 1950s or 60s shown at the Venice Retrospective in 2004, Dalí referred to his own as the only painting that continued the Surrealist tradition, based on its foundations in his “first experience” – which I understand as meaning primary loss, in the maternal sphere – and the continuation of the “tradition of Spanish painters,” in the paternal sphere of culture, authority and history.

⁵ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño does make a passing reference to a conversation on Castagno in connection with the *Christ in El camino de Dalí*. Unfortunately he does not elaborate on the conversation, or reveal the identity of his interlocutor but I presume that he meant this same fresco.

⁶ In 1958, Reynolds A. Morse noted Dalí's return to the physiological concerns of the 1920s. Morse: 1958, 65.

Chapter 7. Birth: *The Madonna of Portlligat*

The narrative series starts tentatively with the two versions of *The Madonna of Portlligat* that Dalí painted in 1949 and 1950, as he settled into his determination to make religious art. Emilio Puignau – a valuable witness to Dalí's production during the period after his return to Spain – believes the second, larger painting needed some finishing touches in 1951. If this is true, then Dalí's decision to date it 1950 supports the idea that the artist intended to produce one special show-painting each year, giving increased meaningfulness to the narrative rhythm that I follow here.¹

Eight years in the USA gave Dalí a useful distance from European culture from which to reconsider the relationship between religious symbolism and psychoanalytical concepts. On his return to Europe, he revelled in the opportunity to rile André Breton by giving primacy to religion, at least in the form of his paintings; Breton's reconvened Surrealist movement was in crisis at the time, and this was partly due to its various adherents' differing degrees of acceptance or refusal of religion. For his part, Dalí realised that there were wonderful precedents in religious art for the representation of concepts that had always formed the kernel of his particular conception of Surrealism.

Dalí recognised the basis of psychoanalytical theories of personality – the emergence from, and legacy of, the mother-child dyad – in the iconic image of Madonna and Child. In the course of art history, this mother-child dyad shifted towards a central place in religious art through the collective will of artists, patrons and theologians. From Dalí's point of view, this psychoanalytical explanation of religious imagery reconciled Surrealism with High Art in a way that surrendered nothing to the cultural or political ideologies that were its sworn enemies.

7.1 Dalí's Return to Eden

In 1948, Dalí returned to his birthplace rich and famous, having largely pacified the anxieties regarding sexuality and identity that motivated his earlier image-making. He was keen to repair relations with his family, and it seems the summers of 1948 and 1949 passed in relative harmony, despite initial tensions between Gala and Anna Maria.² The prodigal son began to select suitably meaningful myths and characters from religious art for the translation of his personal experience into imagery, as he had done before with St. Sebastian or William Tell. The recent conversion to Catholicism of Dalí's once fervently atheist father reinforced the aptness of Biblical imagery for this phase of his self-mythography.³

Dalí revisited the museums and churches of Europe and reinterpreted the work he knew so well.⁴ At the Prado, he explained his frustration with modern art, despite acknowledging its "colossal" act of iconoclasm and destruction, in which he had played a part. However, it had been reduced to "Insistence upon insistence. As if with the intention of unlocking a door that is already open. [...] Theology is the most important thing. It has to be studied again, felt. [...] Now I'm painting the *Madonna of Portlligat*, one of my great ambitions."⁵ Dalí named the science of Theology, rather than any theory of art, as the correct medium through which to rethink the history of image-making.⁶

Surveying the imprint of the theological imagination that spread across Europe in the tracks of Christianity, there is an interesting parallel between the ways that Freud and the patriarchal Church of Rome were hindered by their reluctance to acknowledge the contribution of feminine, maternal virtues to cultural and artistic production. At some murky level of its collective thought, the Church worked hard to resist the incorporation of the Virgin Mary into the official, masculine, heavenly Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while Freud did little to question established masculine authority over secular and religious canons of beauty and good taste in art. In Freud's basic conception, the function of art is yoked to the loosely defined process of "sublimation", and is similarly geared to making the imagination palatable to the patriarchal society in which he lived and worked.

Matching Freud's presumption of the masculine orientation of artistic manifestations with his theories of individual psychology – in which the mother is so important – is irretrievably problematic. This makes his most adventurous foray into art theory – his study of Leonardo da Vinci – a more interesting study of Freud himself. However scattered and flimsy the study's assumptions and conclusions – so as to slot into the psychic structure he had constructed elsewhere – Freud was corralled into admitting a place for maternal influence on the personal level of the image-making act of Leonardo.⁷

The anomaly of restricting the mother's place in the individual's imaginary schema is something that jars in an analysis of Dalí's more strictly Freudian Surrealism, and which becomes more meaningful when that absence of the mother is acknowledged as an integral part of the paintings. Even when Dalí's paintings refer to politics or science, they are always staged more on the personal than the cultural level, and so – to give primary loss and primal scene their due importance in his scenes of anxiety and desire – there is no denying the presence, however spectral, of the mother.

The importance of the mother is clearer in other, post-Freudian psychoanalytical theories, which have cleared a space within their conceptualisations of cultural production for the mother's fundamental role in structuring communicable meaning for and with her child. Lacan's *mirror stage*, for example; Winnicott's notion of *transitional space*; and the whole discipline of Developmental Psychology give primacy to the face-to-face intimacy from which the child learns to creatively test his or her experience of the wider world.

In the 1940s, Dalí and his sister both vividly recalled the overwhelmingly maternal space in which his first artistic experiments took place. It is a poignant indication of the manner in which sentiment surfaced indirectly in his purportedly objective work that he painted tender portraits of his mother while he already knew that she had been diagnosed with cancer of the uterus. He then reacted to her death in 1921 with several depictions of maternal tenderness that can already be interpreted as hopes for psychological reparation. Nevertheless, in his Surrealism of the 1930s, which made claims for

psychoanalytical veracity, he envisioned a less personally invested conceptualisation of the mother – and certainly a less tender one – as a cannibalistic mantis, threatening castration and death.⁸

Even in a less violent psychoanalytical framework, separation from the mother plays the key role in the theories of infantile sexuality, aberration and perversion that coloured much Surrealist art, and not only Dalí's. Narcissism – a condition fundamental to Dalí's paintings, in both their content and their theoretical support – has its basis in a failure during the process of turning away from the reflective reference of the mother-child symbiosis and relating to the outside world. An intuition of similar ideas led to an association of the Virgin, and of Venus before her, with the mirror, making them natural foils for the representation of these theories.

In the Christian myth, as in psychoanalysis, the birth of a child to a particular mother set certain parameters for a person's life. Despite the overwhelmingly patriarchal culture that has driven official artistic production through the centuries, individual patrons, worshippers and artists were also sons and daughters, with their own happy, sad or neutral reminiscences of maternal space, and a Marian undercurrent was always working to promote the place of the mother in Christian iconography. This is clearest in devotional images that offered the observer an imagined return to symbiotic intimacy, in contemplation of the Madonna and Child.

Dalí's return to his birthplace – represented iconically by the bay of Portlligat – and his reconceptualisation of religious art provided fertile conditions for him to reconsider the personal relevance of Madonna and Child imagery. The artist was well-versed in the psychological mechanisms of meaning-making, and knew the role of the persistence of memories – true or false – of that blissful maternal space, when he told interviewers that he intended to work intensively and in seclusion at Portlligat, on the "great, eternal themes of Theology."⁹

There is a hint in the first version of the *Madonna of Portlligat* of the lingering presence of psychoanalytic thinking, in the shadow in the shape of the hybrid male/female symbol that the blue orb casts on the boy's thigh, perhaps suggesting the universal infantile bisexuality described by Freud. Sexuality is thus traced back to its origin in the mother-child dyad.

However, this gimmick – if I have not projected the meaning of the shape myself – was excised from the second version. Perhaps, heeding Freud, Dalí deemed it too close in method to the conscious symbolism of his Surrealist paintings. Dalí realised the benefit of leaving the hidden workings of desire hidden, and relying on the power of latent meaning proper to both the mechanics of the subconscious and to the tradition and established function of religious art. There could be more to the disappearance of this shadow; only five years earlier, Dalí formulated his strategy of ascetic "nullification of desire," in his novel *Hidden Faces*, and the excision of the question of the child's sexuality from his second *Madonna* perhaps represents a progression in that same direction: towards transcendence of the unruly forces of desire unleashed in the process of separation from the mother.¹⁰

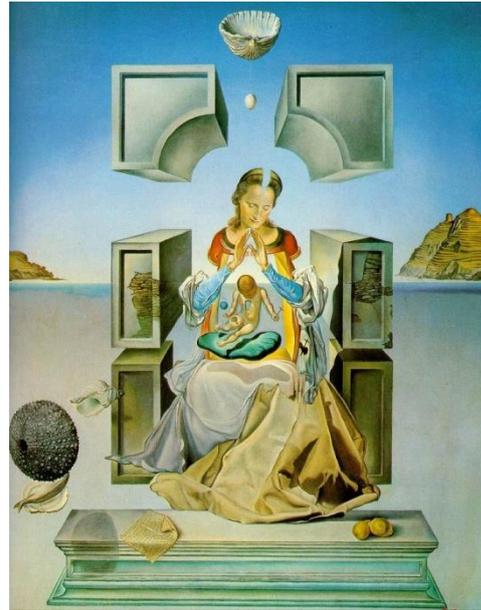


Fig 54
Salvador Dalí
Madonna of Portlligat (1949)



Fig 55
Salvador Dalí
Madonna of Portlligat (1949), detail

Notes

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- ¹ Puignau, 38-9.
- ² See Bas Dalí, 72, 99.
- ³ Dalí told Bosquet that he had no intention of re-writing the Bible, as it is done constantly, and “in any cosmogony, we’ll find the same theme.” *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí*, 1966.
- ⁴ Dalí said he had been in Italy, studying Palladio (‘Vis a vis. Salvador Dalí, Barcelona; *El Correo Catalán*, 5th December 1948, in Mas, 72-4).
- ⁵ Félix Ros, ‘¡Dalí visita el Museo del Prado!’, Madrid; *La Tarde*, 14th December 1948, in Mas, 75-80. Dalí’s first stop was Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights*. An excited Dalí said he would have liked a reproduction as a guide: “This panel is fantastic!” He also had great praise for the “bucolic theme” of Patinir’s panels. Dürer’s *Eve* was the “best Dürer that exists.” They also viewed the Velázquez section, and Mantegna’s *Death of the Virgin*. Dalí commented that “García Lorca was obsessed by this panel. Its livid sky is the one that Lorca’s poetry captures again and again.”
- ⁶ A photo in Romero, *Aquel Dalí*, 39, shows Dalí with Roquer. Dalí’s library contained the former Surrealist Joseph Delteil’s book *François d’Assise*, as well as books by Teilhard de Chardin and Mircea Eliade. In 1941, Dalí wrote that he had “long studied theology” in the epilogue to his *Secret Life* (399-400).
- ⁷ Sigmund Freud, ‘Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood’ (1910), The Penguin Freud Library, vol. 14: *Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 151-231. Dalí first encountered Freud’s essay in *Obras completas del profesor S. Freud, traducidas directamente del alemán por Luis López-Ballesteros y de Torres*, vol. VIII: *Totem y tabú. Un recuerdo infantil de Leonardo de Vinci* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1923). It was an important influence on Dalí’s own theories, particularly the “tragic myth” that he detected in Millet’s *Angelus*, and wrote up as a book which was finally published in 1963.
- ⁸ Dalí developed the identification with a praying mantis – *mantis religiosa*, in Spanish – of the woman in Millet’s *Angelus* in many paintings of the 1930s, and as a theoretical essay eventually expanded to book length and published in 1963.
- ⁹ His experimental phases were in the past, he told Manuel del Arco, “And now I’m trying to integrate all the experience of my youth with the great, eternal themes of Theology. Form, Raphael, Velázquez, Vermeer.” (Del Arco, ‘Vd. Dirá... Salvador Dalí’, Barcelona; *Diario de Barcelona*, 1st September 1948, in Mas, 70-1). See also Félix Ros, ‘¡Dalí visita el Museo del Prado!’ Madrid; *La Tarde*, 14th December 1948, in Mas, 75-80, and A. Pastor-Foraster, ‘Salvador Dalí habla para *Ruta*’, Girona; *Ruta*; August 1948, in Mas, 66-9).
- ¹⁰ Salvador Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, translated by Haakon Chevalier, New York: Dial Press, 1944.

7.2 Raphael's Madonnas

The forms and functions of religious image-making have evolved over time, and Dalí realised this over time, too. In his book, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship* (1948), published as he prepared to return to Spain, it is apparent that Dalí approached the meanings latent within Renaissance painting primarily from the standpoint of appreciation of its technical superiority over the Modernist art that had professed to have made it obsolete, but which he had emulated throughout his Surrealist years.

Often amusing, and scathing in its judgements, the book confirms Dalí's love for the matter and craft of traditional art. It aspires to stand alongside Renaissance artistic treatises, offering artists advice – practical and impractical – and lessons on perspective, composition, technique and materials. It is illustrated with faux Renaissance drawings, but despite the abundance of figures clutching crucifixes, or Madonnas clutching babies, the meanings infusing religious art are barely hinted at in the text until the final chapter. There, Dalí notes the significance of established artistic conventions by making the point that painting was not a decorative art, but a “cognitive” one.

He seems to have realised while writing the book that the rules of composition, perspective and harmony of Renaissance art were not incidental but integral to its philosophical, or theological, purpose of representing meaningful human relationships. The key technical advance of the Renaissance in communicating these meanings, wrote Dalí, was the invention of oil-painting, which allowed the proper representation of “the heavens and the flesh.”

The example Dalí used to explain how a compositional schema might construct hierarchical relationships of flesh and spirit is Piero della Francesca's altarpiece, *Madonna and Child with Angels and Six Saints*, which Dalí saw in Milan shortly before his American exile.¹ Dalí points out that the crossed diagonals of its composition intersect at the centre of the Virgin Mary's forehead, which is on a slightly higher level than the surrounding saints. The composition is also divided along a central, vertical axis by the line by which the egg hangs from the scallop canopy. Dalí borrowed the shell and egg for his *Madonnas*. These were already well established symbols in his Surrealist work, and are part of a nexus of associations that connects religious iconography, mythologies of birth, the mathematical laws of organic morphology and those of artistic composition.²

The first *Madonna of Portlligat* retained the awkward stiffness of Piero della Francesca and other early Renaissance artists but, as Dalí continued to paint Madonnas between 1951 and 1954, he increasingly modelled these on Raphael.³ His identification with Raphael was not new; following his mother's death in 1921, around the time he painted several images of maternity, Dalí painted his *Self-Portrait with Raphaelesque Neck*, based on the self-portrait on the cover of the Gowans Raphael book. His admiration continued into his years in Madrid and, on his return to the Prado in 1948, Dalí's highest praise was for Raphael's *Holy Family with the Lamb*.⁴

Much of art historians' praise for Raphael has been for his technique – his graceful *design* – rather than the meanings his paintings conveyed.⁵ Berenson, for example, wrote that “Raphael was not an artist in the sense that Michelangelo, Leonardo, Velázquez, or even Rembrandt was. He was a great Illustrator and a great Space-Composer.”⁶ Dalí read excerpts by Berenson in *Valori Plastici* in the 1920s, and probably also his books, and it was this skill of Raphael the draughtsman that impressed him then. In a letter to Buñuel in 1926, Dalí named Raphael, along with Ingres, as an artist whose



Fig 56
Piero della Francesca
Madonna and Child with Angels and Six Saints

levels of technical skill he wanted to achieve, and he consistently awarded him a prominent place in his Pantheon of artists after deciding to “become classic” in 1941, second only to Vermeer.⁷

As Dalí moved from an appreciation of Raphael's technique to an understanding of the Madonna theme, he recognised that this was the depiction of the loving intimacy of mother and child symbiosis as the foundation not only of the Biblical myth and the individual psychological self, but even of creativity and communication. Dalí coincided with the view declared by Vasari, and upheld since by academies of art – before modernism's “colossal” act of destruction – that Raphael's depiction of the mother and child were the pinnacle of the European image-making exercise.

In Raphael's paintings, compositional schemas provide the syntax for meaningful interrelationships in a more sophisticated and subtle way than the hierarchical chart of Piero della Francesca's altarpiece. Dalí had often fixed his compositions within the schema of crossed diagonals that Piero used, but which he originally learned from Ingres, who had taken it in turn from Raphael.⁸

However, the appeal of Raphael's Madonna and Child paintings for Dalí predated any thoughts on composition; it was the image of intimate familial bliss that first appealed to Dalí, and the roots of his *Madonna* paintings go back to his own childhood and family home. Dalí and his sister both described the overwhelmingly maternal atmosphere in which Salvador's creative talents were nurtured. Fussed over by his adoring mother, aunt and grandmother, Dalí easily identified with the similarly cosseted child Jesus in Raphael's several paintings of the Holy Family reproduced in Gowans.

In 1949, just after Dalí had painted the first of his *Madonnas*, Anna Maria recalled Salvador convalescing in 1916, with a colour reproduction of Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia* hung at the head of the bed, “and he looked at the Gowans, which were never out of his hands.”⁹ This was the most popular of Raphael's Madonnas, with copies and prints ubiquitous in European and American homes.¹⁰

This popular appeal could only have increased the painting's appeal for Dalí when he returned his attention to Raphael's Madonnas with the lessons of psychoanalysis added to his art historical reading. Freud had shown the way for analysing the iconic status earned by apparently empty images with his study of Leonardo, and Dalí took up that challenge with his analysis of the “tragic myth” of Millet's *Angelus*, which occupied him throughout his Surrealist period and which was eventually published in 1963.¹¹

If we first consider formal composition – as Dalí did in his study of the *Angelus* – the first thing to note in the *Madonna della Sedia* is the predominance of curved forms, exaggerated by the *tondo* format. In *50 Secrets*, Dalí noted the function of circular forms in creating interior harmony in a painting, to counterbalance other rigid, architectural rules of composition. At the centre of Raphael's composition, the child is securely cocooned in his mother's soft curves, explaining the popular appeal of the *Madonna della Sedia* according to a Freudian reading.¹² Dalí did not simply copy his Madonnas from Renaissance models but carefully constructed them with deliberate attention to meaningful form and content. To continue the psychoanalytical interpretation, we might describe them as images of the ideal mother-figure that Dalí had rediscovered – the basis for the secure, integral self. They were portraits of Gala, composed within an organic morphology of sweeping spirals.

In 1941, Dalí had already made clear his aesthetic and psychoanalytical appreciation of the *Madonna della Sedia* as an image of ideal wholeness and return to the womb by illustrating the chapter 'Intrauterine Memories' of *The Secret Life* with a negative image of the painting. He was no doubt helped in his analysis of the painting by daily conversations with Otto Rank's disciple and former lover, Anaïs Nin, who spent time with Dalí while he was writing *The Secret Life*. The caption reads,



Fig 57
Raphael
Madonna della Sedia

“The Child Jesus is situated like an unhatched chick within the divine egg shape formed by the Raphaellesque curves.”¹³ Although his written analysis of the *Madonna della Sedia* was restricted to this caption, the personal significance of the painting – and its wealth of allusion to psychoanalytical and religious fundamentals – make it a fascinating focus of Dalí’s integration of Surrealist and Catholic image-making. As in developmental psychology, so in Christian iconography – the mother’s lap is the *sedes sapientiae*.¹⁴

Notes

¹ Piero della Francesca was not included in the Gowans series.

² See *50 Secrets*, 164-8, and 26, for the representation of “the heavens and the flesh”. Dalí apparently copied Piero’s *Annunciation* in the Prado while he was at San Fernando (Lear: 1985, 174). “Today, physics has effected everything and a painter should know. A painter cannot be an ass. Paccioli taught Piero de la Francesca all the secrets of physics and geometry.” (‘Vis a vis. Salvador Dalí, Barcelona; *El Correo Catalán*, 5th December 1948, in Mas, 72-4)

³ For example, *Raphaellesque Head, Exploded* (1951), other drawings and paintings 1951-2; *Portrait of Gala with Rhinocerotid Symptoms (Galatea)*, *The Maximum Speed of Raphael’s Madonna* (both 1954).

⁴ Raphael’s painting was “Genial, genial, genial.” Félix Ros, ‘¡Dalí visita el Museo del Prado!’, Madrid; *La Tarde*, 14th December 1948, in Mas, 75-80.

⁵ Dalí said he had “always been fascinated by the perfection of Raphael.” See Mercedes Molleda, ‘With Salvador Dalí at Portlligat’, New York; *Arts Magazine*; February 1963. Their conversation took place at the end of 1962.

⁶ Bernard Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance* [1897], in *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, 133.

⁷ Dalí’s comparative table in *50 Secrets*. The painting that most fascinated him was Vermeer’s *Lacemaker*, likewise infused with maternal meaning (*50 Secrets*, 28).

⁸ The crossed diagonals in the compositional schema of *Venus and Amorini* (1925), and other Venus and sailor paintings, are clear in Raphael’s *Galatea*, in the Gowans book. Around 1972, Dalí pointed out to Amanda Lear that the majority of his compositions were based on this X, even when unintentional (Lear: 1985, 214). The schema is still obvious in *The Railway Station at Perpignan* (1965), or several late works that revisit paintings of 1926-8. For example, *Rhinocerotid Gooseflesh* (1956), which recalls *Cenicitas* (1927-8); *The Path of Enigmas* (two versions, 1981), which reprises *Inaugural Gooseflesh* (1928); *Hyperxiological Sky* (1960), which evokes *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* (1926-7), as Dalí confirmed to Robert Descharnes in 1962: “I want to dedicate this painting to García Lorca with an inscription, for he had asked me to do so for another similar one, *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*.” (*WSD*, 73).

⁹ AMD, 36; my translation. Once Dalí began his formal education at San Fernando, his thoughts were brought into focus by Reinach, who in the 17th lesson of his *Apollo* wrote on Leonardo and Raphael, and the Milanese, Umbrian and Roman schools, regarding their depictions of the Madonna and Child. The *Madonna della Sedia* was reproduced in Gowans, with 23 other Madonna and Child paintings, in the first edition of 1905. There were only 19 in the third edition of 1908, “from entirely new plates”, but they were supplemented by an *Adoration of the Magi* and a *Presentation in the Temple*.

¹⁰ Henry James wrote on the painting’s attraction, and David Alan Brown calls it a “cultural icon,” whose appeal matched that of the *Gioconda* today, so that “it was recognised by people who knew nothing else about art” (Brown, 25). Brown quotes James P. Walker, who wrote in his *Book of Raphael’s Madonnas* (New York, 1860) that the *Madonna della Sedia* was “without exception, the best known of Raphael’s Madonnas, and that from which the greatest number of copies have been taken. It is, therefore, incontestably the favourite with the public, if not with artists and amateurs” (Brown, 24).

¹¹ Roger Fry addressed this problem of Raphael’s appeal to sympathy, believing it necessary to “disregard the distracting impertinences of Raphael’s psychology.” (Roger Fry, *Transformations*, London, 1926, quoted in John Pope Hennessy, *Raphael*, New York; Harper and Row; 1970, 175).

¹² This was a trick missed or avoided by Michelangelo in his *Madonna Doni* tondo when, as Arnheim (83-5) noted, he displaced the child, away from the mother’s womb at the centre of the painting.

¹³ *The Secret Life*, n.p.

¹⁴ The significance of this seated pose is already found in its ancient ancestors – the statues of child-kings in the laps of goddesses in Ancient Greece that inspired *The Invisible Man* in 1929.

7.3 The end of the idyll

The summers of 1948 and 1949 saw a rapprochement between Dalí and his family, but not as smooth a repair as Dalí had hoped. His relationship with his sister was soon soured forever, and any idealised image he may have had of his return to the bosom of his family as a prodigal son, shattered.

In a move as provocative towards the Surrealists as it was conciliatory towards his family, Dalí showed his first *Madonna of Portlligat* to Pope Pius XII at a private audience in November 1949, and received a *nihil obstat* for the larger version he already planned.¹ Dalí must have felt ascended to the ranks of Raphael, Velázquez, Leonardo, Michelangelo and others who had worked with Papal approval, yet he was soon publicly denounced by two other father figures who had deeper personal meaning for him than the Pope – André Breton, the “Pope” of Surrealism and, closer still, his biological *papa*, Salvador Dalí Cusí.

Meanwhile, Anna Maria was writing her book on her brother, which fanned the smouldering embers of their father's resentment, already stirred by Dalí's provocative *Secret Life* and by Gala's presence in Cadaqués.² In December, after Gala and Dalí had left for New York, don Salvador signed his foreword to Anna Maria's book, stamping his approval on his daughter's account of the domestic harmony that had existed with Felipa, and the harm done by Salvador, with Gala largely to blame.³

A few months later, Breton responded to Dalí's declaration that he “renounced his tumultuous past in order to return repentant to the fold of the Church.” Dalí's quote, reproduced by the indignant Breton, continued, “I told [the Pope] that I had returned to my atavistic mysticism as a Spaniard, and presented my projects as an artist. From now on, my painting will be an amalgam of my Surrealist experience and the pre-Raphaelite classicism of the Renaissance’.”⁴ As evidence of how far he thought Dalí had fallen from the spirit of Surrealism, Breton reproduced the painter's *Sacred Heart* – the work which had brought underlying tensions between father and son to a head and provoked their estrangement twenty years earlier, when Breton bought the picture in 1929.

Dalí's father had no need of any reminder of this work and the painful events that accompanied his son's entrance into Surrealism; he perceived *The Sacred Heart* as an insult to the memory of Felipa, and had blamed the disruptive arrival in Cadaqués of Gala. By presenting Gala as the holy mother in the *Madonna of Portlligat*, Dalí sought not only to present an image of familial harmony, but to heal the rift with his father, symbolically at least, by appeasing his father's misconceptions about Gala, and about Dalí's love and respect for his mother.⁵

On his return to Spain the following summer, Dalí claimed he had always had important differences with Breton, and offered an olive branch, including a gentle reminder of his father's original atheism:

It's not a case of a brusque change, but a progressive, coherent evolution, which deep down feeds all of my work and which unfolds from my initial disagreement with the Surrealist group in Paris, almost immediately after my arrival in the French capital in 1929. In 1940, and then manifestly, that interior process of mine is reflected clearly in the final chapter of my book, *The Secret Life*, which is, if one knows how to read it, an apology for Catholicism.

It's undeniable that one of the determining reasons for my initial anti-religiosity was my formation in Figueres, under the influence of my father and friends of the family, almost all of them federalist in politics, synonym of atheism in those times. My father was for me – and continues to be so over time – an exceptional personality, with the integrity and bearing of a Roman patrician, and I felt enormous admiration for him.⁶

Dalí declared his Surrealism Mediterranean and fanatic, without concession and ready for all consequences. It “entailed a myth which demanded total liberty of spirit”, while the “Parisian Surrealists” were “cynical, sceptical rationalist”: “for them it was a school full of mannerisms and limitations.” Dalí saw himself in another stage of the same evolution, but with the ambition now “to

defeat that which Surrealism may contain of materialism and atheism and incorporate its sources of inspiration into Spanish mysticism, give it a Christian and mystic content." Dalí called *The Madonna of Portlligat* "the compendium of my evolution. [...]"

Because there is in it all my Cubist and Surrealist experience, and this is able to give rise to a new Classicism. It looks like all the others that have existed and there is in it, at the same time, all the cultural and moral sediment of a man of today, all his elements of culture, without excluding Psychoanalysis. I aspire to the Madonna, whose model has been my wife, being a condensation of all there is of wonderful virtue, spiritual force, colour and geology.⁷

Dalí persisted with his projected second version of the *Madonna of Portlligat* but, in order to do so, he needed to resurrect the sense of homecoming damaged by the disagreement with his sister: "to be in Portlligat, to see the sailors, the colour of the olive groves and of bread, feel the tranquility, the landscape, with its interior uncton and piety. I need the localism of Portlligat like Raphael needed that of Urbino, to arrive at the universal through the particular."⁸



Fig 58
Salvador Dalí
Madonna of Portlligat (1950)

In his revised conception of Surrealism, subconscious thought processes that were essential to the theme of the Madonna and Child – with their basis in family relationships and such oedipal disruptions as those that rose to the surface at the time of Dalí's return home – were minutely analysed and compared with universal myths, and their translation into the language of traditional art. This was very much a "cognitive" art, with any lingering automatism in the genesis of the paintings definitively eradicated.

This was not the first time that Dalí had reworked an earlier painting, but the effort expended on this one – leaving little time to produce new work during 1950 – reveals the importance he gave it. Dalí arrived in Portlligat with the composition and details minutely worked out.⁹ The meticulous construction of this image of mythological and domestic reparation was made urgent by the knowledge that his father was terminally ill with cancer. Puignau witnessed the final reconciliation of father and son, and the profound grief felt by Dalí when his father died in September 1950.¹⁰

Barely four weeks later, Dalí gave a talk at the Barcelona Ateneu, 'Why Was I Sacrilegious, Why Am I Mystic?', in which Dalí hoped to bid his father farewell with a posthumous cathartic

healing of their tragic oedipal rift.¹¹ The incident of Dalí's sacrilege referred to in the title of the talk was the exhibition of his *Sacred Heart* picture at his Goemans exhibition in 1929, the Surrealist imperative of which he had defended in his talk, 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', at the same venue twenty years earlier.

Notes

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- ¹ On leaving the audience, Dalí told reporters of his wish to incorporate modern art into the great tradition of Medieval and Renaissance art. "Modern art must be Christian" (According to José Ma. Massip ('Dalí hoy', Barcelona; *Destino*; 1st April 1950, in Mas, 92-100). Dalí told Puignau that the Pope was delighted that Surrealism was taking this course, that it had been a marvellous visit and that the Pope was very intelligent. Dalí had spoken of mysticism, and the conversation had reinforced his intention of making religious art (Puignau, 32).
- ² AMD, 141-2. Melchor Fernández Almagro wrote his article on AMD for *La Vanguardia*, 2nd January 1950, and it is reproduced in AMD, 167-70. It confirms the importance of Anna Maria's book for an evaluation of the young Dalí that he stayed with in 1926, and the change brought about by Dalí's contact with the Surrealists. The Spanish translation of *The Secret Life* was published in Argentina in 1944. Dalí reacted angrily to his sister's book in January 1950, and was disinherited again, although, considering Dalí's wealth, the gesture was mainly symbolic. Bas Dalí reproduces a letter from Dalí to his uncle Rafael which explains that the artist was also angry that Anna Maria had sold some paintings without permission, and had stirred bad blood while he had worked for reconciliation with his dying father, having sent money towards an operation. (Bas Dalí, the first page of the letter in facsimile on p. 71, the whole letter reproduced, 74, 76-7). Dalí made clear in a letter to his cousin Montserrat that he was willing to reconcile with Anna Maria, but she was too obstinate. This is the opinion that Montserrat, who would remain close to Salvador, passed on to her daughter Lali Bas Dalí (Bas Dalí, 78).
- ³ AMD, 5
- ⁴ 'La conversion de Salvador Dalí,' in Breton, ed., *Almanach surréaliste du demi-siècle*, special issue of the magazine *LA NEF – 'Nouvelle Equipe Française'*, Paris, March-April, 1950) (In French and Spanish in *Poesía*, note, p. 148. My translation.
- ⁵ Dalí's persistent representation of Gala as surrogate mother, especially in his religious paintings, responds to a need to affirm integrity of the self by representing it in relation to the lost but restored mother. See my MA dissertation, 'The Visible Man/The Invisible Woman: the absence of Salvador Dalí's mother', (University of Essex, 2004).
- ⁶ See José Ma. Massip, 'Dalí hoy', Barcelona; *Destino*; 1st April 1950, in Mas, 92-100. Among the paintings which Dalí said were essential to understand his evolution were ones we have looked at earlier: *Venus and Cupid*, which was "Still within my neoclassical period and, in reality, a consequence of the Cubist revolution," and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* – "which contains all of the obsessions of my entry into Surrealism."
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Puignau, 38. Emilio Puignau watched Dalí proceed over the summer and vouches that he did not make a single modification to the painting that he had fully planned.
- ¹⁰ Dalí's father died of prostate cancer on 21st September 1950 (Lubar, 2000, 170). Although Dalí attended neither the funeral nor the burial, Puignau suggests this was more through an excess of grief, and superstitious fear of death, than coldness. See Puignau, 41-2, for his account of the effect on Dalí of his father's death.
- ¹¹ '¿Por qué fui sacrilego, por qué soy místico?', talk at the Barcelona Ateneu, 19th October 1950, *Obras Completas IV*, 628-35

7.4 Surrealism's crisis of faith: Carrouges, Breton and Dalí

When Dalí took stock of his distance from Surrealism's moral position in 1950, he did so in an era of post-war reassessment of thought systems comparable to that which generated Dada and Surrealism after the First World War. While Surrealism rejected the patriotic and religious justifications for the carnage of that war, Dalí was not alone in reconsidering spiritual or psychological aspects of religion in the light of the Second World War's confirmation of the equal stupidity of secular ideals.

Breton attempted to reconvene the Surrealist movement after his return to Paris in 1947, but rifts soon appeared, partly due to the varying tolerance of religion of its members. A deeper fissure opened after an incident known as the "Carrouges affair", which gives an idea of the atmosphere of stifling intransigence around Surrealism at the time.

Michel Carrouges was unapologetically Catholic, despite having contributed in 1939 to *CLE*, the monthly bulletin of the Trotskyite FIARI, where Breton sat on the editorial committee.¹ In 1950, Carrouges was still close enough to Breton to publish *André Breton and the Fundamentals of Surrealism*, but in February 1951, Henri Pastoureau – one of the Surrealist old guard who had contributed to the same issue of *CLE* – informed Breton that Carrouges was to give a lecture in the sacristy of Saint-Séverin church in Paris, hosted by the Catholic Centre of French Intellectuals, which would question Surrealism's "current state of health". Breton remarked that the question was a good one, and was ready to indulge Carrouges, but Pastoureau, Marcel Jean, Patrick Waldberg and others were less understanding, and decided to sabotage the event.² The incident split the Surrealist camp, and an exchange of tracts and crisis meetings led to Breton reluctantly breaking off relations with Carrouges, but also to the expulsion of Pastoureau, Jean and Waldberg by Breton and Benjamin Péret.³

Writing in the aftermath of these events, Ferdinand Alquié disregarded the militants in his *Philosophy of Surrealism* (1955), and discussed the close but still divergent positions of Breton and Carrouges regarding the possibility of transcendence of man's tragic condition.⁴ Dalí kept himself informed of these ideological skirmishes, if only to better define his differences with this politicised Surrealism; he owned Alquié's book, as well as several works by Carrouges.⁵ Comparing the rationale of Breton's dismissal of believers in God with statements of faith by Carrouges, Alquié notes that if, for Breton, God's non-existence is given, then "all will belongs to man." Alquié describes the essential impasse of Surrealism's ontology of "man reduced to himself," and questions the possibility of a positive Surrealist idealism, "an optimism without transcendence."⁶

It was just such elusive, humanist transcendence that Dalí was looking for when he declared, at the end of his *Secret Life*, that heaven is to be found "in the centre of the bosom of the man who has faith" – faith that Dalí was optimistically seeking in 1941.⁷ Nine years later, when Breton mocked Dalí's conversion, Dalí said that his reasons were explained in the final chapter of his autobiography. There, Dalí evaluates Surrealism as one more example of "the materialist scepticism of negativistic, nihilistic theories, of 'isms' of all kinds," which Dalí accuses of asphyxiating a Post-War Europe "dying of the monstrous error of specialisation and analysis, of lack of synthesis, lack of cosmogony, lack of faith."

Dalí suggested that it is necessary to know how to read this final chapter, in order to understand it as an "apology for Catholicism", although the chapter seems quite clear. On the same page he writes, "I believe above all in the real and unfathomable force of the philosophic Catholicism of France and in that of the militant Catholicism of Spain. [...] For the unity of Europe will be made, and can only be made, under the sign of the triumph of Catholicism."⁸

Dalí's assessment of "Post-War Europe" in 1941 was obviously premature, and it was a changed Dalí and a changed Breton that returned to a changed Europe at the end of the 1940s. Dalí was as keen to assert a position independent from Breton's dictates as Breton had been determined to break with ruling cultural systems, and this probably fired his anti-Marxist rhetoric as much as any concern with politics.

The question remains whether Dalí's religious conversion also had a note of cynicism or at least irony, as Adès suggests: "Dalí's suggestion in *The Secret Life* that he would have preferred [*L'Age d'or*] to be 'subversive rather through excess of Catholic fanaticism than through naïve anti-clericalism'

sounds as if even his new adherence to the Catholic faith [...] in 1942 is ironic.” In fact, when *L’Age d’or* was made in 1930, as Adès points out, Dalí gave a lecture at the Ateneu in Barcelona, provocatively attacking “ideas like family, religion and fatherland.”⁹

Dalí had once been eager to eclipse even Breton's anti-cultural stance – as when he denounced “the youth who attempt to imitate the painting of the past” in the *Anti-Artistic Manifesto* in 1928, as he first assimilated Surrealism.¹⁰ The 22-year old Dalí defended the manifesto's virulence at a talk in Sitges, comparing the patina of old paintings – which he accused the club's members of revering – to the yellow stains of dog urine on street corners.¹¹ In his new position, for all its irony or scepticism, he was enamoured of that patina stain, and incorporated it into his conception of Surrealism.

Dalí wrote that it was a remark by Freud in 1938 that had motivated him to “make of surrealism something as solid, complete and classic as the works of museums.”¹² Early in 1939, Dalí was still on good enough terms with Breton to write to him about his meeting with Freud. Freud had said that “in the paintings of the Old Masters one immediately tends to look for the unconscious whereas, when one looks at a Surrealist painting, one immediately has the urge to look for the conscious.”¹³ Dalí hoped that Freud's insight would lead to a “pretty lively debate” within Surrealism, but that possibility was curtailed when Breton broke contact with Dalí in May of that year. By 1941, when Dalí repeated Freud's comment in his *Secret Life*, he had concluded for himself that Freud's statement had been “the pronouncement of a death sentence on surrealism as a doctrine, as a sect, as an 'ism'.”¹⁴ Dalí ended his “apology for Catholicism” in the *Secret Life* by redirecting his quest for a personalised mythology of the vital enigmas away from Surrealism and towards classical and religious modes of representation, where those themes thrived in the fertile ground of latency, through the processes described by Freud as sublimation:

The individual sciences of our epoch have become specialised in these three eternal vital constants – the sexual instinct, the sense of death, and the space-time anguish. After their analysis, after the experimental speculation, it again becomes necessary to sublimate them. The sexual instinct must be sublimated in esthetics; the sense of death in love; and the space-time anguish in metaphysics and religion.¹⁵

Dalí indicated the role of subconscious thought – even in consciously contrived paintings – in *50 Secrets*, passing on advice attributed to Raphael, to always think about something else when painting.¹⁶ When he repeated this to Mercedes Molleda at Portlligat in 1962, she remarked that it seemed a completely Surrealist use of the subconscious, and Dalí enthusiastically concurred, affirming that the “part of automatism and of subconscious that all creation necessarily entails is not a discovery of the twentieth century, as many people think.”¹⁷ He had time to reflect on Surrealism's failure to appreciate this by the time he told Louis Pauwels that

André Breton, because of his narrow-minded anticlericalism, despised Raphael. He could not stand the image of Christ or of a Madonna. But he did not see that through convention, the subversive language of the subconscious expressed itself in a much more intense and authentic way than in the belaboured anarchy of a surrealist picture.¹⁸

Had Dalí convinced Breton of a subversive or sexual undercurrent in religious art, he might have succeeded in provoking the debate within Surrealism that he hoped for. There were painters that Breton admired, and who were fundamental to the development of Surrealist painting, that might have helped him appreciate the positive reappraisal of traditional modes of painting that Dalí proposed.¹⁹ Ernst, Magritte, de Chirico, Picasso or even the “assassin” of art, Miró were all educated in the art that they subverted from within. As it was, Breton seemed prepared only to accept treatments

of religious images that carried a caveat in heavily ironic tones, such as Ernst's *The Blessed Virgin Chastises the Infant Jesus Before Three Witnesses: A. B., P. E. and the Artist* (1926).

In a 1938 lecture – in which he was careful to align himself with Breton's Surrealism – Magritte drew attention to Nietzsche's identification of a necessarily sexual basis for Raphael's abundance of painted Madonnas. Nietzsche had written that "Artists, if they are good for anything, are ... strongly built, excessive, forceful brutes, sensual; no Raphael is conceivable without a certain overheating of the sexual system."²⁰ In Magritte's words, Raphael's hidden sexual motivation was "in striking variance with motives usually attributed to that venerated painter: priestly influences, ardent Christian piety, aesthetic ideals, search for pure beauty, etc., etc. ... But Nietzsche's view of the matter makes possible a more sane interpretation of pictorial phenomena." When Magritte published a similar statement the following year, he added Freud's conclusion that artistic activity was always a substitute for sexual activity.²¹

Notes

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- ¹ *CLE*, no. 2, February 1939. See Adès, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, 293. The FIARI was the Federation of Independent Revolutionary Art.
- ² Polizzotti, 571. Pastoureau read the anti-clerical pamphlet 'A la niche les glapisseurs de dieu!'
- ³ See Polizzotti, 572-3 and Durozoi, 515-6, 518, and notes 1-7 on p. 751 on the "Carrouges affair." Pastoureau distributed a 17-page 'Aide-mémoire relatif à l'affaire Carrouges.' Breton broke off relations with Carrouges when presented with proof that Carrouges had written "religious instruction manuals. The relevant documents are reproduced in José Pierre, ed., *Tracts surréalistes*, 2 vols., Paris; Éric Losfeld; 1980-2.
- ⁴ Alquié, 44-6.
- ⁵ Bonet, 304.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* 162.
- ⁷ *Secret Life*, 400.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* 395.
- ⁹ Adès, 197
- ¹⁰ 'Manifest antiartístic català,' later known as the 'Manifest Groc,' written by Dalí with Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch, Barcelona: Fills de F. Sabater, March 1928. See *Early Years*, 221-2 for an English translation.
- ¹¹ 'Para el meeting de Sitges' published in *L'Amic de les Arts*, 25, Sitges, 31st May 1928. In *Obras Completas IV*, 103-7. The meeting at El Centaure in Sitges was held on 13th May 1928.
- ¹² *Secret Life*, 397.
- ¹³ Fonds Breton, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris. Quoted, following José Pierre, by Gibson: 1997, 383.
- ¹⁴ *Secret Life*, 397.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* 398. The mini-manifesto continues: "Enough of denying; one must affirm. Enough of trying to cure; one must sublimate! Enough of disintegration; one must integrate, integrate, integrate. Instead of automatism, style; instead of promiscuity, rigour; instead of collectivism and uniformisation – individualism, differentiation, and hierarchisation; instead of experimentation, tradition. Instead of Reaction or Revolution, RENAISSANCE!"
- ¹⁶ *50 Secrets*, 45.
- ¹⁷ Mercedes Molleda, 'With Salvador Dalí at Portlligat', New York; *Arts Magazine*; February 1963. The interview evidently took place in autumn 1962.
- ¹⁸ Pauwels, 78. The conversations with Pauwels took place in 1966 and 1967.
- ¹⁹ "A. B." is Breton himself, watching over the painting's Surrealist orthodoxy through a window. "P. E." is Paul Éluard. In the context of Dalí's appropriation of the Spanish Baroque, William Jeffett writes "Dalí's shift is rooted still in Surrealism and other intellectual strands of modern thought, which had rethought the Baroque. [...] Surrealism, too, was anti-modern, and this was equally true for André Breton" (Jeffett: 2007, 52)
- ²⁰ *The Birth of Tragedy*, quoted by Karen L. Kleinfelder, 'Monstrous Oppositions', in *Picasso and the Mediterranean*, (Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; 1996). Picasso – who learnt lessons from Nietzsche's book at the start of his career – supplemented these thoughts in his own way with a pornographic version of *Raphaël et la Fornarina* (1968). It was in considering Raphael's *Transfiguration* in *The Birth of Tragedy* that Nietzsche first developed his concept of the dual Apollonian and Dionysian forces in art.
- ²¹ 'Lifeline', lecture in Antwerp, 1938, (in Lippard, 161), and 'Bourgeois Art', 1939, (*ibid.* 157).

Chapter 8. Death: *Christ of St John of the Cross*

In the next stage of his narrative progression, Dalí returned to the image of the exposed, sexual, mortal body of flesh, which had been the end-point of his aesthetics of St. Sebastian. The biological self, or barely animate dummy, are now reinterpreted through the Biblical mythology of Christ's life story. If emergence from the mother-child dyad is the basis of meaning and communication, of identity and sexuality, it also sets the sandglass of mortality in motion. In his *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1951), Dalí probed the Biblical familial myth further, following the fate of the son cut loose from symbiosis and released into space and time, with the knowledge of his origin and his mortal end as the only co-ordinates in his search for a meaningful sense of existence.

Following the death of his father in 1950, Dalí wore a defensive mask of indifference in public to hide his private grief. Only four years later, when he wrote on the impact of the deaths of people he had known in 'Les Morts et moi', he claimed to have reacted to Lorca's death by exclaiming "¡Olé!", yet he made no mention of his recently deceased father. The real effect of that death is nonetheless immediately, if obliquely, apparent in his work; the luminous Renaissance spaces of the *Madonna of Portlligat* were eclipsed by the heavy Baroque darkness of *Christ of St. John of the Cross*.

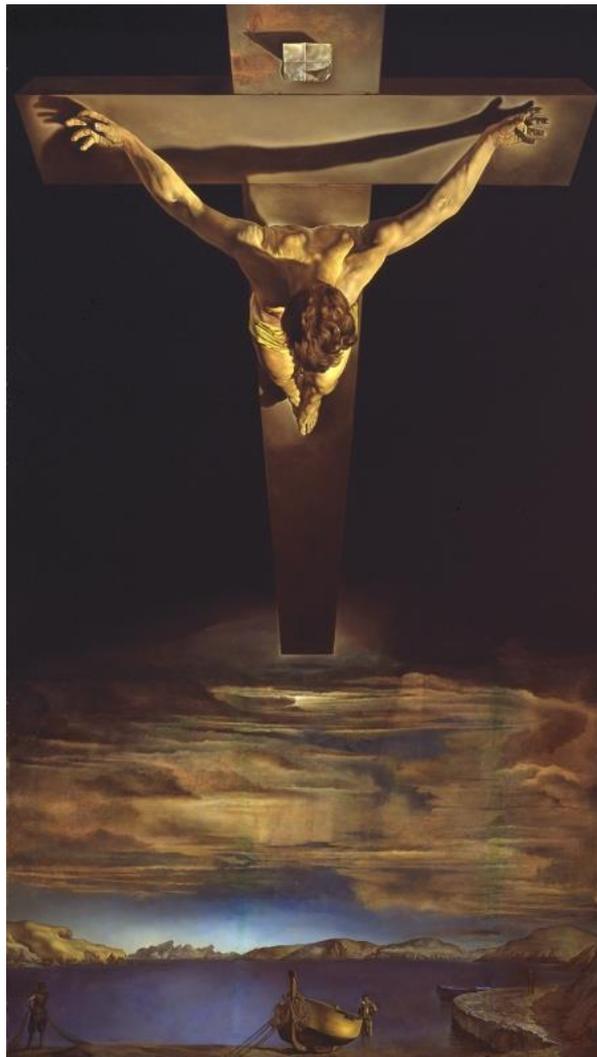


Fig 59
Salvador Dalí
Christ of St. John of the Cross (1951)

Dalí was taking his study of religious meaning seriously, and was accompanied to his 1950 talk, 'Why Was I Sacrilegious, Why Am I Mystic?' by a Professor of Theology, Ramón Roquer. In that lecture, Dalí essayed the ideas on mysticism that he developed in texts over the following year, further exploring the subconscious strata of religious iconography.

Dalí pursued themes explored in the Sebastian and Jerome periods, focussing on the psychology underpinning the representation and contemplation of the mortal body of Christ. His models in religious art transcended any chronological division of Renaissance and Baroque – there were sombre paintings earlier in art history, and luminous ones later. Instead, Dalí sought precedents from the *quiet, ascetic* end of the spectrum of mystical experience and communication, irrespective of era. Grünewald, in Raphael's time, shouted his message in terms that permitted no latitude of interpretation, as did Bernini later, contemporaneously with the ascetic Zurbarán. The few whispered words of Raphael or Zurbarán, on the other hand, allow meaning to generate in the mind of the subjective contemplator.

I propose the categories of quiet and ecstatic mysticism as heuristically useful for an understanding of the particular characteristics of Christography that entered Dalí's thoughts. These forms of creative contemplation make clear the continuity of Dalí's concerns from earlier periods.

Next, I examine the geometry of meaningful relationship in Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, which I define as "mystic perspective", and in which the lessons of classical and religious art gave form to psychologically motivated composition.

Finally, I introduce an unsuspected source of the *Christ*, which brings together strands of thought extending through Dalí's life and art.

8.1 Ecstatic and Quiet Mysticism

As early as August 1948, Dalí told an interviewer that he was working on a Christ.¹ No study for a Christ as early as this has come to light, but the seeds of his Crucifixions were sown in his mind. It took another year or two for Dalí to find a treatment of the subject which would be personally meaningful and yet consistent with the classicism he was pursuing. He said that he found the solution in a drawing by St. John of the Cross, shown to him by Father Bruno de Jesús-Marie, who had first reproduced it in 1929.² However, it was not so much John's drawing which served as a pictorial model – the composition is completely different to Dalí's painting – as the conversations around it and the paths of thought that it opened up that helped Dalí arrive at his composition.

Dalí was no stranger to the poetry of St. John of the Cross, to which he was introduced by Lorca, as he wrote in his *Diary of a Genius* in 1952.³ In that text, Dalí invoked the saint, along with St. Augustine, William Tell and others, to demonstrate that his "present nuclear mysticism [was] merely the fruit, inspired by the Holy Ghost, of the demoniacal and Surrealist experiments of the first part of my life." St. John's search for transcendence was particularly attractive in the war years, and several books were published that could have revived Dalí's interest in him, and in mysticism.⁴

Another mystic, St. Teresa, who is inextricably linked to John of the Cross as a fellow reformer of the Carmelites, had long been in Dalí's thoughts, and in December 1948, shortly after he had visited Rome, Dalí told an interviewer that he was heading to Ávila to film *The Life of St. Teresa*.⁵ By 1949, Dalí had begun to formulate the "neomysticism" of his projected film, *The Wheelbarrow of Flesh*, which would "integrate into realism, in general, the mystical tradition, which is typical of the spirit of Spain." Dalí's film would entail a passage "from fetishistic, delirious, almost pathological love for a real object, to religious sentiment."⁶ Robert Descharnes was drawn into the project when he met Dalí in 1954, and although the film was never completed, Dalí discussed his conception of mysticism with Descharnes, who wrote – in a text approved by the artist – that "Dalí, man without faith, sought solutions to spiritual questions in 'the ascetic, mystic Spanish soul'."⁷

Descharnes' assessment situates Dalí at the quiet, contemplative end of the sliding scale of mystic experience, in relation to other *ecstatic* manifestations – a spectrum which spans the broad range of art described as Baroque. The "ascetic" models for Christ Crucified that Dalí selected from under the Baroque umbrella help us to define the aspects of mysticism that he considered relevant to his integration of Surrealism and Theology. His preferences, closer to models adhering to the classical canon of harmony than to Mannerist expression, point back to the same need for control in the face of the temptations of desire that he had shown in his Sebastian period, or the ascetic control of mental distractions in the Jerome period.

In 1950 came the timely publication of Ernst Gombrich's *The Story of Art*, which seems to have helped Dalí orient his steps, as he retraced art history, and recovered memories of paintings he had known, and places he had seen – sources which had acquired a personal, Proustian patina in his mind. Dalí had several copies of this book in his library when he died, and we should assume that at least one was acquired in its year of publication, especially as Gombrich ended his story with a discussion of Dalí's double images. The book's chronological structure begged the question: after Surrealism, what next?



Fig 60
St. John of the Cross
'Christ on the Cross'

Two landmark works described by Gombrich are significant to the direction Dalí was taking in 1950, not least for the contrasts between the art historian's views on them and those of the artist. Both represent the human body at the frontier of the corporeal and the spiritual; both are dramatic images of transcendence – one of sexuality, the other of mortality. The protagonist of one is male – the Crucified Christ in the *Isenheim Altarpiece*.⁸ The other is female – the Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Ávila, in Bernini's sculpted *Vision of St. Teresa*, which Dalí knew from his visits to Rome in the 1930s, and with which he was reacquainted in 1948.⁹

Gombrich's book also inadvertently contained reminders of Lorca, who had been so important in shaping Dalí's thoughts on art, religion, mysticism and death. Most obviously, Lorca was the masked protagonist of the painting which was the focus of Gombrich's discussion of Dalí, *Apparition of Face and Fruit-Bowl on a Beach* (1938).¹⁰ Also, Gombrich's description of the power of Bernini's *St. Teresa* as an integral element of the interior of a Baroque church matched Lorca's evocation of the “aroma of antique pomp” of the Catholic mass that was so important to his religious experience. Gombrich wrote that interiors of Baroque churches cannot be understood or judged unless we “visualise them as the framework for the splendid ritual of the Roman Church, unless we have seen them during High Mass”.¹¹

Bernini's model of ecstatic mystic experience is based, in Gombrich's words, on Teresa's description of “a moment of heavenly rapture, when an angel of the Lord pierced her heart with a golden flaming arrow, filling her with pain and yet with immeasurable bliss.”¹² Gombrich's description reveals nothing of the concealed meanings of Teresa's orgasmic moment, although he cannot have missed them – after all, Gombrich grew up in Vienna while Freud was active there, and later published several books on psychology and art. Nonetheless, Freud warned that in art, the unconscious should be kept so; we should respect the essential role of sublimation in art. Perhaps Gombrich deliberately respected Teresa's belief in the purity of her mystic experience, and kept art history, and art, in their proper sublimated forms: latent meanings should remain subterranean – the *art* is in their manifestation.

Even allowing for the lack of clarity in Freud's concept of sublimation, the erotic substrata of Bernini's statue were perfectly apparent to Dalí. How could the author of 'Sant Sebastià', whose understanding of the Spanish mystics was shaped in debates with Lorca, not have been alert to the suggestions of the arrow penetrating Teresa's flesh, filling her with pain and bliss?

Dalí already exposed the easy slippage between spiritual and erotic ecstasy in a collage he compiled in 1933, at the zenith of his Surrealist career, entitled 'The Phenomenon of Ecstasy' and accompanied by a short text on that phenomenon.¹³ These, and another article, 'On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of *Modern Style Architecture*', appeared in the same issue of *Minotaure* as André Breton's 'The Automatic Message', in which Breton tentatively admitted the possibility within Surrealism of an analogy between mysticism and hysteria – both are encompassed by the hallucinatory, spontaneous, voluntary or directed visions, or “verbal impulse” that he discusses. Breton wrote that because she “saw her wooden cross transform itself into a crucifix of precious stones, and accepted this vision as both *imagined* and *sensory*, Teresa of Ávila could be credited with having ordained this line on which mediums and poets are situated.”¹⁴ Nevertheless, Breton stops short of granting St. Teresa's ecstatic vision any worth because “she is still no more than a saint”.¹⁵

Regarding the appeal of religious mysticism, other Surrealists were less intransigent than Breton. For example, Werner Spies interprets a poster designed by Max Ernst in 1931 as a “link to Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*,” and suggests a way in which Teresa could have appealed to the Surrealists.

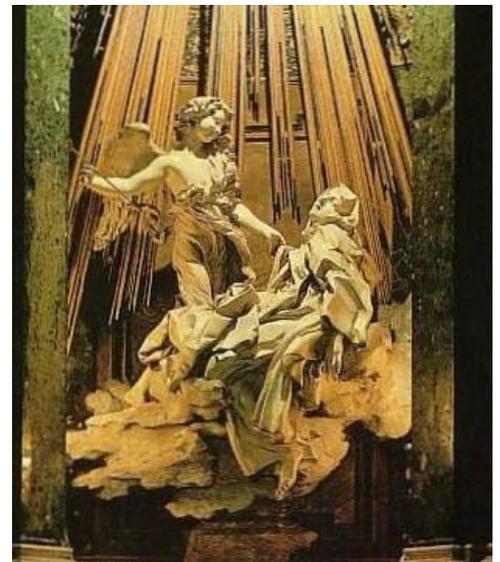


Fig 61
Bernini
Vision of St. Teresa

The connection between Ernst and Bernini, Spies writes, “appears even stronger when we recall Jacob Burckhardt’s inability to accept Bernini’s sculpture, his reaction of disgust at its psychopathological aspect, which was precisely, to the Surrealists, a seal of quality.”¹⁶

When Breton returned to Paris in 1947, a year ahead of Dalí, he organised an *International Surrealist Exhibition*.¹⁷ Any nostalgic tolerance of Dalí by Breton had dissolved into personal animosity and he was not invited to participate but, among the other dispersed survivors of the pre-war movement, there were others who had tempered their Surrealism with a new sympathy for religion.¹⁸ In 1948, for example, Miró related that after moving to Palma de Mallorca at the end of the Spanish Civil War, he would sit alone in the cathedral every day, but felt “enormously enriched during this period of solitude. I read all the time: St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, and poetry – Mallarmé, Rimbaud. It was an ascetic existence: only work.”¹⁹ Evidently, the Spanish mystics were suited to the personal and political moment for Miró who, according to the editor of his correspondence, craved “a strong discipline of mind and body in order to achieve another state, another vision, another experience of the world,” as he always had as a Surrealist.²⁰ While Miró sought introspective solitude, Dalí wanted his religious works to demarcate his territory in a confrontational defiance of Breton, especially after the latter's public denouncement of Dalí's conversion in 1950.

The second painting that Gombrich wrote on at length – the central *Crucifixion* panel of Grünewald's *Isenheim Altarpiece* – is from an earlier period than the Spanish mystic saints, but had associative threads connecting it to the Baroque, to Dalí's years in Madrid, and to Surrealism. It was greatly admired by Max Ernst, and it was even admired by the resolutely atheist Buñuel, who placed a reproduction of it favourably in *Belle de Jour* (1967), in contrast to the disdain he showed by placing a reproduction of Dalí's *Christ on a police inspector's desk* in *Cela s'appelle l'Aurore* (1955).

Buñuel intended to adapt J-K. Huysmans' *Là-bas* to film, in which there is a stunning description of the painting which transcends religious meaning and suited the humanistic empathy with Man's suffering that distinguished Buñuel from Dalí. Huysmans' expressionistic description of Grünewald's *Crucifixion* contrasts with Dalí's “quietistic” *Christ*, and is followed by Huysmans' interpretation of the painting's work of sublimation; he describes Durtal's reaction to the painting: “In this picture was revealed the masterpiece of an art having one fixed aim and object, to represent the invisible and the tangible, to make manifest the lamentable uncleanness of the body, to sublimate the infinite distress of the soul.”²¹

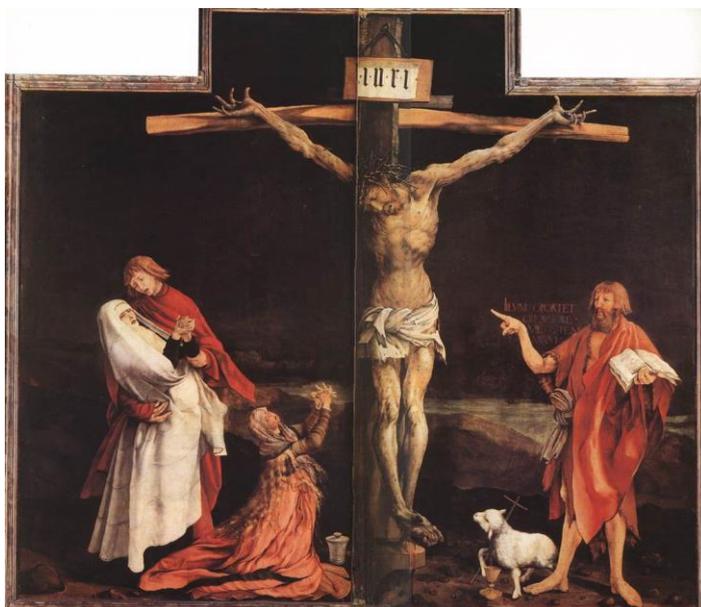


Fig 62
Grünewald
The Isenheim Altarpiece: Crucifixion

Gombrich's discussion of Grünewald's painting arrived in time to have a bearing on Dalí's thoughts regarding another painting of Christ Crucified that was receiving much attention in the Spanish press in 1950, and which prompted some to accuse Dalí of plagiarism when he showed his version in 1951.²² In 1948, the National Exhibition of Fine Art in Madrid showed the first of several *Christs* painted by Benito Prieto Coussent, who joined the San Fernando Academy a year after Dalí, and won several prizes there.²³ Following the success of this *Christ*, it was exhibited at the Galerías Layetanas in Barcelona, along with works by Zurbarán, Pedro Berruguete, Juan de Flandes, and Luís Morales. Dalí saw it at one of these exhibitions before he visited the Prado in December 1948, shortly after returning to Spain, and commented that it was "nothing great, but it has a lot of energy."²⁴ The accusations of plagiarism, and Dalí's remark on the "energy" of Prieto Coussent's painting, invite a comparison between the approaches of the two artists.²⁵ Gombrich's description of Grünewald's painting – published in 1950, smuggled between the two artists' versions – illustrates the contrast between them:

Art for [Grünewald] did not consist in the search for the hidden laws of beauty – for him it could have only one aim, the aim of all religious art in the Middle Ages – that of providing a sermon in pictures, of proclaiming the sacred truths as taught by the Church. The central panel of the Isenheim altar shows that he sacrificed all other considerations to this one overriding aim.²⁶



Fig 63
Benito Prieto Coussent
Christ

Rather than plagiarising, Dalí seems to have taken Prieto Coussent's picture – which, like Grünewald's, provides a sermon on the ugliness of suffering – as an example of how *not* to paint his own Christ. The similarities are few and superficial, and are common to their Spanish Baroque predecessors – both show a jaundiced Christ against a black background, with his head hanging forward. But it is an exaggerated, staged posture of pain and suffering that weighs down the head of Prieto Coussent's, rather than the gravity – in both senses of the word – that Dalí sought to depict.

Dalí also knew Lorca's thoughts on Grünewald in his first published book, *Impresiones y paisajes* (1918), where Lorca wrote at great length on the realistic, carved wooden statues that worshippers visit in Spanish churches, and parade during Holy Week in commemoration of the crucifixion. Grünewald's Christ was the paradigmatic image of suffering Man, an image designed to impress fear and pity upon common folk. Grünewald did this most effectively, wrote Lorca, but was nonetheless limited by the mundane limitations of his task: the Man was too much a man. These reflections perhaps give an idea of Lorca's views in discussions with Dalí, who was surely reminded of them when Lorca's lost poem 'Crucifixión' was published in 1950.²⁷ In any case, when Dalí painted *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, he faced the challenge that Lorca had issued in 1918:

nobody can represent the vanquished but glorious God, because there is no room in any human brain for such a gigantic conception..., and so all Christs are the crucified man, with the same expression as any other being would wear if he died in such terrible torment.²⁸

Dalí's *Christ* aims for the "perfection" that Lorca admired in the "powerful Christs, [...] without wounds, very pale and heavy [...] in which the artist knew to infuse a cold, model's nudity, [which] are never the object of popular devotion." Lorca, for once, disdained popular appeal, as did Dalí when he dismissed the expressionist manner that Pietro Coussent had employed. The coldness that Lorca surprisingly thought best suited to the subject – as it best facilitates the "gigantic conception" of the "vanquished but glorious God" – is something that he might also have defended in the discussions with Dalí that were the platform for the aesthetics of Sebastian.

Lorca noted that, for a period, Spanish artists competed to express Christ's passion by straining his eyes upwards, but that the most successful crucifixions were those that showed "that certain abandonment to the irremediable expressed in the positioning of the tilted heads, impregnated with that invisible crepuscular whiteness which death gives, because death is always mystical."²⁹

Lorca was writing about carved images, but must have had Velázquez's painting in the Prado in mind. Dalí, at least, would have thought of Velázquez when he read Lorca's book. Lorca was never far from Dalí's thoughts, and Dalí must often have reread him – judging by the frequency with which he quoted Lorca's poetry – so we should take his friend's opinions on crucifixions into consideration. How then, does Dalí's representation of Christ's "abandonment to the irremediable" sit with his old divergence from Lorca regarding St. Sebastian? Did Dalí intend to depict defeated resignation, or a calm acceptance of destiny that transcends death? What, in short, is the nature of Dalí's "mysticism"? Dalí gave an interesting hint to Selden Rodman in 1959: "I think I'm a mystic painter. I like Catholicism, but not so much Christianity."³⁰

In contrast to the ecstatic spasm of Bernini's *St. Teresa*, we might think of Dalí's "tragic mysticism", as Giménez-Frontín has called it.³¹ The term recalls the title of Miguel de Unamuno's trawl through all Philosophy in search of pessimism, *The Tragic Sense of Life* (1912).³² Dalí often quoted Unamuno in the period of his theological Surrealism, and he is a necessary reference for any study of Spanish mysticism.³³ Unamuno's ideas on mysticism are sprinkled through that book, but are better considered in their condensed form, in an essay written shortly before it, 'Spanish Mysticism', which asserts the uniqueness of this, the truly representative philosophy of the Spanish people.³⁴ Unlike other philosophical systems, says Unamuno, it is an "anti-speculative, pragmatic phenomenon", based on experience, meditation on that experience, and the inductive method, to discover theoretical truths.³⁵

Lorca collected Unamuno's essays as they were published in the 1920s, and he probably guided Dalí through Unamuno's appreciation of introspective, "inductive" Spanish mysticism as an ally against the tragedy of human life.³⁶ Unamuno tried to clarify this by differentiating the "sensed theology" of mysticism from the merely "thought theology" of Thomist scholasticism. Dalí asserted several times that he was an anti-Thomist, so we might assume a "sensed theology" underlay Dalí's "tragic", "inductive" mysticism – Catholic, but free from the attempted rationality of Christian thought.

Christ of St. John of the Cross thus rests on Dalí's inductive observation of affective phenomena, synthesised in symbolic form into his personal mythology. There is no gesticulatory drama narrating Christ's passion as an event that happened at a certain time, in a certain place. Rather, Dalí represents

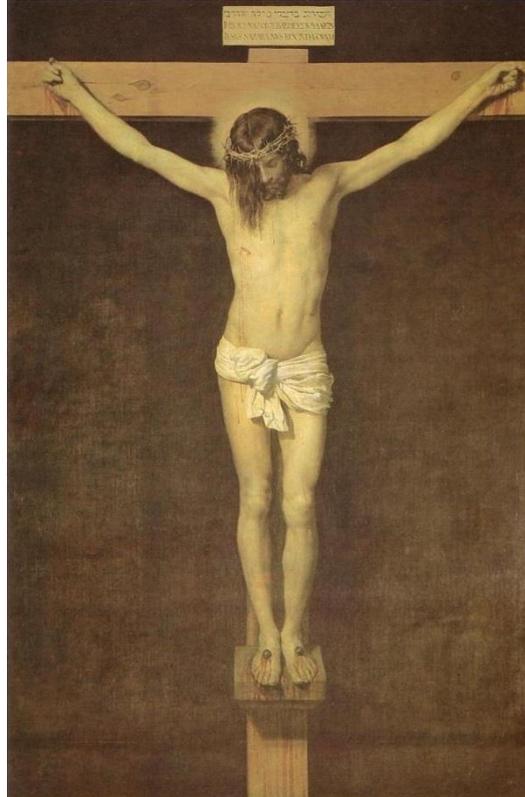


Fig 64
Diego Velázquez
Christ Crucified

what can be induced about the universal tragedy of life, intending to recuperate the “synthesis”, “cosmogony”, and “faith” that he sensed were lacking.³⁷

Unamuno's essay also helps explain why Dalí thought mysticism compatible with Surrealism, not only as ecstatic, mediumistic automatism, as Breton might have allowed it a little consideration, but in a sense closer to Dalí's hyper-interpretative, paranoiac-critical method. In a scribbled note, Unamuno suggested a way to understand mysticism that might have given Breton food for thought. He pondered that rationalism and mysticism might be incompatible when judged as philosophy, but in the light of positivist religion, mysticism is rationalism as applied to a “sphere situated above reason.”³⁸

In November 1951, as Dalí was putting the finishing touches to his *Christ*, he explained that what distinguished Spanish painting was its “mysticism and realism.”³⁹ At the painting's first showing, Dalí told Tom Honeyman – who eventually bought it for the Glasgow Art Gallery – that he had Zurbarán in mind when he painted it, and there is certainly something of Zurbarán in the clearly defined chiaroscuro of yellow-lit flesh against a dark sky.⁴⁰ He later expanded on the appeal of Zurbarán, beyond his technique:

All mysticism of good quality is reality. There is no more mystical painter than Zurbarán and, nevertheless, nobody more realist than Zurbarán. In a still life by Zurbarán there is a sort of animal and transcendental repercussion which transforms each brushstroke into a prayer.⁴¹

Zurbarán represents an ascetic tendency far from the hysterical rapture of Bernini's *St. Teresa*; Moffitt calls Zurbarán the “high water-mark of the strong ‘quietistic’ directions within the Spanish Baroque.”⁴² Dalí often named Zurbarán during his “mystic” period, and the debt became obvious in *Gala Contemplating 'Corpus Hypercubus'* (1954), and explicit in *Skull of Zurbarán* (1956), which reprise the iconography of the contemplation of death that infused Dalí's aesthetics of Jerome.

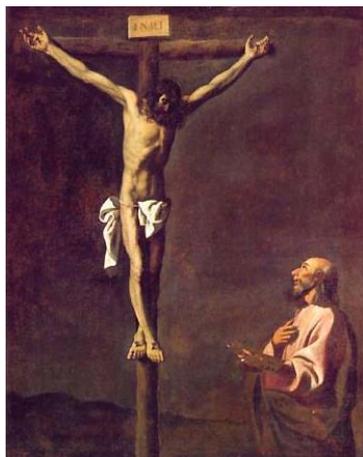


Fig 66
Francisco de Zurbarán,
St. Luke as a Painter before the Crucified Christ



Fig 65
Salvador Dalí
The Ecumenical Council, detail (1960)

Dalí seems also to have referred directly to Zurbarán's painting in the Prado, *St. Luke as a Painter before the Crucified Christ* – with a nod towards Velázquez's *Las Meninas* – when he portrayed himself as Luke before a blank canvas in *The Ecumenical Council* (1960).⁴³ In that painting, the mother-figure Gala holds a cross over Dalí, drawing together the strands of origin, identity and mortality that the narrative of 1949-52 had addressed.

With the step taken from the *Madonna of Portlligat* to the *Christ of St. John of the Cross* – shifting the focus from joyous birth to sombre mortality – Dalí affirmed the “quietistic” approach to representing and contemplating the fundamental enigmas of origin and identity that he had treated less subtly in his Surrealism. Dalí now chose the type of Christ Crucified that, as Jeffett says, “stripped away the narrative anecdote of earlier treatments of the subject, removing the witnesses from the scene and confronting the viewer with the immediacy of Christ's death.”⁴⁴ This, notwithstanding the presence of three small figures at the bottom of the painting, to which I shall return, and who are, in any case, detached from the action of crucifixion.

It might seem that the relevance of these considerations to Dalí is contradicted by his *Corpus Hypercubus*, which he began eighteen months after finishing *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, and in which the observing Gala is as much a protagonist as the Christ who turns his face away. However, Gala is not presented as involved in the action of the crucifixion, as Mary, witnessing the death of her son. As Adès has written, she is instead “positioned as contemplative mystic rather than mourner.”⁴⁵ This is still the “quietistic” presentation that does not moralise or sermonise. We might take Gala's contemplation into consideration in our own act of contemplation, but her presence does not interfere with the viewing experience, it does not preach the appropriate reaction.

In 1947, just as Dalí was turning to religious themes, and just before he was reacquainted with Velázquez's painting in the Prado, the second edition of Unamuno's poem *The Christ of Velázquez* [1920] was published. As confirmation of the place of Velázquez in Dalí's thoughts, one of the figures Dalí appended to *Christ of St. John of the Cross* was copied from a sketch by that artist.⁴⁶ Dalí, or at least Lorca, must have already read the poem during their time in Madrid, and it can have contributed to their experience of Velázquez's painting and their discussions on religion and its representation. Velázquez's artistic progression spanned the objective and the subjective observation of physical and psychic phenomena, from the naturalistic representation of fish, eggs and faces, to more “inductive”, or “cognitive” modes of representation, culminating in the discourse on specular meditation in which *Las Meninas* invites the observer to participate.

Unamuno meant his poem to mimic the meditative, “quietistic” and tragic mysticism proper to the contemplation of Christ Crucified, focusing in turn on the parts of Velázquez's painting: arms, torso, soul – for this is subjective observation from a position of faith that admits the soul, too, as real. In the first lines of his poem, which quote John 16:19, Unamuno ascribes processes of interior vision and meditation to Velázquez's *Christ*:

“Soon the world shall not see me,
but you shall see me, because I live
and you shall live”, you said; and see: the eyes
of faith fasten upon you in the depths of the soul,
and by virtue of art we made you visible in form.⁴⁷

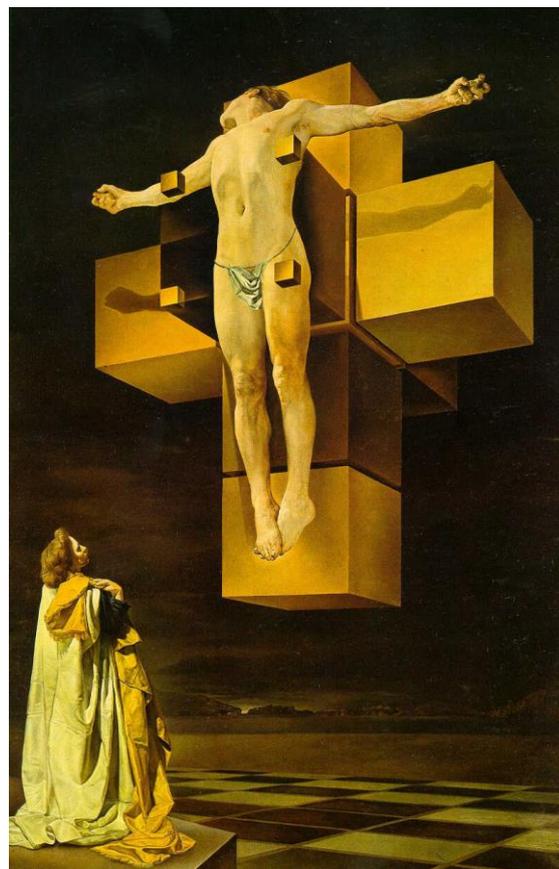


Fig 67
Salvador Dalí
Corpus Hypercubus (1954)

Later in the poem, Unamuno draws attention to the introspective attitude Velázquez gave his Christ: “What are You thinking of, dead, my Christ? [...] You look within Yourself, where lies the kingdom of God.”⁴⁸ Introspection was even more clearly represented by Dalí, who hid Christ's face while displaying his mortal and sexual body as if under the spotlights of an anatomy class in an art academy or a medical school. Dalí invites us to examine the surface of his introspective Christ, and ask questions that pierce the surface like a scalpel, questions like those Unamuno asked of Velázquez's introspector.

Unlike Crucifixions at the ecstatic end of the mystic scale, the sexual potential of *Christ of St. John of the Cross* is nullified: Christ is almost naked, but his body is constrained by the cold geometry of the composition. The irony that went with the surgical aesthetics of Sebastian is that of the living body knowing itself mortal – the irony of faith shackled to science. Christ awaits his death, but does so unharmed and unperturbed, and his thoughts are directed inwards.

Four years later, Dalí did show the face of Christ in the *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* (1955-6) – another scene fixed by a strict geometry. This *aseptic* scene is so free from any indication of putrefaction that not only is the beardless Jesus desexualised and self-assuredly alive – if translucent – but is stripped of authority and personality; Dalí had often used the beard as a marker of virility which has its authority subverted and mocked by association with the *vagina dentata*. There is none of that in this snapshot of a well-groomed metrosexual enjoying a sandwich with his friends. Neither is there any introspection or doubt in his hieroglyphic gesture – one hand on his chest, the other pointed up to the outstretched arms of his awaiting father.



Fig 68
Salvador Dalí
The Sacrament of the Last Supper (1956)

Dalí's insistence on the beauty of *Christ of St John of the Cross* celebrates a transcendence of the tragic condition of man's existence, about which the painter's anxieties had subsided since the period of St. Sebastian. No equivocal eroticism is intimated by a writhing *contrapposto*, suggesting pain that might be pleasure.⁴⁹ Instead, he reprised the steadfastness of his classical, Roman Sebastian, showing death devoid of pain and drama: intact, aseptic and ascetic... “calm and concentrated like a blind statue”.⁵⁰

Dalí considered, but rejected, an alternative, symbolic treatment of the body of his Christ that would have signalled his acknowledgement of the emotive themes that lay latent beneath the surface, with red carnations representing gushing blood, and three jasmine flowers issuing from the wound in Jesus's side.⁵¹ Instead, he opted for pristine beauty. In the polished finish of Dalí's painting, it is the exterior perfection of Christ's body that affirms glory over suffering, in a way that would have pleased Lorca, whose ideal was the “vanquished but glorious God”. Dalí spoke of his “beautiful Christ, like God, who he is”, while he was painting it.⁵² Eight years later, he went into more detail in an interview with Selden Rodman:

I consider that the most human and the most divine Christ, the most extraordinary work of art in the field of Christs is Velázquez's *Christ*. And the worst in the world is that by Grünewald. [...] Velázquez expresses the most divine emotions and sentiments and Grünewald the weakest and ugliest ones, the most bestial. [...] Velázquez [...] expressed the beauty of God, and the image of this beauty of God is millions and millions times more significant than the beauty of humans, especially when, at the same time, Velázquez's image reflects the sublime beauty of the tragedy of the Incarnation.⁵³

Dalí also elaborated on the difference between the repulsive spectacle of human suffering and the beauty that is present in transcendent tragedy.

Tragedy is a thousand times more violent, more impressive, more resounding and more metaphysical when it is presented in a very beautiful body. Christ's sacrifice is more moving in Velázquez because the body of his Christ is extremely handsome and young. But if the same tragedy were to have taken place in a very ugly human body, its significance would have ended up reduced. Repulsion is the opposite of tragedy. [...] I never represent human suffering. It's not a theme that interests me, but I recognise it in Christ.⁵⁴

Notes

- ¹ A. Pastor-Foraster, 'Salvador Dalí habla para *Ruta*', Girona; *Ruta*; August 1948, in Mas, 66-9. Dalí told Pastor-Foraster that he was following the "mystical trajectory of St. Teresa and St. Francis of Assisi".
- ² Father Bruno's account on the verso of the reproduction of Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, in the *Magie des extrêmes* issue of *Études Carmélitaines*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952, between pp. 168 and 169. The photograph of St. John's drawing was provided by Bruno's fellow Carmelites in Ávila. Morse (90) reproduces studies for a Christ dated 1949-50, but it is safe to say that any that were inspired by St. John's drawing came after Dalí's conversation with Father Bruno in 1950. Father Bruno had discovered the drawing in 1926.
- ³ *Diary of a Genius*, 23.
- ⁴ Bruno also published *Vie d'amour de saint Jean de la Croix* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1936); R. P. Maréchal published *Études sur la psychologie des mystiques* (Brussels and Paris: 1937), which deepened mysticism's appeal to the Surrealist mindset, and Dámaso Alonso published an edition of *La poesía de San Juan de la Cruz* (Madrid: 1942).
- ⁵ 'Vis a vis. Salvador Dalí, Barcelona; *El Correo Catalán*, 5th December 1948, in Mas, 72-4. By September 1951, Dalí believed his film would star Greta Garbo (Enrique Rubio, 'Hay que recuperar a Picasso y a Gibraltar, que ambos son españoles', Barcelona; *Solidaridad Nacional*; 15th September 1951, in Mas, 101-3).
- ⁶ Manuel del Arco, 'El neomisticismo a la pantalla del brazo de Salvador Dalí' Barcelona; *Diario de Barcelona*, 24th July 1949, in Mas, 81-2. Dalí differentiated his film from Rossini's Italian neorealism.
- ⁷ *WM*, 322. Descharnes worked on several film projects with him, none of which came to fruition.
- ⁸ The identity of the painter of the *Isenheim Altarpiece* is disputed, as Gombrich acknowledges, suggesting Mathis Gothard Nithard as a likely alternative, but I follow him and wider convention in referring to the artist as Matthias Grünewald.
- ⁹ Bernini's *Vision of St. Teresa* was made for the altar of a side chapel in a small Roman church, Sta Maria della Vittoria, erected between 1644 and 1647.
- ¹⁰ See Gibson 1997, 385-6.
- ¹¹ Gombrich 1984 [1950], 345. For Lorca, see 'Passion Play' in Part I.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ 'The Phenomenon of Ecstasy', published in *Minotaure*, 3-4, 12th December 1933, Text, p. 76. Collage, p. 77.
- ¹⁴ 'The Automatic Message', *What is Surrealism?*, 97-109. Breton also mentions Leonardo's advice to stare at an old wall, with perhaps a barbed reference to Dalí's paranoiac-critical method: "Whatever references continue to be made to this, one can only say the lesson has been lost."
- ¹⁵ 'On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of *Modern Style Architecture*', and André Breton's 'The Automatic Message' published in *Minotaure*, 3-4, 12th December 1933, Dalí's essay on pp. 69-76. Dalí's essay discusses the Art Nouveau "hysterical sculpture" of women with flowing hair – and now we are firmly within Dalí's conception of the hard and the soft, and the sexuality lurking within. Bernini's sculpture is also composed of sensual curves and folds in hard stone.
- ¹⁶ Spies, 226. The poster, depicting a woman enacting an "hysterical arch" in a shop window, was designed for José Corti's bookshop.
- ¹⁷ 'Before the Curtain', preface to the catalogue of the 1947 second *International Surrealist Exhibition* at the Galerie Maeght in Paris, in *What is Surrealism?*, 273-9. José Pierre quotes Breton's 'Lettre d'invitation aux participants' on the search for "un MYTHE NOUVEAU", Pierre, 23-4. Dalí participated in the first *International Surrealist Exhibition*, in New York, 1942, organised by Breton and Duchamp.
- ¹⁸ See Colin McCabe's 'Introduction' to Bataille, *Eroticism*, vii. In 1943, Sartre attacked Bataille, calling his *Inner Experience*, "new mysticism." Bataille's position, open to the eroticism of religion, and antithetical to Sartre, whose existentialism exasperated Dalí, perhaps help us understand Dalí's shift.
- ¹⁹ Miró was interviewed in February 1948 by James Johnson Sweeney, who had organised the 1941-2 double retrospective exhibition of Dalí and Miró at MoMA in New York. 'Joan Miró; Comment and Interview', *Partisan Review*, New York, February 1948, in Rowell, 207-11. Miró later affirmed that his favourite writers were the two Spanish mystics, in an interview with Rafael Santos Torroella, *Correo Literario*, March 1951: see Rowell, 227.
- ²⁰ Margit Rowell, 'Introduction' to *Joan Miró: Selected Writings and Interviews*, 17. Rowell calls the writings of the two saints "among the most ambiguous expressions of the mystical experience in the history of sacred literature, in which eroticism, sensuality, and spirituality are intertwined."

²¹ J.-K. Huysmans, *Là-bas*, (1891), translated by A. Allinson, London; Fortune Press; 1937, quoted in *The Penguin Book of Art Writing*, edited by Martin Gayford and Karen Wright, Harmondsworth; Penguin; 1998, 462-4. The description of Grünewald's Crucifixion by Huysmans is worth quoting at length:

Long and lean, almost dragged from their sockets, the two arms of the Christ seemed pinioned from shoulder to wrist by the cords of the contracted muscles. The armpit was collapsed and cracking under the strain. The hands hung opened wide, the thin fingers contorted in a wild gesture half of reproach. The chest quivered convulsively, plastered with congealed sweat. The torso was barred in circles of ridge and furrow by the cage of the sunken ribs. The flesh was tumefied, stained and blackened, spotted with insect bites, pitted as if with pinpricks by the tips of the rods that, breaking off under the skin, still showed the surface pierced here and there by splinters. / Decomposition had set in; from the open wound in the side poured a thicker stream, flooding the hip with blood that matched in colour the deep red juice of the mulberry. Outflows of pinkish serum, rivulets of milky lymph, watery discharges like white moselle wine, trickled from the bosom and soaked the belly, below which was loosely bound a dripping loincloth. Lower down, the knees, locked tight together, brought the kneecaps into violent contact, while the relaxed legs sank helplessly to the feet, which, pressed one upon the other, stretched long and horrible in full putrefaction, green and ghastly amid torrents of blood. These feet, spongy and curdled, were a grisly spectacle; the swollen flesh rising above the head of the nail, while the shrivelled toes contradicted the imploring gesture of the hands, seeming to be cursing as they clawed with their livid horny nails at the ochreous soil [...]. Above this putrefying body the head showed a monstrously exaggerated bulk, chapleted with a disordered crown of thorns, it hung drooping, one haggard eye half opened with a shuddering gaze of pain and terror. The face was rugged, the forehead fleshless, the cheeks parched, while the mouth, unhinged, grinned with jaws contorted by the spasms of atrocious suffering.

²² Félix Ros, '¡Dalí visita el Museo del Prado!', Madrid; *La Tarde*, 14th December 1948, in Mas, 75-80.

²³ The *Christ* won third prize at the Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes in Madrid, 1948. See a biography of Prieto Coussent (Lugo, 1907 – Granada, 2001) at www.prieto-coussent.com

²⁴ Félix Ros, '¡Dalí visita el Museo del Prado!', Madrid; *La Tarde*, 14th December 1948, in Mas, 75-80. Anecdotes relating to the influence of Prieto Coussent's *Christ* on Dalí are still current in his adopted home town of Padul, Granada. See <http://www.granadahoy.com/article/ocio/16750/prieto/coussentcreador/fuerzas.html>, and <http://www.elpadul.es/patrimonio/ld03.htm> for Dalí's purported remark on Prieto Coussent's *Christ*: "In this Christ, the torso could have been painted by Velázquez, the drapes, Zurbarán. This painting is a blank cheque." Dalí knew the Galerías Layetanas well – it is where Salvat-Papasseit had a bookshop in the 1920s.

²⁵ The accusations might also have played a part in Dalí's opinion on plagiarism, as expressed in his talk, 'Picasso y yo,' in 1951: "I have always known that all revelation is not interesting because it revolutionises, but, on the contrary, because through it one manages to recuperate living tradition, hidden beneath the dust of false tradition, the BUREAUCRATIC ROUTINES of the spirit. Eugenio d'Ors had already said it in lapidary style: 'Everything that is not tradition is plagiarism'." ('Picasso y yo', Dalí's written version published in *Mundo Hispánico*, no. 46 January 1952, 37-42. In *¿Por qué...?*, 228-32).

²⁶ Gombrich 1984 [1950], 269-70.

²⁷ Lorca's 'Crucifixión' was published in *Planas de Poesía* (Las Palmas), and later incorporated into *Obras Completas*, with the title 'La Luna no pudo detenerse al fin.' It was written in New York in 1929, and so corresponds to a moment of tension in Dalí's relationship with Lorca. It had been intended for inclusion in *Poet in New York*, but was misplaced by Miguel Benítez Inglott, who had the only copy, and has since been reincorporated.

²⁸ Lorca, 'Los Cristos', in *Impresiones y paisajes* (1918). Lorca wrote, "Perfection is never the object of passion, what raises questions and troubles the masses is expression." My translation of the Spanish original at http://federicogarcialorca.net/obras_lorca/impresiones_y_paisajes.htm.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ 'Dalí the great?', Philadelphia; *Controversy*; May 1959, in Mas, 130-42. To set Dalí's views on Catholicism and Christianity in context, Dalí was in the middle of his work on an edition of the *The Apocalypse of St. John*, "illustrated" with a bomb filled with nails, and the following year's presentation piece was *The Ecumenical Council* (1960).

³¹ Giménez-Frontín further describes Dalí's attitude as avant-garde, synthesised with a classicism that is anti-modern in the sense that it had always had a "signifying" or "narrative" intention to present Dalí's "phenomenological reflections" on "the processes of material decomposition, of final death, and – in a parallel fashion – of the experience of sex, understood as the heralding of destruction and death." Giménez-Frontín, 10-11.

³² See Jari Ristiniemi, *Experiential Dialectics: An Inquiry into the Epistemological Status and the Methodological Role of the Experiential Core in Paul Tillich's Systematic Thought*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1987, abstract. I try to describe Dalí's *aesthetic* solution to ontological enquiry in terms of Unamuno's thought in this passage, but it would also be interesting to compare it with Paul Tillich's "systematic theology," which deals with the same areas of threat and transcendence arising from the "experience of Being" as Dalí does – especially in the light of Tillich's scathing assessment of Dalí's *Last Supper* (see note 323). Jari Ristiniemi summarises the basis of Tillich's thought as a dialectic between two types of experience – "the experience of the threat of non-being contrasted with [...] the experience of Being as the overcoming of the threat.

- ³³ For example, Dalí quoted Unamuno to Pauwels: “realism is the coherence of mysticism.” *Passions*, 156.
- ³⁴ Miguel de Unamuno first wrote about mysticism in an essay known to Lorca, and probably Dalí: ‘De mística y humanismo’ (1895), included in *En torno al casticismo*, published by the Residencia de Estudiantes in *Ensayos* (1916). It cites St. Teresa of Ávila, St. John of the Cross and Fray Luis de León, and formed the basis for ‘La mística española’, which adds Kierkegaard, St Ignatius of Loyola, Fray Luis de Granada and Fray Juan de los Ángeles, as well as more recent scholars. Unamuno’s essay ‘La mística española’ was published in the *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, LXXIII:1 (University of Glasgow, January 1996 [c. 1909-12]), pp. 16-28, with a study by Mercedes Tasende and Luis T. González del Valle. It was not dated, but was written for the Biblioteca Internacional de Obras Famosas shortly before Unamuno published *El sentimiento trágico de la vida en los individuos y en los pueblos* (1912), (Tasende and González del Valle, 9).
- ³⁵ Tasende and González del Valle, 7.
- ³⁶ It was Lorca, too who directed Dalí’s attention towards Sts Teresa and John of the Cross, and even before Lorca wrote on Christs Crucified, he wrote poems that he called “místicas.”
- ³⁷ Unamuno uses the term “introspective individualism,” borrowed from Martin A. S. Hume, to refer to an individualism that has little or no metaphysics, that becomes humanism. “Its supreme preoccupation is man, concrete, real, living, individual man and his destiny.” He quotes Menéndez Pelayo: “The mystic proceeds as if God and the soul were alone in the world. ‘La mística española’, 21-2.
- ³⁸ Unamuno scribbled the note in the margin of his copy of a book by von Harnack. See Tasende and González del Valle, 13-4, and n. 15. There is no indication of when he wrote the note.
- ³⁹ Dalí continued, “The end of mysticism is mystic ecstasy. One arrives at mystic ecstasy by way of perfection, by penetration into the abode of the interior castle and, aesthetically, by a ferocious self-inquisition – the most rigorous, architectonic and exhaustive of them all – of mystic vision. [...] I want to integrate the Cubist experience with Luca Pacioli’s divine proportion and sublimate atheist Surrealism, the final residue of dialectical materialism, in the great tradition of mystic and realist painting of Spain.” ‘Picasso y yo’, Dalí’s written version published in *Mundo Hispánico*, no. 46 January 1952, 37-42. In *¿Por qué...?*, 228-32.
- ⁴⁰ See Webster, 166-7, 170-1. Dalí finished *Christ of St. John of the Cross* in December 1951, just in time to be unveiled at the Gallery of Alex Reid & Lefevre, London, 6th December, along with the second *Madonna of Portlligat*.
- ⁴¹ Various interlocutors, ‘Café de redacción con Salvador Dalí’, Madrid; *Pueblo*, 11th November 1964, in Mas, 178-88. My translation.
- ⁴² Moffitt, 93. Moffitt adds that Zurbarán’s “particular intentions are revealed in the *Spiritual Guide* of Miguel de Molinos (1675) in which one reads that ‘the soul gains more in ... prayer, in complete withdrawal of the senses, and in mental power ... than [through] penitent exercises, disciplines, etc’.”
- ⁴³ I thank Dawn Adès for bringing Zurbarán’s painting to my attention.
- ⁴⁴ Jeffett: 2007, 72.
- ⁴⁵ Adès, *Dalí’s Optical Illusions*, 164.
- ⁴⁶ The sketch, a study for Velázquez’s *The Surrender of Breda*, can be seen in Taschen, 1001. Dalí knew Velázquez’s Christ from the Prado, from Gowans, and, he says in the *Secret Life*, from a reproduction by his parents’ bedside.
- ⁴⁷ Unamuno, *El Cristo de Velázquez*, 13. My translation. The Bible quote is a translation of the Spanish used by Unamuno. It is markedly different in accepted English translations of John 16:19. The New International Version (2010), for example, reads, ‘In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me’.
- ⁴⁸ Unamuno, *El Cristo de Velázquez*, 16, 17. My translation.
- ⁴⁹ As Adès has pointed out, Dalí was not moralising by subtracting the erotic from the subject, but exposing it to the light of objectivity. Adès writes that “his religious iconography was in no sense accompanied by a morality, which would inhibit erotic imagery.” Adès, *Dalí’s Optical Illusions*, 164.
- ⁵⁰ See Appendix 1. “But also the rose in the garden where you live. / Always the rose, always, our north and south! / Calm and concentrated like a blind statue, / ignorant of the subterranean struggles it causes.” In 1958, Dalí painted a rose floating against a sky over a low horizon that echoes the composition of *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, titled *Meditative Rose*. Taschen, 1137. The image might also have to do with Unamuno’s comparison of Velázquez’s *Christ Crucified* with a white rose, in *El Cristo de Velázquez*, 32. See below for a fuller discussion of the influence on Dalí of Unamuno’s ideas on mysticism.
- ⁵¹ *Scottish Art Review*, 1951.
- ⁵² ‘Picasso y yo’, talk in Madrid, 11th November 1951. “Because I passed through the experience of Cubism and Surrealism, my Christ does not look like other Christs, without ceasing to be classical. I believe it is, at the same time, the least

expressionist of all those painted in these times. He is a beautiful Christ, like God, who he is." Dalí's written version published in *Mundo Hispánico*, no. 46 January 1952, 37-42. In *¿Por qué...?*, 228-32.

⁵³ Selden Rodman, 'Dalí the great?' *Controversy* (Philadelphia, May 1959, in Mas, 130-42). My translations. Dalí also said the following, worth quoting if only for the humour with which Dalí made his serious points:

I find that the most divine theme for an artist is tragedy. But tragedy with beauty, because tragedy without beauty is not a work of art. I see tragedy in the loveliest works of the Greek age, but it's the transcendental tragedy of God, not, let me repeat, the anecdotal tragedy of a man who struggles to own a refrigerator. [...] There are many different levels of beauty, but if Grünewald's Christ walked down Madison Avenue, everybody would think he were the ugliest man they had ever seen. [...] Velázquez as well as Raphael understood the terrible sacrifice of Christ but they painted it with maximum beauty.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

8.2 Mystic Perspective

Dalí took Freud's observation about Surrealism on board, and reconsidered the ways classical art can give rise to a dynamic viewing experience, within the rationally, mathematically defined parameters of a composition, in which the subconscious is given free reign. Dalí's earlier snapshots of dream imagery, while ostensibly dredged from the subconscious were, in comparison, overdetermined by psychoanalytic interpretation and intention.

*

Dalí made two explanatory diagrams of the *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, with footnotes:

1. In 1950, I had a 'cosmic dream' in which I saw in colour this image, which in my dream represents the 'nucleus of the atom'. This nucleus took on a metaphysical meaning, that I consider 'the very unity of the universe' – Christ! – S. D.
2. When, thanks to the indications of Father Bruno (Carmelite), I saw the Christ drawn by St. John of the Cross, I geometrically resolved a triangle and a circle, which 'aesthetically' summarised all my previous experiments. And I inscribed my Christ within this triangle.¹

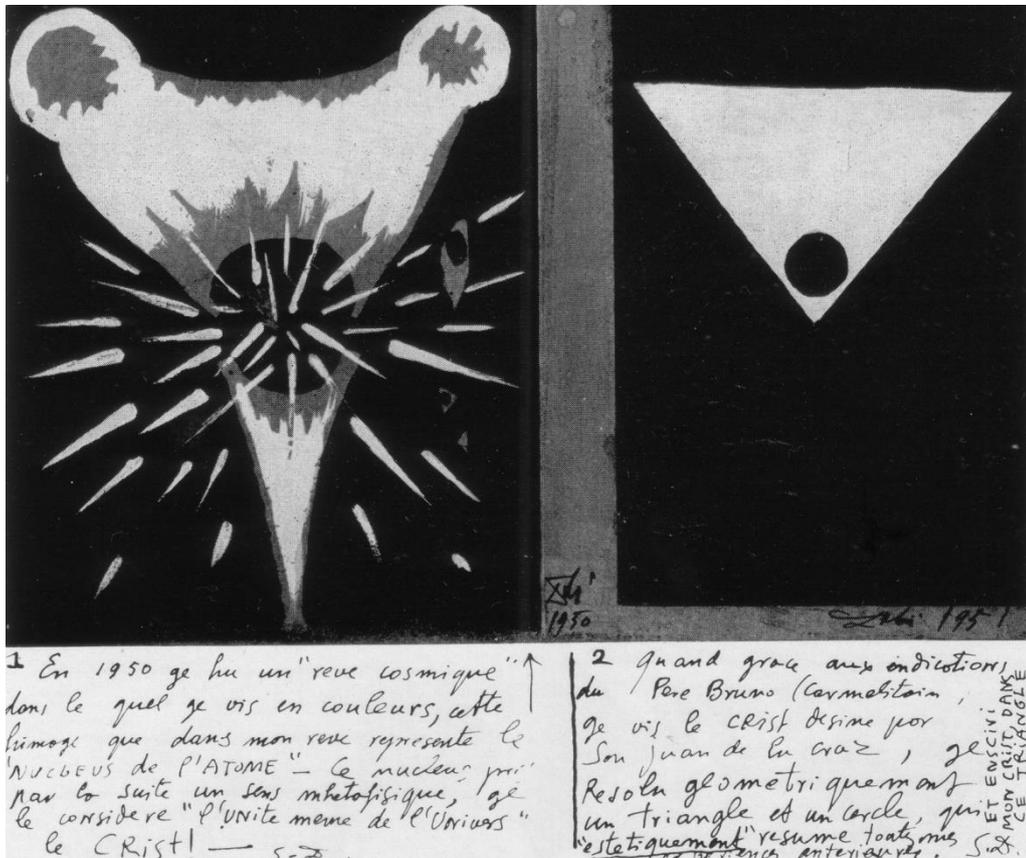


Fig 69
Salvador Dalí
Compositional schema for *Christ of St. John of the Cross* (1950-1)

Dalí's footnotes require further explanation. He acknowledges Father Bruno de Jésus-Marie, whose journal *Études Carmélitaines* had been publishing articles since 1931 that applied a wide range of religious and secular thought to the concerns of the Carmelite Brotherhood, and particularly to explaining and promoting the mysticism of its greatest luminaries, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Ávila. Father Bruno and a diverse range of religious scholars, art historians, anthropologists and psychologists debated themes such as mysticism, hallucination, sublimation, dream, Surrealism, ecstasy, hysteria, martyrdom, sexual abstinence and scientific advances, all of interest to Dalí.

In September 1950, the journal published 'Le coeur surréaliste', one of the articles by Carrouges that incensed the militant Surrealists, more for its publication in a religious journal than its content. Carrouges's article connected Breton and Péret to Plato and Proust, and did not even discuss religion, although it describes Surrealist *amour fou* in a way that implies it is akin to religious faith.² The article that followed it was entitled 'A propos de la Madone de Port-Lligat de Salvador Dalí' by Michel Tapié, and Dalí soon contributed a text of his own.³

The journal may already have come to Dalí's attention in 1946, when Father Bruno published a book *L'Espagne Mystique*. An English translation, *Three Mystics: El Greco, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila*, was published in New York in 1949. The book included an article, 'A propos d'un dessin de St. Jean de la Croix', by René Huyghe, based on a conversation between Huyghe and Dalí's friend José-Maria Sert, who had taken an interest in the drawing and who met Father Bruno towards the end of the war. Sert told Huyghe that St. John had drawn the Crucified Christ as if presented to the lips of a dying person. Father Bruno gave his account of these exchanges on the verso of a reproduction of Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross* in *Études Carmélitaines* in 1952. He pointed out that he had told all of this to Dalí at the start of summer 1950.⁴

In 1951, Dalí arrived at Portlligat having worked out the composition of the Christ painting, which he said had obsessed him for some time.⁵ One study for the painting shows that Dalí did consider using St. John's lateral view, before deciding on the frontal, symmetrical format, inscribed within a geometrical framework.⁶ The Spanish mystic's drawing seems to have provided the intellectual stimulus, rather than the model, for a painting that Dalí thought would be the greatest religious painting he would do.⁷ Such high hopes were surely based on more than a rotation of the viewpoint of St. John's drawing to what is after all a more conventional frontal representation. Notwithstanding the discrepancy in viewpoint, Dalí retained the idea of the precariously tilting Christ. Dalí had most probably discussed this with Sert, who made his own studies for a similarly inclined Christ. Coming shortly after the death of Dalí's father, Sert's observation regarding the cross leaning forward for the moribund observer to kiss may have contributed to the "revelation" of the meaning of St. John's drawing. A similar idea is implied in the *Ecumenical Council*, where Gala offers the cross to Dalí.

Dalí asked Emilio Puignau to draw the cross for his Christ, in correct proportion and perspective.⁸ The allotment of this task to a professional draughtsman corresponded to the pursuit of pseudo-scientific objectivity that went back to the 1920s, as much as to whim or laziness. Already in 1947, in order to elaborate the geometrical schema for *Leda Atomica*, Dalí had enlisted the help of the Rumanian mathematician Matila Ghyka, whose *Geometry of Art and Life* (1946) had revived Dalí's interest in personally meaningful "Blessed Objectivity".⁹ As David Lomas puts it, Ghyka played "Pacioli to Dalí's Leonardo".¹⁰

Ghyka's title gives a clue to how Dalí was thinking about meaningful composition. The hierarchical geometry that set the Madonna's head above others in Piero della Francesca's altarpiece, or that circumscribed mother and child within Raphael's placental tondo, is a sophisticated development of the religious, pictorial language of gesture, symbol and relationship that emerged from the Byzantine and Quattrocento. Dalí explored the Renaissance use of this language in his *50 Secrets*, and then on study trips to Italy at the end of the 1940s.

The geometric composition of the *Christ of St. John of the Cross* reflects Dalí's serious concern for the philosophical implications of viewpoint, proportion and perspective. It is enlightening to compare it with Leonardo's famous drawing of 'Man', in which the centre of the man as biological phenomenon is the navel – the remnant of mother-child symbiosis; seminal to all the meanings of origin and identity born in the marsupial embrace of Raphael's *Madonna della Sedia*. In fact, the navel and the womb sit

at the geometric and significatory centre of all three compositions we examine here – the *Madonna*, the *Christ* and the *Assumption*.

In Dalí's schematic diagram of *Christ of St John of the Cross*, the circle circumscribes the brain, heart and genitals, as well as the navel. The arms and feet – tools for mundane tasks in his life on Earth – are superfluous to Christ's essence, and relegated outside the circle, although they still lie within the Trinitarian structure of his familial co-ordinates in the world. In this geometry of significance, the introspective Christ faces his biological nucleus. Any sentimental plea of upturned eyes to a higher power and transcendence in another world would upset the mathematical equation. Heaven is to be found, Dalí had written, "in the centre of the bosom of the man who has faith."¹¹

For all that he immersed himself in the mathematical methods and theological messages of the Spanish Baroque or Italian Renaissance, Dalí explained his vision of Christ to Puignau as "oneiric and also surrealist."¹² This dark scene was, after all, conceived by the artist in a state of mourning for his father, having returned home to the shores of his childhood, and there are remnants of Surrealism and Freud in Dalí's plotting of the subconscious forces that insidiously disrupt the *Christ's* apparent geometrical equilibrium. Assuming that Puignau's recollection adequately represents Dalí's thoughts, and with the "oneiric" element covered by St. John's dreamed vision, what remains of Dalí's Surrealism in the painting?

We find one answer without leaving the subject of the painting's geometrical composition; we find the very element that Dalí added to St. John's dream vision – and to representations of Christ by ascetic Spanish Baroque artists that it otherwise resembles – in the composition of one of his paintings of *Blessed Objectivity*, painted at the cusp of his transition to Surrealism.

There is a dissonance between the correct perspective in the landscape of *Christ of St. John of the Cross* – which asserts the position of the single viewing subject, with feet on solid ground at Portlligat – and the vertiginous tilt of the crucifix looming above, which brings the viewer's objectivity into doubt. This device, demarcating the boundary between terrestrial and divine, is standard in religious art, but there is also an interesting precedent in Dalí's career; Dawn Adès has noted a comparable effect of dissonance in *Apparatus and Hand* (1927), where the perspective lines of the foreground plane do not match those of the central figure, standing on the Cadaqués shoreline:

The anthropomorphic geometric figure in the foreground, tottering on its spindly caliper-legs is thus seen from some higher position, which troubles the very idea of a single and unified viewing subject.¹³

Dalí adopted such contradictory perspectives of juxtaposed architectural elements in his early Surrealist paintings from de Chirico, who used the device to disrupt scenes of otherwise calm. De Chirico, too, based his aesthetics on lessons from the history of art, and also saw his working process as a sort of mysticism.¹⁴ Dalí knew de Chirico's theories well, and had a broad knowledge of traditional art to which he could apply them; his disjointed perspectives were also meant to locate a sense of the *uncanny* in the psyche of the viewing subject. When that subject is, what's more, mourning the recent death of his father, then the Surrealist vision of Dalí's "classical" Christ carries the weight of Freud's theories as much as any of his works.

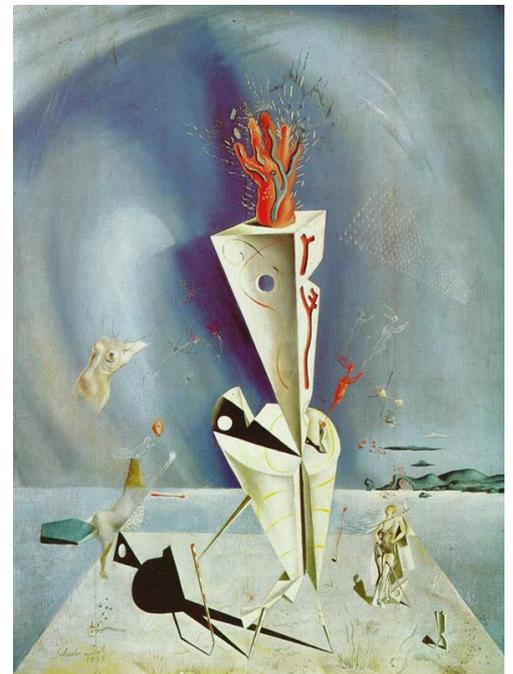


Fig 70
Salvador Dalí
Apparatus and Hand (1927)

Dalí's understanding of the point of view of the artist-observer were bolstered during his approach to Surrealism by the philosophical perspectivism of Ortega y Gasset, who introduced Freud's work to Spain as a contribution to phenomenological interpretation. Ortega's essay 'On the Point of View of the Artist' (1924) compared the evolution of painting since Giotto to the parallel progression in philosophy, as "a retreat from the object towards the subject, the painter."¹⁵ From Ortega, Freud and de Chirico, and from Leonardo, Raphael and Velázquez, Dalí developed a specular perspective that synthesises subject and object, and subordinates both to the inescapable condition of mortality. A fixed viewpoint in *space* is still only relative in *time* to an inevitable end – a philosophical point visualised by de Chirico in another way that Dalí borrowed for his Surrealism: with the still hands of clocks, and long shadows stretching across the ground. The manipulation of perspective that is so important to the composition of the *Christ* is thus eloquent on the theme of mourning and melancholy.

Christ of St. John of the Cross and *Apparatus and Hand* are representations of a self understood primarily as a physiological entity, but now treated according to a mystical aesthetics of vision, interpretation and representation that Dalí was rediscovering in the history of art.¹⁶ Like traditional representations of martyrdom – including Christ's crucifixion – Dalí presents a single figure exposed to irresistible, defining forces, and whose doubtful subjective autonomy leads us to question our own in a dynamic viewing experience of contemplative reflection. The troubled subject who, by definition, cannot reflect on himself in pure objectivity, was part of the irony in Dalí's *Blessed Objectivity*.

The circle within the triangle of Dalí's diagram of the *Christ*, "which 'aesthetically' summarised all my previous experiments," can be read as religious rhetoric – as a womb or a halo within Trinitarian co-ordinates – but it also resembles the triangular body of his *Apparatus*, similarly punctured with a round hole. Circular breasts and spermatozoa abound in the 1927 work, suggesting that Dalí made deliberate use of a basic psychological significance of these shapes. *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, then, is a similar picture to *Apparatus and Hand*, but with the Freudian symbolism returned to the subconscious where it belongs, as Freud had recommended. Dalí's updated representation of the sexual and mortal subject-object – all beautiful surface – is wishfully *sterilised* of the inevitable slide towards putrefaction that the biological self entails. It is the "aseptic" vision that Dalí aspired to in 1927, and the "ascetic" vision aspired to since.

With his meticulous technique – and the intricate staging of the experience of viewing *Christ of St. John of the Cross* – Dalí attempts something similar to Unamuno's travelling camera documentation of the parts of Velázquez's *Christ*; the nucleus of mind, navel and genitals inscribed in the circle within a triangle in Dalí's diagram is the equivalent of the "soul" that Unamuno considers as real as Christ's arms and torso.



Fig 71
Francisco de Zurbarán
Apparition of St. Peter to St. Peter Nolasco

Dalí's "paranoiac-critical" Surrealism emphasised the cerebral rather than the visceral, spontaneous tendencies of Surrealist image-making and theorisation; he made the point in *50 Secrets* – shortly before painting his *Christ* – that painting is a *cognitive* rather than a *decorative* art. Dalí favoured erudite artists, ones conversant in the philosophical intricacies of their modes of representation. Artists who displace and question the viewing subject's sovereignty over the viewing experience, artists who add cognition to perception – Vermeer ironically peering over the shoulder of the artist painting *The Art of Painting*, for example, or Van Eyck's elusive siting of the subject-object which ricochets between the viewer and an illusory mirror at the back of his *Arnolfini* painting – Dalí had an identical mirror in his studio – not to mention Velázquez's further reflections on this painting in *Las Meninas*.¹⁷ These

artists used compositional devices to instigate a viewing experience that invites participative, philosophical and psychoanalytic reflection – in short, contemplation, of the type demanded by the tragic, “quietistic” variety of mystical art.

A pertinent example of this philosophical manipulation of the viewpoint is Zurbarán's *Apparition of St. Peter to St. Peter Nolasco*, where the artist consciously disturbs the observer's experience to a religious end. The saint is shown hanging upside down, following convention, but Zurbarán does not use his meticulous technique to convince us of the reality of what we are seeing. In Zurbarán's *mystical*, reflexive perspective, St. Peter is suspended in an imaginary space projected by another St. Peter. Whose viewing experience is this... ours, Zurbarán's or St. Peter Nolasco's?

Duchamp, even

Among Dalí's contemporaries, the artist who toyed most consequentially with the viewer's delusional mastery of the viewing experience was Marcel Duchamp. From 1952, Duchamp spent summers at Cadaqués and he and Dalí had ample opportunity to discuss the themes and processes involved in artistic representation.¹⁸

Since 1946, Duchamp had been working on his *Étant donnés* project, which occupied him for twenty years. Like Van Eyck's *Arnolfini* painting, Duchamp's work locks the observer into a viewpoint, even as the focus of attention oscillates between the staged scene spied through a peep-hole – perhaps of sex, perhaps of death – and consciousness of the space behind the viewer's back.¹⁹ Conceptually, in terms of the viewing process set up by the artist, the *Arnolfini* painting is closer to Duchamp's *Étant donnés* than it is to more formally and thematically similar paintings of its own time, such as Rogier van der Weyden's *Annunciation*. As with Zurbarán's *St. Peter*, we cannot be sure what we are looking at or why, or to what extent we participate in meaning-making by our presence. Again, whose viewing experience is this?

It is doubtful that Duchamp's musings on the scopic relation extended as far as Zurbarán. However, if we consider the area labelled 'Dalí' of an imaginary pie-chart describing the overlapping thoughts of Dalí and Duchamp regarding the scopic field, we find an enlightening description by Palomino of his experience of viewing a *Christ Crucified* by Zurbarán in the Dominican friary of San Pablo in Sevilla, where the moribund, nearly naked body of Christ could only be seen through a grille and dimly lit. Dalí was more likely to have known Palomino's description than Duchamp, and it is possible that Dalí shared thoughts on Zurbarán's staged scopic experience with Duchamp early in the evolution of *Étant donnés*.²⁰

Duchamp's conceptual, anti-retinal – or “cognitive” – manipulation of the viewing process is a useful guide to the experience of viewing Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, where perspective is similarly manipulated to force a confrontation with the sexual and mortal body. Duchamp's transportation of the peep-hole door from Cadaqués to Philadelphia could be a nod to Dalí, and there could be other private messages to each other in their work. Puignau often met Duchamp at Dalí's house, and Dalí told him of the good friendship between them since their days in Paris; Puignau testifies to the devastating effect on Dalí of Duchamp's death, soon after spending the summer of 1968 in Cadaqués.²¹

Dalí tells us the floor and cross in *Corpus Hypercubus* were designed according to the ideas of Juan de Herrera in his *Discourse on the Cubic Figure* – a title that could pass as a description of Duchamp's early work. Herrera's discourse was a theme already alive in 1951, when Dalí mentioned the architect of the Hieronymite El Escorial monastery in his 'Mystical Manifesto' (1951). At the end of that year, Dalí said that “Juan Gris transformed the Dionysian Cubism of Malaga into ascetism; he is the Herrera of Cubism” in his talk, 'Picasso y yo' in Madrid.²² However, the chessboard pattern is a device that Dalí had used before, and it was loaded with personal significance; in the painting that Dalí showed Freud, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937), a sexually ambiguous figure in a provocative, *contrapposto* pose stands like a statue on a plinth-like cabinet placed on a chequered floor. Even then it might have been a nod to the chess-playing Duchamp and his speculations on the body as a pawn of sexualised vision.

The chequered floor is also to be seen in paintings as meaningful to Dalí as Mantegna's *St. Sebastian* in Vienna, Bellini's *Religious Allegory* in the Uffizi gallery and Vermeer's *The Art of Painting*. Perhaps most significantly, it is also a part of the *mise-en-scène* of *Étant donnés*, and conversations with Duchamp about their respective work must have informed Dalí's speculations on desire, contemplation and mortality. The chessboard pattern thus equates Gala's contemplation of the dying Christ with the geometrically circumscribed game of evading death that Duchamp played, as a staged metaphor of these speculations.

Notes

- ¹ 1910-1965, 100; *WM*, 333: translations modified. The drawings are dated 1950 and 1951. They are reproduced as Taschen 1000 in colour, but without the explanatory footnotes.
- ² In the volume titled *Le Coeur*, of the *Études Carmélitaines*, published by Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 20th September 1950. Carrouges also compared Proust's concept of love as "the fruit of chance" to Breton's "objective chance".
- ³ Dalí contributed 'Reconstitution du corps glorieux dans le ciel' in 1952, which I return to in the next chapter. Among Dalí's acquaintances who contributed were Georges Mathieu and Jacques Maritain, whom Dalí mentioned as a "great artist" in the *Anti-Artistic Manifesto* as early as 1928.
- ⁴ Father Bruno's account on the verso of the reproduction of Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, in the *Magie des extrêmes* issue of *Études Carmélitaines*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1952, between pp. 168 and 169.
- ⁵ Puignau, 59-60. Dalí had even arranged for photographs of a particular model to be taken in Hollywood and sent to him. He told Puignau that he considered the model to be the "ideal character to imitate Christ on the cross" (Puignau, 60). This may have been for aesthetic reasons, of musculature perhaps, or because Dalí appreciated the irony of likening Christ to a Hollywood stuntman, who escapes death in his own way.
- ⁶ Morse reproduces Dalí's side-on study for *Christ of St. John of the Cross in 1910-1965*, 99. Dalí signed and dedicated this drawing to Tom Honeyman in 1952, and it is possible that, rather than a study for the painting, it is an explanatory diagram.
- ⁷ Puignau, 62.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* Puignau had been the draughtsman of Dalí's domestic architectural renovations since 1935.
- ⁹ Dalí had several of Ghyka's books, some repeated, and all filled with notes and drawings. He also had books by Jurgis Baltrusaitis and Luca Paccioli on perspective (Bonet, 305). Baltrusaitis was in Paris in the fifties. Matila Ghyka's *Geometry of Art and Life* (1946) was published by Sheed & Ward which also published Father Bruno's books in English translation.
- ¹⁰ David Lomas, 'Divine! Dalí, Leonardo and the Cult of Celebrity', 85.
- ¹¹ *Secret Life*, 400.
- ¹² Dalí said, "this year I'm going to paint a Christ, but with an oneiric and at the same time Surrealist vision... That is, just as St. John of the Cross saw him in dreams" (Puignau, 59). My translation.
- ¹³ Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 18.
- ¹⁴ Recall the passage from de Chirico's 'Mystery and Creation' (*Valori Plastici*: 1913) that Breton included in *Surrealism and Painting*. De Chirico stated there that his paintings objectively represented only what he saw, but "when I close my eyes my vision is even more powerful" (Chipp, 401-2).
- ¹⁵ José Ortega y Gasset, 'On the Point of View in the Arts', published in 1924 by his own *Revista de Occidente*: See Ortega (1972), 25. Ortega concentrated on the progression in art in this essay, and followed up the parallels in philosophy in *The Dehumanisation of the Arts* (1925).
- ¹⁶ See Jeffett: 2007, 77-8, for evidence supporting the idea that Dalí's Christ was a self-representation. Jeffett acknowledges the work of Natalia Shiou-yun Fang on the subject, in her unpublished M.Sc. thesis, *The Nature of Dalí's Le Christ: Religious or Sacrilegious?* (Edinburgh University, 2000-2006). As with the *Madonna*, the setting of Portlligat is significant, as a part of his personal mythology. As Dalí told the photographer Juan Gyenes Remenyi in 1951, when he *Christ of St. John of the Cross* was almost finished, "here I've created my personality, discovered my love painting, painting my work, constructing my house" (Gyenes, 110).
- ¹⁷ Velázquez could contemplate Van Eyck's Arnolfini painting in the Spanish royal collection, where it is recorded between 1558 and 1789 (Hall, 5). Seidel calls *Las Meninas* "a dissertation on painting as intellectual as well as manual creation" (Seidel, 197). For photographs of Dalí's mirror taken in 1967, see Gyenes, 164-7.
- ¹⁸ Duchamp culminates the chronological progression plotted by Dalí's collection of masterpieces in the Teatre-Museu in Figueres, which comprises El Greco, Gérard Dou, Ernest Meissonier, Adolphe "William" Bouguereau, Marià Fortuny, Modest Urgell and finally, Duchamp's *Box in a Valise* (1935-41), which Dalí says he helped Duchamp compile when they were together in Arcachon.
- ¹⁹ These philosophical reflections form the basis of Jacques Lacan's study of Merleau-Ponty's "scopic field" and the "scopic relation" in Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York, London: Penguin Group, 1977
- ²⁰ Although Dalí's named sources are Italian, it is likely that he reviewed the Spaniards Palomino and Pacheco's treatises when preparing his own *50 Secrets* in 1947-8, and even more so by the time he switched his attention to painting a Christ.

These treatises were widely available, and were supplemented by Ponz's *Viaje de España* [1776], republished in Madrid in 1947.

²¹ Puignau, 119, 121.

²² 'Picasso y yo', 11th November 1951. Dalí's written version of the talk was published in *Mundo Hispánico*, no. 46 January 1952, 37-42. See *¿Por qué...?*, 228-32.

8.3 A Hidden Source: Andrea del Castagno's *Holy Trinity*

To formulate his speculations on the viewing experience, Dalí decided on a very different perspective to the oblique lateral view of *St. John of the Cross*. Yet the frontal view of a tilting Christ was not his invention either; there is a precedent that Dalí knew well, and which even reveals the lingering presence of St. Jerome among the latent meanings of *Christ of St. John of the Cross*.¹

Andrea del Castagno's fresco, *Holy Trinity, St. Jerome and Two Saints*, similarly presents Christ on a cross that looms over a grimacing Jerome and his faithful lion.² Dalí probably saw Castagno's painting in Florence not long before he painted the *Christ*, but he knew it already from earlier trips, and from the Gowans series.³ It is one of several paintings on which the reduced format and black-and-white of the reproductions has the comical effect of making the solidly painted halos sitting on the heads of saints look like loaves of bread.⁴ The humour of Dalí's visual games and double images should not be dismissed; it is another indication of his delight in the self-affirming sovereignty of subjective vision that underwrites paranoid-critical interpretation and mystical meditation alike.



Fig 72
Andrea del Castagno,
Holy Trinity, St. Jerome and Two Saints

Jesus has taken his place in the patriarchal trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, supported by a brace of winged angels.⁵ Jerome continues the central vertical axis of the composition down to Earth, where, echoing the parenthetical bathers in the *Composition*, he is flanked by two female disciples – Paula and Eustochius, the recipient of an epistle on the “fires of lust” that raged within the historical Jerome. They form an earthly trinity, matched in Dalí's painting by three diminutive characters at Portlligat. Though ostensibly fishermen, two of them are in fact plucked from art history – one by Velázquez and another by Louis Le Nain – together with a shadowy third figure.



Fig 166
Salvador Dalí
Christ of St John of the Cross (detail)

These marginal or hidden figures occupy a space of latent meaning within *Christ of St. John of the Cross*. Drawn from Dalí's mnemonic picture library, they have the same legitimacy for Surrealist investigation as other personally experienced images – childhood memories of the primal scene, or snapshots of a dream. Their presentation in scale and perspective incompatible with the main subject, and outside their original context – Velázquez's soldier is fixing a fishing net – establishes their participation in the approximation of Freudian dream-work that Dalí elaborated in his Surrealist paintings, although Dalí's methods have been refined.

Dalí never renounced the lessons on interpreting the human condition learnt under Freud and Surrealism, and a psychoanalytical reading of his paintings is always welcome alongside – or before – the iconological bias that I am using. With that in mind, if a comparison can be made between Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross* and the *physiological* aesthetics of Sebastian in *Cenicitas*, or *Apparatus and Hand*, as I have done, then the *psychoanalytical* aesthetics of Jerome, in which Freud takes centre stage, can also still be found lurking in the associative network around the *Christ*.⁶

The Spanish mystics' introspective meditations on illusion and reality took place at the time of the Council of Trent, when Platonesque debates on the value of representation that have run through the history of art were revived in response to the rationalist objections of the Protestants.⁷ Paradoxically, with the help of the Inquisition, the Council's strict edicts forced the conditions for the creative meditation of the mystics, in which it was best to keep speculation confined to the Interior Castle.⁸ However, the introspective nature of mystic contemplation benefits from a reference point in the outside world – a starting point from which thoughts may wander, in the way Unamuno let his poem flow from his contemplation of Velázquez's *Christ*.

St. John of the Cross, treading the fine line between worship and idolatry, advocated the use of sacred images as an aid for contemplation.⁹ Yet if, as Unamuno wrote, the mystics favoured interior contemplation precisely because of the insubstantiality of the outside world of representations, this leaves them consciously basing their "theoretical truth", as Unamuno puts it, on a man-made image.¹⁰ The mystic, contemplative viewing experience emulated by Dalí in *Christ of St. John of the Cross*, oscillates between wonder and despair, ecstatic and tragic mysticism. Its conscious presentation of an illusion as objective fact, fixed in time and space, nevertheless allows the viewer autonomy of thought.

Notes

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- ¹ As far as I can ascertain, Dalí never revealed this painting as a source.
- ² Dalí may have already had the head of St. Jerome in Castagno's *Trinity* in mind when he painted the head of the anthropomorphic and cannibalistic *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonition of Civil War)* in 1936, as well as the widely recognised grimaces of Goya's atrocity exhibitions. *Saturn Devouring his Children*, too, would be a pertinent example, for the facial expression, the horrific theme, and the contorted anatomy.
- ³ The fresco is in the church of Santissima Annunziata in Florence. It is possible that Dalí was made amenable to *Christ of St. John of the Cross* going to the Museum of Glasgow, was that that city was the home of the Gowans Art Books. The fact that Dalí was willing to drop the catalogue price from £12,000 to £8,200, suggests that he had a vested interest in his painting going to that museum.
- ⁴ Castagno shared what must have been one of the most closely scrutinised of Dalí's Gowans volumes with three other Florentine Quattrocento painters – Paulo Uccello, Tommaso Masaccio and Domenico Veneziano, whose *Head of a Tonsured, Bearded Saint* is perhaps the most amusing of the loaf-balancing acts. Dalí could see the original of Domenico Veneziano's fresco in the National Gallery on visits to London from July 1935. Dalí and his friends in Madrid might have joked about the same effect in Mantegna's *Death of the Virgin* in the Prado.
- ⁵ The angels are possibly placed there to resolve the difficult job of foreshortening Christ's legs without the benefits that Dalí enjoyed, of photography and Puignau. Vasari referred to the *scorci* – foreshortening – of “such Quattrocento painters as Castagno” as awkward intrusions, “as painful to see as they were difficult to execute”. Leonardo also advised against the overuse of such dramatic tricks. Landino, on the other hand, had called Castagno “the painter's painter, the artist appreciated by people understanding the skills of the art.” See Baxandall, 143, 145. Dalí had recently returned to at least some of these sources for his *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*.
- ⁶ We know Jerome was present in Dalí's thoughts at the time. El Greco's *St. Jerome* in the National Gallery, Washington DC, was the model for 'Cosmic Contemplation' (1951), a watercolour and ink drawing showing a saint holding a skull, while contemplating a floating sphere. The kneeling worshipper is the prototype of his self-representation as in *Dalí Nude, in Contemplation Before the Five Regular Bodies* (1954).
- ⁷ The Ecumenical Council of Trent was convened 25 times between 1545 and 1563 – within the lifetimes of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), El Greco (1541-1614) and St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). Among its decisions was to grant authority to the Vulgate Bible, making Jerome one of its main protagonists.
- ⁸ St. Teresa's *El Castillo Interior* or *Las Moradas* (published 1588, but written 11 years earlier) was a spiritual guide to mystical union with God through prayer. The Council of Trent decreed that the church's interpretation of the Bible was final, and that any difference of opinion was heresy.
- ⁹ Tasende and González del Valle, 11. St. John of the Cross's advocacy of the contemplation of sacred images suggests that he did just that himself. This allows the intriguing hypothesis that John could have had an image similar to Andrea del Castagno's in mind when he made his drawing of Christ on the cross.
- ¹⁰ Unamuno, 'La mística española', 21.

Chapter 9. Reparation: *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina*

Dalí ended the three-part life narrative with *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* (1952), representing an ascension to heaven of mother and child, returned to their original symbiotic state. In Marian iconography and dogma, Dalí found images and concepts that translate easily into corresponding metaphors of psychological theorisation – as will for reparation, wholeness, oneness, the search to recover the “primary object”. Besides the Freudian, oedipal interpretations that are a natural link to orthodox Surrealism, the Catholic dogma of the Assumption recalls other of Dalí’s concerns: Rank’s return to the intrauterine paradise, Nietzsche’s eternal return, and his own return to the warm, wet, familiar lagoon of Portlligat.

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Fig 167
Salvador Dalí
Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina (1952)

In April 1952, Dalí announced in the *Études Carmélitaines* that his main painting that year would commemorate Pope Pius XII's approval of the Assumption of the Virgin as dogma.¹ This item of faith asserts that Mary's body, her earthly life extinguished, ascended to heaven with her soul. Dalí was conscious of the psychological function of religious belief, and appreciated that this event mythologises a desired return to the ideal heaven of the mother's body. He later reviewed that summer's *Assumpta* as “the most ambitious picture of my career.”² It showed Gala as the ascending Virgin Mother, with the image of Dalí's *Christ of St. John of the Cross* contained within her body. It seems that what made the picture so “ambitious” for Dalí was its aim to create a personally meaningful image of psychological reparation, giving his three-part life narrative a reassuring if not happy ending that fulfilled a vital need.

Again, the setting is the bay of Portlligat; even the act of creation of the painting-as-reparation entailed a symbolic return to the womb, to the maternal environment of Cadaqués. To achieve his ambition, he said he would need “the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the total asceticism in which I shall immerse myself, isolating myself in Spain”. He added that he would paint it in his own blood, as Nietzsche required and as was the Spanish manner.³ The references to asceticism and to Nietzsche show Dalí delving into his mnemonic warehouse, where the latest discoveries of nuclear science had been added to physiological, classical and religious representation of the mortal body; to the relics of Lorquian religion and Greek tragedy that informed his aesthetics of St. Sebastian; to the psychoanalysis of the mortal mind in his aesthetics of St. Jerome. Gathering a handful of these references, Dalí told Reynolds A. Morse that the *Assumpta* represented

the mother church occupied by an altar which is surmounted by the Christ of St. John of the Cross and crossed with the speed of angels by the corpuscular body of the Virgin, Dionysian dynamism ascending, produced by the Apollonian weight of the sacrifice of Christ.⁴

Dalí is again careful not to rupture the surface of his “beautiful”, immaculate Christ, as when he gave similar “Apollonian weight” to his statuesque sailor-Sebastian in 1926. The syntax of steel, of scientific apparatus and the scalpel that dissected the body on the operating table, is present now in the hard edges of the accoutrements and the altar on which the transubstantiated Christ is ritually and literally consumed – as the Council of Trent had confirmed 400 years earlier, the bread consumed *is* the body of Christ, not a mere symbolic representation.

The substantiality of Dalí’s autobiographical Christ is asserted in the reassuringly solid rock of the coast, in sharp contrast to the placental ocean and the soft curves and transparent body of the Virgin-Gala. Dalí declares the meaningful goal of life as Otto Rank had explained it, as a return to the intrauterine state, and shows his Christ within the “obscure cavern” of the womb, which he had faced with such fear in *The Enigma of Desire*. Through Rank and Freud, Dalí recognised the imprint of the violence of birth in desire – a constant reminder that the “Dionysian dynamism” of sexuality led only to death, hence the “total asceticism” that he aspired to. A return to the mother’s body means the nullification of the threats of sexuality and mortality that Nietzsche detected in Raphael’s Madonnas.

At the age of twenty-four, the virgin Dalí graphically depicted the threatening sexual body as a flayed lump of meat on the same beach, flashing its *vagina dentata*, linking desire to putrefaction. Twenty-four years later, his fear was dissipated and he could picture the *immaculate* condition of the Virgin Mother.

Notes

¹ Salvador Dalí, ‘Reconstitution du corps glorieux dans le ciel,’ *Études Carmélitaines: Magie des Extrêmes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, June 1952), 171-2. The ‘Certitude de l’Assomption’ was the subject of the essay by P. Philippe de la Trinité that followed Dalí’s contribution. After the Council of Trent, at which the veneration of the Virgin Mary was reaffirmed, the Immaculate Conception, and the Assumption became popular without being official dogma. Their approval was established in Spain by Francisco Pacheco, father-in-law to Velázquez. This means that Velázquez was party to discussions of iconographic orthodoxy at the highest level, from the start of his education.

² Morse: 1958, 64. Dalí made the comment in 1957. Puignau writes that the painting needed finishing touches in 1953, but *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* was exhibited at Julien Levy’s Carstairs Gallery, New York, 4th December 1952 – 31st January 1953, and is correctly dated 1952. See Puignau, 69.

³ Salvador Dalí, ‘Reconstitution du corps glorieux dans le ciel,’ *Études Carmélitaines: Magie des Extrêmes* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, June 1952), 172.

⁴ Morse: 1958, 64.

9.1 El Greco's "Dionysian dynamism"

Ultimately, psychoanalysis, like Nietzsche's and other thought systems, explored states that were basic to the life of every individual, and which had already been visualised in religious art. Dalí retrieved another familiar image to help him suitably conclude his visualised life story on a note of reparation. Calling on "the assistance of the Holy Spirit" – and perhaps on memories of Lorca and others – he modelled the elongated body of the ascending Virgin on an *Assumption of the Virgin* by El Greco that he knew from trips to Toledo with his friends from Madrid.¹ Considering Dalí's preference for quiet asceticism in his depiction of Christ, and his disdain for the expressionistic distortions of Grünewald, it seems surprising that he should base his image of reparation on similarly hysterical art.

Compared to his consistent praise of Raphael, Velázquez or Vermeer, Dalí was rather ambivalent in his scattered comments on El Greco. In 1970, for instance, he wrote that he had never liked "modern art, or El Greco, or theosophy"; of course, it is possible to study an artist, and make use of some element of their style, without actually *liking* them, and in 1973 he told André Parinaud that he had studied El Greco and Velázquez as part of his "drive to paint like the masters of old because that was the only way to translate the visions the brain imagines."²

What, then, was the attraction of El Greco's explosive *Assumption*, in relation to Dalí's usual preference for stillness, classical proportion and geometry in other paintings that followed *50 Secrets*?³ What was the nature of the mystical vision that Dalí wanted to translate into his painting?

In 1964, Juan Remenyi Gyenes photographed Dalí and Gala at the Escorial, sitting in silent rapture before *The Martyrdom of St. Maurice*.⁴ Anna Maria described an episode of more ecstatic rapture on a visit to the Escorial in the 1920s, when her brother literally fell on his back while engrossed in an El Greco – probably the same painting. It would be a rare case of altruism if Dalí intended his *Assumpta* to similarly enrapture the observer, and to have an emotional rather than intellectual effect – proof indeed of the "ambition" of the painting.

To imagine the emotional effect that Dalí sought for his vision of reparation, in contrast to the intellectual effect of his visions of birth and death, we can compare the place of El Greco in the development of Spanish art with another artist who was also closely linked to the Escorial and who had a similarly qualified influence on Dalí, Hieronymous Bosch.

If not on his original visit to the Escorial, then certainly by the 1950s, Dalí would have been aware of the contrasting fortunes of El Greco and Bosch in the austere court of Philip II.⁵ Whereas the *Martyrdom of St. Maurice* famously failed to impress the king, Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* – which invites a very different viewing experience – was one of his favourite paintings.⁶ Although the nuances of meaning in Bosch's compendium of symbols may require some translation for us now, the didactic, three-part structure is simple and clear: "Given *this*", it says in the first panel, "then *this* will happen, and therefore *this*". Dalí usually structured his paintings to be similarly legible and delimited – even if his visual lexicon was equally esoteric. On the other hand, El Greco's paintings allow latitude in the viewer's interpretative experience. On this occasion, Dalí ventured from his usual, rigid grammar into the "Dionysian dynamism" of El Greco, which is perhaps why he felt the need to ballast the painting with the "Apollonian weight" of a pseudo-scientific description of "the corpuscular body of the Virgin", dressing his emotional engagement as *Blessed Objectivity*.⁷



Fig 168
El Greco
Assumption of the Virgin

The Virgin stripped bare by Duchamp

The grand title of Dalí's *Assumpta* honours the disciplinary triumvirate that rules over the painting: Religion (*Assumpta*), Science (*Corpuscularia*) and Art (*Lapislazulina*). Dalí had found such pseudo-scientific taxonomies both fun and productive since his days with Bello and Buñuel, and said in 1976, "I can realise delirious syntheses that at times lead to nothing, but that are like a game for me. While scientists are serious people and serious people are, often, asses."⁸

In 1952, while he planned his *Assumpta*, Dalí qualified the objectivity of his "delirious" process, saying that he painted only what he saw but, like St. John of the Cross, he saw what he wanted to see. Including his intrauterine life among the memories he wanted to remember, he described the trauma of his birth as empirical fact, making his memory of it – and his desire for reparation – legitimate subjects for objective representation and delirious association.⁹ In 1976, Dalí again used St. John's mystical experience to acknowledge the unavoidable subjectivity of perception:

Scientifically the things we perceive aren't situated in objects, in reality, but in our souls. St. John of the Cross said this, so sublime: 'To suddenly see in a stream of water the image I carry in my entrails'. It's wonderful. In the reflection in the water, the saint sees the Virgin and Christ, that's to say, an image that obsesses him.¹⁰

In conceptualising the Möbius strip of the subjective and the objective in perception and representation – especially concerning visualisation of the female body; imagining one's origins in time and space – Dalí benefited from the presence of Marcel Duchamp, who spent the summer of 1952 in Cadaqués, and returned regularly from 1958. In length, consistency and productivity, Dalí's dialogue with Duchamp at the margins of Surrealism was second only to – and complementary to – the one he maintained with Picasso.

The specular, scopic relation to the female body formed the theoretical scaffold for Duchamp's major works, *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (the "Large Glass" 1915-23) and *Étant donnés* (1946-66). Duchamp's reflections on the scopic field situated him in a constellation of utmost interest to Dalí, encompassing Lacan, Dürer, Vermeer, Velázquez and Picasso – whose obsessive returns to the theme of the artist in his studio had their first impact on Dalí's art in 1926 – and his influence went beyond the mechanics of representation to the ontological questions posed in those two works.

When Duchamp first spent summer in Cadaqués, in 1933, conversations no doubt revolved around the theme of Dalí's phobic visualisation of the female body that was consolidated in his theoretical writings by the end of the year. Man Ray visited Duchamp, and took photos of the "soft" architecture of Barcelona for Dalí to illustrate his article 'On the terrifying and edible beauty of *modern style* architecture', published in *Minotaure* in December, alongside 'The Phenomenon of Ecstasy'. By 1952, then, Duchamp had long contributed to Dalí's reflections on the hard and the soft; on fear and desire; on the "terrifying" aspect of the female body as womb and tomb.

Dalí's fraught imaginings of the maternal body were a constant throughout his Surrealist period, and were already manifested in the distorted bodies or body parts of his bathers of 1928. The Mannerist elongation in the *Assumpta* perhaps fulfilled a similar function, probing Dalí's and the viewer's ontological dimensions by disrupting the fixed viewpoint – as in his anamorphic experiments of the 1930s or, in a different way, in his *Apparatus* or *Christ*.

While visceral aspects of the artist's scopic relation to the female body were explored by Picasso, in numerous studies of the artist and his nude model, Cubism posed more intellectual questions on the scopic field. However, Cubism's questioning of subjective sovereignty is of a different qualitative order to what Dalí was looking for in 1952, which was closer to the initial influence of El Greco on Picasso's emergent Cubism in the *Demoiselles*. The simultaneity of multiple viewpoints that Picasso categorised as objectively quantified instances of vision is not the same as the unique, subjectively experienced simultaneity of mystic vision that Dalí sought, and that Father Bruno described in 1949, in his book on El Greco and Sts. Teresa and John of the Cross.¹¹

Only five months before he announced his forthcoming *Assumpta*, Dalí gave his talk in Madrid, outlining his differences with Picasso, whom he thanked for revealing the ugliness of pure materialism, thereby opening the way for Dalí's mystical painting.¹² Dalí arrived at this position with the guidance of Duchamp, who outlined his own differences with Picasso in an interview published in 1946, in which he summed up his development from the cubistoid *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1911) to the *Large Glass* (1915-23).¹³

Duchamp's interest in Cubism had always been of a different order to Picasso's interest in physicality, he said. He had wanted painting to serve his purposes; he wanted to get away from the "physical emphasis [which] Courbet had introduced [...] in the nineteenth century." So, in 1946, Duchamp was already promoting a healthy neoplatonic mistrust of the "physical emphasis" of "retinal" art. Previously, "all painting had been literary or religious: it had all been at the service of the mind."

He no doubt expressed similar ideas when he spent several months with Dalí in Arcachon, between 1939 and 1940, while they waited for transport to the USA. Dalí helped Duchamp compile his *Boîtes-en-Valise* (1935-41), and had begun to assess his own true and false memories in the *Secret Life*.¹⁴ It was during this period of close contact with Duchamp that Dalí arrived at his decision to "become classic".

Dalí was at a crucial juncture of his life in Arcachon; he had definitively broken ties with Breton and was poised for success in the USA. He wrote to Buñuel of his "triumphant self-construction", which entailed "the end of hostilities with [his] father, the reconstruction of the ideal of the Family".¹⁵ He told Buñuel he was writing "as the Dalí of the Toledo days", and certain of his paintings returned to concerns of those days, influenced by the diagrammatic art of Sassetta, Bosch and Ramón y Cajal; he wrote that Marxist materialism understood nothing of "the meeting of morphology and psychoanalysis", and made this the subject of a painting.¹⁶ With Breton denouncing Dalí's paranoiac-critical method as "a game of amusement akin to the *crossword puzzle*", and calling for a return to automatism, Dalí was defiantly attuned to Duchamp's call for an art reduced as much as possible to signs, at the service of the intellect.¹⁷

It was this aspect of El Greco's paintings that appealed to the Dalí of the Toledo days, beyond their visual impact, for his emotionally charged Technicolor masses can also be deciphered. They are explicative diagrams of Catholic dogma – itself a theological transcription of the scopic and sexual relations that define origins and identity, and that similarly occupied psychoanalysis. Dalí's intentions with his morphologically expressive, ascending Virgin were not so altruistic after all, but certainly ambitious.

Dawn Adès has remarked that Duchamp's *Large Glass* "hark[s] back to a sacred iconography of visions of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, depicted in a heavenward ascent above clouds and male worshippers."¹⁸ The iconographical standard for Mary's rising passage from earthly to heavenly domain was well established, but Duchamp's specific model seems to have been another version of the *Assumption of the Virgin* by El Greco, which he and Dalí could have seen in Chicago. Its exaggerated binary structure represents the Virgin afloat in a cloud of female angels, soaring above a crowd of male apostles, forlorn beside an empty coffin with feet not unlike those of Duchamp's chocolate grinder.¹⁹

Duchamp's interview with Sweeney was conducted in the year he began to work on *Étant donné*s, which continued his investigation of the scopic field over the following twenty years. He was already at work on it when he visited Cadaqués in 1952, and likely discussed its representational mechanics with Dalí, and the sexual and religious meanings involved, even before Michel Carrouges published his *Les Machines célibataires*, in 1954, which discusses the torturous bride-bachelor machinations of the *Large Glass*, taking up the subject of Breton's earlier essay, 'Lighthouse of the Bride' (1935).

Duchamp repeated his opinion that "Since Courbet, it's been believed that painting is addressed to the retina" to Pierre Cabanne at the end of the *Étant donné*s process, in 1966.²⁰ Only the Surrealists had attempted to go beyond the retinal, he said, and although this is true of automatism, it was the investigative, speculative, *surretinal* Surrealism of Dalí or Ernst that held more interest for Duchamp.

Duchamp's disappointment with the intellectual dead-end of art that addressed only the retina did not prevent his fascination with the questions raised – on the artistic act, on sex and death – by Courbet's *Origins of the World*. *Étant donnés* carried reminders of Lacan, Böcklin and the frightening, cavernous insides of the female body that he assumed held equal horror for Leonardo; it carried the weight of the fear and desire that had loomed in Dalí's paintings since 1926, and which he finally seemed ready to accommodate in 1952.

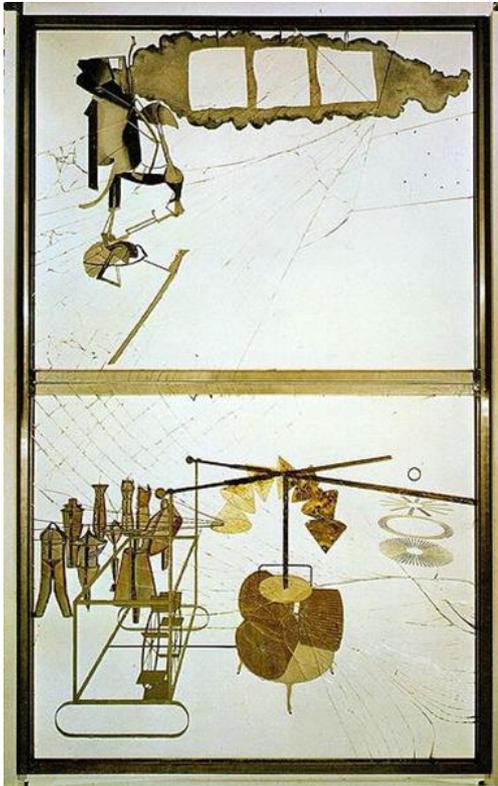


Fig 169
Marcel Duchamp,
*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (the
'Large Glass')* (1915-23)



Fig 170
El Greco
The Assumption of the Virgin

Duchamp consistently evoked but annulled such threats with his resolutely cognitive, anti-retinal art; despite the viewer's active involvement in the scopic field of *Étant donnés*, he or she knows that the situation is a set-up and that the woman's body is a dummy. This is a reminder of the metaphor of body as apparatus that permeated the work of Duchamp, Picabia and De Chirico and that crept into Dalí's work in 1926, in his first articulations of the uncanniness of the female body. Adès, Cox and Hopkins have suggested that Duchamp's *mechanomorphs* of 1911-3 – forefathers to Dalí's *Barcelona Mannequin-Sebastian* – were already influenced by Leonardo da Vinci's "asentimental speculation" in his drawing of a copulating couple that Freud and Dalí took as evidence for Leonardo's fear of female sexual organs.²¹

Duchamp's selection of a door from Cadaqués through which to view *Étant donnés* may have gone beyond a nod towards Dalí; it is possible that Duchamp had also absorbed the meanings ascribed by Dalí to the town's patron, St Sebastian. Adès et al. noted that the work's "Italianate" setting, with the dummy laying over a chequered floor, evokes Giorgione's and Titian's Venuses of flesh and blood, transubstantiating their classical marble ancestors: "the painted icon is replaced with the very symbol of beauty, palpable but unreachable."²²

If the "Italianate" floor of chequered marble were not enough to evoke Sebastian, then Duchamp's visualised Neo-Platonic dialogue on idols and representation suggests that conversations in Cadaqués

were bounded by similar parameters as those of Dalí and Lorca two decades earlier. Duchamp's speculations on the body as apparatus had entered Dalí's aesthetics of St Sebastian via the *mechanomorphs* he exhibited at Dalmau's gallery in 1922, and Duchamp had a reciprocal interest in the antiretinal, diagrammatic art of quantified emotion of Dalí's *Blessed Objectivity*. Dalí's model was the same hieroglyphic, Christian art – "at the service of the mind" – that Duchamp called for in 1946. Adès, Cox and Hopkins suggest that Sebastian also had special significance for Duchamp, who painted a statue of the saint in 1909, and give the "connection between the arrow-shot saint and the Bachelors shooting at the Bride in the *Large Glass*" as an example of how his Catholic upbringing continued to inform his images.²³

Notes

- ¹ The version of El Greco's *Assumption of the Virgin* that Dalí's *Assumpta* most closely resembles is in the Museo de Santa Cruz, in Toledo, which opened in the 19th century.
- ² *Dalí by Dalí*, 136-7; *Unspeakable Confessions*, 195-6.
- ³ In 'Reconstitution of the Glorious Body in Heaven,' Dalí compares his planned Assumption to the "transcendental Pythagoreanism" of Leonardo and Paccioli, thus bending classical geometry into a mystic shape.
- ⁴ Gyenes, 157.
- ⁵ Although Gombrich contextualised El Greco's mannerism with a comparison to the influence of the Reformation on Northern European artists, including Bosch, he did not question El Greco's acceptance in Spain.
- ⁶ In his *Historia de la Orden de San Jerónimo* (1605), Fra José de Sigüenza refers to King Philip II as having allowed Bosch panels in "his house, his cloister, his apartment, the chapter house, and the sacristy". Sigüenza had several copies of Bosch panels in his own cell, referring to them as "books of great wisdom" which he often "read." (Koerner, 312-3, Snyder, 34, 35, 37)
- ⁷ In a 1976 interview, in which he mentioned St. John of the Cross, Dalí said he stood "not on the side of the Church Fathers, but on the side of Leibniz, Malebranche and even Descartes himself." Jean-François Fogel and Jean Louis Hue, 'Les mandales de Dalí', Paris; *Le Sauvage*, October 1976, in Mas, 261-76.
- ⁸ Jean-François Fogel and Jean Louis Hue, 'Les mandales de Dalí', Paris; *Le Sauvage*, October 1976, in Mas, 261-76.
- ⁹ Alberto L. de Lamela, 'Con Salvador Dalí en las regiones del subconsciente', New York; *El Diario de Nueva York*, 13th – 15th February 1952, in Mas, 114-9.
- ¹⁰ Jean-François Fogel and Jean Louis Hue, 'Les mandales de Dalí', Paris; *Le Sauvage*, October 1976 (Mas, 261-76).
- ¹¹ Father Bruno's book, *Three Mystics: El Greco, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila* (1949), might have been the catalyst for Dalí's renewed interest in the mystics. John was imprisoned and tortured in Toledo in 1577-8 by his superiors in the calced Carmelites, whose Order he had been given permission to reform. El Greco, who was just a year older than John, had just arrived in Toledo.
- ¹² 'Picasso y yo,' talk in Madrid, 11th November 1951. See *¿Por qué se ataca a La Gioconda?*, 228-32.
- ¹³ James Johnson Sweeney, interview with Marcel Duchamp, in the *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* XIII, no. 4-5, 1946, 19-21. See Chipp, 392-6
- ¹⁴ Duchamp began to make notes and think about the *Large Glass* in 1913, and exhibited the work in 1926. He compiled the notes as the *Green Box* in 1934, and Dalí recalled helping Duchamp compile his similar, but more extensive *Box in a Valise* in 1939-40 – the portable museum of his collected works. Dalí displayed his edition of the *Box in a Valise* in his "Classics" room at the Teatre-Museu, along with works by El Greco and other artists. In 1976, Dalí told André Parinaud that Duchamp's *Large Glass* belonged "to another planet."
- ¹⁵ Two letters to Buñuel in the Luis Buñuel Archive, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, reproduced by Gibson (1997), 392-5.
- ¹⁶ *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet* (1939), private collection. Taschen, 729.
- ¹⁷ André Breton, 'Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste', *Minotaure*, Paris, nos. 13-4 (May 1939), quoted by Gibson (1997), 396.
- ¹⁸ Adès, 'Surrealism, male-female', 174.
- ¹⁹ *La Asunción de la Virgen* by El Greco, in the Chicago Art Institute, was his first commissioned work in Toledo, for the Cistercian Convent of Santo Domingo el Antiguo, and was painted in 1577, the year of St. John of the Cross's imprisonment in the city.
- ²⁰ Cabanne, 43.
- ²¹ Adès, Cox and Hopkins, 55.
- ²² Adès, Cox and Hopkins, 202
- ²³ Adès, Cox and Hopkins, 24. They reproduce Duchamp's *Saint Sebastian* on the facing page.

9.2 Aldous Huxley's "rationally defensible mysticism"

Dalí's surprising amenability to El Greco in 1952, beyond the appeal to the retina of his majestic Assumptions, might have been facilitated by several essays by Aldous Huxley that were published in 1950, and that have been described as promoting a position of "rationally defensible mysticism".¹ There are interesting parallels between Huxley's writings on art and Dalí's, stretching back to the 1920s, although probably due to shared sources rather than direct influence. For instance, Huxley's essay 'Breughel', originally published in *Essays New and Old* (1927), praised the *Triumph of Death* as "appalling in its elaboration and completeness" and presented Mantegna as a sort of anti-Cézanne, who "did not happen to be very passionately interested in [...] inanimate objects."

Dalí probably first met Huxley in the 1930s in France, where they had mutual friends in Edward James and the Vicomtes de Noailles. James and Huxley were both educated at Eton and Oxford, and became increasingly close towards the time that Huxley published his essays, after James moved to Los Angeles in the late 1940s, attracted by Huxley's involvement with Krishnamurti's Vedanta movement. Although Dalí spent his summers nearby, and although no longer so close to James, it would be natural for him to have known Huxley's views on art.²

In 'Art and Religion,' Huxley wrote about the "Christianity of thrills and visceral yearnings, now violent, now cloyingly sentimental," dominant in Baroque art, in contrast to the quiet spirituality of St. John of the Cross. So Huxley, too, distinguished between the meditative mysticism of St. John or Zurbarán, for example, and its ecstatic alternative. Elsewhere, he suggests an aspect of El Greco's art that could well have provided Dalí with the conclusion of his birth-death-return narrative.³ In 'Variations on El Greco,' (1950), Huxley makes an observation, in hybrid, mystical-psychoanalytical language, that probes the spaces between Zurbarán and El Greco, between Duchamp and Picasso, between *The Enigma of Desire* and *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina*. He says El Greco's

peculiar treatment of space and form tells a story of obscure happenings in the subconscious mind – of some haunting fear of wide vistas and the open air, some dream of security in the imagined equivalent of a womb. The conscious aspiration towards union with, and perfect freedom in, the divine Spirit is overridden by a subconscious longing for the consolations of some ineffable uterine state.⁴

Huxley's observation suggests that Dalí's *Assumpta* is apt for such New Age psychoanalytical mysticism.⁵ Jung, then, would appear to be more suited to the occasion than Freud. Coincidentally or not, Erich Fromm wrote in 1950 on the fundamental difference between Freud's concept of "religious experience" – one of "independence and the awareness of one's powers" – and that of Jung, who considered "the feeling of dependence and powerlessness at the core of religious experience".⁶ Fromm gives ascendancy to Jung's conception of religion that panders to a need for dependence instilled already in the foetus:

The infant after birth is still in many ways part and parcel of the mother, and its birth as an independent person is a process which takes many years – which, in fact, takes a whole life. To cut through the navel string, not in the physical but in the psychological sense, is the great challenge to human development and also its most difficult task. As long as man is related by these ties to mother, father, family, he feels protected and safe. He is still a foetus; someone else is responsible for him.⁷

Fromm's description of Jung's "individuation" process appears to match the progression within Dalí's art. Jung called individuation a "philosophical, spiritual and mystical experience," which is conceived metaphysically as the incarnation of the God concept within the self.⁸ In Dalí's painting, the Assumption is reimagined as an ideal reintegration into the womb at the end of the "individuation" process that is the story of his life: the journey from pathetic Masturbator – the foetal self, hanging limply by its ties to the paternal and maternal forces that dominate it – to beautiful Christ: the whole man who has purposefully completed his life cycle.

The patriarchal church took nearly two thousand years to accommodate the mother in its mythological structure of heaven.⁹ The assertion of the Assumption as dogma promised Dalí a real return to his mother in his incarnated visualisation, on a level with the transubstantiation of Christ, who *is* consumed as the host. The Assumption also resolved a problem in Jung's algebraic formulation of the Christian myth: Jung's belief in archetypal pairs of opposites left the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit lacking a fourth aspect, and he joined Dalí in welcoming Pope Pius XII's approval of the Assumption in 1950 with a congratulatory note.¹⁰ A technical diagram like those that Duchamp made to explain the relationship between the *Mariée* and the *Célibataires*, could probably demonstrate Jung's heavenly Quaternity.

Until the Assumption was accepted, the awkward question of Mary's death or immortality was left unresolved in the dominant iconography and apocryphal account of the Dormition of the Virgin.¹¹ The scene is the one painted by Mantegna in *Death of the Virgin*, which, as Dalí remarked in 1950, fascinated Lorca.¹² The persistent iconographical ambiguity in depictions of Mary's "sleeping" seems to correspond to psychological resistance to contemplating the death of the mother. The Assumption, on the other hand, gives an unequivocal solution – she is alive and well, and living in heaven!

The personal significance to Dalí of this reassuring end to his narrative is shown in his *Assumpta*, where not only has the Virgin Mary ascended to heaven, but her virgin son has returned to the intrauterine paradise within her, annulling the effects of both sexuality and mortality. Gala may have represented Dalí's mother in paintings and in his affections, but the painting is really about Felipa.

Notes

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- ¹ Morris Philipson's 'Introduction' to Aldous Huxley, *On Art and Artists* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960) 14. Several essays were published in *Themes and Variations* in 1950. 'Breughel', reproduced in *On Art and Artists*, 203-13.
- ² See Purser, 50, 106. Huxley gave a talk in Paris at the notorious First International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture, in June 1935, associated in Dalí's mind with the stifling and infantile political intrigue that had led to René Crevel's suicide. Polizzotti, 421.
- ³ Aldous Huxley, 'Art and Religion,' published in *Themes and Variations*, 1950. In *On Art and Artists*, 31-5. Quote on p. 33.
- ⁴ Aldous Huxley, 'Variations on El Greco,' *Themes and Variations*, 1950. In *On Art and Artists*, 226-38.
- ⁵ The term New Age was used by William Blake in his preface to *Milton a Poem* (1809), while Huxley took the title of his book *The Doors of Perception* from Blake's book, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-3). Both terms, therefore, are associated with Biblical mythology.
- ⁶ Erich Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Bantam, 1967 [1949]), makes the comparison between Freud's and Jung's conceptions of religious experience, on p. 14. Dalí could have read the book when it was published in English translation in 1950. He could at least have been aware of Fromm's thinking through secondary sources. In any case, Fromm addressed the questions that concern us and give a good idea of the state of psychoanalytic theory of religion at that time. In another parallel to Dalí, Fromm discusses the problematic irony of American optimism in the age of the atom bomb (Fromm, 2).
- ⁷ Fromm, 77.
- ⁸ C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East* (2nd ed., tr. R. F. C. Hull. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989 [1938]) 157, 294.
- ⁹ The Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was only accepted in 1854.
- ¹⁰ In 'A Psychological Approach to the Doctrine of the Trinity' in *Collected Works of Carl G. Jung*, 2nd ed., vol. 11, Bollingen Series XX. Princeton University Press.
- ¹¹ Mary was found "sleeping" by the apostles, who placed her in a tomb from which she conveniently disappeared. *The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary*, probably by St. John the Theologian, viewed at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf08.vii.xlii.html?highlight=st,john#highlight>
- ¹² 'To Spain, guided by Dalí', *Vogue* (New York, 15th May 1950), 54-7, 91.

9.3 Mechanical Mysticism: The *Vierge Ouvrante*

There is another type of religious image of reabsorption into the mother that provides the final clue for Dalí's depiction of the *Assumpta*, connecting El Greco's soaring Virgin, Duchamp's mechanical metaphors, Theology and Psychology. It also provides further explanation of the alternative didactic and mystical treatments of the viewing experience that Dalí explored within religious art. Shrine Madonnas, when they are closed, show Mary with the Christ Child in her lap – the *sedes sapientiae* – but open up to reveal concealed scenes from the mysteries of salvation, represented within her body.¹ The 15th century *Vierge Ouvrante* illustrated here is in the Musée de Cluny museum of Medieval Art, a short distance from the Hôtel Meurice, where Dalí stayed when he was in Paris. Dalí could easily have seen this, which contains an image of God embracing his crucified son that recalls Castagno's *Holy Trinity*.



Fig 171
Vierge Ouvrante

The mechanically enacted progression from birth to intrauterine return of the *Vierge Ouvrante* matches the life story that Dalí staged in three acts between 1948 and 1952: the original mother-child dyad of the Christ Child on the Virgin's lap, as in the *Madonna of Portlligat*; death, revealed when the shrine Madonna is opened, as a Crucifixion like *Christ of St. John of the Cross*; and return, enacted when the Christ is closed away again within his mother's body, and represented in *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina*.

This is a similar act of concealment and revelation in the viewing experience to that offered by Bosch's triptych *Garden of Earthly Delights*. Dalí associated this painting with the trauma of birth in 1929, when he plucked his foetal self-representation as the "Great Masturbator" from the intrauterine paradise of Bosch's left hand panel. When closed, the doors of Bosch's work display the globe like a transparent womb, titled the *Creation of the World*. Opened, it counters those soft, circular origins with a three-pronged trinitarian structure – its three panels narrate man's genesis, the corruption of

his flesh through desire, and his death. Like the shrine Madonna, it repeats the narrative cycle for the viewer each time the doors are closed and opened again

This is the didactic viewing experience that Philip II favoured over El Greco's evocative, mystical expressionism. Together they are a complementary duality that Dalí explored within the range of religious art, when he adapted the Biblical mythology of origin, identity, and purposeful living to his individual narrative, from its traumatic start in original sin, to its end in the comforting return to the womb-as-tomb.

Notes

¹ The oldest extant shrine Madonna, the *Madonna of Boubon*, is dated around 1200. This Madonna type originated in women's convents, inspired by medieval mysticism and Cistercian spirituality and flourished in France, Spain and Germany. Lists of extant *Vierges Ouvrantes* can be found in Gudrun Radler, *Die Schreinmadonna*, 1990, pp. 51-123. This information was collected from the website maintained by The Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute, Dayton, Ohio, on 20/1/2011.

Epilogue: Pietà

We have followed Dalí's adaptation of religious art to his own painting along a timeline that began in his earliest years, and seen that it was almost consistently crucial, bridging clear turning-points such as the concretisation of his Surrealist style in 1929. For example, while he formulated the essence of selfhood in *Enigma of Desire*, according to his application of Freudian psychoanalysis, we saw the contribution of the iconography of contemplation of St. Jerome to that formulation.

In Dalí's *Enigma*, the nature of that contemplation is tragic, narcissistic introspection; the self is hopelessly anchored to the memory of its lost object, the mother. That was the only available view from the perspective of the isolated Masturbator, speculating on a narrative of its possible existence set in the future. By the time of the *Assumpta*, Dalí was able to reformulate this narrative in retrospect, as the story of a successful restoration of the imagined mother-son symbiosis.

A jump forward now to the end of Dalí's trajectory shows how he looked back to 1929 and tied up the loose strands of the enigma of his selfhood that he had posited then. Once again, it is religious art that provides the solution to psychoanalytic speculation.

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In 1960, Dalí started planning his Theatre-Museum in Figueres, which opened in 1974 on the site of his first ever exhibition. He was increasingly telling his life story in the past tense, his paintings revisiting familiar themes, and he toured his childhood haunts "searching for memories".¹ In 1969, as part of that process, Dalí visited his old classroom and found that a reproduction of Millet's *Angelus* that had long formed a part of his mythical imaginary, no longer hung in the corridor.² Ten years later, Dalí finally brought to a close the *Tragic Myth* that he had spun from the painting since his schooldays, when he repeated Millet's female figure five times across a panel for his retrospective exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou.³ Photographs of *Dawn, Noon, Sunset and Twilight* on Dalí's easel disclose the associative network in which it was enmeshed: it was surrounded by pictures of Raphael's Madonnas, of Michelangelo's *Pietà* in St. Peter's, and of Dalí's surrogate mother, Gala. Dalí uses the colours of Ramón Pichot in this reconciliation with the mother in the myth – the colours of his adolescent impressionist scenes of familial bliss in Cadaqués.

In tune with Freud and Lacan, Dalí's *Myth* is resolved in this painting with the maritidal mother mourning her lost son. In this conclusion, the fatal element of desire within the familial triad has been nullified – there is no male counterpart doomed to death or castration, no pitchfork penetrating the earth, no wheelbarrow or coffin of sex or death.

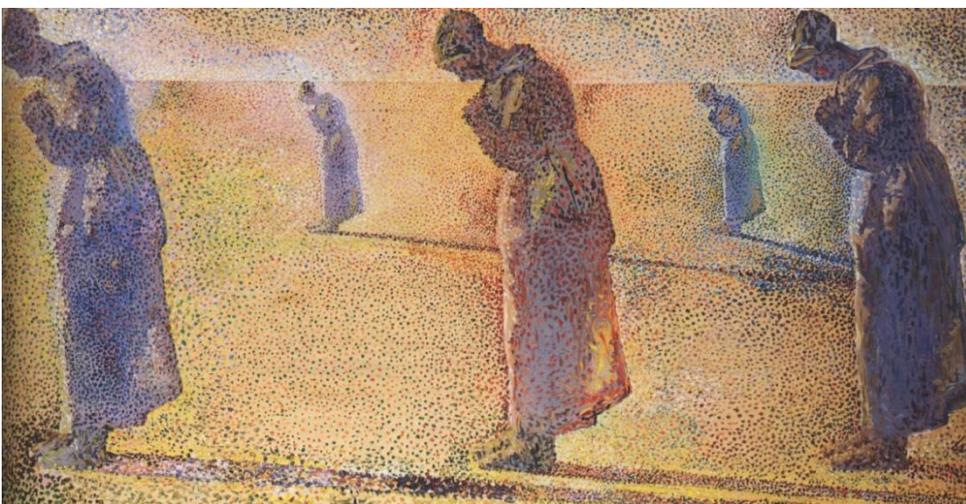


Fig 172
Salvador Dalí
Dawn, Noon, Sunset, and Twilight (1979)



Fig 173
Michelangelo Buonarroti
Pietà (1498-1499)

Dalí was aware that he was making his final paintings, and he meant them to resolve certain lingering issues. At the start of 1982, he began a series of paintings based on Michelangelo's art, seeking further resolution of the enigma of his existence in images of sacred art suited to examination through a psychoanalytic lens – Adam, David, and figures from the tombs of Giuliano di Medici and Pope Julius II. Freud provided a detailed interpretative context for one of these – Moses the paternal “law-maker” – but the most meaningfully elaborated of Dalí's series is an image of the martyred son in his mother's arms based on Michelangelo's *Pietà*.⁴ The psychoanalytical motivation of Dalí's *Pietà* is absolutely determined and autobiographical, but at the same time it is wholly in the language of religious iconography. The psychological power of Michelangelo's statue was attested by an attack on it in 1972 by a man wielding a hammer, as Dalí must have known. Accounts of the attack noted the significance of Mary's youthful appearance (she looks younger than her son) and the fact that Michelangelo's own mother died young, when he was only six.

Dalí's engagement with these personally pertinent themes of the *Pietà* marks the death of Gala in June 1982, closing the cycle of mythopoetic narrative in which Gala had played the role of both lover and mother since 1929. Specifically, it represents a final, visualised resolution of the *Enigma of Desire*, redressing that painting's desperate display of tragic, primary loss. Like Michelangelo's mother, Felipa also died young – “*ma mère, ma mère, ma mère...*”

The mother's breasts – primary objects; first vocabulary of intercommunication – are once more the empty eye sockets of a death mask through which we view the hard and soft of Dalí's world, sharp rocks piercing the surface of the placental sea. The martyred son has returned to the Virgin Mother's body, crystallised together as womb and tomb – a symbiotic monument to nullified desire, to the erasure of original sin.

Like the geological birth of Dalí's maternal space at Cap Creus, the metamorphosis from *Enigma of Desire* to *Pietà* was a long, steady process, but the moment of first crystallisation of the myth's final morphology can perhaps be identified as the final illustration in *50 Secrets*, when Dalí drew Mary grieving for her son, just as he prepared to return home to Cadaqués.⁵ In the accompanying text of that book, Dalí includes among the defining attributes of the *almost* complete artist, the need to become a “master of the resurrection of the lost images of your adolescence”. Those attributes will nonetheless serve for nothing, he explains, unless the artist's hand is “guided by an angel”, and by this he meant Gala.

Dalí's final reconstitution of the enigma of his origins and identity at the time of Gala's passing, in his *Pietà*, reveals the son coming to terms with the mortality of his mother as much as his own – melancholia giving way to mourning. The painting, with its echoes of the *Enigma of Desire*,



Fig 174
Salvador Dalí
Pietà (1982)

consciously addresses the perpetual tension between Death Drive and Pleasure Principle that was the bedrock of Freud's theories of artistic production, and that Dalí saw even in religious art. As he put it to Melina Mercouri in 1964, well into his period of declared Catholicism, "I consider all artistic creation to be nothing more than sublimated eroticism."⁶ This was as true, then, of Raphael and Michelangelo as of Teresa's mystical *little death* in Bernini's statue.

Dalí had long interpreted the martyrdom of the son in Catholic mythology as a paradigm of the universally tragic condition of life – we are born to die – with Freud as a guide to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, and with Lorca as a guide to the predicament of young Sebastian. Lorca was never far from Dalí's thoughts, and he looms in the literary counterpart to *Pietà*, Dalí's study of asceticism, martyrdom and eroticism in his unfinished tragedy, *Martyr: Lyrical Tragedy in Three Acts*, about "a person who attempts no less than to wipe out the original sin."⁷ Dalí began work on this drama, originally entitled *Erotic-mystical Delirium*, in 1954, shortly after completing his narrative cycle with the *Assumpta*, and worked on it for two decades without ever finishing it – the perpetually prolonged, delirious lyricism following Dalí's paranoiac-critical method, sustaining a living mythology of his own existence.



Fig 175
Salvador Dalí
Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion (1930)



Fig 176
Salvador Dalí
Paranoiac Woman-Horse (1930)

Taking the *Pietà* as Dalí's final statement on meaningfully "sublimated eroticism", it is fascinating to look back to the period of his militantly Freudian Surrealism and recognise an early, clumsy engagement with this iconographic emblem following on the tail of the *Enigma*. Dalí further juggled the themes of death and desire, closed eyes, the female body and animal instinct in variations on a sleeping woman, a horse and a lion, in at least three paintings dedicated to Gala in 1930⁸. The figures were also incorporated into the *Invisible Man* – Dalí and Gala's "paranoiac fetish" – where the *sedes sapientiae* pose of the main figure similarly hints at the presence of an invisible, or absent, mother.

Dalí's persistence with the attempt to create this double or triple image is odd, considering that none of the versions is particularly successful. Dalí, however, insisted on their significance, as confirmed by the texts in his contemporary *La Femme Visible*, where he expanded on the theory of his paranoiac-critical method.⁹

The awkwardness of these images is in fact testament to the difficulty Dalí had in representing a positive image of the mother in his psychoanalytically inspired visual schema. Evidence that he turned to religious imagery for help is provided by the mysterious blue balls which are scattered through paintings in 1930. Returning to the globe on which the paternal lion rests its paw in the *Lugubrious Game*, these blue balls possibly allude to the globe on which the Virgin Mary sometimes stands in popular images of her assumption (but less often in "high art"). At the same time, the juxtaposition of these blue balls with a phallic tower or column makes clear that any reference to the Holy Mother will always

acknowledge the grounding of familial mythography in sexuality.

There are certainly sources in profane art for these visual puzzles; the meanings of the lion and the horse have a long tradition thoroughly explored by Lorca and Picasso before Dalí, not to mention the ubiquity of the female nude throughout art history. Fuseli's *The Nightmare* is one possible source suggested by Adès, and Dalí might have followed Picasso's interest in Delacroix, exploring the erotic undertones of the lions and tigers attacking horses with flowing manes, in several paintings reproduced in Gowans¹⁰.

I suggest that another – significantly sacred – model for the forced contorsions of the “sleeping woman” in Dalí's paintings was a type of *Pietà* painting that Dalí knew well. One example is Bartolomé Bermejo's *The Pietà of Canon Desplá* (c. 1490) in Barcelona Cathedral, before which he had probably stood in the company of Lorca, in which a clean-shaven Jerome, in studious mode, is accompanied by his tame lion. There is, however, another example in which the awkwardness of the pose functions as deliberately expressive mannerism; in Lorenzo Lotto's *Pietà*, which Dalí knew from Gowans as *The Mourning of Christ*.

What is of interest now is to look back at Dalí's struggle to construct a form of Surrealist painting in 1929-30, on a solid foundation of Freudian theory, and recognise the extent to which he had even then turned to religious art for visual solutions to his paranoiac-critical musings.

Dalí was shown the way by Max Ernst, whose importance to Dalí at that time was both professional and, as a former lover of Gala, personal. During Dalí's visit to Paris in 1929, he had seen Ernst's *Pietà, or Revolution by Night*, hanging alongside other important Surrealist paintings in Éluard's apartment.¹¹ Dalí acknowledged the impact of this painting in one of his reports from Paris, revealing that he had asked a girl for her opinion of a

reproduction that he was carrying.¹² We might presume that he also discussed the painting with some of the Surrealists that he met then, and that he continued to think about it over the following year. He no doubt had some questions for Gala.



Fig 179
Max Ernst
Pietà, or Revolution by Night (1923)



Fig 177
Bartolomé Bermejo
The Pietà of Canon Desplá (c. 1490)



Fig 178
Lorenzo Lotto
Pietà (1545)

The appeal of Ernst the artist rested partly on his grounding in art history, but was bolstered by his thorough knowledge of Freud. If Dalí was aware that Breton and other Surrealists had had access to Freud's texts in their own language later than he had, he would also have known that Ernst held an advantage over him, being familiar with the German originals since before the First World War. Malcolm Gee has demonstrated the importance of Freud's 'Wolf Man' essay – which Dalí probably did not know directly – for Ernst's *Pietà*.¹³ If Dalí really was interested in the psychoanalytical significance of this work, then he would have known most of the information uncovered by Gee: that it explored Ernst's relationship

with his father; that the cradled figure is a self-portrait; that the father/mother is modelled on de Chirico's *The Child's Brain*, which Breton had owned since 1919. Dalí's questioning mind must have led him to similar insight to Gee's – that Freud led Ernst to explore the origin of the Oedipus myth in a primeval fear of a threatening father, represented by Ernst as mourning his dead son, as in a *Pietà*.

For Ernst as for Dalí, the noble cause of painting is the difficult confrontation of man with his own image. The castration threat that Ernst linked to blindness by the petrified eyes of the stone son, the downturned eyes of the father and the bandaged eye of the figure behind him, is matched in Dalí by the tragic introspection of the Masturbator, and the empty eyes of the death's head, from the *Enigma* in 1929 to the *Pietà* in 1982. This is more than a game of spot-the-reference; this continuity of theme is a statement of Dalí's realisation of the tragic inescapability of the enigma of death and desire. Dalí's painting, following Freud and following religious art, is a confrontation – through representation, contemplation and sublimation – with the "terrible truth" of original sin, with the serene contemplation of a meaningful end as its ultimate objective. The journey from the tortured *Enigma* to the happy ending of the *Pietà* was a metamorphosis of Dalí's self-representation, from sexual and mortal to asexual and immortal.

In real life and in art, it seems Dalí was always searching for a way to come to terms with the absence of his mother from his imaginary world; always longing for a return to the mother-son dyad of psychoanalysis, a journey that Dalí recognised was already represented in religious art, from the Madonna and Child to the *Pietà*.

Notes

¹ Josep Playà i Maset, *Dalí de l'Empordà*, 4. Playà i Maset cites an interview with Antoni Pitxot by Màrius Carol in *La Vanguardia*, 8-10-1989. See also Lear: 1985, 86

² School bulletin relates first visit, 19th July 1954, with Gala. Then invited brothers to Portlligat. Paintings had long since returned to Béziers. Dalí vist des de l'Empordà XIII – Xavier Jiménez and J. Playà Maset

³ 18th December 1979 – April 1980, Retrospective at Centre Georges Pompidou, then to Tate. By October 1980, Dalí was in ill health (Puignau, 163-4)

⁴ Freud's 'The Moses of Michelangelo' [1914], supplemented by 'Moses and Monotheism: three essays' [1934-8], in volumes XIV and XIII, respectively, of the Penguin Freud Library.

⁵ *50 Secrets*, 178-9.

⁶ Melina Mercouri and Salvador Dalí, 'Two fiery artists match with in an uninhibited discussion of love, wealth, fidelity and death', Sioux Falls SD; *Reedbook*; February 1965, in Mas, 189-210. Published in February 1965, but meeting in Portlligat, so, autumn 1964.

⁷ Antonio D. Olano, 'Dalí 71', Castellón; *Mediterraneo*; 3rd-5th February 1971, in Mas, 225-38

⁸ See Taschen, 353-8, for paintings and sketches.

⁹ As Dalí revealed in his talk, 'The Moral Position of Surrealism', at the Ateneu, Barcelona, 22nd March 1930, (Published Hèlix, no. 10, April 1930, Vilafranca del Penedès, in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 221-6), the first double image was the sleeping woman and horse. This was incorporated into the *Invisible Man*, and later absorbed the lion, as part of Dalí's experiment to test his "degree of paranoiac intensity," in discovering further hidden images, and then interpreting them. Soby reproduces a photo of an "incomplete state" of the top half of which he says was painted between 1929-33. The sleeping woman/horse is included, but not yet the "Andromeda" figure. (Soby, p. 36)

¹⁰ See Adès, *Dalí's Optical Illusions*, 26

¹¹ Adès, 69

¹² 'Documentary IV', 23-05-1929, *La Publicitat*, in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 205-8.

¹³ See Malcolm Gee, *Ernst. Pietà or Revolution by Night*; London; Tate Gallery Publications; 1986. The essay titled 'From the History of an Infantile Neurosis' in English was published in German in 1918, but not until 1932 in Spanish. Dalí could have heard or read *about* it in French.

Conclusion

I have approached the work of Salvador Dalí from a broad art historical perspective, considering the lessons that he conserved from the history of art into his theory and practice as a Surrealist painter. Dalí did not acknowledge all of his sources, and I have uncovered previously unsuspected sources of Dalí's Surrealist imagery. I have linked his changing focus on different art and artists throughout his career to events in his life.

The standard view of Dalí's art as self-referential mythography still stands, and he was at all times fascinated with the subject of himself as a particular, sexual and mortal entity. Psychoanalytical theories were essential to Dalí's project of visualising and testing these parameters of the self, but so too was his realisation that the precedents that existed on the pages of art history for considering and representing such ontological questions – for creating an imagined but coherent, visualised mythography of origin and identity – were overwhelmingly within the area of religious art.

The revelation that many of Dalí's sources were in religious art – of particular objects that recur in his paintings, and of his treatment of different themes – makes these sources essential reference points for the analysis of his paintings. They formed a large part of the corpus of images assimilated into his memory and, supposedly, his subconscious, which he dredged and manipulated for his Surrealist paintings with the theoretical support of psychoanalysis.

I have traced the development of Dalí's styles, subjects and attitudinal representation of the self through the various, clearly defined areas of religious art that served as his models.

I have related these changes to the sources that we know him to have been familiar with: paintings and sculpture in the museums and churches that he visited, but especially the paintings he had absorbed from an early age as he browsed and interpreted his collection of Gowans's Art Books.

My approach not only reveals new anecdotal and archival information about Dalí's work, but also provides insight into his motivations, as well as the original psychological motivations of religious art that he uncovered. There is scope for much more research following these lines of enquiry, and much to be gained by removing the barrier between religious iconography and Freudian symbolism that was erected during the foundation of Surrealism.

Dalí's late, overtly religious art and his conceptions of theology, philosophy and mysticism, are shown as natural developments of the concerns of his Surrealist and pre-Surrealist years. The themes of contemplation and martyrdom, and scenes of the Madonna and Child, the Crucifixion and the Assumption are re-examined in this light. As depictions of the body, as struggles for the integrity of the self, as confrontations with mortality, sexuality and the body of the mother, I have shown them to be as legitimate as reflections of the psychology of self-awareness as they are as illustrations of culturally evolved myths.

Throughout my thesis, I have shown how Dalí's theoretical position was influenced by diverse thinkers who are not usually given their full credit, and I have referred to several of these consistently throughout my thesis: the dialogue that Dalí conducted over several years with his friend Lorca was an essential element of his approach to art that has been acknowledged, as were the lessons in how to take humour seriously as an interpretive tool that came from other friends in Madrid, and from Freud. But also, beyond Freud were Rank and Jung, and beyond Picasso and De Chirico were Nietzsche and Berenson. In Dalí's later period he was influenced more by Marcel Duchamp than has been recognised, while I also outlined the wider influence of the journal *Études Carmélitaines*, than the contribution of its editor Father Bruno to Dalí's art when he showed him a drawing of Christ by St. John of the Cross.

Unamuno had helped orient Lorca's side of the religious debate, and is therefore another useful reference for understanding that debate, and the intellectual presence of Ortega y Gasset also helps to contextualise Dalí's thoughts on art. Even some of Dalí's references in modern art, such as Picasso, Picabia and de Chirico helped him to reconsider religious art, and find ways to apply its methods to his own.

Dalí's artistic trajectory is clearly and legitimately divided into three distinct stages: before, during and after Surrealism. I have demonstrated that his constant reference to familiar sources in art history provide a level of continuity in his development that smoothes the passage between these stages, removing the focus from the political and circumstantial events that marked them.

In order to concentrate on Dalí's pragmatic use of his religious models, I have redefined those three periods according to the different approaches toward the problem of the self that he took. I found that representative figures, with clearly defined iconological profiles, can be recognised in Dalí's paintings and be assigned to each attitudinal stage: St. Sebastian, St. Jerome and Christ.

Part I: St. Sebastian

The martyr St. Sebastian represents the problem of the self as a *physiological* entity, confronted with the knowledge of mortality. I looked at how Dalí's visualisation of the body moved from an initial insistence on physical integrity sought in rational objectivity and in models of classical harmony, which culminated in his painting *Composition with Three Figures (Neo-Cubist Academy)* (1926).

Dalí's initial resistance to all things religious was related to a personal incapacity to abandon himself to his emotions. Important events occurred in Dalí's life around the time that he painted his *Composition*, and I gave a detailed account of how these events led him to recognise vulnerability and ambiguity in the sexual and mortal body. I exposed unsuspected sources in religious art for the rapidly advancing metamorphosis of Dalí's approach as it converged with the aims of the contemporaneously nascent notion of Surrealist painting.

Part II: St. Jerome

I identified several of the recurring elements in Dalí's orthodox Surrealist paintings as the iconographical markers of St. Jerome. He is traditionally depicted in his act of meditative, cultural production: ruminating on mortality – represented by a crucifix and/or a skull – and transcribing its message into communicative form, as the Vulgate Bible. In this iconographical domain, St. Jerome represents the contemplative mind, which considers the meaning of mortality and searches for its adequate expression. Like the painter, his aim is to give meaningful form to mental representations.

Dalí used Jerome's iconographic tropes of skull, inkwell, lion, desert landscape and penitentiary rock to explore concepts that he understood through the writings of Freud. I suggested that Dalí deliberately used these for the meanings they traditionally carried, to develop a visual discourse on the fears and desires of the self as *psychic* entity that was his new focus as he embarked on his Surrealist adventure. My approach supplements studies of his work that focus on the psychoanalytical interpretation of his work.

There is an enormous amount of literature on this period – more or less from 1929 to 1939 – and a dense body of work, loaded with ambiguous and tangled references and meanings. There is an undeniable aspect of Dalí's art which tends to the formulaic and superficial, and it cannot be said that every image that he created or borrowed was loaded with significance.

There is no room here to reinterpret the whole of Dalí's Surrealist production in terms of the religious models that served him as symbol, allusion and cross-reference at different levels of motivation and meaning. I restricted my analysis to two paintings that demonstrate the tow of the serious and meaningfully directed undercurrent in his painting: *The Enigma of Desire* (1929) – from Dalí's first triumphant entrance into Surrealism – and *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* (1940) – from a period when he became distanced from official Surrealism, as represented by André Breton. My analyses of these paintings show how consistently and productively Dalí returned to precedents in religious art to represent his own concerns.

Part III: Christ

Christ represents transcendence of the problem of the mortality and sexuality of the body, through faith in the meaning of one's life. With the benefit of psychoanalytical theories of meaningful living, Dalí reinterpreted and appropriated the Biblical myth of the life, death and ascent to heaven of Christ, as a model for his own condensed life narrative.

I looked at the three moments of that narrative, and revealed how Dalí methodically adapted their traditional iconographical representations in religious art to paint a series of works that allowed him to reconfigure his Surrealist practice of representing the psychic constructs that make up a self, but with the network of associative meaning attached to them and supporting them implied rather than illustrated in detail. The theoretical support for this change in approach was suggested to Dalí by Freud, who pointed out the basic flaw in Surrealism: that it was too rational; that it stifled the proper subliminal work of the subconscious.

*

While providing new insights on Dalí's artistic production, I hope my approach shows how taking Dalí seriously as an erudite artist and art theorist can open up new perspectives on religious art, a point I hope I have emphasised in the epilogue to my thesis.



Fig 180
Albrecht Dürer
St. Jerome (1521)

Appendix 1: Ode to Salvador Dalí¹

by Federico García Lorca

A rose in the walled garden you desire.
 A wheel in the pure syntax of steel.
 The mountain stripped bare of impressionist fog.
 The greys guarding over their last balustrades.

Modern painters in their white studios,
 clip the aseptic flower of the square root.
 In the waters of the Seine a marble iceberg
 chills the windows and clears the ivy.

The man treads heavily on the cobbled streets.
 The glass evades the magic of reflection.
 The Government has closed down the perfume shops.
 The machine eternises its binary beats.

An absence of forests, dressing screens and eyebrow gaps
 roams over the rooftops of the old houses.
 The air polishes its prism over the sea
 and the horizon rises like a great aqueduct.

Sailors who know nothing of wine and penumbra
 decapitate sirens in the leaden seas.
 Night, black statue of prudence, holds
 the round mirror of the moon in her hand.

A desire for forms and limits overwhelms us.
 The man who checks with a yellow ruler comes.
 Venus is a white still life
 and the butterfly collectors flee.

*

Cadaqués, at the fulcrum of water and hill,
 raises flights of steps and conceals conch spirals.
 Wooden flutes pacify the air.
 An old sylvan god hands out fruit to children.

Her fishermen sleep, without dreaming, on the sand.
 On the high seas a rose serves them as compass.
 The virgin horizon of wounded handkerchiefs
 joins the great windows of fish and moon.

A hard crown of white brigantines
 encircles bitter brows and hair of sand.
 The sirens convince, but do not suggest,
 and they come out if we offer a glass of fresh water.

*

Oh Salvador Dalí, of olive-toned voice!
 I do not eulogise your imperfect adolescent brush
 nor your colour, which is around the colour of your times,
 but I laud your yearning for the limited eternal.

Hygienic soul, you live on new marble.
 You flee the dark forest of incredible forms.
 Your fantasy reaches where your hands reach,
 and you enjoy the sonnet of the sea at your window.

The world has deaf half-shadows and disorder,
 in the foreground which man frequents.
 But already the stars concealing landscapes,
 indicate the perfect schema of their orbits.

The current of time is becalmed and ordered
 in the numerical forms of one century and another century.
 And vanquished death takes refuge trembling
 in the tight circle of the present minute.

On taking up your palette, with a gunshot in one wing,
 you call on the light that animates the crown of the olive tree.
 Wide light of Minerva, constructor of scaffolds,
 where there is no room for dream nor her inexact flower.

You call on the ancient light that stays on the brow,
 without descending to the mouth nor to the heart of man.
 Light feared by the beloved vines of Bacchus
 and the disordered force of curved water.

You do well to place warning flags
 at the dark limit that glows at night.
 As a painter you don't want your forms softened by
 the shifting cotton of an unforeseen cloud.

The fish in the bowl and the bird in the cage.
 You don't want to invent them in the sea or the wind.
 You stylise or copy once you have watched
 with honest pupils their agile little bodies.

You love defined and exact matter
 where fungus cannot pitch its camp.
 You love architecture that builds on the absent
 and admit the flag as a simple joke.

The steel compass says its short elastic verse.
 The sphere now denies undiscovered islands.
 The straight line speaks its vertical effort
 and the wise crystals sing their geometries.

*

But also the rose in the garden where you live.
 Always the rose, always, our north and south!
 Calm and concentrated like a blind statue,
 ignorant of the subterranean struggles it causes.

Pure rose which clears away artifice and sketches
 and opens for us the tenuous wings of a smile.
 (Pinned butterfly meditating its flight.)
 Rose of equilibrium with no sought-after pains.
 Always the rose!

*

Oh Salvador Dalí of olive-toned voice!
 I say what your person and paintings say to me.
 I do not laud your imperfect adolescent brush,
 but I sing the firm direction of your arrows.

I sing your beautiful effort of Catalan lights,
 your love of what might be explained.
 I sing your astronomical and tender heart,
 of a French deck of cards and free of injury.

I sing the yearning to be a statue that you resolutely pursue,
 the fear of emotion that awaits you in the street.
 I sing the little siren of the sea who sings to you
 riding a bicycle of corals and conches.

But above all else I sing a common thought
 that unites us in the dark and golden hours.
 The light that blinds our eyes is not Art.
 Rather it is love, friendship or fencing.

Rather than the picture you patiently draw it is
 the breast of Teresa, she of sleepless skin,
 the tight ringlet of Matilde the ungrateful,
 our friendship painted like a snakes and ladders board.

May typewritten traces of blood on gold
 streak the heart of eternal Catalonia.
 May stars like fists without falcons illuminate you,
 while your painting and your life blossom.

Do not watch the hourglass with membranous wings,
 nor the hard scythe of allegories.
 Always dress and undress your brush in the air
 facing the sea full of ships and sailors.

Note

¹ Written summer 1925 – March 1926, published in *Revista de Occidente*, April 1926. Translated from the Spanish, in Maurer, 112-23, with my modifications to Maurer's parallel English translation, and to William Bryant Logan's translation from *Collected Poems, Federico García Lorca* (New York; Farrar Straus Giroux; 1991), reproduced in *Salvador Dalí: the early years*, 11-3.

Irony

Heraclitus, in a fragment collected by Themistius, tells us that Nature likes to conceal herself. Alberto Savinio believes this hiding of herself is a phenomenon of modesty. It is – he tells us – for an ethical reason, as this shame is born of Nature’s relation to man. And he discovers in that the prime cause that engenders irony.

Enriquet, a fisherman of Cadaqués, told me those same things in his own language, the day that, while looking at a painting of mine which represented the sea, he observed: “It’s the same. But better in the picture, because in the picture you can count the waves.”

Irony could also originate in this preference, if Enriquet were capable of moving on from physics to metaphysics.

Irony – we have said – is nakedness; it is the gymnast who hides behind Saint Sebastian’s pain. And it is also this pain, because it can be counted.

Patience

There is a patience in Enriquet’s rowing, which is a wise manner of inaction; but patience also exists that is a form of passion, the humble patience in the maturing of Vermeer of Delft’s pictures, which is the same sort of patience as that of the maturing of fruit trees.

There is still another manner: a manner between inaction and passion; between Enriquet’s rowing and Van der Meer’s painting, which is a manner of elegance. I am referring to the patience in the exquisite agony of Saint Sebastian.

Description of the Figure of Saint Sebastian

I realised I was in Italy because of the black and white marble paving of the flight of steps. I climbed it. At its end was Saint Sebastian, tied to the old trunk of a cherry tree. His feet rested on a broken capital. The more I observed his figure, the more curious it seemed to me. Nevertheless, I had the impression I had known it all my life, and the aseptic morning light revealed its smallest details to me with such clarity and purity that it was impossible for me to feel perturbed.

The head of the Saint was divided into two parts: one[, completely transparent,]² formed of a matter resembling that of jellyfish, and held up by a very fine hoop of nickel; the other half was occupied by half a face which reminded me of someone very familiar; from this hoop emerged a support of whitest plaster, which was like the figure’s dorsal column. All the arrows were marked with their temperature and a little inscription, engraved in the steel, which read, “Invitation to the coagulation of blood.”³ In certain regions of the body, the veins appeared at the surface, with their intense blue of a Patinir storm, and described curves of a painful voluptuousness over the coral pink of the flesh.

On reaching the shoulders of the saint, the directions of the breeze remained imprinted, as if on a sensitive plate.

Trade Winds and Counter Trade Winds

On touching his knees, the thin air halted. The martyr's aureola was as if of rock crystal and in its solidified whisky there flowered a rough and bloody starfish.

On the sand covered with shells and mica, accurate instruments of an unknown physics projected their explicative shadows, and offered their crystals and aluminiums to the disinfected light. Some letters drawn by Giorgio Morandi indicated: "Distilled apparatuses."

Sea Breeze

Every half-minute came the smell of the sea, constructed and anatomical like the parts of a crab.

I breathed in. Nothing was mysterious any longer. The pain of Saint Sebastian was a pure pretext for an aesthetics of objectivity. I breathed again, and this time I closed my eyes, not out of mysticism, not better to see my inner I – as one might say platonically – but for the simple sensuality of the physiology of my eyelids.

Afterwards, I went on slowly reading the names and concise instructions of the apparatuses; each annotation was a starting point for a whole series of intellectual delectations, and a new scale of precisions for unsuspected normalities.

Without any previous explications, I intuited the use of each of them and the joy of each of their sufficient exactitudes.

Heliometer for Deaf-Mutes

One of the apparatuses bore this title: "Heliometer for Deaf-Mutes". Already, the name indicated to me its relation to astronomy, but above all, this was made evident by its constitution. It was an instrument of high physical poetry formed by distances, and by the relationships between these distances; these relationships were expressed geometrically in some sectors and arithmetically in others; in the centre, a simple indicator mechanism served to gauge the agony of the saint. This mechanism consisted of a small dial of calibrated plaster, at the centre of which a red coagulum, trapped between two glass slides, served as a sensitive barometer for each new wound.

In the upper part of the heliometer was Saint Sebastian's magnifying glass. This glass was at once concave, convex and flat. Engraved in the platinum mount of its clean and precise glasses, these words could be read: "Invitations to Astronomy"; and below, in letters that imitated relief: "Blessed Objectivity". On a numbered glass rod, could also be read: "Measure of the apparent distances between pure aesthetic values"; and to the side, on a very slender, graduated test tube, this subtle notice: "Apparent distances and arithmetical measurements between pure sensual values." This test tube was half full of seawater.

In Saint Sebastian's heliometer there was neither music nor voice, and in certain fragments, it was blind. These blind spots of the apparatus were those which corresponded to its sensitive algebra, and those assigned to stating explicitly that which is most insubstantial and miraculous.

Invitations to Astronomy

I brought my eye nearer to the lens, the product of a slow distillation, at once numerical and intuitive.

Each drop of water, a number. Each drop of blood, a geometry.

I started to look. First, I felt the caress of my eyelids on the wise surface [made up of calculations]⁴. Afterwards, I saw a succession of clear spectacles, perceived with such a necessary ordering of measurements and proportions that each detail appeared to me like a simple and eurythmic architectural organism.

On the deck of a white packet boat, a girl with no breasts was teaching sailors, imbued with/drenched in/sated with the south wind, to dance the *Black Bottom*. On other ocean liners, the dancers of the *Charleston* and the *Blues* saw Venus each morning in the bottom of their *gin cocktails*, at the time for their pre-apéritifs.

All of that was far from vagueness, all was seen cleanly, with the clarity of a magnifying glass. Whenever I rested my eyes on any detail, that detail was magnified as in a cinematographic *gros plan*, and reached its sharpest plastic quality.

I see the lady polo player in the nickel-plated headlamp of the *Isotta Fraschini*. I do no more than fix my curiosity on her left eye, and this occupies the maximum field of vision. This single eye, suddenly enlarged and as sole spectacle, is an entire bottom and an entire surface of an ocean, in which all poetic suggestions are sailing and all plastic possibilities are stabilised. Each eyelash is a new [direction and a new]⁵ stillness; the greasy, sweet mascara, in its microscopic enlargement, forms precise spheres through which can be seen the Virgin of Lourdes or the painting (1926) by Giorgio de Chirico, *Evangelical Still Life*. On reading the tender letters on the biscuit

Superior

Petit Beurre

Biscuit

my eyes fill with tears.

An indicating arrow, and beneath it: "Direction Chirico: towards the limits of a metaphysics."

The very slender branch of blood is a silent and broad map of the underground. I don't want to carry on as far as the life of the radiant leukocyte, and the red ramifications diminish to a small stain, passing rapidly through all the phases of their diminution, the eye seen once again in its primitive dimension in the depths of the concave mirror of the headlamp, as an unexampled organism in which the precise fish of the reflections now swim in their aqueous lachrymal fluid.

Before looking further, I lingered again on the details of the Saint. Saint Sebastian, untarnished by symbolisms, was a fact in his unique and simple presence. Only with so much objectivity might a stellar system be followed with calm. I continued with my heliometric vision. I was perfectly aware that I was within the anti-artistic and astronomical orbit of the *Fox Newsreel*.

The entertainments come next, simple facts that motivate new lyrical states.

The girl in the bar plays *Dinah* on her little phonograph, while she prepares mixed gin for the motorists, inventors of the subtle blends of games of chance and black superstition in the mathematics of their engines.

On the Portland cement race circuit, the race of blue Bugattis seen from the aeroplane acquires a somnolent movement of hydroids, plunging down in a spiral to the bottom of the aquarium with their parachutes opened.

The rhythm of Josephine Baker, in *slow motion*, coincides with the slowest and purest growth of a flower through a cinematographic accelerator.

Still the cinematic breeze. White gloves to black piano keys of *Tom Mix*, pure as the latest amorous encounters of fish, crystals and stars of Marcoussis.

Adolphe Menjou, in an anti-transcendental atmosphere, gives us a new dimension of *dinner jacket* and of ingenuity, now only enjoyable within cynicism.

Buster Keaton – there’s pure poetry for you, Paul Valéry! Post-machinist avenues, Florida, Le Corbusier, Los Angeles. Pulchritude and eurythmy of the standardised utensil, aseptic, anti-artistic spectacles, concrete, humble, alive, joyous, comforting clarities, to oppose to sublime, deliquescent, bitter, putrefied art.

Laboratory, clinic.

The white clinic becalms around the pure chromolithograph of a lung.

Within the glass of the showcases, the chloroformed scalpel slumbers, reclining like a sleeping beauty in the forest of impossible entanglement of nickels and *Ripolin*.

American magazines offer *Girls, Girls, Girls* for our eyes, and in the sun of Antibes, Man Ray obtains a clear “portrait” of a magnolia, more efficacious for our flesh than the tactile creations of the Futurists.

Display Case of Shoes in the Grand Hotel.

Mannequins. Mannequins, static in the electric splendour of the shop windows, with their neutral, mechanical sensualities and disturbing articulations. Live mannequins, sweetly stupid, walking with the alternating and contradictory rhythm of hip-shoulders, and pressing to their arteries the new, reinvented physiologies of costumes.

[The mannequins’ mouths. Saint Sebastian’s wounds.]⁶

Putrefaction

The other side of St. Sebastian’s magnifying glass corresponded to putrefaction. Through it, everything was anguish, obscurity and even tenderness; even tenderness, because of the exquisite absence of spirit and naturalness.

Preceded by I know not which verses of Dante, I saw the entire world of the putrefied: transcendental and blubbering artists, far from all clarity, cultivators of all germs, and ignorant of the exactitude of the graduated double decimetre.

Families who buy *objets d’art* for the piano, the public works employee, the associate committee member, the professor of psychology... I did not want to go on.

The delicate moustache of a ticket-box clerk moved me.

I felt in my heart all its exquisite, Franciscan poetry.

My lips smiled, in spite of my wanting to cry. I stretched out on the sand. And the waves reached the shore with soft murmurs of Henri Rousseau’s *Bohémienne endormie*.

Notes

¹ Written summer 1926 – summer 1927, published in *L'Amic de les Arts*, 31 July 1927. Translated from Spanish in *Obra Completa de Salvador Dalí*, which reproduces the first Spanish translation, which appeared in *Gallo. Revista de Granada*, (no.1, Granada, February 1928, pp. 9-12, also in *Poesía*, 131), illustrated with a “Tipo de putrefacto”, signed “Salvador Dalí, pintor”, with some revisions made to the Catalan text, first published in *L'Amic de les Arts. Gasetta de Sitges*, year II, no. 16, Sitges, 31 July 1927, pp. 52-54. I also consulted the Catalan original, reproduced in *L'alliberament dels dits*, 15-23. I consulted translations by John London, *The Early Years*, 214-5; Christopher Maurer, *Sebastian's Arrows: Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca*, 141-148; and Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, 157-161.

² Added to the Spanish version.

³ “Invitación al coágulo de sangre” could just as well be translated as “Invitation to the blood clot”.

⁴ Deleted from the Spanish version.

⁵ Added to the Spanish version.

⁶ Added to the Spanish version.

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Abbreviations

- AMD** Dalí Domènech, Anna Maria — *Salvador Dalí visto por su hermana* (Barcelona: Ediciones del Cotal, 1983 [1949])
- DJGD** Gibson, Ian — *Dalí joven, Dalí genial* (Madrid: Punto de Lectura, 2004)
- EM** Santos Torroella, Rafael — *Dalí. Época de Madrid* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes and Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1994)
- GLPD** Rodrigo, Antonina — *García Lorca en el país de Dalí* (3rd ed., Barcelona: Editorial Base, 2004 [1975])
- L-D** Gibson, Ian — *Lorca-Dalí. El amor que no pudo ser* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1999)
- LDAT** Rodrigo, Antonina — *Lorca-Dalí. Una amistad traicionada* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1981)
- ME** Blanch, Eva, Capella, Anna (ed.) and Seguranyes, Mariona — *Museu de l'Empordà. Guia de les col·leccions* (Figueres: Consorci del Museu de l'Empordà, 1999)
- OM** Pla, Josep with Salvador Dalí, *Obres de museu* (Figueres: Dasa Ediciones, 1981)
- POESÍA** Santos Torroella, Rafael — (ed., notes and chronology) *Poesía, revista ilustrada de información poética, no. 27-28: Salvador Dalí escribe a Federico García Lorca (1925-1936)*. 1st part: letters of Dalí to Lorca and other documents. 2nd part: Rafael Santos Torroella, 'Presentación, notas y cronología'. (Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica/Ministerio de Cultura, 1987)
- RES** Santos Torroella, Rafael — *Dalí residente* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes and Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992)
- SL** Dalí Domènech, Salvador — *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (London: Vision, 1942)
- WM** Descharnes, Robert — *Dalí. The Work. The Man* (Lausanne: Edita s.a., Abrams, and Abradale, 1997 [1984])
- WSD** Descharnes, Robert — *The World of Salvador Dalí* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979 [1962])

Gowans's Art Books

52 volumes (Glasgow: Gowans and Gray, 1904-13).

The books are all entitled "The Masterpieces of ...", or in the French editions, "Les chefs-d'œuvre de ...".

The same books were published in Leipzig by Verlag von Wilhelm Weicher, as 'Die Meisterbilder von ...'

The 1914 reprint of the Lawrence book announced the next two issues in preparation to be *Pesellino, Baldovinetti, Verrocchio and Rosselli*, and *Cuyt*, but their publication seems to have been prevented by the outbreak of the First World War.

Individual titles, *Masterpieces of...*

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. Rubens | 29. Lotto |
| 2. Van Dyck | 30. Luini |
| 3. Rembrandt | 31. Greuze |
| 4. Raphael | 32. Carpaccio and Giorgione |
| 5. Reynolds | 33. Hogarth |
| 6. Teniers | 34. Giotto |
| 7. The Early Flemish Painters | 35. Moretto |
| 8. Titian | 36. Romney |
| 9. Frans Hals | 37. Orcagna, Lorenzo Monaco and Masolino |
| 10. Murillo | 38. Gerard Dou |
| 11. Wouwerman | 39. Boucher |
| 12. Velazquez | 40. Constable |
| 13. Holbein | 41. Uccello, Veneziano, Masaccio, and Castagno |
| 14. Veronese | 42. Jan Steen |
| 15. Raeburn | 43. Claude |
| 16. Del Sarto | 44. Morland |
| 17. Correggio | 45. Lippi |
| 18. Bronzino | 46. De Hooch and Vermeer |
| 19. Watteau | 47. Ingres |
| 20. Botticelli | 48. Hoppner |
| 21. Fra Angelico | 49. Gozzoli |
| 22. Tintoretto | 50. Metsu |
| 23. Poussin | 51. Nattier |
| 24. Perugino | 52. Lawrence |
| 25. Michelangelo | |
| 26. Goya | |
| 27. Dürer | |
| 28. Gainsborough | |

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Études Carmélitaines

49 volumes (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1931-64)

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Salvador Dalí: His Art 1910-1965 (New York: The Foundation for Modern Art, 1965) 1910-1965

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Dada and Surrealism Reviewed (Catalogue by Dawn Adès, with David Sylvester and Elizabeth Cowling, Hayward Gallery; London; 11th January – 27th March 1978. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978)

Raphael and America (Text by David Alan Brown, 9th January – 8th May 1983; Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1983)

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Salvador Dalí: Álbum de familia (Texts by Montse Aguer and Fèlix Fanés; Barcelona: Fundació La Caixa, 1998) Aguer & Fanés

Dalí's Optical Illusions (Dawn Adès; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, January 21st to March 26th 2000; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, April 19th to June 18th 2000; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, July 23rd to October 1st 2000; New Haven and London: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2000)

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