**An “Anecdotic Self-Portrait”:
Strategies of Disclosure in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali***

**By
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
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Cultural Mediations
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Abstract

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The subject of this dissertation is the 1942 autobiography of the Spanish artist Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Written to address a number of audiences, Dalí's text is a highly embellished, erudite and self-mythologizing enterprise that can best be described in the artist's own words as an "anecdotic self-portrait," with the emphasis on the storytelling aspect of the work. Dalí, it will be argued, uses the raw material of his life to construct a highly teleological chronicle, using the conventions of the spiritual autobiography and *Bildungsroman*, creating a narrative arc which flows from the innocence of childhood, through an iniquitous youth to the embrace of the Catholic Church.

While the fictionalization of Dalí's personal history transforms a potentially documentary project into a novelistic venture, the highly revisionist disclosure of his stated secrets serves a number of strategic ends in Dalí's personal and public life. The first is as a public relations document, intended both to promote and control Dalí's public image in America. The second is as a manifesto, expressing the artist's antipathy toward aspects of the modernist project, and announcing his break with the Surrealist movement and the founding of a style he calls "classic." The third purpose is to define Dalí's political allegiances which, despite overt claims of apoliticality, covertly point to Spanish Nationalism. This approach requires consideration of Dalí's intended audiences, which include the American public, the Surrealists and other members of the avant-garde, and the gatekeepers of a Spain recently subjugated by Francisco Franco's regime.

Part I of this dissertation seeks, then, to define the narrative content and tone of Dalí's memoir in terms of influences and conventions, and queries the shaping of the facts of the artist's life to serve "anecdotic" requirements. Part II shifts to a focus on extratextual elements, in order to situate the work in terms of Dalí's personal life, career and political affinities. Ultimately, this study argues for a reading of *The Secret Life* as a fabulated and highly revisionist endeavour in terms of intended address and reception by different audiences on numerous registers for several strategic ends.

For
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Introduction and Thesis Statement

Well ... just try to imagine that my secret is composed of a tiny white box that opens but does not shut. An egg, too, you can break. The box, my secret, you will not be able to reconstruct, for my body and the secret are one. And inside you will only find a little yolk and a little white, a tiny bit of albumen, which is my poor little life. I make you a present of it.

Salvador Dalí,
Hidden Faces, 1944.¹

Thesis Statement

This thesis takes as its subject *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the autobiography of the titular Spanish artist, who published the work in 1942 during the Second World War, while living in exile in the United States. Begun in 1938 during the Munich Crisis, and finished on July 30th, 1941, *The Secret Life* was written at a time of tremendous turmoil in Dalí's life, and against the backdrop of terrifying and ever-changing political events that profoundly affected all three countries of Dalí's residence: his native Spain, his second, adopted home in France, and America, where the artist found himself in exile in 1940. This period also witnessed a great change in Dalí's own political views, as he made the transition from someone whose affinities had previously been grounded in a staunch atheism and lay decidedly to the left, to an extreme reactionary position involving claims to have embraced tradition, hierarchy, moral "rigour" and the Catholic Church.

Finding himself, in his late thirties, in exile both from Europe and the Surrealist movement, and already enjoying formidable, although somewhat dubious celebrity in the United States, Dalí was determined to "reinvent" or, to use his metaphor, "rebirth" his public image employing the most powerful means he had at the time: the published

memoir and the popular media. Dalí had a lifelong penchant for defining his position in the art world with incisive precision, and in America in early 1940, he evidently found it necessary to regroup and clearly define his future direction, and as was his wont, to announce it in a public document. Written in French to be published in English translation primarily for a mass American audience, Dalí's text is a highly embellished, profoundly erudite and supremely self-mythologizing enterprise that can best be described in the artist's own words as an "anecdotic self-portrait" (9) with the emphasis on the storytelling aspect of the work.² Dalí, it will be argued, uses the raw material of his life to create a highly teleological chronicle, following the conventions of the conversion narrative and the *Bildungsroman* or "coming of age" novel. This moves him along the narrative arc from the innocence of childhood through an iniquitous youth, culminating with the exuberant embrace of moral rectitude and religion.

While Dalí's mythologizing of his personal history transforms a potential documentary exercise into a novelistic venture, it is argued that the artist's highly revisionist act of the stated disclosure of his secrets performs a number of strategic ends in his personal and public life, and is located on several conceptual and stylistic registers. The first of these is as a public relations document, intended to both promote and take control of Dalí's public image in America. This is reflected in the way in which Dalí mobilizes the text to serve the ends of his career and citizenship, primarily through the fictionalization of his "real" life, creating a sort of Dalinian myth. The result is four hundred pages of exuberant, bizarre, erudite, often pedantic and invariably revisionist text which comprises his "anecdotic" autobiography, although one that is also a fascinating, revealing and immensely rich work of art in its own right.

Dalí's second use of his memoir, it is posited here, is as a manifesto, in which he announces his break with the Surrealist movement, his profound disgust with the modernist project as he defines it, and the founding of a new, pseudo-academic style he calls "classic." This was the culmination of the artist's long-held aversion to certain strains of modernist art and design, which he rigorously opposed. At this point in his career Dalí also rejected orthodox Surrealism and embraced academic and Renaissance art, which he defined in terms of an Old Master technique, and the implementation of presumably universal and grand themes, as opposed to his former, primarily Freudian-based focus on issues of subjectivity, embodiment and the subconscious. Although seemingly at odds with this lofty vision, Dalí was simultaneously enjoying a tremendous celebrity in the "New World" in the early 1940s, and was determined to establish himself as an artist for the masses in America, enthusiastically embracing commercial and popular art, and lauding the virtues of bad taste. That Dalí's new "classic" style had more commonalities with kitsch and popular culture than with painterly traditions and *pompier* aesthetics is argued here, as are the political implications of his move away from modernist imperatives and the embrace of traditional techniques and subject matter.

The third strategic purpose, and one that is stated obliquely in the text, was to define Dalí's political allegiances. In this sense, the artist commandeers the autobiographical format in order to rewrite his past, to bury or repudiate contentious relationships, affiliations, aesthetic choices and in particular, past political involvements which would most certainly adversely affect his career in America as it would in Francoist Spain, where Dalí hoped to return. Dalí's newly embraced Spanish Nationalist fealties are never overtly stated in the text; however, by implication, affiliation and

omission, the artist creates a political profile of himself that, it is argued, was intended as a sort of entry visa back to his beloved homeland, now governed by an extremely right-wing regime which insisted upon tradition, a family-oriented, staunchly heteronormative morality, and an emphasis on the Catholic Church.

Considering the tactical directives of Dalí's text, the prevailing dialectic in this study is between the interior, or content of the text, and the exterior, or "facts" of Dalí's "real" life, and the embellishments and omissions that Dalí implements in order to serve his ends. This reception-based approach not only requires consideration of Dalí's memoir as a strategic document, but equally in terms of his intended audiences who, in addition to Dalí's wife Gala and his family in Spain, include the American public, the Surrealist group, the avant-garde in general, and the gatekeepers of a Spain dominated by that country's newly instated dictator, Francisco Franco.

While this schema provides a relatively straight-forward approach for *The Secret Life* in terms of textual exegesis, issues of reception, and an understanding of Dalí's strategic imperatives for the book, all this is complicated by the fact of Dalí's creative ethos, which privileged that of obfuscation and creative misinterpretation, exemplified in his famous "paranoiac-critical method." This was an approach to visual phenomena which focussed upon the subjective interpretation of visual material based on the projection of the viewer's own preoccupations rather than the authorial content of the work or actual shape or content of the thing viewed. As one often sees faces or objects in the clouds, Dalí was fascinated by the mind's tendency to formulate images from seemingly amorphous or unrelated visual stimuli. "To look is to invent," he wrote, and for him, this subjective and "paranoiac" approach to worldly experience was as

analytically valid as any other.³ In later life the artist even claimed to have become quite proud of his propensity for outright distortion of presumed reality or truth and, embracing mendacity, he was to state in an interview in the 1970s, that “only idiots tell the truth.”⁴ This evidently gave Dalí license to embellish, fabulate, and obscure his text as he saw fit, even if it meant sometimes gross deviations from actual fact. How, then, to approach the life narrative of an artist for whom the distortion of presumed truth was, if not merely a source of amusement, then a creative act, if not an index of superior wit?

While much critical theory maintains that definitive analysis of any given text is an elusive enterprise, *The Secret Life*, perhaps more than any other book written up to the period it was published, self-consciously plays with the hermeneutical process, and occasionally attempts to trump or present its own possible “interpretations.” As Dalí often reminds his readers, they must bear in mind that obfuscation and a constant dialectic between fact and fiction, work and play, person and performance not only defines Dalí’s style, but is indeed the *modus operandi* for his life in general. “My method,” he writes in *The Secret Life*, “is to conceal and to reveal, delicately to suggest the possibilities of certain visceral legions, while at the same time strumming elsewhere the exposed tendons of the human guitar in parts completely torn away ...” This is to be accomplished, Dalí informs his reader, “without ever forgetting that it is more desirable to strike the physiological resonances of the preludes than the ultimate and melancholy ones of accomplished fact” (247). The overriding question for the *Secret Life* scholar, then, is “how to approach the text?” How does one access a book written by an artist whose tools of trade are illusion, parody, performance, paranoia, symbolism, magic, obfuscation, humour and the absurd?

While the reader must constantly be on guard for Dalí's distortions, inventions, and outright parody, it is argued here that beneath the veritable mountain of textual embellishment, Dalí in fact has something very important he wishes to articulate, and as he states at the end of the book, "this life that I have lived, this alone, gives me authority to be heard. And I want to be heard" (399). Considering this, my point of entry to the work begins with the functions the text served for Dalí; what I consider to be the strategic nature of the disclosure of the stated secrets of the artist's life. That is, I focus on the semantic threads he weaves, the phenomena he obfuscates, the tactics he uses and the revisionism he implements for the purpose of understanding the underlying motivations for the shape and content of the authorial intent.

Dalí was a master at obscuring or circumnavigating facts, while simultaneously suggesting their existence through word play, allusion and metaphor, apparently so that only those curious or sharp enough could inch closer to the presumed core of his writings. "My secrets are too grave, and reserved for a Nietzschean elite" Dalí writes in a later autobiographical compendium, and as the dense and highly coded nature of his writing suggests, the artist clearly expects his reader to work hard to extract anything resembling truth or authenticity from his life narrative.⁵ While Dalí's true secrets might be reserved for an elite, however, Dalí's use of a number of registers in the text, in terms of style, tone, and narrative imperatives, in fact suggests many intended audiences, all of whom might presumably access Dalí's book according to their own horizons of consciousness and familiarity with Dalí's history and personal lexicon.

After undertaking the formidable task of familiarizing myself with Dalí's abstruse text and voluminous secondary materials, it became evident that there was only one

navigable response to the issues of the artist's propensity for "anecdotic" narration, distortions and important omissions of the facts of his life, and the use of different communicative registers. This was in terms of the intent, function, and outcome of the revelation of the stated secrets of his life; that is, in terms of strategies. First, strategies to facilitate access to the text and for navigating Dalí's codified, intricate and infinitely ornate language and style. Second, in terms of an understanding of Dalí's own strategies: specifically his own creative methodologies, intended reception, and tactical and practical "use" of the text. Ultimately, this thesis argues for a reading of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* as a highly revisionist and profoundly tactical enterprise that was intended, both overtly and covertly, to be read on a variety of registers by several different audiences. The questions it seeks to answer are the ones that seemed to me crucial for any understanding of this immensely complex text; in particular, "how does one approach the book?," "whom does the text address?" and "what was the strategic function of the work in Dalí's life?"

Methodology and Scholarly Contribution

This study is by no means intended to be comprehensive. Instead it focuses on the personal and cultural milieu in which Dalí wrote *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, on potential strategies for approaching various aspects of this intensely intertextual and polyglossic work, and on the strategic agency of the text itself. This approach is decidedly interdisciplinary and acknowledges that Dalí himself was a profoundly interdisciplinary artist, in the sense that he drew from many sources and worked in many media, all of which reflect similar objects and tendencies, and often interrelate. *The*

Secret Life is no exception and consequently, it is necessary to draw upon a variety of critical theories and historical traditions, cultural paradigms and works in other media to accommodate the diverse discourses and modalities that Dalí mobilizes, conflates or burlesques.

While this is my own critical strategy for approaching the text, my choice of focus was also informed by existing literature on *The Secret Life*, and my desire to avoid duplication. Haim Finkelstein, for instance, in his treatise on Dalí's textual oeuvre, has already produced a primarily psychoanalytic reading of Dalí's book, and investigates the artist's use of myth in his life narrative. David Vilaseca, in his study of Dalí's life writing in general, approaches *The Secret Life* and Dalí's other autobiographical texts in terms of gender construction and issues of subjectivity and identity formation. In the introductory comments to her transcription of Dalí's memoir, Frédérique Joseph-Lowery explores the poetics and semiotics of Dalí's text, while Montse Aguer Teixidor discusses the individual drawings of *The Secret Life* in a recent exhibition catalogue. Fèlix Fanés, a Dalí specialist who has written most extensively about Dalí's autobiography to date, considers *The Secret Life* primarily in terms of Dalí's literary ambitions, in particular his drawing upon the tradition of the "literature of evil," and as a precursor to Dalí's own "decadent" novel, *Hidden Faces*. The work of these scholars is discussed in more depth in the following chapters, and while their own analyses have moulded mine through my desire to avoid duplication, they have equally shaped it by enriching my knowledge of the text, offering alternative perspectives on the work, and providing a foil for my own interpretive approach.

Throughout the process of performing the requisite historical and textual analysis for this dissertation, a second, extremely vital function progressively unfolded before me. That is, the awareness that becoming familiar with the vagaries and intricacies of Dalí's life, his *modus operandi*, and what the artist was later to call the "Dalinian code" offered access to Dalí's visual production, his other writings and the entire Dalí "construct" in a way that was inconceivable without it. Undergoing nothing less than a rigorous course in what Dalí describes as his "cosmogony" familiarized me with a language that I now know is essential to understanding the work of Salvador Dalí, and much of the value of my research and analysis provided here is to be located in the "decryption" of *The Secret Life*. This embodies the complex and frequently bizarre conceptual system that informs literally all of Dalí's written and visual corpus. Documented in this dissertation, and substantiated with Dalí's own words both within and external to his memoir, this "translation" can only enrich Dalí scholarship, and therefore comprises what I believe is a very valuable offering to the field.

While this is a broad analysis of the scholarly contribution this dissertation makes, much of a more specific nature tenders original and important additions to the interpretation of *The Secret Life*, Dalí's American period, and his life and oeuvre in general. Most significantly, this dissertation is the first full-length study on the subject of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and its chief directive is to address a considerable void at a key juncture in the otherwise vast body of Dalí scholarship. Its most comprehensive contribution lies in the depth of analysis of Dalí's dense text, as well as the wealth of contextual research that is crucial for any positioning of the work in historical context, and in terms of Dalí's life, career, and aesthetic and conceptual directives. This critical

and historical context, I argue, is vital for any analysis of the work itself, inextricably bound as it is to the epoch in which it was created and published, and Dalí's immediate career imperatives during the writing of the book.

While this is the broadest contribution to the field of Dalí studies, there are many more specific areas in which the present research builds upon existing material, or suggests completely original approaches to the text. The thesis is divided into two parts, containing five and four chapters respectively. Part I seeks to both query and define the content of *The Secret Life*, what it is that Dalí consciously reveals, or states overtly, and how this disclosure conforms to and deviates from various narrative conventions, influences and styles, as the artist strategically shapes the facts of his life in order to serve his narrative or "anecdotal" ends. Part II looks to extratextual elements of the work, in order to contextualize the narrative and the book itself in regard to Dalí's career and political affinities. Focussing on cultural history, it looks specifically at Dalí's audiences, and the subtexts and strategic omissions of the work: that is, what Dalí does not say, or at least, not overtly, and why.

Breaking down the content of the eight chapters contained within this dissertation, the following survey also considers their contribution to existing Dalí scholarship. Chapter One comprises the first full-length study to consider the narrative conventions Dalí works within in *The Secret Life*, and proposes a structuring of his memoir in terms of the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* and the conversion narrative. Chapter Two is the first exegesis of the text in terms of contemporary autobiographical theory, and also incorporates a survey of recent popular and scholarly approaches to the work. Chapter Three is the only critical study, to my knowledge, of the function of humour in any of

Dalí's writings, or to consider the memoir in terms of *humour noir* and issues of parody. This chapter also surveys critical discourses regarding Dalí's use of style in the work, building upon and contextualising existing research in the field concerned with proposed influences upon the text.

Chapter Four takes as its subject the two most prominent characters in *The Secret Life* next to its author: those of Gala, and of Sigmund Freud. The two converge in the *Gradiva* narrative in the text, which leads to a discussion of Dalí's implementation and parody of psychoanalytic language and methodologies. Also under consideration are two central concepts in the book, and how they relate to the narrative arc: what Dalí cites as the "new science" of "morphology," and what he calls his "cosmogony," pointing to his proposed new "life system."

Chapter Five marks a turn from a focus on textual and narrative strategies to *The Secret Life* as a vehicle for Dalí's career ambitions and cultural and political positioning. It considers the social context in which the book was written, and situates it in terms of communications and reception in mid-century America. Chapter Six is the first analysis to argue that aspects of the book can be read as an extended manifesto; one defining Dalí's anti-modernist stance, his attempt to appropriate or redefine Surrealism according to his new aesthetic directives, and to announce his founding of a new style. This style, which he calls "classic," is the subject of the following chapter, which turns to issues of style and taste that, I posit, form an important conceptual strand of the text. Also an original approach, this chapter queries Dalí's active positioning within period discourses of the so-called high-low divide, and considers the way in which Dalí uses the book's

illustrations, with relative degrees of success, to illustrate his newfound style, and as a conscious affront to the avant-garde.

The last chapter of *The Secret Life* again changes direction, this time away from Dalí's declarations, pronouncements and "official" positioning in the work to what I argue are "present absences", that is, those things which Dalí does not state outright, but around which he shapes the text. For the most part, these comprise Dalí's youthful political leanings toward communism and anarchism, which he makes concerted efforts to diminish, as well as his recent embrace of Spanish Nationalism, which culminates in what is considered as an opportunistic embrace of the Catholic Church in the wake of Franco's instatement of National Catholicism.

Critical Aversion

While the present study is focussed on the strategic imperatives of Dalí's text, in terms of narrative structure and reception, it also offers insight to a book that, because of its complex and abstruse nature, has evidently proved too daunting or off-putting to a number of scholars who might have otherwise been inclined to approach the text from a critical perspective. In fact, despite the popular acclaim the book continues to enjoy, and the considerable literary and historical merits of the work, surprisingly little of a scholarly nature has been written about it, regardless of its obvious value for understanding the oeuvre of one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, Dalí scholars invariably rely upon the text—albeit with varying degrees of reserve regarding its authenticity—as a primary source for their own research. Certainly, if Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp or Andy Warhol had produced similar autobiographies, there would no

doubt be a robust measure of contemporary scholarship informing them. That Dalí's erudite, amusing and innovative work has so far failed, for the most part, to attract all but minimal academic notice can likely be attributed to a number of factors.

The first of these may have to do with the fact that, as Dalí wrote *The Secret Life* in French, to be translated into English, further translations of the work were taken not from the original source, but from the English translation. While sanctioned by Dalí, these translations of translations were inaccurate, omitted text and themes, and were evidently geared more toward selling copy than being faithful renderings of Dalí's original prose.⁶ As articulated by a number of French scholars, this was a frustrating barrier for those interested in accessing the work in an "original" form. A number of critics also voice concerns with the fact of the work having appeared initially in translation, suggesting that this makes the work less genuine than other works that are written and studied in their author's native tongue.

A second obstacle is surely Dalí's traditional position in the western art canon, where his early, Surrealist pre-1939 era work has, until recently, traditionally been cited as authentic, while his later work, including *The Secret Life*, is for the most part considered kitsch, reductive, pandering and inauthentic. In this sense, Dalí and his later work have remained oddly mired, in an era of ironically-inclined and commercially-invested artists such as Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami, in the by now outmoded discourse of the "sell out." Third is surely the fact that the work straddles two traditional academic disciplines, that of Literature (be it English, French or Spanish), and that of Art History. Likewise Dalí's copious forays into the areas of design, performance, theatre, fashion and film, and that his work is a rich mine for discourses of nationalism,

gender, performativity, psychoanalysis, mass culture and the history of the historical avant-garde. Subsequently, an interdisciplinary approach is invariably required to access the text, as well as a perhaps daunting grounding in a number of critiques and practices relevant to Dalí's person and creative corpus.

The fourth obstacle is unquestionably Dalí's politics in his life and work, which have been shadowed by whisperings of Hitlerism and an embrace of Spanish Nationalism, including public admiration for, and later camaraderie with, the Spanish dictator himself. Dalí's reactionary politics and his suspect ethics have duly discouraged scholars, not the least of them the most likely to approach the text: those whose careers are invested in Dalí's reputation, working in various institutions that house Dalí collections, archives and museums. A fifth reason likely to put potential scholars off Dalí's life narrative, especially in the wake of his contentious career and various scandals involving spurious signatures, dubious prints and possibly authorized forgeries, is Dalí's reputation for duplicity; a reputation that the specious recounting of facts in *The Secret Life* does little to dispel.

While these considerations are important, surely the foremost reason for the lack of scholarly interest in *The Secret Life* no doubt lies in the work itself, which is often dense, baroque, uneven, obtuse, parodic and inextricably entwined with the period and society within which it was written. Many reviewers in the 1940s claimed they simply "threw up their hands" in an attempt to evaluate or analyze the work, and indeed, it takes time, patience, considerable literary resources and most of all, a reliable cognitive map of Dalí's life up to and during the writing of his book before one can begin to tease meanings from its many tangled and colourful strands, woven as they are into Dalí's

personal life, and against the backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and the first half of World War II. Indeed, despite growing sentiment toward the significance of Dalí's autobiography, scholarly writings on the subject repeatedly express frustration in attempts to navigate the often bizarre text (in translation or otherwise), the elusive influences, the nature of Dalí's tone, the "insider" references, the perplexing omissions, a bewilderment with the overall structure, and concern and distrust regarding issues of authenticity and motivations for the writing of the work.

The Book as Object

Despite what I have cited as scholarly aversion to *The Secret Life*, the book itself has had a long and colourful history in the popular arena. It was reviewed by more or less every major and many minor American newspapers and magazines, by writers of the stature of Arthur Miller and George Orwell, and even reached fourth on the bestseller list for non-fiction in San Francisco in 1943.⁷ Initial reactions to Dalí's memoir were nothing if not strong, ranging from its being described as an "insanely brilliant autobiography,"⁸ to "one of the most boring books ... ever encountered,"⁹ to a "Handbook for the Future of Sin."¹⁰ Most famously, Orwell described the work in 1944 as nothing less than "a book that stinks."¹¹ Despite such fervent reactions to the text, or perhaps because of it, *The Secret Life* has remained in print to this day, and has appeared in a number of translations and formats since its initial publication.

As Dalí originally published *The Secret Life* in English for an American audience, for the present study the 1993 Dover Publications edition of the original English translation has been used as the primary textual referent. This source was enriched by my

examination of the original French manuscript, and subsequent revisions of it in the holdings of the Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres, as well as a transcription of this manuscript assembled by Joseph-Lowery and published by L'Age d'homme, Lausanne in 2006. I also had the opportunity to view what is to my knowledge every extant edition of Dalí's memoir in every translation in the holdings of the library of the Salvador Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, which yielded a broad perspective of the shape and content of the many versions of the book available since its publication in a number of countries and formats.

The first edition of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, translated by Haakon Chevalier, was published by the Dial Press in New York, and released in November of 1942, when it sold for six dollars U.S. The dust jacket was black, with a color reproduction of *The Persistence of Memory* on the front. One hundred and nineteen special edition copies were also produced in 1942, housed in cardboard presentation cases, and each sold with a hand-drawn image by Dalí inside the front cover. The next edition to appear was the Spanish translation, released in Buenos Aires by Editorial Poseidon in 1944. Vision Press in London published sundry editions between 1948 and 1976, with the inclusion of the scripts of the films on which Dalí had collaborated with Luis Buñuel, *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or*, and Dalí's 1935 essay, the *Conquest of the Irrational*. Later Vision editions were touted as the "New Enlarged Editions," and included more photographs, as well as excerpts from Dalí's 1966 *Diary of a Genius*. An Italian translation by Longanesi and Co., Milan, appeared in 1949, and Table Ronde, a popular press in France, put out various paperback editions printed on pulp paper with different covers in 1952, 1960, 1969, 1979, and 1984. These included omissions in the

text, a jumble of photographs, mostly different from the 1942 edition, and a number of reproductions of Dalí's paintings.

A Swedish edition of *The Secret Life* appeared in 1961, published in two volumes by Bo Cavefors Bokförlag, of Malmö, Lund, and a German edition appeared in 1984. Notably, *The Secret Life* was too pungent to pass by the Spanish Nationalist authorities, and its publication in Spain was banned until 1981.¹² In that year, DASA editions released Spanish, Catalan, German, and English versions. Another Spanish edition, almost identical to that of DASA, but very poorly printed, was released by Editorial Antártida in Barcelona in 1993. The most recent English version was also published in 1993, by New York's Dover Publications. Except for the cover, and a slightly smaller format, this imprint is identical to the 1942 Dial Press version, although the color plates have been repositioned to the inside of the covers, and the margins have been narrowed.

As the numerous translations and reprints attest, Salvador Dalí's autobiography has continued to hold a popular audience among those interested in art, and the book is often cited in literature about the notorious Spanish artist, plundered for information about his life, and for vignettes, aphorisms and pronouncements that pepper writing about Dalí, from the popular to the scholarly. Academic notice, however, has recently shifted toward a certain amount of esteem and curiosity concerning *The Secret Life*, in part owing to the centenary of Dalí's birth in 2004, a time when invested parties sought to re-evaluate the artist's life from primary sources, and which witnessed the emergence of a growing number of articles and texts about and referencing *The Secret Life* itself. Interest was further piqued by the recent acquisition of photographs by the German photographer Eric Schaal documenting Dalí's life during the period in which he wrote the work, and of

the original drawings for the book in 2004 by The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in Figueres, Spain, an institution which produced a publication on these illustrations by Montse Aguer Teixidor, the Director of the Foundation's Centre for Dalinian Studies.¹³

Likewise, a symposium and accompanying exhibition of the original drawings for the book, held at the Cervantes Institute in New York City in 2007, both centered on the subject of *The Secret Life*. Most encouraging for scholars, however, has been the publication, in 2006, of the painstaking transcription of Dalí's original French manuscript by Frédérique Joseph-Lowery, as mentioned above. This text, while not a legible format in the sense of being a finished book, includes all of Dalí's *scraffiti* and revisions and original digressions, and therefore provides an excellent resource for those seeking to analyze the inception of the text, and Dalí's original language unmediated by his typists, his editors, and his various translators. Making Dalí's original French text, including his creative misspellings and crossed-out passages, widely available will no doubt open up future scholarship about the book, as it certainly enhanced the research in the present dissertation.

Praise for *The Secret Life*, and assertions regarding the importance of the text in terms of literary influence, have also increased in recent years. American art historian Charles Stuckey, for instance, recently claimed that "Dalí's immense body of uninhibited texts composed in the first person (most notably, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942), arguably revolutionized a literary genre." He suggests that by "Manically boasting about his weaknesses and vices no less than about his achievements and virtues, Dalí helped to initiate today's antiheroic mode of autobiography and, by extension, the sex-centered biographical interpretations of artists and art so prevalent since the 1960s ..." ¹⁴ In a

catalogue of a 1982 exhibition of drawings from *The Secret Life*, Reynolds Morse and Joan Kropf claim that “*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* is generally regarded as one of the greatest introspective literary works since *Remembrance of Things Past* by Marcel Proust.”¹⁵ Spanish scholars, in particular, note the importance of Dalí’s text in terms of Spanish literary production, beginning with Ricard Mas Peinado’s and Vicenç Altaió Morral’s claim that *The Secret Life* is “one of the best narratives in contemporary literature,”¹⁶ echoed by Aguer’s assertion in a recent interview that Dalí’s autobiography is one of the most important works of twentieth century Spanish literature.¹⁷

Given the ongoing popular attention afforded Dalí’s autobiography as well as growing scholarly interest in the book, and in the work and influence of Salvador Dalí in general, the time is evidently ripe for a critical, in-depth exegesis of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and for one that considers the cultural, political and social context of this remarkable literary endeavour. In particular, it will be maintained throughout the study that follows that this work was informed by diverse strategies of disclosure, as the Spanish artist wove innumerable strands of intrigue and obfuscation into a complex, parodic and erudite literary fabric that resulted in a work that American critic Benjamin DeCasseres cited as “one of the most extraordinary books of any century.”¹⁸

¹ Spoken by the character Girardin in Salvador Dalí, *Hidden Faces* (New York: William and Morrow Company Ltd., 1974), 258.

² All references and supplementary materials in this document have been relegated to endnotes at the end of each chapter. However, in the interest of saving space, I have used an in-text citation format for material quoted directly from the Dover edition of *The Secret Life*. See Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, trans. Haakon M. Chevalier (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993).

³ Salvador Dalí, “My Paintings at the Autumn Salon,” *L’Amic de les Arts*, vol. 2, no. 19, 1927, supplement to the issue, in Salvador Dalí, *Oui: The Paranoid Critical Revolution*, ed. Robert Descharnes, trans. Yvonne Shafir (Boston: Exact Change, 1998), 16.

⁴ *The Fame and Shame of Salvador Dalí*, directed by Mike Dibb, with Ian Gibson (Barnes, U.K.: Dibb Directions, 1996).

⁵ Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí, As Told to André Parinaud*, ed. and interviewed by André Parinaud, trans. Harold J. Salemsen (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1976), 224.

⁶ Frédérique Joseph-Lowery, "La Mise au secret de *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí*" in Salvador Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un génie?*, ed. Frédérique Joseph-Lowery (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 2006), 29-34.

⁷ Anon., *The New York Times* (Jan 24, 1943) (CDSS), n.p. Many of the popular articles cited in this dissertation are from a period scrapbook held in the archives at the Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres, Spain, likely compiled by Dalí's wife Gala, his family or a close friend. Most of these articles do not indicate page numbers, and as such are tagged with the acronym CDSS, for Centre for Dalinian Studies Scrapbook. This is also the case for a few articles cited from the archive at the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, which is similarly tagged with the acronym DMLF for Dalí Museum Library File.

⁸ Sterling North, *The New York Post*, Dec. 23, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

⁹ Howard Devree, "Salvador Dalí's Not in the Least Secret Life," *The New York Times*, January 17, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹⁰ Anon., *St. Paul, Minnesota Dispatch*, Dec, 18, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹ George Orwell, "Benefit of Clergy: Some Notes on Salvador Dalí," in *Dickens, Dalí and Others* (New York and London: Harvest/HBJ, 1973), 175.

¹² Joan Kropf, and A. Reynolds Morse, *Salvador Dalí: The Secret Life Drawings* (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Salvador Dalí Foundation, Inc., 1982), iii-iv. The reason for *The Secret Life* being banned in Spain, namely its sexual content, was suggested by Montse Aguer Teixidor, Director, The Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres, Spain. Interview conducted by Julia Pine, May 30th, 2007.

¹³ Montse Aguer Teixidor, *La Vida Secreta de Salvador Dalí per Salvador Dalí* (Figueres: The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, 2005). Enrique Sabater, one of Dalí's secretaries, later acquired the rights to *The Secret Life*, as he did ownership of the original drawings for the book, which were "found among the papers of the now-defunct Dial Press" (Joan Kropf and A. Reynolds Morse, *Salvador Dalí: The Secret Life Drawings* (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Salvador Dalí Foundation, Inc., 1982), iii). These were acquired in 2004 by The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in Figueres Spain.

¹⁴ Stuckey, review of "The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí," http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_7_87/ai_55149253/pg_1.

¹⁵ Kropf and Morse, iii-iv.

¹⁶ Ricard Mas Peinado and Vicenç Altaió Morral, "Dalí is Thirty-seven Years Old: Physiology of the 'Great Masturbator,'" in *Persistence and Memory: New Critical Perspectives on Dalí at the Centennial*, eds. Hank Hine, William Jeffett and Kelly Reynolds (The Salvador Dalí Museum Foundation St. Petersburg, Florida: Bompiani: 2004), 95.

¹⁷ Montse Aguer Teixidor, interview.

¹⁸ Benjamin DeCasseres, "In the Realm of Books," *New York Journal American*, Jan. 3, 1943 (CDSS).

CHAPTER I: An Inquisitorial Process: The Making of a Life

*FORM, FORM, FORM—which is to say: SHAPE FIGURE
CONFIGURATION CONFORMATION FIGURATION ARRANGEMENT
DISPOSITION PROPORTION STRUCTURE DESIGN OUTLINE
ASPECT APPEARANCE OUTSIDE EXTERIOR CONTOUR
CIRCUMFERENCE...*

Felipe Jacinto (aka Salvador Dalí),
The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí, 1941.¹

Introduction

As the autobiography of one of the twentieth century's most commercially-oriented and "public" artists, the 1942 memoir of the eccentric Catalan painter Salvador Dalí's *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* is generally considered to be a public relations exercise intended to promote Dalí's career in the United States in the early 1940s. While this assessment is corroborated in the present study, as the continued popular appeal, as well as growing scholarly interest in it indicates, the book was remarkably successful in combining Dalí's promotional intent with a unique writing style and a superior talent for storytelling. As a close reading of the text reveals, the volume has considerable artistic merit, shows remarkable erudition on the behalf of its author, and yields first-hand accounts of important avant-garde formations in Spain, Paris and the United States during the 1920s, '30s and early '40s. Most of all, for those interested in the life and work of Salvador Dalí, the memoir provides entry, although often difficult and abstruse, to some of the key discourses and events of the artist's life and work up to the period of the book's publication.

What makes *The Secret Life* innovative for the period in which it was written is its decidedly literary quality, in that Dalí has very much shaped the events of his life, his

relationships, and his recounting of his intellectual, creative and spiritual growth into a novelistic format that blurs the lines between fact and fiction, memoir and novel. “There is nothing like being the cultivator of your own life for producing glorious pages of text,” Spanish writers Ricard Mas Peinado and Vicenç Altaió Morral observe regarding the content of Dalí’s life narrative, and evidently, Dalí makes every effort to cultivate his own legend using the raw material of fact to generate a satisfying fiction.² As such, it is not surprising that the idea of form is emphasized so heavily throughout the text, as Dalí attempts to mould and shape his life story into a coherent gestalt that fulfills the demands of what can only be described as his plot or storyline.

This chapter considers the question of form in *The Secret Life* as it relates to the narrative structure of Dalí’s memoir. Being one of the key concepts of the book, form is parsed for the way in which Dalí presents the events of his life, the literary techniques, conceits, images, symbols, language and traditions that make the autobiography decidedly literary or fictional in quality. This analysis will set the scene for subsequent chapters, which consider how the shape and content of Dalí’s book functioned strategically for the artist to pitch a new public persona in America, to announce his new aesthetic and creative direction, and to achieve a number of political and social ends in the service of his long, prolific and very public career.

An “Ornamental Inquisition”: Forming the Text

“We know today,” Dalí writes in the Prologue of *The Secret Life*, “that form is always the product of an inquisitorial process of matter—the specific reaction of matter when subjected to the terrible coercion of space choking it on all sides, pressing and squeezing it out, producing the swellings that burst from its life to the exact limits of the

rigorous contours of its own originality of reaction.” For Dalí, all matter is destined to become or grow into “what it is,” and is therefore invariably subject to the “inquisition” or compression of space that moulds it. Dalí uses the agate as an example, a stone whose interior contains a loose configuration of “ornament,” in swirls and shapes, or what Dalí describes as its “arborescent blossoming.” “Yet,” the artist notes in characteristically eccentric and evocative language,

they result from the most ferocious constraint of a colloidal environment, imprisoned in the most relentless of inquisitorial structures and subjected to all the tortures of compression and moral asphyxiation, so that their most delicate, airy and ornamental ramifications are, it seems, but the traces of its hopeless search for escape from its death agony, the last gasps of a bit of matter that will not give up before it has reached the ultimate vegetations of the mineral dream (3).³

For Dalí, the ornamental agates might grow and strain to transcend the “inquisition” of form to which they are subject, but they will always become what they are destined to be. “So too the rose!” He writes, “Each flower grows in a prison!” This notion is key to *The Secret Life* in terms of Dalí’s writing strategy, where the artist presents the events and outcome of his life as predestined, as Dalí grows, after undergoing several trials and experiences, into the “finished product” he presents the reader with at the end of the book. The narrative arc follows Dalí’s life from what he postulates is the “loose configuration” of his early life, to his misguided and perverse adolescence and young adulthood, to his final triumph as the “reborn” man who has found the Catholic Church, reactionary politics, academic and Renaissance art, and takes on the “form” that is determined by what he calls his “biological mould.” “It is now known, through recent findings in morphology ...” Dalí writes, “that most often it is

precisely the heterogeneous and anarchistic tendencies offering the greatest complexity of antagonisms that led to the triumphant reign of the most rigorous hierarchies of form”

(3).

Figure 1: Salvador Dalí. “Ornamental Inquisition.”
Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 369.
Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Considering Dalí’s idea of the “ornamental inquisition,” one might approach *The Secret Life* with an image that appears at the beginning of Chapter Fourteen (Figure 1). Here the artist has inserted a fanciful chimera based upon his initials, S.D., with an arm reaching out and piercing an elongated cranium that resembles a tongue. The figure is standing on a plinth like a statue, above which the artist has written the English title “Ornamental Inquisition,” referring to his concept of the “biological mould,” but also applicable to the shape and structure of the book itself, with its exuberant, hyperbolic

“ornamental” writing, held in by the “inquisition” of the narrative structure of the book. The animated aspect of the image also points to the emphasis on the body and anthropomorphism in the book, and the extent to which Dalí associates himself physically with the text itself.

Indexing Dalí’s name, the initials are perhaps intended as a synecdoche of the artist, and in a very graphic sense visualize a specific relationship with his own mind and tongue, and the textual product it implies. Dalí’s Spanish roots also give his use of the word “inquisition” a very specific gloss, pointing to the Spanish Inquisition, the Catholic tribunal established by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in 1478. Set up to maintain religious orthodoxy in their dominion, and to suppress heresy, Dalí therefore makes parallels with his own religious directives, outlined in the book, which increasingly narrow toward an embrace of the Catholic Church. From this perspective, this tiny drawing becomes an emblem of Dalí’s autobiography itself: ornamental, yes, an inquisition, yes, and equally as much, using Dalí’s characteristically somatic language, presumably an opportunity to “get into his head,” as it is a play with *la langue*, metaphors and double-entendres included: the tongue in cheek, the sticking out of the tongue, and the holding of it.

Life Writing: Narrative Structure in *The Secret Life*

Despite Dalí’s undeniably eccentric writing style and relentless hyperbole, the structure of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* follows, for the most part, a relatively conventional, chronological account of a life lived, despite a few long-winded asides comprised of what Dalí describes as “tales” or “stories.” At four hundred pages, divided into three parts, the book commences with an epilogue, and ends with a prologue, and

apart from the first section entitled “anecdotic self-portrait,” is wholly chronological. Part One begins in the womb, and continues to recount a happy, if unconventional childhood. The reader learns of Dalí’s middle-class family dominated by his hot-blooded father, and his early life in his hometown of Figueres, Spain, and in the seaside town of Cadaqués, where the family had a summer home. Here Dalí, a self-described natural-born “king,” duly transcends his peers at school in intellect and elegance, and first becomes interested in art and sex.

Part Two considers Dalí’s adolescence and young adulthood, in which the artist portrays himself primarily as a naïf and a buffoon leading up to the brink of near madness, when he is saved by the healing union with his beloved wife-to-be, Gala. The narrative follows life developments from the young man’s expulsion from school, his first sexual and romantic experiences, his early development as an artist, the death of his mother, his Dandyism and his attendance at the Escuela Especial de Pintura and his tenure at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, where he meets some key early figures in his life and embraces the avant-garde. This section ends just as Dalí is about to join the Surrealist movement, and has completed his first major project, the film *Un Chien andalou*, in partnership with his Residencia colleague Luis Buñuel. It culminates in Dalí’s meeting with and courtship of Gala and his expulsion from his family, punctuated with a Catalan folk tale entitled *Tale of the Wax Mannequin and the Sugar Nose*.

Part Three of Dalí’s autobiography chronicles its author’s career, including his entry into society, and his involvement with the Surrealist movement, which he greatly downplays. The backdrop of this module is the Paris avant-garde and social elite, who form Dalí’s immediate circle, as well as the Spanish Civil War, and World War II. These

chapters chronicle Dalí's rise to the height of fame and fashion in both America and Paris, until the artist experiences a personal crisis, after which he rejects Surrealism, the avant-garde, "decadence," leftist politics and atheism for a new "classic" style in painting, a stated refusal of all movements and politics except the "Dalinian" one, and privileges "rigour," "form," hard work and marital devotion. In the final pages of the epilogue, Dalí adumbrates this situation, having emigrated to the "New Land" of America, and as a final flourish, embraces the Catholic Church and announces his resulting personal "renaissance."

The tripartite division of Dalí's text functions both structurally and conceptually in terms of the artist's spiritual growth and the geographical shifts in the narrative, as the central conceptual trajectory involves the artist's allusion to various phases of his growth, as reflected in the more conventional "three ages of man." These "ages" map the route to emotional and spiritual maturity which, as Dalí describes it, runs from the innocence and wonder of his childhood, to the dissolution and decadence of his adolescence, to his conversion and acquisition of his presumed redemptive "wisdom" at the end of the book.⁴

Within the illustrative framework of the book itself, Dalí also implies another kind of growth or resolution in the stages of his life, from fragmentation to wholeness, or, following the theme of form in the book, from the malformed or fragmented to the "formed." Dalí accomplishes this through the inclusion of pictograms from a French children's language primer, which he has cut out and placed strategically throughout the first half of the text. This visual component, comprised of commercial, mechanically-reproduced images which are immediately evident in their variation from more traditional text illustrations, are calibrated to the narrative in more obvious ways, and are primarily

intended to enhance or “explain” the text visually. These include graphic cuts of simple things that have some direct or easily surmised connection with the wording next to which they appear, such as *Hérisson*, *Araignée*, *Huppe* and *Pyxide*, which appear in the margins on page eighty-seven. Elsewhere, for example, “*Béquilles*,” meaning “crutches,” appears directly beside the passage that reads “It was the first time in my life that I saw a crutch, or at least I thought it was” (90).

Puzzled by this graphic inclusion in Dalí’s memoir, in an essay on *The Secret Life* Spanish literature scholar Michelle Debax sees this “visualizing” of the text as a compensatory gesture, writing “It is as if Dalí knew that his text is not sufficient, that its competence arose rather from the graphic code and as if this came to support and sometimes substitute the linguistic code.”⁵ While the marginalia certainly enhance the “linguistic code” of the work, as a sort of visual punctuation, Dalí had a more cohesive narrative purpose for their insertion. Indeed, Dalí’s childhood wonder and excitement at the discovery of the crutch, of nature, and of the world around him are reflected in the pictograms as a sort of semiotic exclamation, implying that these were some of the elements and experiences that helped to create the person Dalí was to become.

Except for a few exceptions in the latter part of the book, the graphic cuts diminish in the text when Dalí begins to make the transition to adulthood, and into the realm of the avant-garde and the Surrealist movement. At this point in Dalí’s maturation, these diverse and “innocent” elements become “resolved” in four images rendered in a technique that the artist was later to call “erotic metamorphoses,” being fantastic overdrawn “transformations” of existing images into bizarre, often salacious ones.⁶ In these Dalí begins with pages from nursery language primers, with the pictograms still

arranged evenly across the pages, usually in groups of six or more. Dalí transforms these by drawing over them in ink to create fanciful works incorporating the drawings. The result is frequently sexual or sinister, and thanks to the contrast between innocence and experience, there is invariably an amusing sub-text. The first of these, displays the original page from the primer, showing a thimble, a doll, a ball, a needle and pin and a whip, next to the “metamorphosis” Dalí has performed on the image.⁷ This is comprised of a man, with swirls or clouds emanating from his head, whose crouching body holds a coronet or tree-like structure which encompasses the ball and the doll. Protruding noticeably out of the central body, the whip unambiguously becomes a long, thin, curved phallus, and transforms the neutral page of the textbook, originally the height of simplicity and innocence, into a perverse and complex visual joke about sexual fantasies and lust.

This type of visual play is reminiscent of Dada collage, a graphic technique which gave impetus to the fashion for rearranging and recontextualizing printed images to create new and often humorous or disturbing visual constructs.⁸ Frédérique Joseph-Lowery also sees the Surrealist influence on Dalí’s inclusion of the individual graphic cuts, although her focus is more on iconicity, and the agency of the words that inform each of the pictograms. “Without editorial choices inaugurated by Larousse,” she writes, “Magritte would never have painted *This is Not a Pipe*.”⁹ Unlike Magritte, however, it is likely Dalí would have been more attracted to this type of graphic procedure as it played upon vision and perception, exemplifying as it did his paranoiac-critical method by referencing potential hallucinatory fantasies that could be rendered through the phenomenon of projection and the workings of the imagination.

Dalí included four metamorphoses in the text, three of which appear in Part Two of the book. While the images are intriguing and amusing in themselves, and offer a colourful inclusion in the roster of illustrations for the text, the function they perform within the narrative is to create a visual metaphor of Dalí's transformation from the infantile "polymorphous perverse," an expression from Freudian psychoanalysis that the artist frequently employs in relation to himself, to an integrated whole. "I was the backward, anarchistic polymorphous perverse," Dalí writes of his childhood.¹⁰ "With extreme mobility I reflected all objects of consciousness as though they were sweets, and all sweets as through they were materialized objects of consciousness" (4). The pictograms, as they punctuate the narrative of Dalí's childhood, are analogous to these "sweets," materialized upon first encounter as novelties or significant discoveries, and later brought together to resonate anew in complex formations. In this way, this suite of mechanical drawings and Dalí's "metamorphoses" of them adds another layer of meaning to *The Secret Life* as it paves the narrative trajectory, and sweeps what might be called the Dalí character from innocence to experience, or *informe* to form, and childhood and adolescence to old age.

According to Dalí, as a child he became fascinated with old age, inscribed as this state was with wrinkles which etched the wisdom of life lived and time passed, as compared to the malformed lumps of flesh he disparages his young companions as being. In a long passage in Chapter Five, Dalí considers his nurse Lluïcia and grandmother, writing "I adored old age!", struck as he is by the elders' "parchment-like flesh on which the effaced and complete manuscripts of their life were written," as compared to the "crude, brand new and apathetically unconscious flesh of my schoolmates, who no longer

even remembered that they too had already been old a while ago when they were embryos” (67).

Through such ruminations, Dalí positions himself as anticipating, from a very early age, his maturity which, the finale of the book explains, was to entail his epiphanic conversion to Catholicism and “tradition.” Describing himself as the “Anti-Faust” (that is, someone who longed to age rather than, like Faust, to seek eternal youth), Dalí recalls that “As a child I adored that noble prestige of old people, and I would have given all my body to become like them, to grow old immediately!” “Let the labyrinth of wrinkles be furrowed in my brow with the red-hot iron of my own life,” he writes, “... let my unformed childhood soul, as it ages, assume the rational and aesthetic forms of an architecture, let me learn just everything that others cannot teach me, what only life would be capable of marking on my skin!” In equally exuberant prose, Dalí continues to champion the wrinkle as a form of “life writing,” inscribing experience, knowledge and spiritual development upon the flesh. “The smooth-skinned animal of my childhood was repugnant to me and I should have liked to crush it” he claims. For “I already knew that only the wear and decline of the flesh could bring me illuminations of resurrection” (68).

In this way, Dalí sets up the narrative telos of the entire book: from the “retarded face of the child of genius” to the “noble prestige of old people”; that is, to the metaphysically and psychically “mature” or “complete” human. This tripartite division of the text, from infancy to adolescence to “old age,” is mirrored in the geographical locations featured in each of the three parts of the text. These include the artist’s relocation from various regions of Catalonia in Part One, to predominantly Paris in Part Two, and in Part Three, Italy, and finally America. Each region or country reflects a

phase in Dalí's spiritual, emotional and artistic development within the context of the structure of the work.

For Dalí, Spain logically signals his beginnings or "roots," analogous to the womb or mother. In Part Two Dalí enters the world of the avant-garde, beginning with his attendance at the Escuela Especial and student residence in Madrid, and of Paris, where he becomes a Surrealist, and wins a fame that by the end of the book he views as spurious and loathsome. Here Paris takes on its often-assumed role in the popular imaginary as decadent and frivolous, a state analogous to the profligacy of Dalí's "middle period" or "extended adolescence." This wayward path is remedied in Part Three when Dalí visits Italy, where he discovers and embraces Renaissance and classical art, and decides to become what he calls a "classic" artist, by which he should be understood to be following classical, Renaissance and academic traditions.

The final phase of the memoir is set in the United States, where Dalí portrays himself not, as he insists, as an exile from World War II, but as an immigrant by choice. Dalí posits America, throughout the text, but particularly in the final pages of the book, in a context very much in tune with the modernist European rhetoric of the interwar period, as the new and Utopian land of promise and freedom, where one might start one's life afresh. The "New World" is evidently the ideal setting for Dalí to stage his personal renaissance as, he writes, "Europe was dying of its political, aesthetic and moral revolutionary experiments which have progressively devoured, weakened and reduced it. It was dying of lack of rigor, lack of form ..." (395). This life-cycle imagery is crucial to the storyline which stages a number of literal and symbolic births, deaths and rebirths that push the reader toward the final destination of Dalí's artistic "resurrection" and spiritual

rebirth in the epilogue. As Dalí explains at the closing of the book, illuminating the narrative structure of *The Secret Life* and the foundation for the myth the book establishes, “Death and resurrection, revolution and renaissance—these are the Dalinian myths of my tradition” (394).

Imaging the Life Cycle

The first manifestation of the life cycle theme begins in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* with the author’s brief account of the death of his brother, which according to Dalí occurred three years before he was born.¹¹ This brother, also named Salvador, was in Dalí’s estimation, “probably the first version of myself, but conceived too much in the absolute” (2). This is followed by Dalí’s own birth which is referred to in his description of his life in the womb. Although details of parturition are not provided, this event is alluded to in Dalí’s insistence on the contents of Otto Rank’s book *The Trauma of Birth*. This nativity leads to the living of Dalí’s early life, which finds its finale at the end of Part One, in which the artist signals the death of his childhood, and therefore the beginning of his adolescence and young adulthood. This “death” is staged through a bizarre ritual of the young artist throwing his *diabolo*, a simple toy, over the edge of the tower at El Muli de la Torre, the home of family friends. Having made what he considers a “sacrifice” of the *diabolo*, a symbol of his childhood, Dalí is left in the possession of his favourite object, a crutch he recently found in the attic, and henceforth employed as his king’s sceptre in his monarchic fantasies. This crutch, with evident parallels to the Christian cross, becomes at this point for Dalí the “symbol of death,” and the “symbol of resurrection!” (111). As well as prefiguring his religious conversion and “resurrection” at

the end of the text, the crutch was to become one of the most prominent images in the artist's visual lexicon.

In Part Two the second cycle of deaths and resurrections begins with a decidedly understated event in terms of Dalí's treatment of it in the text, but one that is crucial to the movement of the work. This is the passing of Dalí's mother, which spurs the artist to seek vengeance; a vengeance Dalí posits as a vicarious form of resurrection of his mother via the power of his own fame. "My mother's death struck me as an affront of destiny—a thing like that could not happen to me—either to her or to me!" Dalí writes.

In the middle of my chest I felt the thousand-year-old cedar of Lebanon of vengeance reach out its gigantic branches. With my teeth clenched with weeping, I swore to myself that I would snatch my mother from death and destiny with the swords of light that some day would savagely gleam around my glorious name!" (153).

How important this episode is to the narrative structure of *The Secret Life* is debatable, although at least one scholar, Jean Alsina, cites it as the central pivot of the plot structure. While downplayed in the text, its significance in terms of Dalí's life, Alsina argues, is underscored by the fact of its appearing in the exact centre of the text: at the end of Chapter Seven in a fourteen-chapter book."¹²

The third "resurrection" occurs when Dalí and Gala first meet and develop a romantic attachment. Here Dalí portrays Gala, who was paying a summer visit to Dalí in Cadaqués with her husband Paul Éluard and other members of the Surrealist circle, as saving him from the brink of madness—it, too, being a form of intellectual or social death. While the bizarre courtship ritual Dalí describes will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, in sum, Dalí explains that in the first few months of their life together, Gala

cured him of his madness, and essentially resurrected him as suitable for living a productive life on earth. “My hysterical symptoms disappeared one by one, as by enchantment,” Dalí explains of Gala’s ministrations. “I became master again of my laughter, of my smile, and of my gestures. A new health, fresh as a rose, began to grow in the centre of my spirit.” During this episode, Dalí in turn “saves” Gala, who asks him, for unexplained reasons (although presumably in response to a depression or life crisis), to “kill her,” which, although Dalí claims to have considered carrying out the crime, he refuses. “...[S]omething limped in my enthusiasm,” Dalí explains, “and the conviction of my resounding resolve to murder, instead of resounding within the armours of my Machiavellism with the sonorous prestige of fine bronze, rang only with the defective noise of tin!” (248). The two therefore “save” each other from their respective forms of obliteration, and hereafter are resurrected as the united “force” Dalí presents them as in the text from this point on.

The fourth, final death and resurrection cycle begins in Part Three, Chapter Twelve, and is no doubt the most significant in terms of Dalí’s mythmaking strategy. At the height of Surrealist notoriety in both America and Paris, Surrealism and celebrity suddenly become loathsome to the artist. “Just as everything seemed to be going better and better for me,” he explains,

I suddenly felt myself in the grip of a depression which I was unable to define ... A kind of insurmountable fatigue weighted on my ever-alert imaginative hysteria. I had had enough of all this! Enough diving suits, lobster-telephones, jewel-clips, soft pianos, archbishops and blazing pines thrown from windows, enough of publicity and cocktail parties (345).

Returning to his home in Port Lligat, Dalí's depression lasts for several weeks, described in extravagant and lurid detail in Chapter Twelve. Wracked with anxiety, torpid and lifeless, at one point Dalí notes that "A bland odour rose from my body, seeming to me to be the very odour of my own death" (347). Finally, as a great wind-storm abates, Dalí lies down to slumber in an act of symbolic death. "I sensed the approach of sleep," he writes, "so painfully desired, in a blend of 'reality' which in the end outweighed that of my anguish and of my imagination" (349). Upon waking, it is naturally Gala who saves him, like a "chrysalis Lazarus," by telling him to "rise and walk" (350). This signals the beginning of Dalí's rejection of Surrealism and his move toward his new "classic" phase, as announced at the end of the book. "There, now at last," he writes,

in the solitude which Gala and I had won through our common effort of six years spent in striking, without impatience but with unwearying persistence, the hammer-blows of our personality on the red-hot anvil of the sooty Vulcan of actuality—at last, I said to Gala, I would be able to begin to do "important" things (346).

This new phase of Dalí's life begins with the Dalís' visits to Italy, where they are inspired by classical and Renaissance art which helps define Dalí's new aesthetic direction. "Gala demonstrated to me by a thousand inspired arguments," he writes, "burning with faith, that I could become something other than 'the most famous surrealist' that I was. We were consumed with admiration over reproductions of Raphael" (353). In Rome, Dalí, hitherto a staunch atheist, evidently also discovers the appeal and grandeur of the Catholic Church, and welcomes its embrace. "St. Peter's of Rome," he enthuses, "you who were built for the sole and unique space between the two open arms of Bernini's colonnade, or for that of the whole of heaven and earth! ..." (362).

Returning to France, Gala and Dalí next have to escape to America via Portugal in order to evade Hitler's invasion of France in May 1940, and Dalí announces his final "renaissance" on American soil. "Heaven" Dalí informs the reader, is what he has been seeking all along, "through the density of confused and demoniac flesh of my life—heaven!" And heaven, according to Dalí, "is to be found in the centre of the bosom of the man who has faith" (400). This last cycle, where he is reborn as a Catholic and rejects what he cites as his profligate past, Dalí has learned to sublimate, he tells us, his sexual desires in his art, the "space-time anguish" in religion, and "the sense of death in love." In a final flourish before the epilogue, Dalí adumbrates his new direction, with its newfound emphasis on form, rigour, religion, love and tradition. "Instead of automatism, style;" he writes, "instead of nihilism, technique; instead of scepticism, faith; instead of promiscuity, rigor; instead of collectivism and uniformization—individualism, differentiation, and hierarchization; instead of experimentation, tradition. Instead of Reaction or Revolution, RENAISSANCE!" (398).

Genres and Literary Traditions

Dalí's insistence upon subsuming what are presumably the true sequence and events of his life to the needs of a narrative structure designed to meet his projected goals points much more to a novelistic approach than to a faithful recounting of facts in an ostensibly fact-based memoir. More specifically, the book is structured in a number of ways like that of a *Bildungsroman*, a coming-of-age novel, translated from the German as a "novel of education," or "self-cultivation," which conventionally traces the development of a character from childhood to mature adult life. While Dalí's autobiography displays clear affinities with the *Bildungsroman* format, it is perhaps more

accurate to describe the book as a form of *Künstlerroman*, or “artist’s novel, a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman*.”¹³ A *Bildungsroman* is a novelistic form that, like *The Secret Life*, tends to concentrate upon spiritual, psychological, social and moral development, as a journey, portrayed here by Dalí as the transition from Spain to Paris to America, inspired, as he presents it, by his creative and spiritual evolution. Such a journey or mission is, according to the convention of the coming of age format, spurred on by a great loss or cause for discontent, which motivates the protagonist to undertake a quest at an early age away from the familiar, and familial setting. In Dalí’s case, this is a result of the loss of his mother when he was sixteen, which, as he locates this event in the narrative, incites him to seek fame in her beloved name.

Themes of escape and exile are also common to the *Bildungsroman*, which parallel Dalí’s and Gala’s flight from the wars in Spain and in Paris, and their exile in the U.S., although Dalí, who ever refused to play the victim, decidedly underplays this aspect of his life, which could have been effectively exploited for narrative purposes. Dalí also depicts his arduous and occasionally painful psychic process of maturation, although he again underplays the requisite clashes between figures of authority and a rigid social order characteristic of the *Bildungsroman*, and which he could have undertaken, at least, by detailing his traumatic break with his father no less than with Surrealist “ringleader” André Breton and the Surrealist group. Again, however, Dalí minimizes these, no doubt for reasons of diplomacy. Finally, at the end of the book, the protagonist presumably reaches the requisite stage of maturity, and becomes reconciled to his current position in America, outside of the Surrealist circle, and finds God and tradition, resulting in the

characteristic *Bildungsroman* finale in which he performs a self-assessment discussing his new place in society and the world order.¹⁴

Whatever other literary traditions Dalí may or may not have been drawing upon, *The Secret Life* invariably follows the convention of the spiritual autobiography or conversion narrative, a format which chronicles a decadent or “sinful” youth, often misspent as an atheist or pagan or involved in spurious religions and cults, and which ultimately results in a spiritual enlightenment or conversion to a specific religion. In this sense, Dalí’s presumably “misspent” youth in the thrall of left-leaning politics and among the Paris avant-garde, which is resolved in his embrace of the right and the Catholic Church, parallels the tradition of spiritual autobiographies such as John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* (1666). In his work on Dalí’s autobiographical writings, Spanish literature scholar David Vilaseca points out the use the artist makes of the tradition of autobiographical texts “which (mirroring themselves more or less faithfully in the life of Jesus Christ as told in the New Testament) explains the biography of the narrator as a path from the dissipation of childhood and adolescence to the discovery of God, which leads to an evangelical or messianic mission and thereby to salvation.”¹⁵

As Vilaseca suggests, Dalí’s conscious use of the conversion formula is particularly apt in light of his presenting of himself as a saviour figure within the text. This commences with the death of the brother who died before Dalí was born, and who was also named Salvador. According to the legend Dalí weaves of his life, this death allowed him to live, or be “resurrected,” and hence, he writes, “My parents baptized me with the same name as my brother—Salvador—and I was destined, as my name indicates, for nothing less than to rescue painting from the void of modern art, and to do

so in this abominable epoch of mechanical and mediocre catastrophes in which we have the distress and the honour to live” (4). This saviour role—albeit of art rather than the souls of men—was not to follow that of Christ too closely, however, and Dalí is determined that he should be victorious rather than sacrificial. As a child, the artist describes his playing at various roles, “From the cruel demi-god to the humble worker, passing through the stages of the artist to the total genius ...” “I have always arrived at the saviour ...” he continues. “Salvador, Salvador, Salvador! I could repeat my own name tirelessly ... I knew that a sacrifice was inevitable, and with a repugnant cowardice I would look around me in the dark. For of only one thing was I absolutely sure: I was not going to be the one sacrificed!” (89).

As an adolescent Dalí claims to have become even more convinced of his role as saviour, and he begins to describe himself in what Alsina calls “Christic” terms; that is, with the Eucharistic reference of, if not precisely the eating of the body of Christ, then of providing “nourishment” for the times. As a young man, staying at the Residencia and coming into contact with a number of young members of the Spanish avant-garde, Dalí recognizes his uniqueness and senses his own destiny, describing himself in terms that parallel Christ’s sacrificial offering of his body, as performed in the Eucharistic ritual:

while already preparing the grill of my transcendental prosaism on which, when the day came ... I would come and fry the mushrooms, the chops and the sardines of my thought (which I knew were destined to be served some day—fried to a turn, and good and hot—on the clean cloth of the table of the book which you are in the midst of reading) in order to appease for some hundred years the spiritual, imaginative, moral and ideological hunger of our epoch (176).

More poignant, perhaps, is Dalí's declaration at the finale of the text, of having found Catholicism and continuing to seek faith, and most of all, of his "rebirth," with obvious parallels to Christ's resurrection. While Dalí most overtly associates himself with Christ, as—he relishes reminding the reader—his name implies, some scholars prefer to compare Dalí's religious journey in *The Secret Life* to that documented by Saint Augustine, the archetypal conversion narrative as recounted in one of the earliest works in the autobiographical genre, his fourth-century *Confessions* (AD 397 and AD 398). In this work, Augustine chronicles his career path and spiritual growth, born as he was on a modest Algerian farm, but rising to hold influence at Milan's imperial court. Throughout this text, Augustine leads what he later considered to be a relatively sinful life, involved as he was with the Manichaean religion, conducting a dubious romantic relationship, and indulging worldly ambitions. Finally, in a garden in Milan, St. Augustine converts to Christianity, the religion his pious mother Monica had taught him in his youth.¹⁶

While the telos of Dalí's spiritual struggle holds parallels to Augustine's confessions, to date, scholars who note this comparison tend to focus on the correspondences between Augustine's and Dalí's intrauterine experiences, and their maternal relationships. Alsina, for instance, proposes that Dalí's claim of the originality of his recounting of his intrauterine memories can be read as an intertextual enterprise, "either as an innovation, but also as an inversion of the famous deployment of the first chapters of the Confessions of St. Augustine," in which the saint tries to remember his life *in utero*, but which he writes, is "lost in the darkness of my forgetfulness."¹⁷ For Saint Augustine, Alsina suggests, this complete emptiness "prevents the creature from claiming, at the dawn of life, so much as innocence, or even an autonomy." Conversely,

as Dalí claims in his own life narrative, he remembers vividly his life in the womb, wherein “the Dalinian foetus was already, and splendidly, Salvador Dalí.”¹⁸

For Vilaseca, the parallels between the works in question are manifest “particularly so in regard to the future of Augustine’s mother Monica, whose role as Agent of God’s ‘revelation’ can be equated with that of Gala in Dalí’s memoirs.”¹⁹ Certainly, like Augustine’s saintly mother Monica, Gala does play an important role in facilitating Dalí’s development, although a close reading of the text reveals that this role, despite Dalí’s relentless translation of her into a goddess figure, is of a strictly secular, rather than spiritual one, as she aids the awkward Dalí in his social interactions, his day-to-day practical life, and most importantly, in his career. Dalí’s spiritual development is strictly nurtured and revealed by Dalí, and Dalí alone. Indeed, in a manner typical of his conflation and idiosyncratic reinvention of existing archetypes and conventions, in describing his “rebirth,” the artist takes on his own feminine, Monica- or Madonna-like role, as the bearer of his own “cosmogony,” a term he uses roughly to correspond to his newfound spiritual ethos. In this sense, Dalí curiously becomes his own mother, or his own “Monica,” and writes, that

... before giving birth to this cosmogony which for nine years I had felt pressing and growing and giving kicks in the depths of my logical bowels I would have to continue on the road of my life, which the war of Europe might even involuntarily bar, in order to be able to continue to attend to my moral, material and capricious “needs,” as of a pregnant woman—which I was and which I continually am for the honour and glory of everyone. I needed, in fact, immediately to get away from the blind and tumultuous collective jostlings of history, otherwise the antique and half-divine embryo of my originality would risk suffering injury and dying before birth in the degrading circumstances of a philosophic miscarriage occurring on the very sidewalks of anecdote. No, I am not of those who make children by halves. Ritual first and foremost! Already I am

concerning myself with its future, with the sheets and the pillows of its cradle ... (390).

While some comparisons to Saint Augustine's *Confessions* bear consideration, there is no evidence to support Dalí's close referencing of the work. Although throughout *The Secret Life* the artist makes every effort to showcase his erudition, and to at least hint at the historical and intellectual traditions upon which he draws, no trace or mention of St. Augustine can be found in the text itself. Instead, Dalí's religious allusions tend to be of a more generalized nature, drawing upon the conventions of conversion narratives and spiritual autobiographies in order to construct a multifaceted myth of his own secular and spiritual development. As arts writer Pierre Volboudt concludes, Dalí is his own most faithful and authoritative hagiographer. "He has created his own 'saint's life,'" he writes, "He lives it. That incense he distils, those flatteries in regard to himself, perfume the man in the banners of which the rambling stories about the merits of the builder of his glorious pyramid are unfurled."²⁰ Spanish scholar Carmen Rasilla also gives a more generalized, and perhaps more convincing religious context for Dalí's spiritual presumptions, writing that "Like a priest of his own ceremonial and author of himself as an autobiographical character, he will also perform his death and resurrection, achieving the almost impossible desideratum of the autobiographical genre, which is the death or termination of the protagonist at the end of writing his life." Therefore, she maintains, Dalí describes himself as "resurrected like an archetypal god or creator,"²¹ and indeed, Dalí's life narrative offers much substance for comparison with the life of a saint, a messiah, a prophet, and a saviour who is, oddly enough, "mother" to himself, or both Madonna *and* child.

Figure 2: Salvador Dalí. Promotional poster for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Ink on paper, 1942. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

That Dalí intended to create an image of himself as a saviour figure is reinforced throughout the text in a series of religious-themed images, the most significant of which appears as the frontispiece for Part Three of the text, and was used for the hard cover of *The Secret Life*, under the dust jacket, in its first publication, and for posters for the work (Figure 2). This is a depiction of a Christ-like figure holding a cross in a gesture presumably meant to ward off two distressed WWII-style military airplanes falling to the ground, one of which is marked with a swastika.²² That this illustration was given such a prominent place in the original marketing of the book (although it has been notably downplayed in more recent editions) suggests that not only is Dalí's conversion of foremost importance to what might be called the premise of his autobiography, but that

the idea of religion as an antidote for or vicarious weapon against war was also a key theme or message of the work.

Dalí inserted a similar illustration as the heading of the epilogue, this time with a Vatican-like cluster of buildings, topped by a cross, conspicuously acting as a backdrop. In this way, the salvation or conversion theme evident in the end of *The Secret Life* transcends a mere personal recount of spiritual salvation, and suggests that Catholicism is the only possible solution to the horrors and “evils” of war. “No unity of Europe could be more solid, tenacious, and menacing than that of its common distress,” Dalí declares in the final pages of the memoir, and insists that

the unity of Europe will be made, and can only be made, under the sign of the triumph of Catholicism. And if I am asked again today where the real force of Europe is to be found, I shall answer again that in spite of all immediate appearances it resides more than ever in the indivisibility of its spirit, in that indivisibility which is materialized in Bernini’s two rows of columns, the open arms of the occident, the arms of St. Peter’s in Rome, the cupola of man, the Vatican (395-6).

Bread and the Saviour’s Body

While the religious theme of *The Secret Life*, and Dalí’s conscious positing of himself as a “Christic” or saviour figure are relatively understated, the artist reinforces them using various methods throughout the narrative. This is most evident in his use of the imagery of bread, which appears, sprinkled as liberally as crumbs, throughout the text. Dalí employs food, ingestion, digestion, and expellation imagery frequently in *The Secret Life* in metonymic or metaphorical ways which will be discussed in proceeding chapters, but as in his painted oeuvre, bread holds the place of prominence, and brings

with it all its traditional Biblical associations as the Eucharistic host and as the body of Christ.

Dalí scholar Dawn Ades considers the use of bread and of bread imagery in Dalí's creative oeuvre, and suggests that "Dalí turns the idea of bread as 'the staff of life' on its head."²³ That is, that Dalí divests it of its traditional role as symbolic of the foundation of human survival, and of its conventional religious connotations. While this is certainly the case in much of Dalí's use of bread in his work, the artist does in fact also reinforce and corroborate the traditional, "Christic" associations of bread in the western collective consciousness, although Dalí's employment of it, as symbolic of his own body, and "body of influence," is decidedly idiosyncratic, and points more to his own role as a saviour of modern art rather than that of a *bona fide* religious figure, or of Christ himself. Dalí does indeed turn the traditional connotations of bread "on its head," as he comically describes various bread-centred projects of his Surrealist period, but the effect, as he would have the reader believe, is that bread becomes synonymous with the artist and his art, much as the Eucharistic host represents the body of Christ. Describing in his memoir how he decided in the early 1930s to use bread as a creative medium, Dalí writes that "I had just discovered the enigma of bread: it could stand up without having to be eaten! This thing ... I was going to render useless and aesthetic. I was going to make surrealist objects with bread." "Upon arriving in Paris," Dalí explains, "I said to everyone who cared to listen, "Bread, bread and more bread. Nothing but bread" (307).

Speaking of his return to Paris after two intensely industrious months in Port Lligat, Dalí explains the symbolic value that bread holds in his "cosmogony" of the period. "My bread was a ferociously anti-humanitarian bread," he explains, "it was the

bread of the revenge of imaginative luxury on the utilitarianism of the rational practical world, it was the aristocratic, aesthetic, paranoiac, sophisticated, Jesuitical, phenomenal, paralyzing, hyper-evident bread which the hand of my brain had kneaded during the two months in Port Lligat.” On the eve of his leaving for Paris, Dalí explains the ecstasies and tortures of this productive time, which he summarized, “in the apparently insignificant gesture of putting the end of the loaf of bread upright on a table, the whole spiritual experience of this period” (307).

Dalí’s insistence upon bread during his mid-Surrealist period in Paris extended to an elaborate plan he disseminated among Parisian high society to found a “secret society of bread,” which would have as its aim “the systematic cretinization of the masses.” In the descriptive passage that follows, Dalí describes in elaborate detail his plan for a tremendous, *avant-la-lettre* happening, or work of performance or environmental art. The idea was to bake enormous loaves of bread, fifteen to forty-five metres in length, and to leave them, anonymously, in public places in various high profile spots across the globe, such as the inner gardens of the Palais Royal, the court of Versailles, and in New York, between the Savoy-Plaza and the Hotel St. Moritz. According to artist, this was intended to become the point of departure which, “in accordance with my principles of the imaginative hierarchical monarchy, one could subsequently try to ruin systematically the logical meaning of all the mechanisms of the rational practical world” (311).

While this projected “conquest of the irrational” was fully in keeping with Surrealist practice, the other, and presumably primary mission Dalí’s “bread campaign” was intended to fulfil was to disseminate or promote Dalí’s image. Like his soft watches and crutches, bread was to become one of Dalí’s “trademarks,” and a symbol of his

influence upon the artistic sphere and the public in general. This conceit becomes clear in *The Secret Life* when the artist describes himself sitting with a number of friends in a restaurant, as the waiter delivers a basket of bread to the table. Everyone present, he claims, “exclaimed in astonishment, ‘It’s like a Dalí!’” According to the artist, “The bread of Paris was no longer the bread of Paris. It was my bread. Dalí’s bread, Salvador’s bread. The bakers were already beginning to imitate me!” (315).

As Dalí sets his sights on “conquering America,” bread increasingly takes on the role metonymic of Dalí’s influence. “America!” he writes, “I wanted to go over there and see what it was like, to bring my bread, place my bread over there; say to the Americans, What does it mean, eh?” (324). As follows, it is no surprise that upon his first voyage to America, by ship, Dalí managed to coerce the baker on the *Champlain* to bake him a loaf two and a half metres long. The bread having been bolstered with a wooden armature to prevent it from breaking, and wrapped in cellophane, Dalí boasted to fellow passengers that he could not wait to speak to the reporters on shore. “I love getting publicity,” he writes, “and if I am lucky enough to have the reporters know who I am, I will give them some of my own bread to eat, just as Saint Francis did with the birds.” Arriving on shore, Dalí is greeted by a throng of reporters, all of whom were, according to the artist, “amazingly well informed as to who I was.” In one of Dalí’s comic turns, however, the artist ends up being immensely disappointed that while being interviewed, not a single reporter asked about the enormous baguette which he “held conspicuously during the whole interview either on my arm or resting on the ground as though it had been a large cane” (330).

America clearly did not respond to Dalí's Surrealist bread. And this was despite what Dalí describes as his "most directly exhibitionistic way of showing my obsession with bread" (337), which involved his carrying it around the streets of New York under his arm until it was dry and dented. With the loaf falling to bits on the sidewalk in front of the Waldorf Astoria, Dalí writes, at precisely twelve noon, he decided to throw the crumbling bread away, although before he did, he slipped and fell. This caused the bread to split in half, and slide away some distance. A policeman immediately arrived to help Dalí off the ground, and when the artist looked about him, it was to discover that the two halves of the breadstick had completely disappeared. Thus, in keeping with the narrative shift from Dalí's Paris-based Surrealist period to America, the birthplace of Dalí's new "classic" phase as an artist, bread, like Surrealism, disappears from *The Secret Life*. Dalí's bread, as emblem of his Surrealist aesthetic and career, evidently found no place in America, and worn out, it broke in half and disappeared, both literally, in the form of his loaf, and symbolically, as a presence in Dalí's memoir.

Monarchy and the Aristocratic Crutch

As bread is a ubiquitous and multi-faceted symbol in *The Secret Life*, so too is that of the crutch, although its religious symbolism as the body of Christ, like those of the Christian cross, are not as prominent as Dalí's use of the object-image in relation to ideas of monarchy, aristocracy and tradition. While bread is metonymic of the "Surrealist body" of Dalí, or more specifically, the Dalinian creative corpus, and therefore the seat of his influence and persona, in *The Secret Life* the crutch signifies, like a sceptre, Dalí's "kingly" ambitions, as well as his stated love of tradition and aristocracy. Like "renaissance," "tradition," in fact, is one of the key concepts of *The Secret Life*, and is

clearly an important element of Dalí's stated turn to "classicism" and his personal "rebirth." Indeed, in Dalí's "cosmogony," the idea of tradition is synonymous with that of monarchy and aristocracy— not necessarily in a particular monarchy or aristocracy, but in the hierarchical order that monarchy presupposes.

Typically, as with his religious conversion, Dalí maps the concepts of tradition and monarchy firmly upon his own body via his elaborate "Dalí" masquerade, and just as he portrays himself as a saviour figure, the artist equally presents himself throughout the text as the figure of a king, therefore indexing his allegiance to hierarchy and aristocracy. Both the king motif and ruminations upon the nature of royalty and the aristocracy are highly present in Dalí's memoir, beginning with his desire to dress up in his king's costume as a boy, the statement of his "violent royal feelings" of his youth, and his "ambitious autocratic desires of 'absolute monarchy' ... which constituted the continuous desire of [his] whole early childhood" (173). In typically polemical yet abstruse fashion, he therefore pits these concepts against the leftist ideologies, and in particular socialism and communism, which privilege the democratization and collectivisation against which Dalí balks in the text.

This is exemplified in Dalí's account in Chapter Nine of the visit of the Spanish King Alfonso XIII in March of 1923 to the Escuela Especial de Pintura in Madrid, where Dalí was a student. According to his account, Dalí feels a great respect for the Spanish monarch with whom he believes he has a natural affinity. Finding himself, with his schoolmates, in close proximity to the king in one of the classrooms, he writes, "There can be no doubt that we recognized each other!" This brush with monarchy Dalí portrays as triggering his own innate regal qualities, writing "The King's presence revived in my

mind the King I bore within my skin! During the entire visit to the school I had this impression, which did not leave me a single moment, that the two of us were uniquely and continually isolated from all the rest” (173). Likewise, later in his life narrative, finding himself in elegant company, Dalí writes that “I remained always the Catalan peasant, naive and cunning, with a king in my body” (339).

Dalí’s monarchic penchant is stated early in the book, when the artist notes how he received “as if by chance” a gift from one of his uncles in Barcelona, a king’s costume consisting of an ermine cape, a gold sceptre, and a crown attached to which was a white wig. The artist conveys his many feelings when he wore this outfit, when “‘imperialist sentiment of utter solitude’ held sway, more and more powerful and always accompanied by that other sentiment which was to serve as its frame, its ritual so to speak—the sentiment of ‘height,’ of the ‘summit’” (70). Dalí evidently delighted in wearing his king’s costume, although the original sceptre seems to have gotten lost and replaced by an old carpet beater, to be followed by his beloved crutch, as found in the attic of El Muli de la Torre. “I immediately took possession of the crutch,” Dalí writes, “and I felt that I should never again in my life be able to separate myself from it, such was the fetishistic fanaticism which seized me at the very first without my being able to explain it. The superb crutch! Already it appeared to me as the object possessing the height of authority and solemnity.” The evident symbolism Dalí perceived the object to possess rendered it perfectly suited to his needs, and “It immediately replaced the old mattress beater with the leather fringes which I had adopted a long time ago as a sceptre ...” (90).

This description of Dalí’s costume, and his “natural” “kingly” qualities, is reinforced in the text with an idealized illustration of a nude and muscular Dalí in regal

costume as a young boy, proudly wielding his sceptre-crutch (Figure 17). The crutch imagery is iterated later in the text in a drawing of a large nude figure being propped up by crutches, and flanked by two others in the background (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Salvador Dalí. “Crutches.” Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 261. Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

This illustrates a long, rather bombastic passage in which Dalí links the aristocracy with the symbol of the crutch, and suggests that his own role is to “prop up” or “uphold” the aristocratic regime, and therefore presumably hierarchy, monarchy and tradition. In a darkly comical passage reminiscent of Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Dalí describes the social elite, or the aristocracy as “storks” or “unijambists,” as it is necessary for them to stand on one foot in order to maintain their ability to “see everything from above.” These are the people, Dalí explains, with whom he decided to align himself; that

is, “the group of invalids whose snobbism propped up a decadent aristocracy which still stuck to its traditional attitude.” Naturally, Dalí “arrived” to help them with his arms “loaded with crutches.” However, once the artist has made his first attempt at “keeping the aristocracy standing upright by propping it with a thousand crutches,” he then decides to give it a “terrible kick in the leg.” After a few more kicks, which the collective victim evidently withstands, Dalí ascertains that he had “therefore propped it well” (260-62).

This allegory ends with the aristocracy thanking Dalí, to which the artist responds by kissing its hand. “With the pride of one leg and the crutches of my intelligence, you are stronger than the revolution that is being prepared by the intellectuals, whom I know intimately,” Dalí informs them collectively:

You are old, and dead with fatigue, and you have fallen from your high place, but the spot where your foot is soldered to the earth is tradition. If you should happen to die, I would come at once and place my own foot in that very imprint of tradition which has been yours, and immediately I would curl up my other leg like a stork. I am ready and able to grow old in this attitude, without tiring (262).

In this way, Dalí explains his turn toward hierarchy, tradition and his love of the “aristocratic regime” which, he avows, “has in fact been one of my passions” (262). This is as far as possible from the Salvador Dalí of the Surrealist period, steeped as he was at that time in communist doctrine and other leftist politics, not to mention the anarchist-leaning propensities of his younger days in Spain. Indeed, at this point in the narrative, about two-thirds of the way through the book, Dalí begins to set the reader up for the next, and final phase of his life; his “rebirth” or shedding of his old life, career direction and politics for an entirely different “Dalinian” model.

The Dalinian Body: Interior and Exterior

While Dalí posits a number of semantic and thematic links throughout the text, such as that of the life cycle, monarchic and “Christic” imagery, the malleable symbols of bread and crutches, Dalí’s body-related imagery is perhaps the most unsettling, as well as decidedly innovative for the period and place in which the work was written. Noting the surprising historical reluctance of autobiographers to focus thematically and psychologically on issues of the body, Roger J. Porter writes that “Even Rousseau subordinated descriptions of bodily function to his predominant concern—his relation to society.”²⁴ Shirley Neuman also considers “this near-effacement of bodies in autobiography,” and cites this tendency as a form of cultural repression. For Neuman, the origins of this aversion to the body in Western autobiography comes from the dualist tradition of separating the mind from the body, or the soul from somatic, and stems, she argues, from the originary conceptions of subjectivity which derive from Platonic, Christian, and Cartesian models.²⁵

Considering critical problematics involved in the coalescence of autobiography and issues of the body, perhaps the unsettling effect of Dalí’s life narrative on many critics at the time and place of its first publication stems from the fact of the work’s being so decidedly body-centric, and the destabilizing outcome of this focus on the established primacy of the mind versus spirit paradigm. Dalí’s assertion of the embodied experience very much undermines this received binary by simply refusing to recognize it, or perhaps more accurately, shifting the tension between the mind and the body to that of bodily “interiority” and “exteriority,” in the sense of private “life” versus the public, performed self, or social “mask.” The extent to which Dalí generates this kind of discourse

surrounding his persona, his visual art and his writing, Vilaseca notes in his assessment of general biographical approaches to Dalí's work, is such that "One of the things which would most strike a neophyte approaching the bibliography on Salvador Dalí is the extent to which (sometimes even from their very titles) a great deal of the existing studies of the artist seem to be based on a clear-cut distinction between an 'internal' and 'external' Dalí."²⁶

This tension between interior and exterior, hard and soft, is one upon which Dalí plays throughout his life narrative, and he refers to it in *The Secret Life* as the "morphological aesthetics of the soft and the hard" (304), especially as it relates to the womb, shell, mask, the hard cover of the book itself, and especially that of skin, which Dalí references so liberally throughout the text. The trope of interior versus exterior is deeply entwined with the artist's consciousness of his own performance as Dalí, and his awareness of his own performativity. By the latter is intended the required iteration of Dalí's public persona, and its own ability to undermine the gravitas and "truth" value of this very performance, via overstatement, and self-conscious play with issues of veracity and falsehood. Dalí's insistence throughout *The Secret Life* on his body as a "container" for his subjectivity, and the skin or mask as an index for his public persona destabilizes fixed notions of subjectivity and particularly the mind-body formulation. Instead Dalí suggests the body's value as a vehicle for flux and change, and the persona as something shedable, replaceable, and self-regenerating. In this sense Dalí *interpellates* himself, creating a social "skin" or *pelle*, in French philosopher Louis Althusser's sense of ideologically formulating a new subject.²⁷ That is, the artist generates a new public image

for the projected forthcoming second half of his career; a gesture which Dalí intended to serve a number of creative, social and political ends.

With Dalí's insistence upon the dialectic between interior and exterior, and the skin or protective covering, it is no surprise that the artist begins the chronology of his life narrative within the confines of someone else's skin: that of his mother, as described in what Dalí claims are his memories of intrauterine life. Inspired by the writings of former member of Freud's inner circle, the Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Rank, Dalí bases his description of the interior of the womb on Rank's 1924 book *The Trauma of Birth*. This work deviated from Freud's doctrine of the primacy of the Oedipus complex as the "originary trauma" in human experience, by putting forth the hypothesis that birth is the first disruptive sensory or psychological experience to which humans are subject, which, depending on the quality of the birthing process, will shape the social and psychic success of an individual's entire life as a consequence. Paraphrasing Rank, Dalí writes that

It seems increasingly true that the whole imaginative life of man tends to reconstitute symbolically by the most similar situations and representation that initial paradisiacal state, and especially to surmount the horrible "traumatism of birth" by which we are expelled from the paradise, passing abruptly from that ideally protective and enclosed environment to all the hard dangers of the frightfully real new world ..." (27).

This is the first of a number of instances in *The Secret Life* in which Dalí locates himself within a protective layer, this time the foetal sac, a place he describes as "divine"; in fact, Dalí states, "it was paradise" (27). External to this soft and silent haven, however, is the locus of the "hard dangers" of the "frightfully real" world. For this reason, the artist explains, he admires the crustacean, shedding light on his notorious emphasis on the

lobster in his visual art. Ruminating upon shellfish in Chapter One, Dalí writes that “By virtue of their armour, which is what their exoskeleton actually is, these are a material realization of the highly original and intelligent idea of wearing one’s bones on the outside rather than inside, as is the usual practice.” In this way, Dalí expounds, “The crustacean is thus able, with the weapons of its anatomy, to protect the soft and nutritive delirium of its insides, sheltered against all profanation, enclosed as in a tight and solemn vessel ...” (9).

Dalí’s emphasis upon the necessity of a hard, protective shell in *The Secret Life* is outlined in sundry episodes which foreground assaults upon the protagonist’s body. These take many forms in the memoir, but the most traumatic are invariably keyed to Dalí’s sensorium, and in particular, his skin: that protective membrane that preserves the safety and sanctity of his subjectivity. In particular there are two “neurotic” episodes which function in the text as displacements to help the artist to cope with the suffering of loss or the psychic harm of rejection.

The first of these episodes recounted in *The Secret Life* is when, in 1929, Dalí has just completed the filming of a project with his friend, the Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel. Contrary to the critical disaster Dalí anticipated it would be before it was released, the film, the now famous *Un Chien Andalou*, was to become a watershed in avant-garde cinema. Having been utterly exhausted by the lugubrious task of dressing up dead donkeys as props to look as cadaverous as possible, Dalí describes how he went back to his hotel alone and “utterly dejected.” He soon becomes frightfully ill from the stress and disgust, and is confined to his hotel room for several days. Staring at the ceiling from his bed, the artist focuses upon some insects that have alighted upon the

plaster, and becomes convinced that a tick has fallen from its perch and fastened itself to his back. Dalí fixates so intensely on this tick that he becomes convinced that “It was as if it were formed of my own flesh, as if it constituted an inherent and already inseparable part of my own body.” In typically comic hyperbole tinged, in this case, with pathos, Dalí writes that “instead of an insect it had become a terrifying germ of a tiny embryo of a Siamese twin-brother that was in the process of growing out of my back, like the most apocalyptic and infernal disease” (214).

Terrified, in an incident reminiscent of the notorious eye-cutting scene in *Un Chien andalou*, Dalí slices the tick off his body with a razor blade, only to discover that it was not a tick at all, but a mole with which he had been born, and had seen countless times before. The episode culminates with a gory spectacle with Dalí’s blood smeared throughout the hotel room, to the horror of hotel staff and a hastily-summoned physician, who is mystified by the artist’s self-mutilation. After this episode, Dalí is left ruminating upon the nature of his transgression against his own flesh and upon the painful failure of his sojourn to Paris, which he had intended to “conquer,” or, to use his expression, to “put in the bag.” *Un Chien andalou* seemed to him at this point to be “a complete failure”; his timidity prevented him from “shining” in Paris high society; a proposed exhibition had been repeatedly put off; and most disheartening of all, instead of enjoying a longed-for tryst with an elegant Parisian woman, masturbation became a supremely depressing enterprise in the heart of pleasure-loving Paris, where Dalí sensed all about him “the gleaming foam of the thighs of feminine beds” (216).

Dalí’s staging of the penetration of his flesh signifies here in a number of ways, but primarily as an assault upon the ideal self, or *imago*. According to Jay Prosser, in his

study of skin imagery in autobiography, self-mutilation and other “non-accidental skin symptoms” point to childhood memories or unconscious fantasies “too traumatic to become conscious.” As such, skin disorders and traumas “appear as returns of an unspeakable repressed event,”²⁸ in this case, presumably Dalí’s mortifying rejection and sense of worthlessness. After recovering from the lesion of the tick or mole, and therefore, by displacement, excising the failure and resulting despondency of his bungled attempt to “conquer Paris,” Dalí decides to return to Spain. At this point, the artist writes that he felt a resurgence of his health, as if he were revisiting the “eternal paradise” of his mother’s womb, or more specifically, Spain’s national bosom. His confidence returns and he writes that, like a worn pelt, “I thus hung my illness on the coathanger of the Gare d’Orsay, as though it had been an old coat which could no longer be of the slightest use for the summer on which I was embarking” (217). Well versed in psychoanalysis and the rhetoric of sublimation and repression, Dalí explains to his reader the degree to which his illness had been a psychosomatic displacement or coping mechanism deployed in order to shield himself from his own failure, and writes that “If, another winter, I should again need an illness to shelter me from the inclemencies of my bad luck I prefer to buy a brand-new coat” (217). Through this means the artist adds another link in the semantic chain of the skin-like covering, in this case to be removed or exchanged like a worn garment; a theme which was to reach its apotheosis in the finale of the book.

While Spain, and in particular Figueres, Cadaqués and Port Lligat are associated in the text with the “protective shell” or the womb, Gala takes on a similar role away from this maternal home, as she creates an “armour” for Dalí, inside of which is the soft “meat” of Dalí’s person, as it is with the crustacean. As Dalí strays further from the

Ampurdán region of Catalonia, Gala increasingly becomes Dalí's "armour" or, more accurately, his mother, who protects him in the womb of her presence and fortitude.

"Instead of hardening me, as life had planned," Dalí explains,

Gala with the petrifying saliva of her fanatical devotion, succeeded in building for me a shell to protect the tender nakedness of the Bernard the hermit that I was, so that while in relation to the outside world I assumed more and more the appearance of a fortress, within myself I could continue to grow old in the soft, and in the supersoft (316-17).

The extent to which Gala provides a virtual protective shell or womb-like refuge for her husband is evident in a second "neurotic episode" later in the text, when Dalí finds himself utterly lost and vulnerable without her. Some time during the Spanish Civil War, Dalí is left alone in a hotel in Tre Croci near Cortina in Italy to recover from over-taxation, while Gala found it necessary to go to Paris for a fortnight. Just at this time Dalí received news that the Spanish anarchists had shot some thirty of his friends in Cadaqués, near his home in Port Lligat, and as a result, he must make up his mind whether or not to return to Spain to "share the fate" of his countrymen. Presumably as a nervous reaction to the grief and this terrifying decision, bereft as he was of the "petrifying saliva" of Gala's "fanatical devotion," Dalí almost goes mad fixating, as he did with the imaginary tick, upon what he thinks is a piece of snot attached to the bathroom wall in his hotel room. In an attempt to remove the offending globule with a fingernail, he discovers that, like the tick which affixed to his back, the snot becomes lodged in the skin under his nail and he is unable to remove it.

The snot was, it turned out, solid and sharp, resulting in a painful splinter that caused Dalí's hand to swell to the point where the artist was wracked with terror that the

mucous had infected it incurably. “None of the tortures of the civil war could be compared in intensity with the imaginative torment which I endured during that frightful early Alpine afternoon,” Dalí writes with characteristically satiric exaggeration. “I felt death weigh within my hand like two ignominious kilos of gesticulating worms” (367). The following day Dalí discovers that upon close examination, the nasal mucous is actually a piece of hardened glue that had been long dried on the wall in the hotel bathroom. Relieved, he falls asleep and upon awakening, immediately recognizes this as a sign that he “knew that [he] should not leave for Spain” (367).

As Sidonie Smith suggests, regarding the relationship between the body and the autobiographical text, for Dalí, “The body functions as a powerful source of metaphors for the social. It offers itself up, in bits and pieces, in its blood, immune system, organs, in its topography and pathology, for use in constructing the social environment and assigning persons their places in that environment.”²⁹ In this episode the piercing of the skin or social “armour” of his *imago* with what Dalí calls the “false mucous” becomes, as did his fixation with the imaginary tick, a cipher, both acting as a locus of displacement for Dalí’s having to face a terrifying decision, and as a sign that he should not put himself in danger. That Dalí foregrounds what should have been an insignificant episode, turning it into a horrific, albeit comic incident of hypochondriasis, symbolically suggests the artist’s intense association with “mother” Spain, who was also experiencing assaults and penetrations of her social body.

Dalí’s emphasis on his own body, and especially his sustained imagery throughout the book of the womb, the hard shell, and the epidermis in their roles as protective coverings, becomes, as Smith suggests, a “powerful metaphor for the social,”

in this sense, the barrier between Dalí's "supersoft" interior, and the harsh realities of the outside world. The question remains, however, as to how this signifies more concretely in *The Secret Life*. How and why does Dalí stage these minor bodily events as such momentous and graphically rendered spectacles? In her study of contemporary performance art, *Performing the Body*, Amelia Jones poses a similar question, and asks, what happens when works of art "overtly stage their relationship to the viewer as corporeal, invested, mutual, intersubjective?" Most importantly, considering issues of reception in terms of Dalí's mid-century, middle-American audience, Jones asks, "What happens when these works pose themselves in a theatrical mode: one that, by definition, acknowledges their contingency on an audience?"³⁰ In order to answer these questions, as they relate to Dalí's literary "performance" of the perforation of his flesh, it is necessary to turn to what is presumably the "other" of Dalí's "skin"—that is, what it is that assaults and makes necessary his emphatic emphasis on the protective layering of the hide or hard shell.

In both these episodes, Dalí believes he is assaulted by something that can only be described in terms of the abject, manifest in the imagined tick or what he calls the "false mucous." The assumption is naturally that Dalí is repressing reactions to various traumatic events or difficult decisions with unsavoury objects that function as metaphors for the "world outside" of his person, and which represent assaults on both his body and his psyche. According to Julia Kristeva, in her seminal writing on the abject and its signification, "Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-

ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death.”³¹ More succinctly Kristeva writes, “The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to the *I*” (2).

Dalí’s highlighting of the permeation of his body and subjectivity by the abject “other” underscores the artist’s social anxiety, and therefore problematizes the very act of autobiography in the sense of the subject’s exposure to the reader via the self-revelation presumed to be fundamental to the genre. In this sense, Dalí puts into discourse the issue of mediation between writer and reader, the permeation of the “skin” or imaginary of Dalí’s text, and therefore destabilizes the promise of this, and by extension all autobiographies’ access to the proverbial “thing itself”—i.e., to the “truth” or “core” of Dalí’s “self,” or the presumed secret of *The Secret Life*. Nevertheless, Dalí’s insistence upon the “invasion” of the abject, particularly as it violates his flesh, perhaps also tries to bridge this gap, by creating a sort of textual *punctum*, in the sense that Roland Barthes employs this term to signify visual “slippages” in photographs that reify an image, bypassing the imaginary or “artistic intent,” and generating a sudden direct and emotive contact between the viewer and the viewed.³² In other words, while the reader is conscious of Dalí’s text as a work of fiction, merely *based* on a “true story,” the one place where one might peep through a crack in the narrative façade is through the implied cause and effect of Dalí’s traumatic episodes, where Dalí’s narrative “skin,” as well as his literal skin is permeated, and Dalí is left vulnerable to or “honest” with the reader, if for a fleeting moment.

An American Metamorphosis: “New Skin! A New Land!”

While intensely conscious of his telos of becoming a “king” or “saviour,” throughout most of *The Secret Life* Dalí presents the reader with a self-image as

malformed, “unwrinkled” or inexperienced in life’s lessons, where boundaries between his interiority and the social sphere are easily and painfully violated, often resulting in distressing outcomes. This is before Dalí announces his conversion to Catholicism at the end of the book, in which he transitions, or “morphs,” from the old, Surrealist, avant-garde, left-leaning Dalí to what he calls the “Anti-Surrealist,” the reactionary, academic painter he aspired to be at that period. Speaking, as *The Secret Life* does, primarily to an American “mainstream” audience, Dalí announced his “rebirth” on U.S. soil to the North American “masses.” “I had a growing desire to feel myself in contact with a ‘new flesh’” he writes, before his “conquering” of America, “with a new country that had to yet be touched by the decomposition of Post-War Europe. America!” (324).

Dalí did indeed conquer America, primarily through courting the press, and became such a celebrity in the later 1930s and early 1940s that he and his work were in fact “everywhere” in the U.S.A., ranging from fashion houses to shop windows to the design studio to the ballet to the 1939 New York World’s fair and the Museum of Modern Art. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, America, it seemed, simply could not get enough of Dalí or the Surrealist style that served as his veritable trademark, and his public success was a true popular culture phenomenon. That Dalí fully intended to cater to the American market he makes clear in Chapter Eleven of *The Secret Life*. While writing about “mass” American taste, Dalí offers the opinion that “Europeans are mistaken in considering Americans incapable of poetic and intellectual intuition.” Indeed, according to Dalí, “America chooses with all the unfathomable and elementary force of her unique and intact biology.” And what America had undoubtedly chosen was what she “did not have,” and “all that America ‘did not have’ on the spiritual plane I was going to

bring her, materialized in the integral and delirious mixture of my paranoiac work, in order that she might thus see and touch everything with the hands of liberty” (325).

At this point in the memoir, Dalí brings together the previous skin-related tropes he has used in his book to illustrate his own presumed metamorphosis, from former avant-garde, left-leaning, atheist Surrealist, to academic, reactionary, pious “classicist.”

“To live!” Dalí writes in the epilogue,

To liquidate half of life in order to live the other half enriched by experience, freed from the chains of the past. For this it was necessary for me to kill my past without pity or scruple, I had to rid myself of my own skin, that initial skin of my formless and revolutionary life during the Post-War Epoch. It was necessary at all costs that I change skins, that I trade this worn epidermis with which I have dressed, hidden, shown myself, struggled, fought and triumphed, for that other new skin, the flesh of my desire, of my imminent renaissance which will be dated from the very morrow of the day this book appears (393).

Here Dalí returns to the idea of the cast-off overcoat, or the sloughed pelt of his “previous” life, which, as he states, is intimately entwined with the declarations and life narrative with which he presents the reader. Also, the extent to which Dalí conflates the idea of his own skin with the very materiality of the volume that is *The Secret Life* becomes evident, as Dalí states that his renaissance will be dated “from the very morrow of the day this book appears.”

According to Frédérique Joseph-Lowery, a Dalí scholar who recently transcribed and published the artist’s entire French manuscript of *The Secret Life*, with revisions and *scraffiti* included, the manuscript itself very much carries symbolic or sacrificial connotations. Lowery considers the many hundreds of original pages of Dalí’s work, mostly on yellow foolscap and various American hotel letterheads, and equates them in a

very literal way to the artist's sloughed skin similes. For Lowery, these "deposits of skins" testify to the upheaval in Dalí's life at the time he wrote his book, indexing the "many displacements and the discontinuity upon which the autobiographical practice of the painter is dependent." This "moult" or shedding represents to Lowery "concrete proof of the process of dematerialization of the body of the writer."³³

Dalí continues to conflate the concepts of career, skin and text in the long declaration that closes *The Secret Life*:

I am at this moment, as I write these lines, in the midst of making the last convulsions, which are in reality the end of this chapter, which will allow me to shuffle off and completely detach myself from the prison of my old skin, exactly as snakes do ... when toward the end of certain transparent October days they leave hanging all along the rocks of the beach of Monterey the torn shreds of their old lyrical epidermis ... (393).

The extent to which Dalí intends to present his new self/skin to America, as a completely new "package," far from the dissolute Surrealist he was previously known as, and well distanced from the other émigrés and refugees who had filled American ports during the war years, is evident as Dalí continues,

New skin, a new land! And a land of liberty, if that is possible! I chose the geology of a new land that was new to me, and that was young, virgin and without drama, that of America. I traveled in America, but instead of romantically and directly rubbing the snakeskin of my body against the asperities of its terrain, I preferred to peel protected within the armour of the gleaming black crustacean of a Cadillac which I gave to Gala as a present (393).

In this passage Dalí suggests that this skin of his former self is very much entwined, like his "Dalinian bread," with his public persona, and in particular, with his influence as an artist, a writer, and a celebrity. Dalí may have shed his old skin, he tells us, but

“Nevertheless all the men who admire and the women who are in love with my old skin will easily be able to find its remnants in shredded pieces of various sizes scattered to the winds along the road from New York via Pittsburgh to California.” Further, in equally graphic and duly peculiar prose, the artist writes that,

I have peeled with every wind; pieces of my skin have remained caught here and there along my way, scattered through that “promised land” which is America; certain pieces of this skin have remained hanging in the spiny vegetation of the Arizona desert ... Other pieces of my skin have remained spread out like tablecloths without food on the summits of the rocky masses by which one reaches the Salt Lake, in which the hard passion of the Mormons saluted in me the European phantom of Apollinaire (393-94).

Dalí continues in this lyrical mode claiming that pieces of his shed skin have been deposited, in fact, in all of the United States, itself represented by the American flag, that is, “lost in the folds of that night of the future illuminated by fifteen stars large as closed fists filled with seeds of liberty, and stirred by the patriotic wind which, coming from the fifteen states, makes the erect, fecundating and immobile serenity of the banners even more glorious ...” Dalí’s interest in the national body here, and his own body as metonymic of the body of Spain and the body of Europe is reflected in the same passage, when he writes that, “The old Greco-Roman civilization, after the experience of all those vain revolutions, and beneath the inquisition and the distress into which war has plunged it, it too is painfully changing its skin, dramatically finding its new skin, the skin of its tradition, still buried under chaotic hell” (394).

Dalí is evidently offering a first-hand account of the momentous change Europe was undergoing as a result of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, while pointing to the “New World” as a safe haven and exemplar of victory, growth and liberty. Equally,

the artist is participating in the rhetoric, generated primarily by despotic regimes, of the “New Man”—the supposed ideal human united with utopian visions of societal regeneration or rebirth used to legitimate much of the war, destruction and genocide of the period. This is most evident in Dalí’s rhetoric of the “renaissance” couched safely in the bosom of tradition, a concept used by Francoist, National Socialist and Italian Fascist propaganda regimes in order to promote, respectively, the New Spain, the Master Race, and the New Rome.

As will be discussed in future chapters, while Dalí may well be nodding, if not ingratiating himself, to Francoist and other causes in *The Secret Life*, Dalí’s use of the skin metaphor is primarily a self-directed and intensely personal one. Dalí’s choice of and perpetual return to the imagery of his own hide underscore his sense of embodiment in terms of the “outer layer” of subjecthood: as a trace, a face, a façade and an inherently unstable construct that can be manipulated and changed at will. This is all highly *a propos* for an artist whose literary and visual corpus was obsessively autobiographical throughout his life, and who was, perhaps more than any other artist of any time, intensely aware of his public persona in the popular media, and the politics and mechanics of his own performativity. In fact, it might be said that Dalí’s autobiographical works of the early 1940s have as their primary theme the performance of the self, or the “skin” of his public “face,” and that this is the very subject of *The Secret Life* and a number of his important post-Surrealist works of art of the period.

That Dalí was engaged with the imagery of skin and its semantic value in terms of his stated personal and public “transformations” is manifest in a number of his paintings of the late 1930s and early 1940s equally as much as it is in his autobiography. Certainly,

the relationship between the highly body-centric language Dalí sustains in his life narrative in order to illustrate the embodied and embattled subject, and his painting of the period, comprises an interdisciplinary project that has been virtually ignored in Dalí scholarship. Four paintings in particular reference Dalí's "epidermal" preoccupation, the first three being his *Original Sin* (1941) depicting worn, cast off leather shoes next to a spry, nude female foot; *Daddy Longlegs of the Evening, Hope!* (1942), a work indexing the war with its distressed military aircraft, and foregrounding the flayed pelt of an elongated female form; and *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943) in which a male nude emerges from a pliable, skin-like egg that is also the planet Earth. That these works can be viewed as autobiographical, referring to Dalí's own life and "renaissance," is hardly an issue when discussing any aspect of the oeuvre of an artist whose work is intensely, if not obsessively, self-referential. As American art historian Robert S. Lubar suggests, "To speak of self-portraiture in Dalí's work is, in an important sense, redundant, as Salvador Dalí—the man, the artist and the person—is the privileged subject of his life's work."³⁴

The emphasis on the dialectics at work between interior and exterior, and how these play out in the imagery of the skin is nowhere more evident or more self-reflexive than in Dalí's painting of 1941 entitled *Soft Self Portrait with Grilled Bacon*, a work that was featured (in a pendant portrait with Gala) as the frontispiece of the 1942 edition of *The Secret Life*, and one in which Dalí portrays himself as nothing less than a flayed pelt (Figure 4). This canvas depicts Dalí metonymically as the skin from the artist's head and face, propped up with a number of Dalí's famous crutches.

Figure 4: Salvador Dalí. *Soft Self Portrait with Grilled Bacon*. Oil on canvas, 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain. © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

The figure is golden brown like the colour of cooked meat, and sports Dalí's by-then well-known handlebar moustache. The eyes are mere sockets, out of which swarm black ants, and the mask-like pelt is supported by a plinth, giving it the aspect of a traditional bust, upon which are inscribed the words "Soft Self Portrait." Next to the figure atop the pedestal is a neatly placed strip of cooked bacon.

Later in his career, Dalí described this painting in his own words as "an anti-psychological self-portrait." "[I]nstead of painting the soul, that is to say, what is within," he claimed,

I painted the exterior, the shell, the glove of myself. This glove of myself is edible and even tastes a little rank, like hung game; for that reason there are ants and a rasher of fried bacon in the picture. Being the most generous

of all artists, I am forever offering myself up to be eaten, and thus afford delicious sustenance to the age.³⁵

This “glove of myself” is, of course, Dalí’s flayed or shed epidermis, and corresponds with the description at the end of *The Secret Life* of Dalí’s having sloughed his old skin like a reptile in order to facilitate his metamorphosis. As a remnant of the artist formerly known as Dalí, a sort of death mask, it is presumably what remained after Dalí’s stated rebirth, much like the pages of Dalí’s autobiography in their materiality. Certainly, like a “genuine” sculpted bust, here is an interpretation of a “real” person, and likewise, not a direct image of Dalí, but an artistic rendering of him, or a mask, representing nothing less than his own masquerade. “In *The Secret Life*,” writes biographer Meredith Etherington-Smith, Dalí “deliberately recreates his life as a work of art. He looks in the mirror and he describes the mask, not the face.”³⁶ While ostensibly a means of “contact” with the artist or author through first-hand interpretation, like Dalí’s autobiography *Soft Self Portrait*, with its painting of an image of a remnant of Dalí’s face, equally distances the reader from the subject, and in fact renders Salvador Dalí, and his “secret life” more elusive than ever.

According to Dalí’s analysis, *The Soft Self Portrait* limns Dalí as both a flayed skin, a “glove” of himself, and that which is decidedly a mask, or what he has shed and left behind. While this likeness may well depict the artist’s former persona or performed, public “self” before his great conversion, Dalí’s gustatory allusions cannot be overlooked as the artist describes himself, in word and paint, as “hung game”; nicely browned, with a piece of bacon nearby.³⁷ Indeed, by “offering himself up to be eaten,” Dalí confirms once again his insistence on his “public” self; his exterior, served up to be consumed in a

literal as well as a metaphorical sense “in order to appease for some hundred years the spiritual, imaginative, moral and ideological hunger of our epoch” (176).

While Dalí makes no small claim here for his autobiography to do nothing less than “appease” the “hunger of our epoch,” in the epilogue of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the author again returns to birth imagery and that of sloughed skin in order to signal his stated metamorphosis. “I am thirty-seven years old” he writes, and it is July 30th, 1941, the day I promised my publisher that I would finish this manuscript.” Symbolically completing the task of moulting his former life through the cathartic process of writing his autobiography, Dalí explains that he is “completely naked and alone in [his] room”—that is, unambiguously the *tabula rasa* he has once again become, the naked newborn who turns to the wardrobe mirror to peruse the freshness of his new being. But while born anew, Dalí claims also to have come full circle as, having experienced first-hand so many events of the first half of the twentieth century, he asserts that he is “the most representative incarnation of post-war Europe; I have lived all its adventures, all its experiments, all its dramas” (399). As such, Dalí rejects the modern experiments, the avant-garde, and the left-leaning politics of the period, and self-consciously “reinvents” himself according to a model with which he sees fit to present, and therefore market himself in the U.S. “My metamorphosis is tradition,” Dalí declares at the closing of his memoir, “for tradition is precisely this—change of skin, reinvention of a new original skin which is precisely the inevitable consequence of the biological mould of that which preceded it” (394).

Form and the “Biological Mould”

Figure 5: Salvador Dalí: “Form’ is always the product of ‘inquisitorial’ process of matter.” Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 3. Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain. © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí /SODRAC (2009).

The primacy of this idea of the “biological mould,” as Dalí moves in the text from “heterogeneous” and “anarchistic” to rigorous and “formed,” becomes clear in the first illustration to appear in the book, a highly coded image with a hand-written caption that reads “Form’ is always the product of ‘inquisitorial’ process of matter” (Figure 5). In it the central figure appears to be a curved wooden armature, similar to a stringed instrument such as a guitar or a cello, or perhaps a rocking chair. This image corresponds with one of the visual themes of the illustrations in *The Secret Life*, that of anthropomorphic furniture, which is reflected most readily in the phallic protuberance which here has the appearance of a turned wooden banister or post. In terms of style, the sketch is reminiscent of the drawings resulting from the Surrealist game Exquisite

Corpse, in which a long rectangular piece of paper is folded into several sections, and passed to each player in succession, each of whom draws part of a figure, and then folds it over so the next player can see only a tiny section of the image peeking out, and must continue the drawing “blind.” The end results are invariably odd and humorous creations similar to the one that Dalí has drawn here.

While the Exquisite Corpse is habitually incoherent in terms of overall design and intent, however, this image, like virtually all of Dalí’s pictures, has been carefully charted, and is highly coded and brimming with personal iconography. Like most of the drawings in his book, this one is also calibrated very much to the text in which it immediately appears; in this case, in the midst of Dalí’s rumination upon the nature of form and morphology. As a result, the overall shape of the central figure corresponds to that of the *ouroboros*, an ancient symbol depicting a snake biting its own tail, whose circular form, connecting the “beginning” and the “ending” of the reptile, represents the life cycle, as a literal cycle or circle. The incorporation of this emblem keys the image to the main theme of *The Secret Life*, which once again in Dalí’s words is “Death and resurrection, revolution and renaissance,” a progression of life phases which he describes as the “Dalinian myths of my tradition” (394).

Within the context of *The Secret Life*, it can be assumed that this central figure, draped with Dalí’s famous soft watch as a sort of trademark, is a fantasy portrait of Dalí himself, with Gala playing a prominent role. The couple’s presumably harmonious relationship is reflected in their double signature in the bottom right of the drawing, which the artist has placed conspicuously inside the circular form, topped with his trademark crown and surrounded by what he calls “swords of light” to imply something

numinous or extraordinary (153). Dalí frequently signed his name with Gala's in his pictures, but as this is a text illustration, the elaborate signature serves primarily to reinforce the Gala-Dalí unification theme of the image. In the background is a well-known representation from Dalí's earlier works of a woman on her knees in the process of performing fellatio upon a standing man with long, flowing hair. Although hardly romantic by conventional standards, here the act is posited as an idealized rendition of love, in reference to Gala's "healing powers," or what Sigmund Freud called the "medication of love"; that is, what helped Dalí to "become what he is." The bean-shaped object the Dalí figure is tenderly embracing in its ribcage also refers to Gala, whom Dalí describes in the book as his "secret within his secret" (315). The rounded forms repeated throughout the image, some of them in a yin-yang configuration, are ones Dalí frequently used to signal what he insisted was his ideal union with Gala, as he did in his 1937 "The Dream of an Apparition of an Emblem."

In the stomach area is another similar "pod," which may well be the "cosmogony" Dalí informs the reader he is gestating, a bean or pupa-like shape that is repeated in the soft forms hanging on the central figure, and rounded forms perched upon both of its ends. These seed-like objects signal growth and "morphology," the process that Dalí is presumably under in the "inquisition" of his autobiography, and which will ultimately lead him to "blossom" into his predestined form. Dalí's conflation here of the phallic, the foetal and the maternal tie in very much with the theme of the life-cycle that forms the foundation of the book: the wooden armature and the soft testicular forms hanging from it, and the curved position of the main figure, inside of which gestate two foetus-like objects. These elements reinforce Dalí's doubly-gendered approach to the self-image he

attempts to project in the work: as fatherly “saviour”; as mother of his own cosmogony; and himself as a sort of seed or pupa planted in the soil of America to grow into the nourishing intellectual and creative “food” or “sustenance” for the nation’s future. Speaking in the epilogue of his desire to be part of the regrouping and regrowth of what he posits as the impending Occidental renaissance, Dalí writes “Let me be the first fore-precursor of the renaissance!” (395).

The central figure in this drawing is the skeletal structure or armature upon which Dalí will grow beneath the “skin” of his persona, and the base material that was to metamorphose into the finished product, as “each flower grows in a prison.” In other words, this was the embryonic Dalí that was to become his predestined self: a Catholic, a reactionary, a “classicist,” and nothing less than the saviour of modern art. As a portrait of Dalí’s “interior,” the work can be considered a companion piece to Dalí’s *Soft Self Portrait with Grilled Bacon* of 1940, which shows Dalí’s “outer shell” or “glove of himself” in the guise of the flayed skin of his face and neck. Both self-portraits, these two works demonstrate in the most graphic sense Dalí’s “morphological aesthetics of the soft and the hard,” and schematically reveal Dalí’s own concept of the binary subject as defined by his inner, “secret” world of bones and organs, and his public persona as defined by his mask-like skin or outer shell.

Soft Self Portrait introduces the theme of food and eating with its piece of grilled bacon, and points once again to the gustatory imagery that holds such a prominent place in Dalí’s deeply somatic prose. Dalí’s *Form* drawing equally points to issues of consumption and digestion with its prominent dentition indexing the head of the Dalí-creature, and in this context, the jaws likely point to what the artist would have the reader

believe is his voracious appetite for life and learning. As a young boy, Dalí writes of how he “devoured” the works of Kant, Descartes, Nietzsche and others, which appeased a “violent necessity for the spiritual nourishment of my soul,” which he compares to nothing less than a calcium deficiency (142). Speaking of his growing intellect and interest in the world of arts and letters, Dalí writes in *The Secret Life* that “My edible, intestinal and digestive representations at this period assumed an increasingly insistent character. I wanted to eat everything ...” (319). In turn, the nascent creature such fare would nourish was to grow into the saviour figure Dalí claims he was destined to be, in order to “appease for some hundred years the spiritual, imaginative, moral and ideological hunger of our epoch” (176).

A few pages further from where the *Form* image appears, Dalí begins to speak metaphorically about consumption of art and literature using the imagery of crunching, eating and jaws. “I have often said that the most philosophic organs man possesses are his jaws,” he writes. Indeed, sucking the marrow out of bones that are “being crushed in the final destructive embrace of your molars” is, for Dalí, “the supreme moment of reaching the marrow of anything that you discover the very taste of truth, that naked and tender truth emerging from the well of the one which you hold fast between your teeth” (10). In the image in question, Dalí has no doubt offered his rendition of what he would like his reader to believe is the “naked and tender truth” of his person as he undergoes the morphological process of becoming his “true” self, or experiencing the “inquisitorial process of matter.” Dalí, that is, quite literally presents himself as the bones whose marrow the reader might suck, in order to taste what Dalí claims is an “honest attempt at self-portraiture” (11).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the form and structure of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and parsed the narrative aspects of the work as they relate to Dalí's insistence upon subsuming the "real" events of his life to the requirements of various conventional literary genres and formats. These, it has been argued, include aspects of the *Bildungsroman* and the conversion narrative, which help to convey the trajectory of the artist's journey from an innocent childhood to a debauched, atheistic youth to a wise maturity and Catholic conversion. The symbolism Dalí uses, and the way in which he conveys meaning through often abstruse or highly-coded means, is also considered here, particularly as they relate to Dalí's use of the idea of the saviour, of the crutch, of bread, of skin, of the dialectics between hard and soft, and finally, the iteration of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

While *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* is decidedly embellished and undeniably novelistic in format, it does remain, however, an autobiography; that is, a historical account of Dalí's life up to the time of the book's publication. Acknowledging this, the following chapter examines the degree to which Dalí's "honest attempt at self-portraiture" has remained controversial among Dalí's biographers and critics. It also queries the extent to which Dalí conforms to, deviates from and extends the traditional boundaries of the autobiographical genre itself: an important consideration for approaching the work. The question of how strategically Dalí has structured the facts of his life in order to present himself in a particular light, and the politics of the disclosure of the "truths" of his career and personal life will continue to be queried in light of various critiques and discourses, and most specifically in terms of autobiographical theory.

¹ Salvador Dalí (Felipe Jacinto), *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Julien Levy Gallery, 1941) in Salvador Dalí, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, ed. and trans., Haim Finkelstein (New York and Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1998), 338-39.

² Peinado and Altaió Morral, "Dalí is Thirty-seven Years Old," 95.

³ All in-text references refer to Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, trans. Haakon M. Chevalier (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993).

⁴ Typical of Dalí's interdisciplinary approach to his creative production, this course is reflected in a painting the artist executed at the time he was writing his autobiography in America in 1940, entitled *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)*, which also portrays a life in three phases. It should be noted that the painting does not include adulthood as one of the three ages, and assuming that this work is self-referential, therefore implies that, as Dalí appears to do in *The Secret Life*, he has made the transition from childhood and adolescence directly to wise old age.

⁵ Michelle Debax, "Le Texte autobiographique comme béquille de la peinture," in ed. Mercadier, Guy, *Écrire sur soi en Espagne: modèles et écarts* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1988), 277. Translation mine.

⁶ These images, along with a number of others Dalí produced between 1940 and 1968, appeared in a limited edition, privately printed sixty-page art book entitled *The Erotic Metamorphoses* in 1969.

⁷ See page 83, Dover edition of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*.

⁸ As Dalí's early schoolbooks demonstrate, the artist had been using this technique since at least 1919, when he was fifteen years of age. This predates the Dada-style work by German artist Max Ernst, who created amusing "transformations" with overdrawing and overpainting in the 1920s, such as a small image executed in 1920, entitled *The Master's Bedroom*, which also uses a nursery primer as its foundation.

⁹ Joseph-Lowery, 20. Translation mine.

¹⁰ Dalí is referring to Freud's concept of the "polymorphously perverse disposition," as discussed in his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XII, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 191.

¹¹ As is well known, Dalí claimed that his brother was much older than he actually was upon his death. In *The Secret Life*, Dalí writes that "My brother died at the age of seven from an attack of meningitis, three years before I was born" (2). However, as David Vilaseca documents, "the civil register of the Ministry of Justice in Figueres notes that the first son of Salvador Dalí I Cusi and Felipa Domenech was born on 12 October 1901, and died on 1 August 1903, at the age of twenty-one months. The second Salvador was born on 11 May 1904, hence not three years, but just over nine months after the former's death. Moreover, the stated cause of the brother's death was not meningitis but 'catarrh with gastroenteric infection' (David Vilaseca, *The Apocryphal Subject: Masochism, Identification and Paranoia in Salvador Dalí's Autobiographical Writings*, Catalan Studies Translations and Criticism, vol. 17 (New York, Washington, etc.: Peter Lang, 1995), 77, fn.

¹² Jean Alsina, "Salvador Dalí autobiographe dans *La vida secreta de Salvador Dalí*," in *Écrire sur soi en Espagne: modèles & écarts*, ed. Guy Mercadier, 257-27 (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1988), 263. Translation mine.

¹³ The *Künstlerroman* is a sub-genre of the *Bildungsroman*, and displays many of the same characteristics of the latter, but is specifically a novel about an artist's life journey, and his or her development as a painter, musician, or more often, a writer. From this viewpoint, *The Secret Life* might be grouped among the better known texts in this genre, such as Hermann Hesse's *Demian*, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage* (Margaret Drabble, ed., *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Fifth Edition (Oxford, New York, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1985), 100).

¹⁴ While Dalí's work might well be contextualized in terms of the *Bildungsroman* or *Künstlerroman* framework, it might also be argued that aspects of *The Secret Life* reflect Spanish literary traditions, most specifically that of the picaresque novel. This is a genre that is traditionally satirical in nature, whose name stems from the word *pícaro*, aptly meaning rascal or trickster—epithets especially applicable to the person of Salvador Dalí. The picaresque novel is usually written in the first person and chronicles the life of a rogue, usually of low social status, who must live on his or her wits in a corrupt society. Usually of an episodic structure, the *pícaro* lives through a series of adventures which allow the author to satirize cultural foibles and the pretensions and idiosyncrasies of various social classes. It should also be noted that, like

Dalí's life narrative, the picaresque novel invariably ends with religious redemption, as the protagonist overcomes or transcends his delinquency (Drabble, 762-3).

¹⁵ Vilaseca, 211.

¹⁶ See Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁸ Alsina, 263. Translation mine.

¹⁹ Vilaseca, 211-212.

²⁰ Pierre Volboudt, "The Anamorphosis of the Verb," in *Homage to Salvador Dalí: Special Issue of the XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 119.

²¹ Carmen Rasilla, "Dalí's Autobiographical Metamorphosis," in *Persistence & Memory: New Critical Perspectives on Dalí at the Centennial*, eds. Hank Hine, William Jeffett and Kelly Reynolds, 101-104 (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Salvador Dalí Museum and Bompiani, 2004), 101.

²² Dalí was to reuse this imagery in his painting *The Temptation of St. Anthony* of 1946.

²³ Dawn Ades, ed. "Bread," in *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective* (Venice: Palazzo Grassi, and Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, and London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 426.

²⁴ Roger J. Porter, "Figuration and Disfigurement: Hercule Barbin and the Autobiography of the Body," paper delivered at a conference, "Autobiography and Self-Representation," at the University of California-Irvine, March 3-4, 1990, in John Paul Eakin, *Touching the World: Reference in Autobiography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 184.

²⁵ Shirley Neuman, "'An appearance walking in a forest the sexes burn': Autobiography and the Construction of the Feminine Body," *Signature 1* (1989): 1, in Eakin 184.

²⁶ Vilaseca, 12.

²⁷ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1991), 163.

²⁸ Jay Prosser, "Skin Memories," in *Thinking Through the Skin*, eds. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey (New York: Routledge, 2001), 54.

²⁹ Sidonie Smith, "Identity's Body" in *Autobiography and Postmodernism*, eds. Kathleen Ashley and Leigh Gilmore (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 270.

³⁰ Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, eds. *Performing the Body/Performing the Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 41.

³¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 71.

³² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London: Vintage, 1993), 40-73.

³³ Joseph-Lowery, 18-19. Translation mine.

³⁴ Robert S. Lubar, *Dalí: The Salvador Dalí Museum Collection* (Boston, New York, London: Bullfinch Press, 2000), 11.

³⁵ Robert Descharnes and Gilles Néret, *Dalí: The Paintings* (Koln: Taschen, 2001), 359.

³⁶ Meredith Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory: A Biography of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 279.

³⁷ The versatility with which Dalí employs images of himself, both as skin and as "meat" is further extended in Charles Stuckey's suggestion of the artist's word play in this painting that "the odd detail of a strip of bacon (lard in French) is evidently a visualized pun (for the homonym l'art)" (Charles Stuckey, "Dalí in Duchamp-Land," *Art in America*, May 1, 2005. October 1, 2008.

<http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-132297837.html>.

CHAPTER 2: Dalí and the Autobiographical Act

I do not seek to be any better understood. My secrets are too grave, and reserved for a Nietzschean elite. The rules of my chess game are one of the disciplines that lead me to pray to my God and to increase my genius.

Salvador Dalí,
The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí, 1976.¹

Introduction

“Customarily,” Dalí tells us in the beginning of his autobiography, “writers begin to write their memoirs ‘after their life is over,’ toward the end of their life, in their old age. But with my vice of doing everything differently from others, of doing the contrary of what others do, I thought that it was more intelligent to begin by writing my memoirs, and to live them afterwards” (393). That Dalí, an artist, should be interested in publishing his autobiography, especially at the still green age of thirty-seven, was something of a mystery for Dalí’s public and critics alike during the time of its publication. Indeed, in 1942, the year *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was first released, it was a task no other artist of his stature had undertaken on this scale since the Italian Renaissance sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini’s own memoirs were first published in 1728. Written between 1558 and 1562, Cellini spins a lively and fascinating tale of his life in and out of court and among the famous names of his time in later sixteenth-century Italy and France. Assuming Dalí was familiar with Cellini’s autobiography by the time he was to write his own, however, it seems he paid little heed to the earlier artist’s advice to those who attempt to record their memoirs.² “All men of whatsoever quality they be,” writes Cellini, “who have done anything of excellence, or which may properly resemble excellence,

ought, if they are persons of truth and honesty, to describe their life with their own hand ...” However, as far as the sculptor was concerned, “they ought not to attempt so fine an enterprise till they have passed the age of forty.”³

In the early twenty-first century, when writing an autobiography is almost a requisite aspect of the public relations mechanism of celebrity, and the autobiographies of major and minor personalities from all cultural domains are filling up the shelves of bookstores at an ever-increasing pace, Cellini’s advice reminds us of a time when memoirs were retrospective endeavours, intended to shed light and wisdom upon a life lived, rather than an opportunity to seize the notoriety of the moment. Dalí’s own acknowledgement that memoirs are traditionally written by people “after their life is over,” underscores his awareness of his own pushing of the limits of the genre, and indeed, he was one of the first celebrities to use the autobiographical format in the way that he does, as an extended and highly strategic public relations exercise, and as an opportunity to shape the current view of his public image.⁴

The previous chapter considered the way in which Dalí narrates and fictionalizes the events and people in his own life according to novelistic criteria, or to construct and control his own “legend,” essentially transforming his memoir into an extended, and extremely literary exercise in self-mythification. In this chapter, *The Secret Life* is considered in terms of what theorists of life narratives call the “autographical act”; that is, how Dalí mobilizes various autobiographical formats in his oeuvre in general; how *The Secret Life* fits into the discourses of autobiographical theory; views of various critical and scholarly approaches to the work; and especially in terms of issues of “fact” versus “fiction” and presumed imperatives of authenticity. This chapter will also consider the

ways in which Dalí self-consciously plays with issues of disclosure and veracity, both conforming to, and expanding the boundaries of the memoir genre in the early 1940s, and thus problematizing and politicizing the disclosure of his promised “secrets.”

Finally under consideration is Dalí’s attempt to extend or enrich the book through his meticulously compiled photographic material which, it will be argued, not just appends or enriches, but forms a parallel narrative to the written text. How this practice relates to the strategic nature of Dalí’s writing is to be found in the fundamental issues of concealment and revelation, of the withholding, distorting or fabricating of information in a work that is profoundly mediated and embellished, despite Dalí’s claim to being “an honest attempt at self-portraiture.”

Dalí’s Autobiographical Impulse

“Western man has become a confessional animal” Michel Foucault muses in his *A History of Sexuality*, pointing to the revelatory impulse in human nature. Assuming that one might equate confession with autobiography, and judging from the proliferation in the twentieth century of autobiographies and memoirs produced by celebrated or significant people, this does, indeed, seem to be the case.⁵ Dalí’s decision to write his autobiography appears to have been made when the genre was becoming popular among celebrities and people who had led outstanding lives. In fact, Dalí was very early to realize the power and influence of mass media in the generation of celebrity, and clearly gauged the potential of mobilizing it for his own purposes. Dalí was among the first artists or other members of the European avant-garde to pen his life narrative, and he was certainly modelling his own work on “classics” such as Saint Augustine’s and Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Confessions* and Cellini’s autobiography, as well looking at the style

and efficacy of political treatises and manifesto-style memoirs such as Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, or Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

In terms of Dalí's career, while *The Secret Life* may well be the most significant and successful of the artist's autobiographical writings, it is by no means unique as Dalí was, in fact, an avid, life-long self-documenter, and his "official" autobiography can be viewed as part of a continuum of his writings of the self. Dalí had, for instance, begun to keep a journal in Catalan in 1919, several volumes of which are extant, and in the collection of The Gala-Salvador Dalí foundation in Figueres and the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. These extend, in various formats and with missing volumes, from November 1919 to December 1920, and include other similar works in which Dalí ruminates upon his art and oeuvre to date, including a volume documenting Dalí's life between 1920 and 1921 entitled *My Life in this World*.⁶

The one volume held in the Dalí museum in Florida was published privately by Reynolds Morse in 1962, and is entitled *Continuation of Book Number 6 of my Impressions and Private Memoirs, January 1920*.⁷ It was written when Dalí was fifteen years of age, and both the translator of this document and David Vilaseca note the contrast between this lucid, practical text and Dalí's later flamboyant and ambiguous style. Vilaseca observes that "it lacks the usual megalomaniac fixation with his own artistic persona," and notes how it shows a more intimate side of the artist.⁸ Indeed, these documents are highly informative as they reveal an early version of Dalí, before he became the eccentric sophisticate encountered in *The Secret Life*, and of course, farthest of all from the gaudy and decidedly lurid figure he would emerge as later in life; the

“embarrassing genius” that art critic Robert Hughes describes as a “pretentious, whorish old fanatic.”⁹

Nevertheless, there is much of the later Dalí to be recognized in this earlier version. While Dalí ruminates upon Catalan politics of the period, and his beloved native Empordà region of Catalonia, he also writes in one entry that “I’ll be a genius, and the world will admire me. Perhaps I’ll be despised and misunderstood, but I’ll be a genius, a great genius, I’m certain of it.” In one section, under the rubric “Thoughts about Myself,” Dalí divulges that “I am madly in love with myself,” and that “There’s no doubt that I’m a completely theatrical type who only lives in order to ‘pose.’ I’m a ‘poseur’ in my manner of dressing, in my manner of talking and even in my manner of painting, in certain cases.” As well as being a poseur, Dalí apparently now considered himself a “refined egotist” although, “as well as an egotist I’m naïve at certain times, which is what I imagine people notice most.” He is determined that others find him unique and fascinating, and “In a short time” he boasts, “I’ve made important advances along the path of farce and deceit.” Perhaps most notably in terms of heralding the Dalí to come, he claims that he has become “a great actor in this even greater comedy that is life, the farcical life of our society.”¹⁰

Finkelstein suggests that as regards Dalí’s autobiographical tendencies, “hints strewn in his writing and art alike can be deciphered to reveal various personal references, to be later used as pieces of a psychological jigsaw puzzle.”¹¹ He singles out Dalí’s essay “The Liberation of the Fingers” (1929), in which Dalí attempted to emulate André Breton’s autobiographical method in his Surrealist novel *Nadja*. Finkelstein also cites other examples of Dalí’s early published works as being essentially

autobiographical, such as his “masturbatory” rumination entitled *Rêverie* of 1931, and his disturbing poem *L'Amour et la mémoire* of the same year. While these are some of Dalí's earlier written works that have diaristic or autobiographical elements, Dalí also continued to document—or perhaps more accurately, *interpret* his life after writing *The Secret Life*, including his *Diary of a Genius* (1964), which is a published journal sporadically spanning 1952-1963 (and which, it should be mentioned, Dalí mockingly suggests he considered calling *My Re-Secret Life*¹²).

Another notable work is entitled *Les Passions selon Dalí*, the transcription by Louis Pauwels from conversations he recorded with the artist, and which were revised later by Dalí. Published originally in 1968 as *Les Passions*, it was reprinted in 1989 as *Dalí m'a dit*.¹³ Another is *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí* (1973), originally a French publication, a pastiche of Dalí's earlier writings of the self, compiled by André Parinaud, as well as some new material gleaned from interviews with the artist.¹⁴ A similar work is that of an interview conducted by Alain Bosquet, entitled *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí* (1966).¹⁵ Likewise, some self-referential material can be found in Carleton Lake's “real-time” view of Dalí entitled *In Quest of Dalí* (1969), described as “Dalí revealing himself through his own words and actions.”¹⁶ Further works with pronounced autobiographical tendencies can be found in various editions of published letters, including those to J.V. Foix written between 1932 and 1936,¹⁷ and collected letters to Lorca in *Salvador Dalí escribe a Federico García Lorca* (1978),¹⁸ and *Sebastian's Arrows: Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca* (2004).¹⁹

While this inventory adumbrates the texts most likely to display autobiographical impulses in Dalí's literary corpus, attempting to extricate the artist's presumed autobiographical work from that which is presumably not autobiographical is a redundant exercise, as it is fair to say that the great majority of Dalí's creative production, in painting, writing and even other projects such as film and ballet, is, in the sense of being self-referential, autobiographical performance. As Lubar suggests, the privileged subject of Dalí's life's work is the artist himself. "Not only is Dalí's visual practice matched by his excursions into the realm of literary autobiography, as in the case of the artist's extravagant 1942 text, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, but the ontological status of self-portraiture in Dalí's work is open to numerous interpretations."²⁰ That said, while much of Dalí's work can be cited as self-referential, only in *The Secret Life* does Dalí claim to be writing an autobiography *per se*. Acknowledging this, the following discussion will consider how Dalí works with the memoir format, the traditions and conventions upon which he draws, his treatment of his self as subject, the way he structures and navigates his own history, and how successfully and artfully the author carries out his task in the service of supposed self-disclosure.

Theorizing the Life Narrative

As it gains increasing attention in the academic domain, how autobiography is defined in literary terms is currently a subject of debate among scholars. While the designation "autobiography" can be elusive, two of the most often cited definitions will be implemented here. The first is that put forth by Philippe Lejeune in a well-known essay entitled "The Autobiographical Pact," in which he defines autobiography as a "Retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence,

where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality.”²¹ The second definition is Paul John Eakin’s extremely economical one, in which autobiography is defined simply by the very fact of “the autobiographer’s explicit posture *as autobiographer* in the text.”²² Taking these as points of reference, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali* is perhaps Dali’s only “true” autobiography, in which the artist locates himself as the writer and subject of this specific literary project, which is, in many ways, the “story of his personality.”

While these definitions do much to establish the boundaries of autobiography, in the critical arena concerned with life narratives in general there is some dispute as to whether or not one can consider the format a genre at all. Literary critic Paul de Man, for instance, in his well-known essay “Autobiography as De-facement,” raises this question about a practice that he considers “always looks slightly disreputable and self-indulgent.”²³ To him autobiography is “not a genre or mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts.”²⁴ To circumnavigate this issue, some critics suggest that autobiography be considered an act rather than a genre—that is, a gesture that can be performed within many different disciplines, media and genres.²⁵ While acknowledging this debate, it is not the intention to participate in it here, and consequently, in reference to autobiography, the terms genre, act and format are all used.

A number of critics tend to position Dali’s work in terms of his deviation from or creative interpretation of the truth-claim that the autobiographical format implies. Dali’s biographers, in particular, tend to take a documentary or positivist approach, and as a result often take offence at the artist’s having omitted many details of his life, or having deviated from verifiable facts. According to autobiographical theorist Avrom Fleishman,

this view of autobiography as a reliable account of a life lived or as a “self-written biography designed and required to impart verifiable information about the historical subject” is still indisputably the most widely held view, and one that he calls the literalist or purist position, in terms of definitions of autobiography.²⁶ This is surprising, Fleishman observes, citing André Malraux, who writes that while no one “now believes that the object of the self-portrait, or even the portrait, from the effigies of the Egyptian sculptors to the Cubists, was simply to imitate nature, people still believe it of literary portraiture.”²⁷ French theorist Roland Barthes iterates this view in his own self-reflexive narrative, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*. “What I write about myself is never *the last word*,” he writes. “[T]he more “sincere” I am, the more interpretable I am, under the eye of the other examples than those of the old authors, who believed they were required to submit themselves to but one law: *authenticity*.”²⁸

Eakin notes an evolution in the validity and valuation of the authenticity or truth claim implied in the autobiographical format, and explains that adventurous twentieth-century autobiographers have “shifted the ground of our thinking about autobiographical truth because they readily accept the proposition that fictions and the fiction-making process are a central constituent of the truth of any life as it is lived and of any art devoted to the presentation of that life.” Memory, he claims, is no longer merely a “convenient repository” in which the past is carefully safeguarded, and few continue to hold the view that autobiography equals an accurate and unembellished recount of a historically verifiable past. Alternately, it expresses “the play of the autobiographical act itself, in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of present consciousness.” In our time, Eakin explains, autobiography is

increasingly understood as both “an art of memory and an art of the imagination” and indeed, these two things work in such symbiosis that “it is usually impossible for autobiographers and their readers to distinguish between them in practice.”²⁹

Lejeune considers autobiography in terms of reception, and helps to define this reader-writer interface associated with autobiographical writing by the assumption of what he describes as an “autobiographical pact”; that is, the implicit understanding between reader and writer that for the duration of the presumed *entente* created by the entry of the written memoir, a certain amount of “historical fact” is to be imparted, and can safely be assumed to be true. Nevertheless, for him, “The paradox of autobiography is that the autobiographer must carry out this project of impossible sincerity using all the usual tools of fiction. He must believe that there is a fundamental difference between autobiography and fiction even if, in fact, to tell the truth about himself, he uses all the novelistic techniques of his time.”³⁰ While conceding, or even savouring the actuality that fact and fiction cannot do otherwise than intertwine in autobiography, Eakin points out that this can have its drawbacks as well, when life narratives are simply assumed to be interpretive fictions and literary critics, “seeking to promote the appreciation of autobiography as an imaginative art, have been willing to treat such texts as though they were indistinguishable from novels.”³¹

De Man’s pointing to the issues of authorial mediation of memory through text and Lejeune’s acknowledgment of the necessity of “fictionalizing” life narratives in order to transform them into text, are crucial to any understanding of the autobiographical performance. According to De Man, “The interest of autobiography is not that it reveals reliable self-knowledge—it does not—but that it demonstrates in a striking way the

impossibility of closure and of tantalization (that is the impossibility of coming into being) of all textual systems made up of tropological substitutions.”³² To put it more succinctly, as does Robert Elbaz, “autobiography is fiction and fiction is autobiography: both are narrative arrangements of reality.”³³ This is especially relevant when dealing with an artist who had devised what he called a “Dalinian Code” and “Dalinian Language,” and who took such an interest in the problematics and dynamics of interpretation and “paranoiac” cognition, claiming, as Dalí did, that “to look is to invent.”³⁴

In the Epilogue and first chapter of *The Secret Life*, Dalí himself sets the reader up for this very “deformation” of the genre, by self-consciously deflating his own proposed truth-claims. After describing a number of fanciful literary possibilities, he writes that “I shall explain these and many other enigmas, even stranger and no less exact, in the course of this sensational book. One thing at least, is certain: everything, absolutely everything, that I shall say here is entirely and exclusively my fault” (6). Five pages later, Dalí announces that he is about to recount various anecdotes from his life, and writes that “When they are strictly authentic and bluntly told, as these are, such anecdotes offer their colors and contours with the guarantee of an unmistakable resemblance that is essential to any honest attempt at self-portraiture.” Establishing that he is making an “honest attempt,” then, Dalí imparts that these episodes of his life “would have been, I know, secrets forever sealed for many. My fixed idea in this book is to kill as many of these secrets as possible, and to kill them with my own hands!” (11). While Dalí makes this “pact” with his reader at this point, claiming to offer an “honest attempt at self-portraiture,” it is not long before he begins, in a highly self-conscious manner, to subvert

this accord, and already by page thirty-eight, he is informing his reader that “The difference between false memories and true ones is the same as for jewels: it is always the false ones that look the most real, the most brilliant” (38).

The most remarkable and oft-noted of these conscious “subversions” of the text’s “authenticity” is Dalí’s underscoring of the presumed truth-claim of the autobiographical genre by emphasizing the mediated quality of the work. He does this by playing with genres and issues of revelation and concealment, most significantly in relation to “true” and “false” memories. This play is established in the beginning of the book, in Part One, where the titles of the six chapters therein all conspicuously destabilize the veracity of the author’s “historical” narration. The first chapter is entitled “Anecdotic Self Portrait,” where Dalí reveals that he will recount brief episodes of his childhood and youth to demonstrate the extraordinary nature of his life. The use of the word “anecdotic” suggests, however, a short story or an amusing vignette in which facticity is generally subsumed by the “punch line” or poignant aspect of the narrative, much like the structure of the autobiography as a whole. The following chapter is entitled “Intrauterine Memories,” wherein Dalí claims to recount his life *in utero*, followed by the chapter entitled “The Birth of Salvador Dalí.” Drawing on psychological theories propounded by Otto Rank, Dalí makes a “case” for the fact that he can remember his prenatal life, and can faithfully narrate the importance of the event of his own birth. Naturally, it is presumed that the reader will take these with the requisite grain of salt.

The next chapter is entitled “False Childhood Memories,” which is followed by the chapter “True Childhood Memories.” Both relate similar “recollections” from Dalí’s childhood, intended, no doubt, to be significant, in a “Freudian” sense, to Dalí’s later

development as an adult. By emphasizing the fact that one story is “true” and the other “false,” Dalí plays with ideas of authenticity, textual mediation, and the autobiographical “pact” that suggests that the author will attempt to provide a semblance of truth to the reader. By claiming that one story is fact, and the other fiction is, logically, to highlight the actuality that all received text is the result of interpretation, and that, in this case, to write, or to read, is “to invent” every bit as much as seeing is. The final chapter in Part One of *The Secret Life* is one that Dalí claims was a “genuine” episode from his life, in which he becomes fascinated with the breasts of a peasant woman picking linden blossoms. While Dalí provides no reason to question the veracity of the episode as he tells it, he nevertheless entitles it, using italics, as *The Story of the Linden-Blossom Picking and the Crutch*; that is, as a “story” rather than a recounting of facts.

This making a point by framing, highlighting, or suggesting associations is a technique Dalí uses throughout his writing, and is one that he transposes with his iconological interplay of visual imagery in paintings. Hence, Dalí can “say something” merely by juxtaposition, proximity, implication or association, a technique that is precisely what makes Dalí’s work so intriguing in terms of the many possible layers of interpretation—intended and otherwise—that such a method provides. In the first five chapters of his autobiography then, in the paratextual space of the titles of his work, Dalí suggests in five different ways that what the reader has been reading has been filtered through the art or artifice of interpretation. These include “anecdotes”; spurious prenatal memories; the presentation of two very similar narratives, one slated as “true” and the other as “false”; and an episode from his real life described as a “story.” In this way Dalí destabilizes the precept of his autobiography as being an accurate depiction of a life

through the conscious use of what literary theorist Robert Scholes calls “fabulation”: that is, fiction, and presumably other forms of writing, that insists on its very deviation from “reality” and celebrates its own artifice.³⁵

Such “implication by association” and self-subversive techniques are precisely what make *The Secret Life* as innovative and perplexing as it is. It also positions the work in terms of modernist literary experiments of the period, such as the time structure and nuanced textual play in James Joyce’s stream-of-consciousness technique in *Ulysses*, or Gertrude Stein’s play with subject positioning and the authenticity of the autobiographical voice in her *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* of 1933 and *Everybody’s Autobiography* of 1937, both penned by Stein herself. Dalí’s highly self-conscious subversion of the “authenticity” of his autobiographical project, and his melange of various narrative modes point to the tendency toward increasing self-consciousness in vanguard twentieth-century writing, and the conflation of genre, fact and fiction. As autobiography scholar William Spengemann notes, “The modernist movement away from representational discourse toward self-enacting, self-reflexive verbal structures and the critical theories that have been devised to explain this movement conspire to make the very idea of literary modernism synonymous with that of autobiography.”³⁶

Dalí’s self-reflexivity, his use of irony, his preoccupation with textual fluidity and potentialities entwined with the issues of subjectivity, interpretation and authorship position *The Secret Life* as profoundly modernist, and indeed, very much prefigure the self-reflexive irony and intertextuality that characterize much postmodern writing as well. Canadian literary theorist Linda Hutcheon contextualizes aspects of postmodern fiction in

terms of what she calls “historiographic metafiction”: that is, as a mode which self-consciously problematizes the construction of itself in terms of history as well as fiction, and assumes it as always already ideologically and discursively constructed. It is a fiction which is “concerned with its status as fiction, narrative or language, and also grounded in some verifiable historical reality.”³⁷ Although complicated somewhat by the presumed veracity of the autobiographical format, Dalí’s experimentation with issues of memory, authenticity and interpretation therefore prefigures characteristically postmodern texts which, according to Linda Hutcheon’s model, “paradoxically point to the opaque nature of their representational strategies and at the same time to their complicity with the notion of the transparency of representation.”³⁸

Looking at autobiography in terms of the generation of text and textual systems, it is prudent to note that the “autobiographical act,” that of the manufacture of a life narrative through text, is an active, ongoing process, and one that not only narrates a “life,” but brings one into being. Elbaz suggests that the emphasis in the prevailing ideology has been “on the structure of the self and not on its structuration, where structuration means a process of production.” However, that implies that “if the self is created in and through language, it can never be a finished product; it cannot be analyzed or described since the description itself is in ceaseless movement.”³⁹ In this sense, the autobiographical act does not simply record a life lived, or vicariously reconstitute it, but instead is a performative or “productive” endeavour or, to use a more apt linguistic term, a “speech act,” being a verbal utterance which constitutes an action.⁴⁰ In this regard, Fleishman observes that “The existence of this ambiguity suggests that a life is not something that precedes autobiography but is identical to it”: that is, an autobiography

does not represent or replicate a life but instead constitutes it, brings it into existence.

“‘Life’ means nothing in the individual (as distinct from the biological) realm until it is told in life stories,” he writes. “Autobiography is not, then, an imitation of something already there, found or given, but the creation of a new being, a life—not one to take up space and people the earth, perhaps, but one that exists as an aesthetic object.”⁴¹

The idea of the autobiography as “bringing into being” a new subject as “aesthetic object” is one that, as was argued in the previous chapter, Dalí was intent on achieving in a highly self-conscious manner, and indeed, formed the foundation of the text’s strategy. The recurring theme of birth and rebirth throughout *The Secret Life* culminates in Dalí’s announcement of his awareness and intent that his memoir creates for him a new “life,” and a new public image. “It was necessary at all costs that I change skins,” Dalí notifies his reader, “that I trade this worn epidermis with which I have dressed, hidden, shown myself, struggled, fought and triumphed, for that other new skin, the flesh of my desire, of my imminent renaissance which will be dated from the very morrow of the day this book appears” (393). The degree to which the autobiographical genre and act figure not simply in Dalí’s “real” autobiography, but in his creative corpus, and indeed his entire, lifetime “performance” of the “Dalí character,” cannot be underestimated. Nor can the self-conscious use of, and bodily and subjective association with the autobiography itself, including the text and the physical pages, in any analysis of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*.

Eakin suggests that “autobiographical truth is not a fixed but an evolving content in an intricate process of self-discovery and self-creation, and, further, that the self that is the centre of all autobiographical narrative is necessarily a fictive structure.” Indeed,

according to Eakin, “in order to deal with the vexing issue of factuality that readers of these texts confront, it is essential to reach some understanding of the state of mind that motivates autobiographical discourse in the first place.”⁴² This precept comes closer to the issues at stake in the present analysis of Dalí’s work: that of the construction of a public persona or entity—the one Dalí offers his reader in *The Secret Life*. As autobiography theorist Valérie Baisnée suggests, “The questions a critic should ask, therefore, are not whether a text is ‘true’ or ‘fictional,’ but what or whose interests are served by the references to these concepts.”⁴³ Most importantly, especially in terms of Dalí’s intent and audience, one might then ask, “What is Dalí performing or formulating in *The Secret Life*, to what end, and for whom?”

This idea of what end is served by the “fictive structure” that Dalí posits in the autobiographical act that is *The Secret Life* deserves further consideration in terms of issues of strategy and disclosure. More poignantly, assuming that the Dalí whom Dalí is presenting is pure construct, where, then, is the “real” Dalí to be found, if at all? What of the “metaphysics of presence,” the idea of a “true author or real self in the text,”⁴⁴ an enquiry problematized to seemingly absurd degrees by the very fact of Dalí’s perpetual and relentless emphasis on performance and performativity? Vilaseca’s thesis hinges upon the question of this very concept of Dalí as a “fictive structure,” or what he calls the “apocryphal subject,” and suggests that Dalí’s play with the mechanics of autobiography in *The Secret Life* and other works constitutes a conscious effort to evade a single subject position, although it should be noted that his focus is on Dalí’s performance of gender, in particular. According to Vilaseca,

Dalinian text, in its fantasmatic mobility, refuses to establish the subject's identity in any essentialist, stable or proper way ... Dalí transgresses the very binary economy by which such exclusive oppositions as hetero vs. homo, or self vs. other are sustained and made possible. Dalí 'is and remains in disjunction'; he is thus a trans-sexual, transpositional subject playfully existing in n different positions—in n fluid (non)identities, desires, voices and sexes.⁴⁵

Vilaseca makes a case for Dalí's ability to evade classification in terms of his sexual orientation, and to navigate a "binary economy," in that he seems to float between two poles in terms of his politics, his sexual preferences, the so-called "high-low" divide, and between being "serious" and parodic or ironic. Nevertheless, the position taken in this dissertation suggests that while, as with any autobiography, it may be impossible to access any true "self" of the author, the author's very rationale in *The Secret Life*, at least in terms of self-presentation, is to perform a coherent, unified extremely *singular* self. Dalí, in fact, had many personal and public reasons to "gather himself together" after the tremendous upheaval he had experienced up to and during the writing of his autobiography. The public and commercial nature of *The Secret Life* points, in particular, to Dalí's consciousness that his primary audience, the American public, held what could only be a fractured view of him, cobbled together from various media sources primarily beyond Dalí's control. And being as communications-savvy as Dalí was, he understood the value of "capturing" the media for his own ends, in which he could present a self-fashioned gestalt in place of a fractured or indeterminate public image. Autobiography theorist James Olney notes this unifying function of the memoir that may have attracted Dalí in particular, writing that "the explanation for the special appeal of autobiography, understood in terms of a similarly transcendent or Romantic view of art, is turned to in the first place because it offers an unmediated and yet stabilizing wholeness for the self."

For Olney, “Autobiography exemplifies ‘the vital impulse to order’ which has always underlain creativity.”⁴⁶ As was discussed in the previous chapter, Dalí’s emphasis on form throughout *The Secret Life* very much reflects this “impulse to order” and Dalí’s self-defining tendencies, at least as they relate to his public image in America.

Both Vilaseca and theorist of the life narrative Linda Anderson, in a general way, compare the problematics of fragmentation that autobiography attempts to remedy in terms of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s celebrated Mirror Stage—a particularly apt comparison considering that Dalí knew and influenced Lacan, and writes about him in *The Secret Life*. In his 1949 paper “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” Lacan queries the formation of the *imago*—that is, what he defines as “an identification,” and as “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image.”⁴⁷ Lacan suggests that a crucial aspect of this identity formation occurs when an infant, who at first has no concept of being a corporeal and subjective whole, sees him/herself reflected a mirror (which can also mean the metaphorical “mirror” of others’ response to him or her) and hence, develops a sense of him/herself as a whole, unified being. Being a reflection, however, this identification therefore remains a perpetual “other” or alienated identity.

According to Lacan, “The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation—and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality.” Lastly, Lacan notes, is “the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development.”⁴⁸ According to Anderson, this

“alienating identity” clearly has implications for autobiography, which “has often employed the idea of the mirror as an analogy for the self-reflective project of autobiographical writing.” Citing Shari Benstock, she writes that this process “reveals the impossibility of its own dream” in that “what begins in the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers over the premises of its construction.” The subject, through autobiography, strives towards the “false symmetry” of the mirror, a unified self which can only ever be a fiction.⁴⁹

In terms of the autobiographical genre, then, it might be concluded that Dalí was well aware of the arguable necessity of fictionalizing his life narrative in the process of transforming it into text, and indeed, making a virtue of this necessity, or at least revelling in its possibilities rather than attempting to create an illusion of or to attain “authenticity.” In fact, it is argued here that Dalí was intensely conscious of the performance aspects of “staging” a life narrative, particularly for a popular reader, and fully recognized this act’s efficacy in constituting a coherent, self-defined public persona. As follows, this was evidently preferable to an otherwise disparate image of himself in the American collective consciousness as disseminated primarily through the popular press. Not all critics and commentators have agreed upon the questions Dalí raises, however, about authenticity, veracity and autobiographical intent; nor would they corroborate the argument made in this chapter for a reading of Dalí’s autobiography as a conscious “fabulation,” for the purpose of presenting a unified, if spurious public image. In the following section current critical assessments of *The Secret Life* will be discussed in light of these problematics, reflecting contemporary scholarly positioning of the text, and the many possible approaches the work offers to the reader.

The Secret Life in Critical Context

While the book was much debated upon its first publication in 1942, a small number of contemporary critics and scholars have written briefly about *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*, implementing diverse approaches and offering a number of interpretations and conclusions regarding the contents of the book, and Dalí's possible motivations for having written it. These range widely, from a view of Dalí's memoir as an extended paean to his wife Gala, an exercise in semiotics, a genealogy of the constitution of subjectivity, in terms of mythology, and anything from a publicity stunt to a catharsis. One thread that connects most of these analyses, however, is that Dalí's text is decidedly not to be taken at face value. Bearing this in mind, the following survey of literature concerned with *The Secret Life* will begin with an examination of the perspectives of four of the artist's biographers, to be followed by various contemporary critical responses. Popular reviews and critiques that addressed *The Secret Life* during the time of its publication and shortly thereafter will be examined in following chapters.

The first of the major biographies in English written on Salvador Dalí is *The Case of Salvador Dali*, written by Fleur Cowles, the American founder and editor of *Flair* magazine, in 1959. Cowles' work is a rather dainty analysis, and although well researched and insightful, Dalí wrote it off as "The work of a secretary."⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Cowles' description of Dalí's book gives a general view from the perspective of an American of letters of the period, and regarding some issues, Cowles enjoyed the benefit of being able to consult with the artist, in letter form, for information and answers to sundry questions. Cowles begins her discussion of *The Secret Life* by underscoring its effect on the general public. "Dalí's autobiography," she writes,

being no ordinary book, got far from an ordinary reception. No reader has ever forgotten it; nor was its limited readership confined, as one might think, to long-haired intellectuals or “lovers of art.” It will long be remembered by the unsuspecting housewife who bought it from a shop shelf, by students—and by regular readers of all biographies, as well as those who were simply drawn to it by lurid notices.⁵¹

How the American public received the book, however, was a different matter, and “Those who did brave its contents were usually held to it in horror and forced to read it in special ways,” she imparts “—surely not as a bedside companion to attract sleep, but as something to think twice about before being sucked into its sometimes revolting, sometimes sad, always fascinating net.” “To read this tumescent book without stop,” she warns, “as most other books are read, is quite unlikely, if not downright impossible.” So disconcerting, in fact, is Dalí’s perverse text, that

One wants to read a portion and look around for reassurance at normal people leading so-called normal ... lives. One runs from an overdose of brutality, sadism, bad taste, buffoonery, sexual intimacy, a life-long parade of paranoiac thought, of every moment in the life story of a strange man whose words duplicate his equally unfamiliar behaviour in paint.⁵²

The title of Cowles’ biography, “The Case of Salvador Dalí,” suggests a treatment of Dalí’s life and character from an institutional point of view, perhaps that of a detective, a physician or psychoanalyst. However, when searching for motivation, Cowles simply takes Dalí’s work at face value and in answer to her own question, “Why did Dalí want to pour himself out in this autobiography” simply quotes Dalí’s “thesis” for his book, recorded in the introduction above, claiming the work as a cathartic enterprise, in the service of the artist’s stated “renaissance.”⁵³

Unlike Cowles, more recent biographers have been decidedly less credulous, and the general attitude is one that Dalí is fundamentally duplicitous, and had vested interests and ulterior motives for his writings. This is certainly the case in the next comprehensive biography on the subject of Dalí, by biographer Meryle Secrest, which appeared in 1986. “As reading matter,” Secrest offers, “Dalí’s *Secret Life* was a very deceptive book ...”⁵⁴ She writes that it was “deliberately concocted,” and compares the work with excerpts from the diaries Dalí had penned in his youth. According to Secrest, “The most cursory comparison with his month-long diary of 1920 makes the false tone of *The Secret Life* glaringly evident ... the early diary gave a very different impression: it showed a human being.”⁵⁵ The biographer further observes of Dalí that, “there is a distinct coldness at the very core of the book, a kind of chilly detachment, as if he were observing himself in an infinity of mirrors.”⁵⁶ As would be echoed by many readers, despite what Secrest reads as a false note, the real interest in *The Secret Life* lies in Dalí’s “secrets”; that is, what he intentionally or inadvertently reveals “despite himself.” “All this to one side,” Secrest postulates that what is remarkable about Dalí’s *Secret Life* is that, “given its single-minded goal, it is nevertheless a revealing book. It might be no more than an occasional adjective, adverb or phrase, but Dalí does indeed often disclose the state of mind hidden beneath the layers of hyperbole.”⁵⁷

In 1993, *Town and Country* editor Meredith Etherington-Smith added to the roster another book-length biography of Salvador Dalí. For her *The Secret Life* “is the culmination of the continuous process of self-mythologization that Dalí had begun at the Residencia (or even before). All his heavily embroidered obsessions are gone into in minute and occasionally very funny detail.”⁵⁸ While conceding to Dalí’s wilful self-

mythologization, and his decided use of humour, like Secrest, Etherington-Smith also positions Dalí as fundamentally deceptive, suggesting that “Dalí liked crustaceans because they wore armour to conceal their soft flesh beneath, and his autobiography is written, whether consciously or not, to conceal almost every truth about his life and about himself as a human being.”⁵⁹ This should intrigue the reader because it directly reflects upon Dalí’s creative production, including his persona, “thereby refining his own myth to the point where it became a permanent mask, a permanent work of performance art.”⁶⁰ “In effect,” she continues, “he was treating his whole life as a paranoiac-critical work of art, just as he regarded his paintings as frames in the film of his life.”⁶¹ Her final pronouncement on the text very much echoes that of Secrest, although allowing for the fact of artistic license, and not without humour herself. “Occasionally” she concedes, “reality does, however, obtrude, but so enmeshed is it with surreality that only by very careful textual analysis can Dalí’s lapses into truth become apparent.”⁶²

While Cowles blithely accepts Dalí’s self-assessments, Secrest and Etherington-Smith evidently cannot look beyond the artist’s omissions or divergence from the verifiable “facts” of his life. As biographers, their intent is to document accurate information, and they expect no less from their subject. To both, while the book itself may have held its charms as well as its riddles, mysteries and inconsistencies, they expect more than occasional “lapses into truth,” and both Secrest and Etherington-Smith focus specifically on Dalí’s reluctance to discuss his own family. Secrest, it should be noted, is quite compassionate in her citation of Dalí’s omissions in this regard. According to her, Dalí was “making a veiled but unmistakable allusion to genuine inner concerns while avoiding large areas: incidents and aspects of relationships that were too delicate or too

painful to deal with, or would have aroused the wrath of those close to him.” She notes some particularly surprising omissions for a stated autobiographical work:

For all his seemingly compulsive boasting and self-advertisement, Dalí, for instance, diplomatically avoided all mention of his father’s remarriage or the eventual fate of his stepmother. He never discussed the cause of his mother’s death. He never talked about what was obviously an extremely close relationship with his sister. He did not, in this book, describe the actual incident that caused the break with his father, much less the reconciliation itself, a particularly puzzling omission.⁶³

Etherington Smith also notes the omissions of events pivotal to Dalí’s relationship with his family, and like Secrest, claims his avoidance of mention of his family was not simply for the sake of duplicity, or a revelation of his spurious character, but was developed as a coping strategy or sublimation mechanism to avoid reliving emotional trauma. “Soaring flights of fancy and metaphor deliberately obscure the central facts; his relationship with his mother and his father, his closeness to his sister, his father’s relationship with his aunt,” she writes.⁶⁴ For her, “*The Secret Life* is not an autobiography; it is the culmination of twenty years’ work by Dalí reinventing the events and relationships of his childhood and adolescence in order to exorcise the truth, with which he would never be able to deal ...”⁶⁵

The most recent, and by far the most in-depth of Dalí’s biographies is *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, published by Ian Gibson in 1998, although, as the book’s title reveals in its emphasis on ignominy, it does not conceal the author’s disdain for his subject. According to Gibson, *The Secret Life* is a “megalomaniac memoir,”⁶⁶ in which “Dalí constructs a narrative fabric in which fact and fiction, truth and lies, are inextricably entwined.”⁶⁷ According to Gibson, Dalí wrote *The Secret Life* with a number

of ends in view, and hence, Dalí's fabricated "version" of the "truth" is infinitely twisted and multiply-invested. To him "The driving purpose of *The Secret Life* is to present Dalí as a mixture of ambitious-child-made-good-at-thirty-seven ..., prophet of war ..., saviour of modern art ..., and reborn Spanish Catholic ..." If this were not enough, for Gibson, "A related purpose is to create the myth of Gala as preordained muse, mistress, psychotherapist and wife ..." Further,

There are other aims: to flatter America—envisaged, with the collapse of Europe into chaos, as the Promised land; to establish the Empordà plain, Cadaqués and Port Lligat as the most important places in the world; to prepare the ground for Dalí's eventual return to Spain; and, of course, to increase his fame in the States and enhance his sales at a time when the art market was at a low ebb.⁶⁸

Gibson's list of Dalí's transgressions is surely the longest of all his biographers, and his view is anything but objective. In addition to the truth-claim violations listed above, Gibson continues to disparage the text, and his commentary is reproduced in large part below not only for the sake of assessing Gibson's view of Dalí's autobiography, but for its content, which is for the most part technically accurate. Despite this, however, it precludes the prospect of nuance and overlooks the possibility of creative interpretation or selective reasoning, not to mention the universally human trait of self-deception. In fact, Gibson refuses to let his readers forget that *The Secret Life* was written "largely without recourse to documentation, and with the deliberate exclusion, or misrepresentation, of vital episodes or moments in Dalí's life." According to Gibson,

His virulent Marxism as an adolescent is never mentioned; the reasons for his father's repudiation in 1929 are not given ...; his reverence for Breton in the early 1930s, attested in their correspondence, goes unacknowledged—indeed, Breton is hardly named; we are asked to

believe that, within a year of joining the Surrealist ranks, Dalí had rejected automatism, had invented the slogan “the conquest of the irrational” (in fact first formulated in 1935) and had embarked on a covert programme to take control of the movement and redirect its energies; Dalí claims all the credit for creating “the fashion of Surrealist Objects,” with no reference to their forerunners or of Breton’s explicit instructions for their propagation; he expresses scorn for the political commitment of the Surrealist movement when he himself shared it for a time; the blame for the anti-clericalism of *L’Age d’or* is placed solely on Buñuel’s shoulders ... ; he asks us to admire his and Gala’s stoical refusal to confess to their lack of means during their early years together ... ; Picasso is portrayed as a great friend; as regards the Spanish Civil War, Dalí denies that Lorca ... could have been killed by the Fascists other than as a “propitiatory victim” required by “revolutionary confusion,” and so on.⁶⁹

What Gibson views as Dalí’s mendacity is, to him, merely indicative of a pathologically narcissistic and profoundly duplicitous character. “Betrayal follows betrayal,” he states, “betrayal of former friends, betrayal of what Dalí himself had said, written or done, betrayal of truth, betrayal of the claim, made at the beginning of the book, that the work is an “honest attempt at self-portraiture.”⁷⁰

The cited quartet of biographers read Dalí’s book and the genre of autobiography from what Fleishman calls the “literalist or purist position,”⁷¹ as defined by a faithful recounting of facts; facts which, as they see it, Dalí has wilfully misinterpreted, distorted, or worse, omitted. In writing informed by critical theory, however, scholars tend to be more forgiving of Dalí’s wilful divergences from his lived experience, although this is not always the case. Notable for its brevity is a similar implied assessment of *The Secret Life* by two writers who focus on Dalí’s earlier life as an artist. Dawn Ades, one of the best-known Dalí specialists writing in English, and Fiona Bradley, in the introduction to their exhibition catalogue *Salvador Dalí: A Mythology*, describe *The Secret Life* as an “autobiography”; that is, in quotation marks.⁷² While both women draw—although for

the most part with the requisite grain of salt—on Dalí's life narrative for the purpose of their own research and interpretation, this simple grammatical gesture clearly indicates an assessment of the work as inauthentic, spurious or unreliable, as well as an assumption that autobiographies comprise, by definition, the documentation of facts.

Another very brief assessment of *The Secret Life* assumes quite the opposite, and looks at Dalí's memoir from a purely romantic perspective. This is the work of Dominique Bona, author of a 1996 biography of Dalí's wife Gala, entitled, *Gala: La mujer más enigmática del siglo XX*. Bona's reading of *The Secret Life* is expressive in mode, fundamentally unconcerned as she is with the truth—claims the term “autobiography” implies for her peers. For Bona, Dalí's book has only one purpose: “after ten years of life in common,” she writes, *The Secret Life* is “a song of love to Gala, to whom the book is dedicated.” Gala, Bona declares, is the one essential for Dalí, and “Until the final line, she is the great secret of the book and the obsession of the author.”⁷³

While not as single-minded as Bona's assessment, the majority of scholars assume a broader attitude toward *The Secret Life*, taking the autobiography as an extension of Dalí's creative production, more as a work of art rather than a documentary exercise. The following survey considers the assessments of a number of scholars who tend toward this view, who parse and deconstruct *The Secret Life* according to various theoretical paradigms, and who provide, in contrast to the majority of Dalí's biographers, more critical, if not lyrical or nuanced analyses of the work to date.

While very little of a contemporary nature has been written on the subject of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, a few scholars have recently broached the subject, and broadly speaking, critical approaches tend to be made manifest in one of three ways, or

combinations of them. The first stream of enquiry regarding analysis of Dalí's text hinges on a more sociological episteme, as rooted in cultural history and issues of representation and reception. Those working in this vein invariably locate Dalí in historical context, and privilege a view of his work as a product of and foil for the milieu in which he was writing. The second follows psychoanalytic directives and post-structuralist critical assessments of the text based on enquiries into the nature of Dalí's subjectivity, concerned with Dalí's psyche and self-image, as subject, and subject to, various factors relative to the artist's performative, psychological and sexual predispositions. Along these lines, some have suggested a Freudian reading in "reverse," averring that Dalí purposely stymies psychoanalytic interpretations of his work, and even parodies psychoanalytic methodology. The third is an approach to Dalí's work in terms of genre and narratology, from a text-based, semiotic, or literary perspective. This approach examines the structure of the work, its form, influences, Dalí's use and creative misuse of language, and the potential implications of textual and conceptual mediation of the work as a result of translation. The following review will consider the small body of extant critical writing about *The Secret Life*, in the context of what are proposed as the three dominant critical approaches to date.

Reception-Based Approaches to *The Secret Life*

One of the most recent scholars to consider *The Secret Life* in any detail is Paul Rutherford, a history professor at the University of Toronto, who dedicates part of a chapter to Dalí's autobiography in his 2007 book *A World Made Sexy: Freud to Madonna*. Rutherford's study is very much in accord with the idea of Dalí's text as an "invested" or strategic document, and assesses the work in terms of affect and reception,

or more aptly, in terms of public relations and self-promotion. “Whatever else his autobiography was ...” Rutherford claims, “*The Secret Life* can also be labelled an extended advertisement for the ‘Dalí brand,’ a new kind of product that embodied the name and the style of one of the most notorious painters of the day.”⁷⁴

Rutherford locates Dalí’s text in terms of the thesis of his own book, which explores the development of what he calls the “libidinal economy” in twentieth-century culture; that is, the exploitation and commodification of eroticism as part of a sex-centered consumer-driven system he calls the “Eros project.”⁷⁵ According to Rutherford, *The Secret Life* is complicit with this system, in that, in his assessment, Dalí’s frank discussion (for the period) of his sex life allows him to exploit his own sexuality as a “selling point,” including Dalí’s implied sexual ambiguities and anxieties, accounts of his bizarre courting rituals, and particularly his transgressing of taboos; most notably his frank and open discussion about masturbation which was simply “not discussed” at the time, at least in literature published in English for a general American audience in 1942. Rutherford notes Dalí’s heightened recognition of the importance of the media, and “the way their attention could be used to construct his public persona as a flamboyant genius.” In particular, Rutherford argues that as one of the easiest ways to capture media notice, in *The Secret Life* and elsewhere, “Dalí offered public displays of sin and sex.”⁷⁶ This stated, he sums up *The Secret Life* as follows:

The autobiography was both a method of self-promotion, where Dalí explained how he was the most sensational genius of his times, and an exercise in self-fashioning, where he constructed his own myth out of the raw material of his experiences. Such a narrative required the description of an “other”: that which was not Dalí ... His was the life of colour, in dress and in performance, a life devoted to shock and excitement in the pursuit of pleasure. Call him the joker. In short, Dalí had imagined himself

in the preferred mode of the Eros project, a self who knew his own desires, eventually commanded his situation, and so realized his ambitions.⁷⁷

While Rutherford narrows Dalí's public relations tendencies down to the artist's desire to sell the "Dalí brand," and in particular, by embellishing or foregrounding the more shocking aspects of sexual revelation, modern art and literature scholar Haim Finkelstein is more inclined to address Dalí's self-consciously mischievous approach. Finkelstein enframes this aspect of Dalí's work in terms of parody or as a sort of game of identity "hide and seek," intellectual one-upmanship, or outright performance in the service of self-promotion, noting Dalí's "overornate language" and "shocking details" which "create an impression of a 'tell-all' attitude." According to Finkelstein, the reader is "Choked, smothered, by Dalí's narcissistic persona," and therefore tends to remain oblivious to the fact that the book "is not truly an honest attempt at a biography, but rather a construction created for the purpose of selling a particular image of Dalí to his new American public; to sell, indeed, his art as the creation of a naughty, eccentric, egotistical, but also brilliant, artist."⁷⁸

While Rutherford and Finkelstein represent the overwhelming critical opinion of *The Secret Life* as a promotional vehicle for Dalí's career, another scholar questions this by now entrenched view. This is Fèlix Fanés, former director of the Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres, Spain, in a study entitled "*La Vida Secreta: Una Literatura del Tumulto*" ("*The Secret Life: A Literature of Turmoil*"). The published proceedings from a conference on Dalí held in Barcelona in 2003, it is the longest study of Dalí's autobiography to date, rivalled only by Fanés' own prologue, based on the same material, entitled "*Salvador Dalí: Obra Literaria Completa*" ("The Complete Works of Salvador

Dalí”), *Textos Autobiográficos I*, and published that same year.⁷⁹ In it Fanés addresses many of the discourses and critiques surrounding *The Secret Life*, questions some of the assumptions about the work, and proposes some intriguing interpretations.

Fanés dismisses what might be called the venal perspective of *The Secret Life* by maintaining that the book was “quite disappointing, not to say totally disappointing” in terms of its effect on the American public. Citing negative period reviews of the book, he asks, “If the image that is constructed is so extremely negative, how to continue defending the thesis that *The Secret Life* had been intended for ‘pleasing’ and ‘convincing’?”⁸⁰ While Fanés’ challenge of the presumption of *The Secret Life* being a public relations exercise is debatable, his proposal of what he considers a third reading of Dalí’s memoir in terms of a bid for a career change for the artist—that is, from painter to writer—is compelling. Towards the beginning of the 1940s, Fanés explains, Dalí encountered a number of events that had a great impact on his career, including what he cites as the exhaustion of the artist’s subject matter in painting, his expulsion from the Surrealist group, the phenomenal rise of his celebrity, and the dwindling of aristocratic patronage, not to mention the Spanish Civil War and the commencement of WWII. As a result, Fanés observes, the painter turned to the options available to him in the United States, and suggests that Dalí was following Cellini’s model, as chronicler of his tumultuous times.⁸¹

Citing Joris-Karl Huysmans’ notorious *fin-de-siècle* novel *À Rebours*, published in 1884, Fanés notes that in a revised prologue in a later edition of the book that Huysmans had intended his volume “to break the limits of the novel, to make it enter the realm of art, science, history; in a word: to serve me as a single form, a frame in which to

introduce serious work.” Considering Huysmans’ directive, Fanés asks, rhetorically, “Would this not also be the objective of *The Secret Life*?”—that is, as a book that “responded to a literary challenge?” not by means of a novel, but by means of the autobiography, in order to create a text that embraced “art, science, and history, and defied the limits of literature?”⁸² For Fanés, then, *The Secret Life* was no mere public relations vehicle, but instead a literary enterprise intended to inaugurate Dalí’s proposed new career as a writer.

Psychoanalytic- and Subjectivity-Based Approaches

Considering the psychoanalytic possibilities *The Secret Life* affords the reader, Fanés suggests that the structure of the text mirrors Dalí’s own attempt to resolve a current crisis in his life. While not mentioned overtly by Dalí, Fanés maintains that the text summarizes “an evident crack in identity that the painter tries to fight by means of the redemption of the Renaissance, of classicism, in order and hierarchy, and to those things opposed to ‘the fragmentation, the experimentation and the scepticism’ of modernity.”⁸³ In this regard, Fanés notes the influence of the Freudian paradigm in the text, and explains that such influence is present in Dalí’s writing as much as his painting. Without psychoanalysis, Fanés reminds us, many of the “secrets” that underlie the narrative could not be comprehended. Indeed,

It could even be said that, in good part, *The Secret Life* is the history—the novel, if you like—of the construction of “I” in orthodox Freudian terms, in which the first half the subject hinges on a desperate fight with his own impulses that, when not being able to take leave of them, are accumulated until they are crushing; and the second part in which, thanks to the appearance of another person—Gala as object—that energy can be channelled in the form of loving passion and developed as well like the subject.⁸⁴

According to Fanés, the structure of Dalí's work is of two parts, beginning with the narcissistic child dominated by the pleasure principle and the id, until, in the second half of the book, his impulses and self-love are tamed by the "narcissistic corset" of Gala, the superego who brings about a happy mediation and the health of Dalí's ego/self.⁸⁵

In his short catalogue essay entitled "Salvador Dalí : Portrait of the Artist as (An)Other," Robert S. Lubar also approaches Dalí's autobiographical impulse in *The Secret Life* and other works according to a psychoanalytic model including recent discourses and critiques in this vein. He cites, for instance, the title of another of Dalí's autobiographical works, the *Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, to index Dalí's confessional inclinations in terms of Freud's "talking cure" of psychoanalysis, wherein the patient presumably—to put it summarily—experiences relief from the turmoil of his or her psyche through the very act of revelation.⁸⁶ According to Lubar, "Dalí critics have either taken his excursions into the realm of autobiography at face value or have dismissed his prose as a capricious and cynical exercise in self-promotion." To him, such assessments represent "a serious failure to reckon with the ways in which the artist actively established and simultaneously dislocated the myth of a unitary subject of autobiography and self-portraiture in his literary and visual corpus."⁸⁷

According to Lubar, then, Dalí's autobiographical acts—in both painting and writing—are explorations of subjectivity and an exercise in destabilizing the idea of authorship, where Dalí's identity is "alternately substantiated and undermined by the artist himself." Consequently, in works where Dalí indexes his/him "self," he subverts this certainty by becoming "a phantom and mobile presence," and hence, "his oeuvre can

also be understood as an exploration of the self as “other.”⁸⁸ Lubar cites David Vilaseca as one of the few to consider Dalí’s autobiographical oeuvre in terms of issues of subjectivity and identity, and his paper follows Vilaseca’s strand of enquiry. Lubar is specifically citing Vilaseca’s 1995 work based on his doctoral thesis, the most extensive and theoretical examination of Dalí’s autobiographical corpus to date, entitled *The Apocryphal Subject: Masochism, Identification and Paranoia in Salvador Dalí’s Autobiographical Writings*.

In this volume Vilaseca examines a number of autobiographical texts by Dalí, mostly post-1939, including several of those which were published by third parties after interviews with Dalí, but his main focus is on *The Secret Life*. This study very much lives up to its claim to draw on recent scholarship in deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism, and Vilaseca describes his approach as “anti-humanist,”⁸⁹ “poststructuralist,”⁹⁰ and with a focus on “contemporary postmodern identities.”⁹¹ With his stated emphasis on “homosexuality, masochism, abjection and paranoia,” as well as his suggestion (despite claims to the contrary) that Dalí had tendencies towards transvestism, the work falls very much under the rubric of “queer theory” or “gender studies,” although Vilaseca does not cite these terms.

Vilaseca underscores what he sees as the extreme nature of Dalí’s autobiographical proclivity, which is, he claims, very much rooted in the tension between binaries, which fundamentally destabilizes the idea of a single, rigidly defined identity. “Salvador Dalí represents one of the most bizarre, deeply (self-)subversive phenomena in contemporary occidental culture,” Vilaseca posits. “His work, his personality and his opinions transgress most of the binary oppositions with which we might attempt to define

and classify them: he is and he is not an avant-garde artist, he is and he is not an original author, a Surrealist, a mystic, a showman, a homosexual, a sadist, an anarchist.”⁹²

According to Vilaseca, Dalí is the very embodiment of contradiction, and hence, his subjectivity, as conveyed through the vehicle of autobiographical writing, “transgresses all boundaries: political, cultural, and psychic.”⁹³ According to Vilaseca’s analysis, “Neither one identity nor a pure subjective dispersion, neither singular nor merely protean, Dalí’s uses of subjectivity will be found to embody an unresolvable tension which lies at the core of identity itself.”⁹⁴

Vilaseca’s emphasis is on the construction and deconstruction of Dalí’s persona in relation to issues of embodiment, gender and “transgressive” sexualities, and the study focuses on Dalí’s self-referential oeuvre in terms of what he calls the “apocryphal subject”; that is, the constructed “self” of his life writing. His work is self-consciously derived from more recent critical theoretical schools of thought concerned with gender performance, sexuality and subjectivity, which, he asserts, offer much to Dalí scholarship. In return, he observes, “Dalí offers contemporary critical theory ... one of the contemporary bodies of writing in which identity and the status of the post-modern subject (author) are addressed and interrogated in the most challenging, complex, original and (I would say) generous manner.”⁹⁵

Many of Vilaseca’s insights and assertions regarding Dalí’s autobiographical corpus do much to illuminate *The Secret Life*, of which he gives the following summary, with a focus on identity formation and of Dalí’s “giving birth to himself”⁹⁶:

The Secret Life narrates the story of how Salvador Dalí became Dalí, his own illusion of self-presence and unity. It is the story of a (self-)creation, that of a “genius” who, at the age of thirty-seven and at the peak of his

popularity, looks back at this “formless and revolutionary life during the Post-War Epoch” in order to tell us how he finally transformed himself into the subject we all know, the man destined “for nothing less than to rescue painting from the void of modern art.”⁹⁷

Vilaseca’s analysis of Dalí’s work suggests many possible readings of Dalí’s identity formation as it stands in an intertextual sense in *The Secret Life*, and raises a number of questions regarding subjectivity and performativity that are fundamental to analysis of the portrayal of the subject of any autobiography, but in particular one that deals with a first-hand account of being a person as complex, multi-dimensional and exhibitionistic as that of Salvador Dalí. Indeed, Vilaseca states that “It is not in Dalí as a ‘real’ or biographical person that I am interested, but in Dalí as a textual entity (as the ‘I’ who speaks for us in the autobiographical corpus, which is largely the result of his own fictional creation).”⁹⁸

Text-Centred Approaches to *The Secret Life*

While Fanés, Lubar and Vilaseca focus on issues of subjectivity and analyse Dalí’s work in terms of psychoanalytic paradigms, other authors, particularly those whose mother tongue is other than English, understandably express frustration with the mediated aspect of Dalí’s text, as it is available to them. This section will query the problematics of translation, mediation, and structural, linguistic and semiotic concerns, and propose strategies for negotiating these issues.

Dalí originally wrote *The Secret Life* freehand in extremely erratic and eccentric French that combines odd spelling, sketches, diagrams, and dubious punctuation. Before it was handed to the translator, Gala, who spoke French well, aided by the Dalís’ friend and collaborator Caresse Crosby, who typed some of the revisions, rewrote Dalí’s French

script in clear handwriting, making some changes, omissions and re-arranging some text for clarity, and ameliorating the spelling and punctuation. Gala's French text was in turn given to the translator, Haakon Chevalier, who provided the definitive English translation for the first publication of the book in 1942 in America. All subsequent translations have been taken from Chevalier's English version of the text rather than Dalí's original French manuscript or Gala's "cleaned up" version, thus compounding the "distance" to Dalí's original voice. Joseph-Lowery suggests that, despite being authorized by Dalí, the published French version of the text, translated from English by Michel Déon, was highly insensitive, omitted important passages and themes, and was evidently packaged to sell copy much more than to render Dalí's original screed faithfully.⁹⁹

Translation of any written work is a contentious process which subjects any manuscript to the interpretation of an "other," and is naturally compounded when translated again from a secondary source. Considering these linguistic concerns, issues regarding the difficulty of accessing what might be called Dalí's "essential" text and what is often cited as his various methods of undermining "easy" access to something resembling his subjectivity, are doubly compounded by a text that has been mediated by so many voices other than its author. This said, it is worth looking closely at this discourse regarding the translation of *The Secret Life*. According to Vilaseca, who quotes the English version of the text in his study, "This translation does not have a proper first version behind it, an 'original' to which one can go for the reassuring, definite answers."¹⁰⁰ This is a perplexing statement, as Dalí's original French manuscript has been available to researchers at The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in Figueres, Spain, for years, and as Vilaseca states in an endnote, he even accessed it himself.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless,

he posits that “Rather (by way of presenting itself as a translation which is itself an original), it undermines the very notion of the ‘original’ and ‘proper.’”¹⁰²

Hence, according to Vilaseca, “Dalí’s autobiography gives the ‘original’ text the character of a palimpsest, one superimposed upon another text that is both referred to and effaced by it.” Further, this “palimpsest-like character” of Dalí’s autobiographical oeuvre also affects its authorship, according to Vilaseca, who positions the translation “issue,” in terms of the “textual I” he cites as being the focus of his study. “Rather than bearing witness to a unique and irreplaceable author . . .,” Vilaseca writes, “Dalí’s memoirs . . . constitute for the most part, a result of a collaboration, of a negotiation between several subjects (co-authors, interviewers, translators, editors) whose exact responsibility with regard to the final text is ultimately impossible to unravel.”¹⁰³

Subsequently, for those confined to reading French or other translations of *The Secret Life*, converted from the English translation of the original French version, frustration regarding access to, at least, a closer version of the text, is perhaps more easily understandable. Such is the case for Jean Alsina, in his article “Salvador Dalí autobiographe dans *La vida secreta de Salvador Dalí* por Salvador Dalí.” According to him, “This rich autobiography has, all things considered, two real readings.” He claims that “We, all the others, are readers of readers, subjected to the frustration of having before our eyes only a secondary, mediated text. The source, the text guaranteeing authenticity and allowing a face-to-face interaction with the autobiography is prohibited to us.”¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, he makes an effort to decipher Dalí’s work, and concludes that *The Secret Life* “is one of the most extraordinary texts which can be read.” Further, “It cannot be summarized or recounted.” Admitting defeat, he suggests, it is easier to turn to

the structure of the work than to the content, “To the point that to avoid speaking of what Dalí tells us, we turn to the way in which he records, presents and organizes ...”¹⁰⁵

While Alsina settled, begrudgingly, for Dalí’s text in translation, Joseph-Lowery decided instead to return to the source: Dalí’s original manuscript. This involved making sense of some one thousand and seven hundred pages of *The Secret Life* drafts recovered from Dalí’s house in Port Lligat after the artist’s death, and kept as found, in disarray, in a fond at The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation. This cache included several typewritten versions of the book, pages written in a hand believed to be that of Gala’s, and some peripheral material such as first drafts and outlines that were later altered or abandoned. Also included was Dalí’s original manuscript, written on lined yellow foolscap and letterhead from various American hotels. These pages reveal the exuberant, humorous and multidimensional aspects of Dalí’s original text, including his *scraffiti*, diagrams, drawings, crossed-out paragraphs, and often comically “creative,” or perhaps unintentional misspellings of French words. Joseph-Lowery’s transcription contains as much of this original material as possible, including errors and changes and alternative passages, and as such, is not a “reading version” of *The Secret Life*, but a study in Dalí’s writing process.

This text is prefaced by comments from Joseph-Lowery, and while most of the observations on the volume refer back to the linguistic and textual nature of the work, she also offers some insight to the context of Dalí’s writing, and to the nature of his hand. The back cover of Joseph-Lowery’s transcription states that through Dalí’s authorization of various translations of *The Secret Life*, including those that markedly stray from his original writings, “Salvador Dalí brought to life his secret text,” placed it in a position of

“reflections and of double images,” and “surrounded it with simulacra.” This was, the commentator suggests, “in accordance with the aesthetics of the painter and with his famous paranoiac-critical method.” But due to the insensitive renderings of various translations (and in her introduction Joseph-Lowery cites Michel Déon’s French translation from the English in particular), “a ‘violent’ text appears,” i.e., “A language against the grain of the careful, smooth, varnished technique of the painter,” one that is compared to abstract expressionist works, that is, with “large splashes of ink and paint.” In contrast, Dalí’s original text is described as being “dense, sensual, elusive and mutable, the way that Dalí liked it. It is infused with a formidable force, with the impulse of its daydreams relived with pleasure, and with comic strength.”¹⁰⁶

In her introductory comments to her transcription, Joseph-Lowery proposes a reading of *The Secret Life* itself as an exercise in linguistic “play,” citing Dalí’s double entendres, his use of nuance, connotation and verbal “transformations,” which nothing but the original text can adequately convey. “There is wind in the sails of the language,” she writes, in her own evocative prose, and suggests that Dalí, who speaks both Catalan and French, and therefore stands between “two doors,” “senses the drafts from both.” This interest in language, is the true “breath” which “inspires” the manuscript, and in substantiation, she points to the graphic cuts from the *fin-de-siècle* nursery primer Dalí used to illustrate the original publication, captioned with simple French words, such as “souris,” “béquilles,” “hérisson,” etc. For Joseph-Lowery, this is evidence that “The breath of the French language penetrates the book very deeply.”¹⁰⁷

For those who focus on the literary aspect of *The Secret Life*, the primacy of Dalí’s “original” written word is clearly as important as the veracity of Dalí’s memoir is

to those biographers who seek to reconstruct the “facts” of Dalí’s life. The position taken in this dissertation however, is that while Dalí’s original screed must be given its due, it was the content and agency of the book that was of primary importance to Dalí, rather than the artistry of his written text. Dawn Ades writes that “For Dalí ... it is always the idea that is most important: the medium for its expression—and he was as fluent in words as he was in paint—was a matter of relative indifference for him.”¹⁰⁸ According to this analysis, for Dalí issues of authenticity, the artist’s “hand” and what Walter Benjamin would call the “aura” of the original, the sort of spiritual “firstness” of an entity, was not always of primary concern.¹⁰⁹ Dalí orchestrated innumerable projects throughout his career that required collaboration with, if not complete execution by third parties, according to his design, and *The Secret Life* does not differ in this respect. Upon examination of Dalí’s original manuscript, as well as Gala’s amended version of Dalí’s text, and Chevalier’s English translation, it is apparent that Dalí produced the work with the intention that it would be executed with the help of others according to his direction. While comparison of the translated text with Dalí’s original French version is highly illuminating, it would seem that, for Dalí, the overall idea, content, forum for artistic expression and efficacy in terms of communications was his principal motive, not the precise nuance or linguistic primacy of his initial written words. If this were not the case, Dalí never would have approved translations of his work, including Michel Déon’s “violent” French translation.¹¹⁰

While Vilaseca and other scholars suggest that Dalí’s English text is mediated to an unusual degree of distortion, there are in fact few autobiographies, or books in general, that flow directly from the author’s pen to the printed page without some form of

intercession from a collaborator, translator, censor, editor or promoter. Likewise, while it can be frustrating to read Dalí's work as modified by a third party, most of the canonical older works of autobiography have been studied in translation, and stand relatively unproblematic as a result, including, for example, Saint Augustine's *Confessions* (originally written in Latin), Benvenuto Cellini's life narrative (originally written in Italian), and for those who are not versed in French, *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*. That these works should be treated for the most part as valid in translation, while Dalí's autobiography, written by for the express and immediate purpose of being translated into English for a North American market, should be considered compromised or unduly mediated because of that very fact (at least of its first translation), invites speculation.

Visualizing Dalí's Life Narrative

While very little of a scholarly nature has been written about the text and illustrations in *The Secret Life*, no notice whatsoever has been afforded to the substantial photographic material that accompanies the text. This is unfortunate as, unlike more conventional autobiographies, to which such images are habitually appended as a sort of photo album, these photographs have been arranged into carefully constructed visual essays by a professional artist, and substantially enhance the text as well as creating a parallel storyline that forms a visual "memoir" worthy of its own analysis. In this sense, the suite of images included in the work can be considered an autobiographical act in its own right, as a series of photographs intended to construct a life narrative, and to showcase Dalí's work and "secrets" through visual means. Whereas the drawn illustrations for the text concentrate on the fantastic and the embellished true and false

memories, and therefore very much on Dalí's "interior" world and "mythology," the photographs focus on more tangible aspects of Dalí's work, his public persona, the social milieu in which he circulated, and objects and people of import to the artist.

Chronologically arranged, and with thoughtful themes and captions written in the first person, the series functions on another conceptual register, both sustaining the thematic content of the memoir, and working as a complex of individual works of art in their own right. By virtue of their materiality as well as their content, the photographic essays also remind the viewer of Dalí's profound commitment to, and proclivity for interdisciplinary and multi-media approaches to his art practice.

While those interested in Dalí's oeuvre might find little discussion of Dalí's artistic production in the pages of *The Secret Life*, here the artist has provided a forum to address or document his work visually, and this suggests that perhaps the artist found this the best means for him to address issues of his own creative production. While the photo series chronologically follows important themes, people, and places in his life, it also shows Dalí's progression as an artist, and demonstrates how immensely eclectic his work was, and the grand and visionary scale of so many of his projects. While the photographic aspect of the text is easily skimmed or overlooked, careful examination of the layouts, consideration of the themes, and the parsing of Dalí's captions offer intriguing insight into the creative direction and thematic structure of much of Dalí's work up to the period of the publication of his autobiography.¹¹¹

A thorough exegesis of this suite of photographs is beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses specifically on Dalí's textual and performative strategies. However, a close examination of the first montage is offered here to introduce the reader

to methodologies and techniques Dalí used in their configuration. Numbering eighty-six individual black and white images, artfully arranged on thirty-two pages, they are entitled as follows:

- I. Intra-Uterine Memories
- II. Child Heredity
- III. Thirty Years Before—Thirty Years After
- IV. The Orifice Enigma
- V. Cadaqués: An Enchanted Villa
- VI. Personal Magic: My Principal Fetiches [sic]
- VII. My Rare Works
- VIII. The Tragic Implications of Spain
- IX. Dalinian Eccentricities Not to be Further Imitated
- X. The Strangest Distortions in the Whole History of Art
- XI. The Great Paranoiac
- XII. The Mouth of an Aesthetic Form
- XIII. Tyranny and Liberty of the Human Gaze
- XIV. Exorcism
- XV. Last Day of Happiness in Europe
- XVI. My Heteroclite Life in America

The first of the pages in the series is entitled *Intra-Uterine Memories*, which evidently speaks to Dalí's discussion of his own stated memories of being in the womb, and his current interest in Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth*.¹¹² Here Dalí explores the subject of the egg and the uterus, explaining in italics at the end of the text the theme of the page, that "Most pictures of rounded form are dominated by intra-uterine and paradisiac elements of the consciousness." In this collage Dalí chooses a cubic grid, in which rounded, womb or egg-like forms dominate. These are, clockwise from upper left, a reproduction of Ingres' *The Turkish Bath*, which he writes is "a pre-eminent unconscious expression of the intra-uterine paradise." Next is the now-famous Philippe Halsman composite photograph of Dalí in the foetal position (he calls it a "sleeping pose"), as he appears to be curled up inside an egg. Bottom right is one of Dalí's latest

paintings at the time, and one that was exemplary of his proposed directive to “become classic,” his 1942 painting *Family of Marsupial Centaurs*, which repeats an already well-tested Dalinian theme where, Dalí writes in the caption, “the children can come out of, and go back into, the maternal uterine paradise.”

Finally, Dalí includes a reproduction of Raphael’s *Madonna of the Chair*, featuring the virgin and child with an angel inside a tondo form. In the caption, he writes, “The Child Jesus is situated like an unhatched chick within the divine egg shape formed by the Raphaellesque curves.” Notably, Dalí has had the image reproduced in negative, giving it the appearance of an X-ray where, as in the Halsman piece, Dalí allows the viewer to “see through” the “egg’s” shell.

While these photographic groupings give Dalí an opportunity to showcase a number of his paintings and other projects, they also allow him to place them within the context of the larger themes of his life, and the themes of the book. The *Intra-Uterine Memories* montage, for example, interfaces directly with the text as Dalí visually stages the theme of birth and the life cycle in *The Secret Life*, with an emphasis on the concurrent theme of “interior” versus “exterior” revisited throughout the text. Again the focus is on vulnerability and armour, of his “morphological aesthetics of the soft and the hard” which features so prominently in the book, as well as the permeation of private and intimate spaces which encompass the overriding conceit of the text as a revelation of a secret life, or the presumed permeation of the shell or skin of Dalí as subject.

The extent to which Dalí has carefully chosen and arranged each image to resonate with the others, rather than simply being a collection of descriptive photographs, is evident in each of his montages. In *Intra-Uterine Memories*, for example, the emphasis

is on the equal weight of each image within a quartered grid, and considering the dominant circular motif in each, suggests a circle made of circles, with the singular egg-like configurations in the Raphael carefully marking a counterpoint to the nude Dalí in the egg, and likewise, the jumbled spaces of human and humanoid forms in *The Turkish Bath* and *Family of Marsupial Centaurs*. The image also works in other ways to reinforce Dalí's stated turn to what he calls "classic" art, by foregrounding the work of Ingres and Raphael, Neo-Classical and Renaissance artists respectively, as well as reinforcing the theme of himself as a saviour figure, by contrasting an image of Dalí *in utero* with that of Madonna and the infant Jesus.

Other important concepts germane to Dalí's work and performative tendencies include page VI, dedicated to Dalí's superstitions, entitled *Personal Magic: My Principle Fetiches* (sic), which explains a number of objects and themes in Dalí's painted oeuvre, and number IX, *Dalinian Eccentricities Not to be Further Imitated*, in which the artist concentrates on photographic records of what would be described in contemporary parlance as performance art and installations. After adumbrating a number of important projects, people and places in more or less chronological sequence, the essays end with XVI, entitled *My Heteroclite Life in America*, which depicts up-to-the-minute projects Dalí had recently executed while in exile in the United States, including his Dream of Venus pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair and a staged outdoor scene at Hampton Manor in Virginia, where Dalí wrote most of *The Secret Life*.

Dalí evidently considered this photographic aspect of the text as important, and, being separate inserts to the text, as one of the few places he could alter the book in subsequent editions, as the text plates, or reproductions of them, have continued to be

used to this day in English editions, and are therefore unalterable. In this light it is notable that the 1961 Dial Press New Enlarged Edition of *The Secret Life* includes an extra five pages of photographs, with a slightly different layout style, but also with captions written in the first person. As is often remarked, the appearance of Dalí's great school friend and likely lover, the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, appeared with conspicuous infrequency in Dalí's memoir. While an extremely stylized and blotchy pen drawing of the poet appears on page 203 of the text, no photograph of him was included in the original 1942 edition of *The Secret Life*. However, in the 1961 edition, Dalí evidently desired to "reinstate" Lorca's presence in his *Life* where he was at liberty to do so, and here Lorca is newly mentioned in three of the captions—although still no photograph. Most cryptically, perhaps, is the caption below a detail from an unnamed painting, in which Dalí has written: "My last metal cuneiform writing: Thirty-two years later I painted this new version, inserting the name of García Lorca intertwined with that of Gala, forming Galsia Larca." That Dalí would conflate the name of his beloved muse with that of another indicates, in no uncertain terms, the place of importance Lorca played in his own life, and indeed, an attempt to reinstate or re-present aspects of his complex sexuality.

In an essay on Surrealism and photography, Susan Sontag suggests that "photography is the only art that is natively surreal,"¹¹³ and as such, "Any collection of photographs is an exercise in Surrealist montage and the Surrealist abbreviation of history."¹¹⁴ That Dalí shared this perspective is apparent, and throughout his career the artist relished arranging and embellishing popular images, magazines, postcards, and recontextualizing photographs in montages and photographic essays. He also evidently

enjoyed working in the popular journalistic style of the period, and was occasionally commissioned to produce photo essays for sundry journals and magazines. The precursors to the type of layout Dalí provides in *The Secret Life* originate, however, with Dada collage and photomontage, and in various Surrealist practices, not the least of which included the innovative approach to photographic embellishment and layouts in novels such as André Breton's *Nadja*, and Surrealist and other avant-garde magazines of the first half of the twentieth century, such as the Dada magazine *Littérature*, Georges Bataille's *DOCUMENTS*, and the 1930s Surrealist vehicle *Minotaure*. Some of Dalí's contributions to the latter, in particular, are now among of the best-known of the Surrealist works, most notably his "On the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Modern Style Architecture" and "The Phenomenon of Ecstasy" which appeared in issue 3-4 of *Minotaure* in 1933. In works such as these Dalí juxtaposes similar, yet often unrelated images to suggest sensory experience and visual and emotional resonances, or what Charles Baudelaire called "correspondences" with creative and invariably bizarre combinations of styles, subjects and objects.

As Dalí was in the process of making the transition from a Surrealist episteme to a pseudo-academic one at the time of writing his memoir, it is no surprise that the images for *The Secret Life* are decidedly more prosaic than these earlier Surrealist pieces. Nevertheless, Dalí's impulse to work with visual and conceptual "correspondences," creating thematic montages based on his own "paranoias," obsessions, and his personal lexicon of symbols is still in evidence. That these evocative configurations can be interpreted by the viewer in any number of ways was paramount to Dalí, who evidently intended his own montages to stimulate the viewer's own projections and interpretations

in an approach similar to his paranoiac-critical method. Addressing this directive as early as 1927, Dalí wrote that

To know how to look at an object, an animal, in a spiritual manner, is to see it in its greatest objective reality. But people only see stereotyped images of things, pure shadows emptied of all expression, pure ghosts of things, and they find vulgar and normal everything they are accustomed to seeing every day, as marvellous and miraculous as these things might be. For this reason, I recently wrote, in reference to photography: "*To look is to invent.*"¹¹⁵

While Dalí makes reference to the paranoiac-critical phenomenon of projection, and to the importance of a fresh and creative approach to spectatorship, his emphasis in this passage on the object is important to his approach to his own photographic practice. Here, as in his painted oeuvre, the artist focuses very much on the materiality of things, and things as metonymic or symbolic of specific elements of Dalí's "cosmogony." Dalí concentrates, for instance, on the shoe in *The Secret Life* photographic page III, *Thirty Years Before—Thirty Years After*, suggesting in the captions that his fascination with this object mapped a continuum in his life, from his stealing a slipper as a child and wearing it on his head, through his use of the shoe in the construction of his Surrealist objects to his collaboration with the designer Elsa Schiaparelli on their famous haute couture "Shoe Hat." Likewise, in the *Personal Magic* section, Dalí discusses the talismans and "bogies" that reappear in a number of his paintings, and the section entitled *The Mouth of an Aesthetic Form*, in which Dalí singles out several objects, edifices and people with resemblances to the shape of mouths. Dalí's captioned comments concerning these objects are extremely useful in terms of understanding their symbolism in various

paintings, as is the privileged, first-hand view of the method Dalí uses to make sense of the interface between seemingly disparate objects and events.

While Dalí certainly selected the images that were to comprise the photographic inserts for his book, the degree to which he chose the grid arrangement and placement on the page is unknown, although the decided restraint of the format suggests that Dalí was likely following the guidelines of his publisher, who may or may not have employed a professional graphic artist to execute the final layout. In contrast, just before the release of *The Secret Life*, Dalí was given *carte blanche* to be “sub-conscious editor for two pages,” by creating a two-page spread for the American photographic magazine *Click*, which resulted in an exuberant, detailed and decidedly fantastic layout, discussed in Chapter Five of this dissertation. The editor of the magazine, commenting on the phenomenal amount of time and energy Dalí invested in the project, described the result as nothing less than one of Hercules’ labours.¹¹⁶ To introduce the spread, the magazine featured an image of Dalí in the process of creating the piece, and the result is far from the orderly or conventional layout featured in *The Secret Life*.

Whatever the logistics of the presentation of the photographic materials that appear in *The Secret Life*, Dalí evidently very carefully chose the images according to specific themes in the book, and in order to add a visual aspect to the text that he felt would enhance the experience of the book on an alternate register. This included an understanding of his life, as he has constructed it here in black and white, in terms of his own visual production, and the places, faces, objects and optical experiments that preoccupied him and helped to define who he was. In this sense, the photographs serve to

both enhance the text, by informing and enriching it, and also resonating on another level as a parallel “life” to the one the artist offers in the written text.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* as it relates to what is known as the “autographical act,” assessing the various ways in which Dalí mobilizes autobiographical formats, and the many layers of interpretation his interdisciplinary and highly self-conscious presentation of the narrative of his life affords. Extant documents in Dalí’s literary oeuvre reveal that the artist harboured a lifelong impulse toward producing “literature of the self,” and was also familiar with the “canonical” traditions of autobiography, upon which he drew and which he also attempted to destabilize or subvert, replacing the received notions of authenticity and veracity with those of self-mythification and fabulation.

Contemporary critical responses to Dalí’s presumed rubric of autobiography manifest in *The Secret Life* were considered here and evaluated in terms of the central arguments of this thesis. It was suggested that these fall primarily into three categories, including sociological- or reception-based approaches; analyses informed by psychoanalysis and by critical theory that focuses on issues of performance, performativity and subjectivity; and textual and linguistic exegeses. Following this conceptual strand, in the following chapter, two other analytical strategies will be suggested. The first of these is a reading of *The Secret Life* in light of Dalí’s textual references and literary influences. The second of these is in terms of Dalí’s singular and often decidedly dark use of humour and parody in his writing, and how these add even further conceptual and analytical layers to an already highly stratified text.

- ¹ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 224.
- ² By 1946, it is certain that Dalí had read Cellini's autobiography, an edition of which he illustrated. See Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, trans. John Addington Symonds (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1946).
- ³ Benvenuto Cellini, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*, eds. Charles Hope and Alessandro Nova, trans. John Addington Symonds (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 15.
- ⁴ Although Dalí's work was an early one documenting the avant-garde, and the life narrative of an artist written by his own hand, many people in Dalí's immediate circle were to follow suit, including several of the characters that will appear in this thesis, such as Luis Buñuel, Julien Levy, Caresse Crosby, Edward James, Man Ray, Helena Rubinstein, Amanda Lear, and Anaïs Nin, whose "confessional impulse" was revealed in her published diaries.
- ⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990, 59.
- ⁶ Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998), 103.
- ⁷ Salvador Dalí, *Impressions and Private Memoirs of Salvador Dalí, January 1920*, trans. Joaquim Cortada I Perez (Cleveland: The Reynolds Morse Foundation, 1962).
- ⁸ Vilaseca, *The Apocryphal Subject*, 212.
- ⁹ Robert Hughes, "The Two Faces of Dalí," *Time* (March 13, 2000), www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,996320-2,00.html
- ¹⁰ Salvador Dalí, unpublished diaries dated between 1919 and 1921, The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres. As quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 102, 121-122.
- ¹¹ Haim N. Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing, 1927-1942: The Metamorphoses of Narcissus* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 255.
- ¹² Salvador Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Picador, 1980), 45.
- ¹³ Louis Pauwels, *Dalí m'a dit* (Paris: Ergo Press, 1989).
- ¹⁴ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 1976.
- ¹⁵ Alain Bosquet, *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1966).
- ¹⁶ Carleton Lake, *In Quest of Dalí* (New York: Athena Books, 1990), back cover.
- ¹⁷ Salvador Dalí, *Corresponsal de J.V. Foix 1932-1936*, ed. R. Santos Torroella (Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrània, S.A. 1986).
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- ²⁰ Lubar, *Dalí: The Salvador Dalí Museum Collection*, 11.
- ²¹ Philippe Lejeune, "The Autobiographical Pact," in Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*, ed. Paul John Eakin, trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 3-30.
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- ²³ Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN*, vol. 94 (1979): 919.
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- ²⁵ Elizabeth W. Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 19.
- ²⁶ Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1983), 7.
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- ²⁸ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. Richard Howard (New York, Hill and Wang, 1977), 120.
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- ³⁴ Dalí, "My Paintings at the Autumn Salon," in Dalí, *Oui: The Paranoid Critical Revolution*, 16.
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- ³⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), n.p., as paraphrased by Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University), 1999, 56.
- ³⁸ Hutcheon, 18.
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- ⁴² Eakin, 3.
- ⁴³ Valérie Baisnée, *Gendered Resistance: The Autobiographies of Simone de Beauvoir, Maya Angelou, Janet Frame and Marguerite Duras* (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1997), 7.
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- ⁴⁵ Vilaseca, 72.
- ⁴⁶ James Olney, *Metaphors of the Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), 3.
- ⁴⁷ Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror State as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1977), 2.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ⁴⁹ Shari Benstock, ed., *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 11, 12, in Linda Anderson, *Autobiography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 66.
- ⁵⁰ Carleton Lake, *In Quest of Dalí* (New York: Athena Books, 1990), 202. According to Lake, Dalí claimed that "Fleur Cowles' book is a disaster ... The work of a secretary."
- ⁵¹ Fleur Cowles, *The Case of Salvador Dalí* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), 161.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*
- ⁵³ *Ibid.* 163-164.
- ⁵⁴ Meryle Secrest, *Salvador Dalí* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1986), 182.
- ⁵⁵ Secrest, 183.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 184.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 183.
- ⁵⁸ Meredith Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory: A Biography of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 262.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 278.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 262.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 279.
- ⁶³ Secrest, 184.
- ⁶⁴ Etherington-Smith 262.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 278.
- ⁶⁶ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 462.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 463.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 462.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 462-463.
- ⁷¹ Fleishman, 7.
- ⁷² Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley, eds., *Salvador Dalí: A Mythology* (London: Tate Gallery Publishing, 1999), 11.

- ⁷³ Dominique Bona, *Gala: La mujer más enigmática del siglo XX* (Barcelona: Tiempo de Memoria, 2004), 281. Translation mine.
- ⁷⁴ Paul Rutherford, *A World Made Sexy: Freud to Madonna* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 82.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.
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- ⁷⁸ Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 256.
- ⁷⁹ Fèlix Fanés, Prólogo, *Salvador Dalí Obra Completa Volumen I, Textos Autobiográficos I* (Figueres: Ediciones Destino, The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones Culturales, 2003), 7-41.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 39, 40.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 33.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ⁸⁶ Robert S. Lubar, "Salvador Dalí: Portrait of the Artist as (An)Other," in Ades and Bradley, *Salvador Dalí: A Mythology*, 109.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁹ Vilaseca, 216.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, back cover.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 216-17.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.
- ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ⁹⁹ Joseph-Lowery, 32. Translation mine.
- ¹⁰⁰ Vilaseca, 8.
- ¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ¹⁰² Vilaseca, 8.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁴ Alsina, 264. The original manuscript was presumably not yet available to researchers at this time.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 257.
- ¹⁰⁶ Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un génie?*, back cover.
- ¹⁰⁷ Joseph-Lowery, 20. Translation mine.
- ¹⁰⁸ Dawn Ades, *Dalí* (London: Thames and Hudson, World of Art, 1995), Preface, 6.
- ¹⁰⁹ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), 223.
- ¹¹⁰ Joseph-Lowery, 32. Translation mine.
- ¹¹¹ It should be noted here that, apart from snapshots, Dalí did not take his own photographs, and this aspect of his art must be considered decidedly collaborative. See William Jeffett, "Salvador Dalí: Photography as Self-Portrait and Identity," in Fèlix Fanés, *et al.*, *Dalí. Mass Culture*. Fundación "la Caixa"; The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation and Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofía, 2004, 244-249.
- ¹¹² See *I. Intra-Uterine Memories*. Photographic insert for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942, adjacent to page 70, Dover edition.
- ¹¹³ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 41.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.
- ¹¹⁵ Salvador Dalí, "My Paintings at the Autumn Salon," *L'Amic de les Arts*, vol. 2, no. 19 (October 31, 1927), supplement to the edition, in Salvador Dalí, *OUI: the Paranoid-Critical Revolution*, ed. Robert Descharnes, trans. Yvonne Shafir (Boston: Exact Change, 1998), 16.

¹¹⁶ Anon. "Memo to the Reader," appended to "The Secret Life of Dalí, by Dalí," *Click*, September 1942, 38.

CHAPTER 3: The Evil Genius: Style and Parody in *The Secret Life*

In this epoch of intellectual misery we live in, I must express myself in terms of caricature so that my contemporaries can try to understand me.

Salvador Dalí.
“Sharp Sybaritic Realism,” 1973¹

Introduction

In the introduction to his first and only novel *Hidden Faces* (1944), Salvador Dalí wrote that those “who quarrel with my aesthetics, agree in considering my autobiography one of the ‘human documents’ of the period.” “Still others,” he writes, “questioning the ‘authenticity’ of my *Secret Life*, have discovered in me literary gifts superior to the skill which I reveal in my pictures, and to what they call the mystification of my confessions.”² While Dalí was ready to acknowledge that although some people might not appreciate his painting or artwork, nor would he vouch for the accuracy of his memoir, he was more than ready to defend his abilities as a writer. It is in fact very much Dalí’s “literary gifts” and, if not the “mystery” of his “confessions,” the evident intellect and rich intertextual buffet served up in *The Secret Life* that distinguishes Dalí’s work from that of other writers and autobiographers, while the cited deviance from fact that so irks his biographers is the very quality that intrigues those concerned with the artistry of Dalí’s prose. As mannered in writing as he was in painting, Dalí’s style must be considered very carefully in *The Secret Life*, as, like his paintings, it is carefully loaded with nuance, reference and double-meaning rife with highly tactical inclusions and exclusions which can be read on a number of conceptual registers, and which presume a number of audiences. In fact, it will be argued that Dalí’s many choices of styles and his

multiple references are intensely strategic, and not intended simply to embellish or add interest to his work, but to perform very specific social, critical and narrative functions.

It will be posited in this chapter that the first objective of Dalí's style is to set up the question that comprised the original sub-title of *The Secret Life*, as revealed in the original manuscript: "Am I a genius?"³ This is a question Dalí spends a large part of the book trying to answer in the affirmative, through the intricate artistry of his writing, and the self-conscious showcasing of the breadth of his reading and intellect. The second inherently strategic element of Dalí's style, it will be maintained, is the very undermining of the construct of the artist-as-genius, and of the gravitas and "authenticity" of the art world itself, through the use of parody. Indeed, it will be maintained that the primary mode of *The Secret Life* is that of parody, encompassing humour, irony, satire, caricature and burlesque, which allows for the "double-voiced" discourse that informs the work, and permits Dalí to air his criticism of and disdain for the avant-garde, Surrealism, aspects of the modernist project, and other cultural or social formations he targets.

To acknowledge the strictures of Dalí's parody is crucial to any reading of *The Secret Life*, and to bypass this means becoming vulnerable to a trap in which George Orwell becomes ensnared in his famous review of Dalí's autobiography: namely, of reading the work "straight," and as such, accepting as unproblematic Dalí's assertions of perversion, cruelty, narcissism and evil. Nevertheless, as Orwell illustrates, Dalí's writing can indeed be read "straight," as well as parody, or as an outright affront to the avant-garde, and presumes a number of audiences with various levels of sophistication, erudition and knowledge of Dalí's "real" life as opposed to the one offered in the memoir.

A third strategic element of his writing style concerns Dalí's drawing upon the canon of literary figures that so enthralled the Surrealists, the so-called "literature of evil," and works that fall under the rubric of "black humour," to which he has added some figures of his own. The artist's highly self-conscious referencing of this tradition duly enriches his text, but most significantly, is intended to portray Dalí for the bulk of the book as "wicked" and "decadent," and therefore, in the conceptual construct he builds, inclined toward the avant-garde, Surrealism and the left. This positions the artist as misguided and therefore worthy of redemption at the end of the book, with his move to "goodness," religion and tradition that completes the cycle of his renaissance, and follows the convention of the redemption narrative. This chapter, then, will consider the narrative and mythmaking function of Dalí's style, his use of parody, and his extensive drawing upon literary references with the aim of unravelling some of the many strands that comprise the intricate web of allusion, illusion and obfuscation that form the foundation of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*.

"What does that mean, eh?"

As Dalí points out in his introduction to *Hidden Faces*, early critics of *The Secret Life* immediately acknowledged the quality and innovation evinced in Dalí's writing, if sometimes begrudgingly, as did Bertram D. Wolfe, offering the following backhanded compliment to Dalí in *The Herald Tribune* in 1942, just after *The Secret Life* was published. Wolfe notes that "this is a remarkably skilful piece of writing. Despite its annoying and dreary stretches of mystification, assumed archness, childish exhibitionism and frequently unsuccessful attempts to play with words as if they were jewels or fireworks, it is impossible not to admire the painter as writer."⁴ Indeed, it is by far his

treatment of language itself that captures the reader in *The Secret Life*, both because of, and despite the daunting task of wending one's waythrough what Dawn Ades describes as Dalí's "wild orthography and bubbling grammar."⁵

Perhaps no one was more familiar with, or frustrated by, Dalí's relentless insistence in his creative writing on textual idiosyncrasy than Haakon Chevalier, the translator of a number of Dalí's mid-century American texts, including *The Secret Life*. Chevalier describes the challenges of translating Dalí's work in the introduction to the 1973 edition of *Hidden Faces*, offering colourful insight into the artist's literary tendencies. "Sometimes," he writes,

exhausted from hours of ploughing through the lush jungle of his prose, I would turn to him in exasperation and say "You never use one word where two will do. You are a master of the mixed metaphor, of the superfluous epithet; you weave elaborate festoons of redundancy round your subject and illuminate it with glittering fireworks of hyperbole ...

"To this," Chevalier reveals, Dalí "would smile with apologetic self-assurance, a diabolical glint would come into his eyes and balance on the waxed tips of his moustache, and with great gentleness he would improvise a little piece on the violence of his Spanish temperament and the volcanic excesses of his imagination."⁶

Dalí well knew the extent to which such "volcanic excesses" served to amuse and "tantalize" his readers, and to create multiple registers within his writings which presumably allowed him to address a number of audiences. To that effect, Dalí was to proclaim in 1969 that "... the important thing is to spread confusion, not to eliminate it."⁷ Clearly, then, the baroque and "ornamental" aspect of Dalí's writing is not merely an index of an eccentric or overactive mind, or a method of evasion, but a vehicle for

creative obfuscation as a uniquely expressive technique. In the prologue to an illustrated book he produced in 1973, entitled, *Ten Recipes for Immortality*, Dalí gives the following “advice” which, although somewhat tongue in cheek, certainly moves toward elucidating some of the more perplexing passages in *The Secret Life*, and positioning his “willful obscurantism” as a marketing technique. He begins by explaining

The way to write a book which may increase the number of its buyers every day and achieve even greater success: one assembles for communication practical recipes which will interest the human being’s curiosity for information, for example, “How to demoralize for life a cretinous art critic” or perhaps “Ten recipes for immortality.” Each recipe must contain a satisfying truth: what Leibniz called; “The sufficient reason.”⁸

The “practical recipe” in Dalí’s autobiography is presumably Dalí’s assertion of divulging secrets to his readers, intended to “interest the human being’s curiosity for information.” Dalí continues his “recipe,” explaining that

When the whole thing becomes too clear, dazzlingly so, you have to obscure the idea and thus pay homage to Heraclitus the Obscure and to Tantalus when your readers get tired of everything which is too clear or too obscure. Then you must adopt the technique of “fumatora” chiaroscuro, peculiar to Eugène Carrière, in order to keep up the temptation to know more but allowing the reader to find some parcels of the truth which are of interest to him.⁹

In addition to Dalí’s stated intent to create an intriguing “package” for Dalí consumers, the artist is unambiguous in *The Secret Life* that his mandate is to “tantalize,” but he nevertheless expresses his desire to allow people to find their own “parcels of truth.” “People were constantly asking me,” he writes, “What does that mean? What does that mean?” a question he inevitably leaves open. Of Paris, for instance, Dalí reveals the

pleasure the spread of his “mystification” affords him. Speaking of society women who hounded him for explanations of the symbolism of his work he writes that,

beneath the very sure snobbism of these bewildered females, the pincers of my mystification had clutched their magnificently clad breasts, within which the cancer of my brain was already silently growing. They would ask me, “But look here, Dalí, what is all this about “bread.”?” I then feigned a thoughtful air. “That is something you should ask of the critical paranoiac method, my dear” (312).

That Dalí was as intensely conscious of his own style in writing as he was in painting is evident in his recorded interactions with Chevalier and discussion of it in “Ten Recipes,” as well as his importunate referencing of the work of other writers in his own work. For the record, Etherington-Smith observes of Dalí that “he was perfectly capable of writing highly intelligently on a variety of subjects and in a ‘normal’ manner.” She cites, in particular, Dalí’s series of letters to his friends J.V. Foix, Sebastià Gasch, and to Federico García Lorca, written in the mid-1930s, which she describes as “the letters of a nervous but clever man, very much in touch with reality, who takes his painting and his writing very seriously.”¹⁰ This is a notable observation, substantiating the claim that Dalí’s writing was indeed a conscious effort at a particular, and highly peculiar style of writing, and not simply the result of an eccentric mind.

While many commentators are satisfied to position Dalí’s baroque and often perplexing writing as a creative technique analogous to the bizarre and detailed work Dalí produced in painting, Finkelstein views Dalí’s insistence upon obfuscation as a sort of gambit. Indeed, he claims that it “served Dalí as a strategic device utilized by him to further his ‘political’ position, illuminate his art in a particular light, create a climate of acceptance for the work, and endow his strangest whims and preoccupations with at least

a semblance of aesthetic and philosophical validity.”¹¹ Finkelstein maintains that as Dalí became alienated from Breton and the Surrealists, the increasingly obscure nature of his writing was intended to act as a buffer or “smokescreen” preventing him from having to commit fully to any “single theoretical or ideological position.” He argues that “Writing increasingly became for Dalí a means of devising for himself all kinds of escape mechanisms, by deflating expectations through the use of non sequiturs, or, often through the use of ironic reversal.”¹²

While this may ring partially true for some of Dalí’s writing, the opposite view is espoused in this thesis, as throughout *The Secret Life*, once a reader becomes used to navigating Dalí’s “fumatora,” it becomes evident that the artist in fact loudly trumpets what can only be described as very definite views, such as his complete disinterest in the avant-garde, his disgust with modernism, the Surrealist movement and for the most part, leftist politics. Indeed, as will be discussed in following chapters, once the reader becomes accustomed to Dalí’s textual approach, it is evident that rather than trying to avoid any single theoretical or ideological position, Dalí harbours pungent, and highly defined views on art, design, taste, politics and morality that he thoroughly and repeated expounds in *The Secret Life*.

While Dalí’s peculiar writings style is perhaps meant primarily as an enticement to the reader’s curiosity, additionally it is surely meant to showcase, or convince his readership of his prodigious intelligence. “Is Dalí a genius?” is a question that hovers over *The Secret Life*, as indeed, Dalí intended it to be, signalled by the original subtitle for the work, which was “Suis-je un genie?” Consequently, in order to provide evidence for a positive response to this question, throughout the text Dalí dishes up a veritable

smorgasbord of literary, creative, scientific, political, psychoanalytic and religious references, and equally so of allusions to aristocratic society, fashion, design, the fine arts, and to contemporary Spanish, French and American popular culture. Hence, while obfuscation was clearly one of Dalí's techniques for "tantalizing" his readers, another method was by "blinding them with science," or stridently exhibiting his considerable learning and exceptional intellect.

While Dalí may not have possessed in-depth knowledge of all the philosophers, artists, political figures, scientists and celebrities to whom he alludes in his autobiography, it should be noted that he was, if not particularly well-educated in an institutional sense, extremely well-read and intellectually curious, and that his approach to the life of the mind paralleled that of his interest in painting. That is, as Dalí self-consciously chronicles in his autobiography, he would "try on" one style or another, pick and choose his references, symbols and allusions according to personal taste and efficacy, and wantonly edit, distort or recombine them according to his own needs. "The Surrealist group," he writes of his early years, for instance, "appeared to me the sole one offering me an adequate outlet for my activity" (251). While acknowledging this, *The Secret Life* is, to a large degree, intended to convince the reader of Dalí's intellectual genius as well as his artistic genius, and to reinforce this concept, on the last page of the book he announces hubristically that "Since 1929, I have ceaselessly studied the processes, the discoveries of the special sciences of the last hundred years. If it has not been possible for me to explore all corners of these because of their monstrous specialization, I have understood their meaning as well as the best!" (400).

In his autobiography Dalí showcases his autodidactic efforts, boasting of having gone through a reading “frenzy” as a boy, to the extent that, “At the end of two years there was not a single book left for me to read in my father’s voluminous library.” The work that had the greatest effect on him, he writes, was Voltaire’s *Philosophical Dictionary*. Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, on the other hand, “gave me at all times the feeling that I could do better in this vein myself” (140). Congruous with Dalí’s nutritive metaphors in *The Secret Life*, he presents his intellectual curiosity as a sort of “spiritual food” for his nascent genius:

My eagerness to read what I did not understand, stronger than my will, must have obeyed a violent necessity for the spiritual nourishment of my soul, and just as a calcium deficiency in certain weakened organisms of children causes them blindly and irresistibly to break off and eat the lime and plaster on walls, so my spirit must have needed that categorical imperative, which I chewed and rechewed for two consecutive years without succeeding in swallowing it.

“But one day,” Dalí continues, “I did swallow it.” And in a short time, “I actually made unbelievable progress in understanding the great philosophical problems.” From Kant, he declares, he moved on to Spinoza and Descartes, only to realize that he had “begun to read the philosophers almost as a joke, and ended by weeping over them” (142). While Dalí focuses on philosophy in this passage, elsewhere in the book he describes how he has “devoured” painting styles, the literature of psychoanalysis, and he also makes frequent mention of economic and social theory, in particular, Hegel’s dialectics and Marx’s dialectical materialism. “In the past there had been three philosophic antecedents of what I aspired to build in my own brain: the Greek Sophists, the Jesuitical thought of Spain, founded by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, and the dialectics of Hegel in Germany,” he

writes, adding, “the latter, unfortunately, lacked irony, which is the essential aesthetic element of thought: moreover it “threatened revolution” (305).

That *The Secret Life* suggests to its readers so many possible references and presumed influences attests to the intertextual, allusive and open-ended nature of Dalí’s highly “ornamental inquisition.” Indeed, Dalí self-consciously—to use a contemporary expression—“sampled” the work of other authors in his work to create, much like the photographic montages that punctuate the text, a sort of textual collage that served a number of creative and strategic ends. On the most general level, this was to enhance his text by creating a multiply-coded, intricate and colourful tapestry familiar to us today in much modernist and postmodern writing. While enriching and extending the ken of Dalí’s text, and adding layers of colour and nuance, this approach also helped to showcase Dalí’s erudition, and therefore reinforced the concept of his own “genius.” Once again Dalí plays in this way with the method of disclosure in his autobiography, creating an often labyrinthine complex of allusion, quotation and paraphrase that makes the prospect of a truly satisfying comprehension of his book a formidable task for any single reader.

Sampling Literary Influences in *The Secret Life*

As Dalí showcases his erudition so vociferously in his memoir, it is not surprising that critics are often inspired to look for specific influences on Dalí’s writing style, and reviews reflect a restless search to contextualize *The Secret Life* in terms of literary schools or styles. Reviews also suggest a surprisingly diverse selection of writers to whom Dalí is compared, ranging from James Joyce to Adolf Hitler, and thereby attesting to the extraordinarily eclectic and evocative aspect of the work. Before considering these,

however, it should be noted that Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror*, and the works of de Sade and similar writers with what might be called a "cult" following were not widely known or available in the United States, and hence were less likely to have been cited as frequently as they were in later years in respect to the darker aspects of Dalí's autobiography. Bearing this in mind, a review by Benjamin DeCasseres, writing in the *New York Journal American* in 1943, exemplifies the sorts of comparisons that were being made by the mid-twentieth-century American press. DeCasseres writes that *The Secret Life* "will recall Rousseau's *Confessions*, Ely Culbertson's *The Strange Lives of One Man*, Strindberg's *Zones of the Spirit*, Giovanni Papini's *The Failure*, and Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* ..."¹³ Bertram Wolfe of the *New York Herald Tribune* also offers period insight, writing in a 1942 review that "Two decades earlier this autobiography would have been a forbidden book, sold surreptitiously to take its place on the shelf with the "Droll Tales" of Balzac, the worlds of Rabelais, Boccaccio and Margaret of Navarre, the "Ulysses" of James Joyce, and other variegated and semi-reputable companions, classics for the most part ..."¹⁴

Later critics had other influences in mind, and historian of the European avant-garde Jack Spector suggests that "By its erratic character and the richness of its many puns, the Dalinian style recalls the linguistic constructions of Brisset," referring to the idiosyncratic French fin-de-siècle "outsider" writer Jean-Pierre Brisset.¹⁵ Secretst, on the other hand, is convinced Dalí's work bears a remarkable resemblance to the subject of A.J.A. Symons' famous biography, *The Quest for Corvo*, the subject of which was the eccentric English author Frederick Rolfe, alias Baron Corvo, "whose ambition to become a prince of the church was thwarted in real life." She notes that comparisons show, "in

the writings of both Corvo and Dalí, the same pedantic use of overblown literary expressions, the same tendency to linger over irrelevant detail, the same arbitrary blurring of outline between fantasy and the real world.” Perhaps most significantly, “There is a similar tiresome compulsion to shock at all costs, the same braggadocio, the same insistence on obfuscatory explanations, the same refusal to conceive of themselves in any terms short of genius.”¹⁶

While such comparisons provide food for thought, contemporary scholars are more inclined to look for influences upon Dalí’s autobiography among works that it is known the artist would have been familiar with thanks to his association with the French avant-garde. In particular, these works stem from the group of authors canonized by the Surrealists, including the Comte de Lautréamont, Raymond Roussel, the Marquis de Sade, and Sigmund Freud, writers whom Dalí directly references in *The Secret Life*. Also cited and referenced by Dalí is that exemplar of the late-nineteenth-century Decadent writers, the French writer Joris-Karl Huysmans. Fanés suggests that particular notice should be taken of Dalí’s novel, written immediately after *The Secret Life* and published in 1944, as, he maintains, it points to Dalí’s aspirations as a writer of both fact and fiction, as well as to the influence of Huysmans on Dalí’s style and the narrative arc of *The Secret Life*. As this is the most in-depth comparison in critical writing about Dalí’s book, it will be considered here in detail.

In his analysis, Fanés begins with Dalí’s brief comparison of himself with Floressas Des Esseintes, the protagonist of Huysmans’ famous work *À Rebours*. He notes the episode where Dalí accidentally cuts off a mole, mistaking it for a tick, and subsequently trails blood throughout his hotel room, causing him tremendous distress.

Dalí superstitiously sees this as an omen not to return to war-torn Spain, as, according to Dalí, “I had already been there ... just as des Esseintes, the hero of Huysmans’ *À Rebours*, had experienced the fatigue and the reality of his voyage to London before even beginning it ...” (367). Fanés views this mention as contributing to evidence of both *À Rebours* and *The Secret Life* having “several meeting points.” Specifically, according to Fanés, considering the character of Des Esseintes is constructed on two basic principles. “On the one hand, that of artifice, that takes diverse forms throughout the story: imprisonment in luxury, praise of gems, digression on literature ... submission to art ... that takes it to the praise of the Church.” On the other hand, the figure of Des Esseintes is “based on contempt of humanity,” which is manifest in various ways, in particular, the claim to reject the tyranny of society, the dictates of fashion in thought and style, and the praise of solitude. These tendencies are what “awake in the protagonist an extreme enthusiasm for wickedness,” and, according to Fanés, this is “somebody not very far removed from the narrator of *The Secret Life*,” who is also “shut in, in his aristocratic insolence, by means of the construction of a world of culture and pleasures.” Dalí is also, according to Fanés, “a despiser of humanity, which he finds “amorphous” and “cretinous,” and someone who is also given to the aesthetic pleasures of religious practice, particularly that of Catholicism.¹⁷

Fanés’ hypothesis bears consideration, although as has been and will continue to be argued in this dissertation, Dalí’s style and narrative influences are culled from a diverse range of writers and discourses, and can by no means be narrowed to one or two, based on slim evidence such as one mention and a few generalized comparisons.

Although Dalí thoroughly enjoyed what he called “cretinizing” people, or “having one

over on them,” and at this point was dissatisfied with the avant-garde and with many modernist imperatives, he nevertheless shows himself as almost compulsively social, and hardly reclusive or averse to the “dictates of style or fashion.” Rather, Dalí proudly claims in his autobiography to be a man of fashion, to have influenced style in many areas, including dress, design and even mannerism, and very conspicuously foregrounds his relationship with his “best friend,” the reigning doyenne of Parisian fashion, Coco Chanel. Also, while Dalí does indeed “discover” Catholicism at the end of *The Secret Life*, Des Esseintes decidedly does not. Huysmans himself converted later in life, as was reflected in his writing, but this was some time after *À Rebours* was written, and is not relevant to the novel itself.

That said, Des Esseintes does bear significant comparison with the Dalí encountered in *The Secret Life*, but this is the early Des Esseintes Huysmans introduces, by way of explaining his personal growth *before* he became the reclusive aesthete to whom Fanés compares Dalí. This was a very short-lived phase in Des Esseintes’ life in Huysmans’ book, and was already over by the third page of the first chapter of *À Rebours*, as the protagonist is transformed into the misanthropic and obsessively luxury-loving recluse. Here was the early, darkly social Des Esseintes who did things like filling a grand hall with rows of church pews, where he admitted his tradesman to whom he would preach, from a pulpit, a sermon on dandyism, “adjuring his bootmakers and tailors to conform strictly to his encyclicals on matters of cut, and threatening them with pecuniary excommunication if they did not follow to the letter the instructions contained in his monitories and bulls.”¹⁸ Indeed, the description of Des Esseintes’ early caprices here parallels Dalí’s ever-more peculiar persona quite remarkably as Des Esseintes “won

a considerable reputation as an eccentric—a reputation which he crowned by wearing suits of white velvet with gold-laced waistcoats, by sticking a bunch of Parma violets in his shirt-front in lieu of a cravat, and by entertaining men of letters to dinners which were greatly talked about.”¹⁹

It might be assumed that Dalí would be taken by the description of Des Esseintes’ earlier life as an eccentric public figure, in particular his strange clothing and behaviour, his bizarre parties and flights of fancy. Specifically, Dalí seems to have relished Huysmans’ notorious “black dinner,” described in *À Rebours* as a “funeral feast to mark the most ludicrous of personal misfortunes” where all the food was a shade of black:

The dining-room, draped in black, opened out on to a garden metamorphosed for the occasion, the paths being strewn with charcoal, the ornamental pond edged with black basalt and filled with ink, and the shrubberies replanted to cypresses and pines. The dinner itself was served on a black cloth adorned with baskets of violets and scabious ... Dining off black-bordered plates, the company had enjoyed turtle soup, Russian rye bread, ripe olives from Turkey, caviare [sic], mullet botargo, black puddings from Frankfurt, game served in sauces the colour of liquorice and boot-polish ...²⁰

Dalí, who with Gala and friends often orchestrated equally eccentric dinners and soirees, would have been delighted by the exaggerated luxury and dark humour of this sort of menu, as well as Huysmans’ evident pleasure in describing every last sepulchral detail. Indeed, he references this feast in *The Secret Life* in Chapter Eleven, where Dalí writes of being introduced, via the Surrealist writer René Crevel, to his friend Caresse Crosby at her Paris apartment on the rue Monsieur. “At this luncheon,” Dalí claims,

everything was white, except the table cloth and the china, so that if one had taken a picture of it, it would be the negative that appeared to be the positive. Everything that we ate was white. We drank milk. The curtains

were white, the telephone was white, the rug white. She was dressed in white, wore white ear-rings, shoes and bracelets (326).

In addition to referencing Huysmans, Dalí's description is also apparently an in-joke, as Crosby, being one of the editors of *The Secret Life* manuscript, could not fail to encounter Dalí's "white lie." In her own autobiography, *The Passionate Years*, published in 1953, Crosby explains that,

Dalí in his memoirs has chronicled that luncheon at which he and I met for the first time and which—he says—was entirely white. According to him, we ate cream of celery soup, breast of chicken with rice, little onions, blancmange with cream to finish off, marshmallows with white mint. He also said that I wore white shoes and *white* stockings, so of course, I don't believe the rest!²¹

While Huysmans' imprint is arguably more than a slight presence in *The Secret Life*, as Fanés points out, the Decadent writer's influence, as with a number of mostly nineteenth century French writers, is clearly evident in *Hidden Faces*, Dalí's first and only novel, published in English, in America, in 1944. Indeed, just before *Hidden Faces* was released, Chevalier, who was presumably in the process of, or having recently finished translating Dalí's novel, wrote a preview in the *Saturday Review* for Dalí's then-forthcoming novel which, he maintains, "is among other things an epitaph of pre-war Europe. It is in the tradition of Petronius' *Satyricon*, or Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Huysmans' *À Rebours*. In some respects it recalls Robert Briffault's *Europa*. It is primarily a novel of decadence."²² Later, Chevalier was to make further comparisons in the 1973 edition, to which he wrote a translator's foreword. Here he describes the novel's "aura of decadent romanticism reminiscent of Barbey d'Aurevilly, of Villiers de L'Isle-Adam and of Huysmans, taking the English reader back to Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton and

Ouida with its ringing aristocratic names, its men and women of resplendent beauty, its luxury and extravagance.”²³ While these comparisons may well be apt, Dalí clearly took umbrage to this type of association, and was determined to claim his style as his own in the Foreword, writing that “Before I had finished my book it was claimed that I was writing a Balzacian or a Huysmansian novel.” His rebuttal to this might also apply to his autobiography, where he writes that “It is on the contrary a strictly Dalinian book ...”²⁴

While critics have turned primarily to fin-de-siècle Decadent literature for influences in *The Secret Life*, more recent observers have looked to political examples for potential sources as they consider Dalí’s presumed or speculated political positioning. “I think about Spengler, Oswald Spengler,” Fanés imparts, referencing the German historian and philosopher, and notes that Dalí had various translations of Spengler’s opus *The Decline of the West* in his Port Lligat library. Similarly, in relation to Dalí’s stated reconciliation with the Catholic Church, Ian Gibson avers that “There is no acknowledgement in these pages [of *The Secret Life*] to Dalí’s acquaintance of Ernest Giménez Caballero, editor-owner of *La Gaceta Literaria* and the principle theorist of Spanish Fascism, but it is impossible not to sense the influence on him of the latter’s book *Roma madre*.” *Mother Rome*, Gibson notes, was published in Madrid in 1939 just after the Spanish Civil War had ended. “Dalí’s exaltation of Rome, the Rome of the Vatican, of the Renaissance, of hierarchy and now of imperialism,” writes Gibson, “is almost indistinguishable from Giménez Caballero’s, as is his new-found enthusiasm for the virtues of Spanish Catholicism.”²⁵

William Jeffett also suggests parallels between Dalí’s autobiography and that of Spain’s dictator, General Francisco Franco. “Dalí’s myth-making and autobiographical

The Secret Life (1942) appeared one year following Franco's own megalomaniac and idealized autobiography: the novel/film-script *Raza* (1940-41)," he writes, a contrast that acts as a reminder of Dalí's interest in Franco and the Spanish Nationalist cause at the time of his writing *The Secret Life*.²⁶ Most notably in terms of politics, when *The Secret Life* was first released, the book it was most often compared to was one that was on many people's mind at the time, and which served as one of the closest stylistic references for the American press: Adolf Hitler's astoundingly anti-Semitic manifesto-autobiography of 1933, *Mein Kampf*.

"*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* is as secret as an important speech by Hitler," states an anonymous writer for the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* in January 1943, while a staff writer at the St. Paul *Dispatch* claims that "This is certainly the strangest book of the year and it is quite possible that when all the returns are in it may still up the runner-up, pressing *Mein Kampf* hard for the title of strangest book of the century." "No man of our time, not even Hitler," writes Clifton Fadiman of *The New Yorker* in January 1943 "has exploited his own paranoia with greater efficiency and self-consciousness than has Salvador Dalí." Finally, and most strikingly, in a review of *The Secret Life* for *The New York Post* in December 1942, Sterling North notes that "Dalí's life parallels Hitler's to the degree of caricature."²⁷

Dalí does, indeed, make direct reference to *Mein Kampf* in his own "manifesto" at the beginning of Chapter Eleven, in a list entitled "My Battle," which adumbrates his stated belief system. Of the thirty Manichean pairs of things Dalí is "for" and "against" in this list, he includes "Against Equalitarianism, For Hierarchization," "Against the Collective, For the Individual," and "Against Revolution, For Tradition" (286). That this

manifestoesque inventory is meant to reference *Mein Kampf* is implied by Dalí's inclusion above the list of a drawing of one of his notorious lobster telephones, with the word "telephone" written four times. Dalí's association of the German dictator with that of the telephone is made evident in a number of the artist's works of the early war period, most notable among them his 1939 canvas entitled *Enigma of Hitler*, which features a decidedly phallic black telephone receiver hanging from a tree, dripping what resembles seminal fluid onto a plate on which rests a minute image, meant to represent a photograph or newspaper clipping, of Hitler.²⁸

In addition to this blatant reference, as North suggests, there are other parallels between Hitler's and Dalí's life narratives, and while some are mere "correspondences," and likely coincidental, there is some suggestion that aspects of *The Secret Life* may have been influenced, to a certain degree, by the tone and directive of the German dictator's autobiography. Hitler, like Dalí, well understood the power of the media and the popular text, and like Dalí's, his memoir was written with very strategic ends, as a public relations vehicle and political declaration. Extremely widely read by people all over Europe and North America, and from all over the political spectrum, by the late 1930s *Mein Kampf* had sold hundreds of thousands copies, and was available in a number of translations, including, it should be noted, Spanish and French, the two languages which Dalí could read at the time other than Catalan.²⁹

In terms of parallels, Dalí would have observed that both he and Hitler began their careers as painters; careers which grew into ambitions of greatness as they styled themselves as saviour figures: Hitler, in terms of a twisted Teutonic concept of the "Aryan race"; Dalí as the self-appointed "saviour of modern art" (4). Presumably because

they felt their tasks were momentous, and their lives of such great import, and considering that both were extremely adept at self-presentation and the generation of propaganda, Dalí and Hitler equally felt justified in writing their memoirs at remarkably early ages for that period: Hitler at the age of 36-37, and Dalí at the age of 37-38. The most obvious and general parallel between *Mein Kampf* and *The Secret Life*, however, is to be found in the larger-than-life personalities of the authors of the respective books: both Dalí and Hitler had a gift for oratory, and both were prone to grandiose thinking. Both were also extremely, if not pathologically, megalomaniacal—although in Dalí's case, the artist consciously *performed* the entrenched narcissist. And what is the reader to make of the fact that *The Secret Life* calls, in no uncertain terms, for a “return to order” in the world of art, with direct parallels to Hitler's project (outlined after his writing of *Mein Kampf*) to privilege academic, painterly and representational art, portraying worthy themes while decrying modernist tendencies and the proliferation of “isms”—in Hitler's case as “degenerate,” and in Dalí's as “absurd”?

Another element of Hitler's life narrative that would invariably appeal to Dalí was what has frequently been described as Hitler's “paranoiac” disposition, in that, like Dalí's beloved Lydia, the self-deluding resident of Cadaqués who sold him his fisherman's shack in Port Lligat, his world-view was intensely self-focused and experientially mediated by the projection of his ideological views. According to Ralph Manheim, a translator of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's logic is “purely psychological: Hitler is fighting his persecutors, magnifying his person, creating a dream-world in which he can be an important figure.”³⁰ While this explanation might well apply to Hitler, it is equally as true of Dalí, who also manages to spin an aura of great consequence around his person and his

career in his own life narrative. It is also, to be sure, exemplary of Dalí's "theory" of the paranoiac-critical, involving the projection of the objects of one's own preoccupations upon outside matter, incidents and phenomena.

While Hitler makes an actual appearance as one of the characters in *Hidden Faces*, the figure of the German dictator is surprisingly absent in Dalí's memoir, considering the impact he was having on the world stage and on Dalí's life. Dalí had, however, initially intended to include mention of Hitler in the book, as evinced in an early typewritten outline of Part Two, Chapter Four. In this original formulation, Dalí intended the chapter to include (in upper case) "THE MEETING WITH FREUD IN LONDON—the war seen from Arcachon and Paris—my latest aesthetic and philosophic evolution—" and finally, "a letter to Hitler from Leonardo da Vinci."³¹ One can only speculate what a letter to Adolf Hitler from the painter of the Mona Lisa, written by Salvador Dalí, might contain. Dalí's extolling the virtues of Renaissance art in the finale of his memoir, as he embraces reactionary values and rejects modern art, decadence and revolution, points to a discussion of the virtues of traditional, or what Dalí called "classic" art, but it is impossible to gauge Dalí's intent.

While Dalí arguably draws loose parallels between his own autobiography and that of Hitler, it is prudent to consider the duality of Dalí's references, as both possible admiration of and desire to imitate, but equally as likely as parody: that is, *The Secret Life*, on one level, is a sort of inverted or deflated *Mein Kampf*. North's comment, that Dalí's life parallels Hitler's "to the degree of caricature,"³² points in particular to Dalí's use of caricature, humour and parody in his work which, while sometimes light-hearted and amusing, also often extended to dark and disturbing extremes.

“Ludicrous Missives”: Humour and Parody in *The Secret Life*

Walter Benjamin once stated that “Surrealism is the death of the last century through farce,” a comment with which he points to something that tends, all too often, to be overlooked in more recent scholarship concerned with Surrealist art and writing, and most surprisingly, with the work of the Surrealists’ *de facto* court jester, Salvador Dalí.³³ While it is impossible not to acknowledge that a certain amount of “Dalinian silliness” is going on in *The Secret Life*, Gibson very rightly observes that “Hardly anyone seems to have grasped the book’s humour.”³⁴ Besides Gibson, Charles Stuckey is one of the few who has, and he is equally surprised that “The possibility that Dalí’s slapstick writings in the style of de Sade might be put-ons has generally gone unacknowledged.”³⁵ Indeed, virtually none of the scholars who have approached *The Secret Life*, other than Carmen Rasilla and Haim Finkelstein, have sincerely considered the dominant mode of the book which, as argued here, is that of humour in the form of irony, satire and caricature, which will be discussed here under the primary rubric of “parody.” Thus this exegesis will take as a starting point a comment made by Benjamin DeCasseres in a review of *The Secret Life* in early 1943, that “Dalí is, above all and beyond all, a satirist of the first order whether he admits it or not.”³⁶

Judging by comments made by those who knew Dalí as a young man, it is clear that the artist had been a natural comedian from a very young age, although in a particularly idiosyncratic, highly coded, and often extremely abstruse way. Describing Dalí’s comedic manner, Dalí’s former aide and collaborator, Robert Descharnes recounts the following about Dalí’s life as a student:

He wore a thin moustache like that of the movie star Adolph Menjou. He was slender, timid, and phlegmatic but well-mannered. His inexhaustible eloquence was enhanced by the comic effects of his natural humour and Spanish accent, but he knew how to keep quiet and did so for long periods, curled up in an armchair, observant and serious. His prodigious intelligence enabled him to topple no matter what intellectual structure by bringing into play comical enormities at which he was the only one who did not laugh.”³⁷

According to Breton’s biographer, Mark Polizzotti, despite Dalí’s many transgressions during his membership in the Surrealist movement, one of the reasons for the poet’s “uncharacteristic complaisance” was Dalí’s gift, “shared by few others, for making Breton laugh ‘until tears came to his eyes.’”³⁸ Among many other caprices, according to Secrest, Dalí began sending Breton “ludicrous missives,” which Breton would duly read at café meetings “in gravely measured tones until the audience dissolved in laughter.”³⁹ Those who are familiar with Catalan culture, and especially those who knew Dalí personally, are quick to pinpoint Dalí’s humour as very specific to the Empordà region of Spain in which Dalí was born and raised. In an informal discussion, both Montse Aguer Teixidor, the Director at the Centre for Dalinian Studies at The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in Figueres, Spain in May of 2007, and one of the Centre’s archivists, Ana Otero, Catalans familiar with Dalí’s oeuvre, were equally vehement in their view that Dalí’s humour is firmly rooted in the North-eastern area of Spain. As both explained, however, the characteristics of the Empordanese sense of humour are not necessarily easy to define, nor are attempts at definition always complimentary. Closer to this point are Ian Gibson’s noted reflections by Dalí’s friend Sebastià Gasch, who stressed the painter’s “innate irony—Empordanese in origin, he believed—claiming it had appalled him by its ‘incredible cruelty,’ at once glacial, impassive and utterly

tranquil.” On the other hand, Gasch maintained that Dalí had “a privileged and devastatingly lucid intelligence. In all his actions, in everything he said, and naturally in his paintings, the cerebral man is the one we find to the fore.”⁴⁰

Romero, another person who knew Dalí and the Empordà region well, wrote that “Dalí is gifted with the shrewd, infectious humour of the Ampurdán [alternate spelling], sharpened by his dealing with the fishermen and peasants as well as with the clever people of all conditions and nationalities who form his constant entourage.”⁴¹ Yet another of Dalí’s early friends, Josep Pla, gave the following analysis of *The Secret Life*, which Gibson records he “had ‘read and re-read’ in Cadaqués. He was convinced, he claimed, “that the tenor of the writing was authentically Empordanese in its irony and its mixture of mental freedom and ‘biological timidity.’” According to Pla, the book could only have been written by “a Catalan with the typical virtues and defects of the Empordà” and “only the natives of the Embordà ... were equipped to fully understand Dalí and his skill as an international ‘social strategist.’”⁴²

These assessments suggest that Dalí’s “Catalan” sense of humour is rooted very much in his “prodigious” intelligence, shows a particularly cruel aspect, is intensely ironic, and is frequently executed in a “pokerfaced” or deadpan manner, without “giving the game away.” The “social strategist” that Pla positions Dalí as emerges, perhaps, in the purest form of parody or satire, which allows the executor to tell the “truth” when couched safely in the bosom of absurdity or humour. Dalí certainly seemed to have a clear idea of precisely how his humour functioned in terms of issues of agency and disclosure as he describes it in *The Secret Life*. “With me no one could ever tell where humour ended and my congenital fanaticism began,” he writes,

so that people soon got used to letting me do whatever I wanted, without discussion: “That’s just Dalí!” they would say, shrugging their shoulders. But meanwhile Dalí had said what he wanted to say, and this thing that he had just said would quickly devour all the things that were not said or that even though they were said remained as though they had not been said, for most of them were already dead letters before they were even formulated (284).

In terms of artistic practice as it relates to parody, humour or irony, it is prudent to consider precedents set by one of the few artists Dalí seems to have admired throughout his life, Marcel Duchamp, to help elucidate Dalí’s conceptual *modus operandi*. For instance, in an interview with Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp was to state that “My position is the lack of a position ...” pointing to a decidedly liminal or inaccessible posture. Further, he explains the importance of refusing to foreground or disclose one’s own tactics, which he explains would reveal the workings of his artistic strategy and therefore render the idea of the “non-position” moot. “[B]ut, of course, you can’t even talk about it,” he states, “the minute you talk you spoil the whole game.”⁴³ But while Duchamp’s notorious “gestures,” as many of his more conceptual artworks might be described, present as relatively humble, and arguably personal expressions, despite their vast impact on the art world, Dalí’s often bombastic work presumes, and in fact, commands an audience, and demands that his viewers “clue in” or be “cretinized.”⁴⁴

While acknowledging this grandiose self-presentation, and what might be called Dalí’s “creative narcissism,” at this point it should be noted that with this kind of analysis comes the potential for criticism that the claims just made can easily be seen as an apologia for an egotistical, self-serving artist, who has duped the public into making him a rich man and an international celebrity. But whether or not it is acknowledged that Dalí may well have been the charlatan he portrays both “inside” and “out”—and there is little

evidence to the contrary—it does not discredit or change the fact that Dalí doth, to use Shakespeare’s famous phrase, “protest too much” or overstate his position—far, far too much—in fact, to the degree of parody. Consequently, what art critic Robert Hughes describes as Dalí’s “disgraceful” public “self” can be cited as a very tactical and loudly played performance, not in *relation* to Dalí’s oeuvre, but *as* Dalí’s oeuvre, and one that presumably served some function in his social, creative or political economy.⁴⁵ While this does nothing to aid the reader in distinguishing Dalí’s presumed parodic approach from his presumed “real” one, Dalí was to state (that is, if he can be believed) that although he recognized his own duality, he did not even know himself when he was “serious” and when he was not. In an interview with Alain Bosquet in 1967, the artist was to state that “I am not only an *agent provocateur*, but an *agent simulateur*. I never know when I start to simulate or when I speak the truth. That is characteristic of the profundity of my being.” According to Dalí, “I’m in a constant interrogation: where does the deep and philosophically valid Dalí begin, and where does the looney and outrageous Dalí end?”⁴⁶

By constantly putting authenticity and veracity into question, particularly in relation to his own person, Dalí presents a problem known as the “Cretan liar paradox,” in that the Cretan, who states that “all Cretans are liars,” “leaves his audience with the paradox of not believing him if he chooses to believe him.”⁴⁷ According to parody theorist Margaret Rose, the mechanics of this construct work “to show that it is not a function of fiction to offer verifiable statements of the world—for the naïve reader to take as true—but to lead the reader to interpret the fiction as, in its turn, an interpretation of the world of the reader.”⁴⁸ The idea of the Cretan-liar paradox is a particularly apt one in reference to Dalí, whose perpetual *frisson* was what he called “cretinizing” people, that

is, of “sucking them in,” or allowing them to make fools of themselves or to reveal their own prejudices, hypocrisies or foolishness.⁴⁹ It is also apt that Dalí would destabilize the very issue of subjectivity, “truth,” authenticity, and interpretation, as interested as he was in the idea of “projection” via his paranoiac-critical method which promoted wilful visual misinterpretation and the application of imaginative phenomena upon “real” objects.

While few people would argue that Dalí’s personality was a humorous performance of some kind, the general critical consensus has been that this “Dalí routine” was in the service of the artist’s avarice, very much to attract attention to himself, and essentially, as Rutherford states, to “sell the Dalí brand.” That said, very few critics have considered the possibility that Dalí’s oeuvre, performed or otherwise, or aspects of it, might also be a form of social critique in itself; that Dalí’s “act” as an overstated, loudly trumpeted, avaricious self-promoter indexes his role as a social satirist and attempts to mirror a society that Dalí viewed as misguided and “mad.” Dalí occasionally stated this very position outright, as he did in an interview with André Parinaud, claiming “The clown is not I, but rather our monstrously cynical and so naively unconscious society that plays at the game of being serious, the better to hide its own madness.”⁵⁰

This self-reflexive self-concept and intimation of social critique suggests that Dalí’s humour was actually quite a serious business. “. . . Ah, let us not claim that Dalí is an entertainer,” Georges Borgeaud entreates. “It is not certain that he ever knew laughter, joy or humour. Nothing in his books reveals abandon or relaxation . . . We are far removed from a fanciful or diverting enterprise.”⁵¹ Ratcliff intimates a similar view of Dalí’s humour as potentially “serious,” and even philosophical, writing that he has “paraded the spectacle of Dalí’s inauthenticity so much it seems as though the time has

come to mention the possibility that a presence as illuminating as his cannot be utterly frivolous. He may be profoundly serious.” Dalí’s “hollowness,” according to Ratcliff, “is vast as Blake’s plenitude.” Shifting to the Modernist period, he writes that “Dalí is Picasso in reverse, an anti-creator as crucial to authentic value in art as the fallen Lucifer to the idea of good in the world.”⁵² To Ratcliff, then, Dalí provided a self-conscious foil for what he viewed as a spurious “truth claim” and gravitas of the avant-garde, exemplified here in the painter Dalí viewed as his greatest rival, the “other” Spaniard Pablo Picasso.

This view of Dalí as a foil, cultural commentator, or what Pla calls the “social strategist,” suggests that Dalí is performing a role with a critical function that might be defined as performative, that is, according to Amelia Jones, one that opens up “that process of meaning production with respect to narrative/temporal arts ... or in relation to the experience of subjectivity and identity ...”⁵³ Put more simply, it might be stated that Dalí performed a sort of one-man “artist drag show” as a parody and critique of the art world and modernism as he defined them, and by the early 1940s in particular, of the avant-garde and Surrealism. Consequently, the interpretation proposed here regarding Dalí’s persona is similar to that of gender theorist Judith Butler’s position on “drag” performance—i.e., that while embodying the “eccentric genius artist,” Dalí’s public personality and performance “serves a subversive function to the extent that it reflects the mundane impersonations by which [in this case, models of the sensitive/numinous/egotistical artist] are performed and naturalized and undermines their power by virtue of effecting that exposure.”⁵⁴ According to Butler’s framework, then, Dalí’s exaggerated performance, as Surrealist, as classicist, as genius, as egotist, etc., can

be posited as a sort of camp routine that, on one level allowed him to make a “spectacle” of himself under the rubric of self-aggrandization, and on another, particularly in light of Dalí’s immensely public presence, to undermine the very construct of “artist-as-genius” and, by extension, the gravitas of western art and the credibility of the prevailing Western art system.⁵⁵

Of course, Dalí’s performative “meaning production,” at least during the writing of *The Secret Life*, was not part of a contemporary critical or artistic episteme in America in the early 1940s, although in retrospect it can clearly be read as a precursor to, and possibly as a progenitor of art practices that would become commonplace beginning in the 1960s. Today, by comparison, the cultural landscape is dominated by irony and parody, by self-reflexive critiques of the art world, the mixing of media and genres, “high” and “low” art forms, fabulation and performance. In particular the “lived art” that Dalí helped to pioneer, in the sense of using one’s personality, with one’s body as a “prop” or medium for art, has become common. In addition, this artistic strategy often becomes a metalinguistic mechanism which throws into question various phenomena, such as beauty standards, gender roles, increasingly technologized and commercialized subjectivities, and the art world itself, as it arguably does in works of “lived” art embodied in figures such as Orlan, Gilbert and George, Leigh Bowery or Mariko Mori. In terms of “lived” art, Dalí’s literary precedents might be traced to at least the eighteenth century, as his own effete and eccentric persona lampoons famous figures such as the dandy Beau Brummel (whose life was famously documented by Jules Barbey d’Aurevilly), and those following in his wake: the aesthetes, Oscar Wilde, Charles Baudelaire, and the so-called Decadents, of which Huysmans’ *Des Esseintes* is a chief

exemplar. In “mainstream” America of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, however, what Dalí was doing was confounding to an audience who had few conceptual parameters and little critical vocabulary with which to define his artistic approach.

Oddly, however, while contemporary audiences for the most part understand and accept “lived” art in the sense of the artists and literary figures cited, Dalí has remained frozen in simplistic and rigid discourses dominated by formalist standards that were used to define his transgressive (according to avant-garde criteria) creative practice in the 1930s, at the beginning of his “public” career as an artist. As will be discussed in later chapters, this view of Dalí had much to do with the avant-garde’s, and particularly André Breton’s positioning of Dalí as *Avida Dollars*, an epithet meaning “greedy dollars”; a genuine smear campaign undertaken for the purpose of disassociating Dalí from the Surrealist movement. This despite Dalí’s relentless foregrounding of himself as what might be described as a human caricature, with his curled-up moustache, lectures orated in diving suits, loaves of bread strapped to his head *et al.* All these things are duly presented under the banner of an ill-defined and often popular view of Surrealism or as an index of “eccentric genius,” but are also unambiguously comic and pointedly performative. While considering this, it is perplexing that so much of Dalí’s public persona has been, and stubbornly remains to be, taken at “face value”; that is, as thoroughly unproblematic. To paraphrase Ratcliff, seldom in a near century of “Dalinian silliness” has the cultural establishment entertained the possibility that there might have been a lucid, engaged, politicized, or strategic “self” behind the public entity known as Salvador Dalí.⁵⁶

The purpose of the emphasis here on Dalí's parodic and performative tendencies is not simply to point out the possible manifestations or sites of humour or masquerade in Dalí's work, but to suggest that Dalí's work *was*, for the most part, humour and masquerade, including his painting, his persona, his performances, aspects of his commercial production and his writing. That is, Dalí's humour cannot be confined to one period, medium or series, but must be contextualized as his very artistic strategy, lifelong, and very much tied in with what might be described as his "dialectic" of concealment and disclosure of any presumably "true" or "genuine" subject position in his work. That is not to say, however, that all of Dalí's work is meant to be read as "funny." Humour is a highly elusive and fluid entity, and trying to discuss how it works in any given text is perpetually complicated by the fact that dissecting humour effectively nullifies it. In most cases, one simply knows it when one sees it, rendering it a highly subjective exercise.

This having been established, it is fair to say that Dalí sets the tone right from the beginning of *The Secret Life* as humorous and self-reflexive, opening the work with the quip, "At the age of six, I wanted to be a cook. At seven I wanted to be Napoleon. My ambition has been growing ever since" (1). Following this lead, it is evident that there is a fairly straight-forward sprinkling throughout the text of the kind of conceptual and textual play that might be described as burlesque, exaggeration, double entendre, sarcasm, irony, parody, satire or comedy. While perhaps this aspect of Dalí's humour in *The Secret Life* is so obvious that it requires little discussion, what has proven more difficult for readers and critics are some of the more mystifying passages of the work, including Dalí's long digressions into the "myth" of Dullita/Galatea, for example, as well as vignettes such as *The Story of the Linden-Blossom Picking and the Crutch*, and the *Tale of the Wax*

Manikin with the Sugar Nose, not to mention the frequent occurrences, often at odds with the rest of the text, of Dalí's sudden outbursts of extreme, often physical cruelty. Some of these will be addressed in following chapters, where it will be suggested that they be construed as Dalí's attempts to incorporate into his text the language and imagery of psychology and psychoanalysis in the idiom of Sigmund Freud and Otto Rank, while simultaneously parodying them, and his own interpretations of them, in the process. Other hermeneutic options regarding Dalí's work will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, which considers literary influences, genres, and famous figures that, it will be argued, Dalí may have drawn upon in the creation of his persona, his life narrative, and the various forms of parody he employs.

Parody can be defined most simply by using an early mention of the term in the English language, by Ben Jonson, from his comedy *Everyman in his Humour* of 1598, where he writes "A Parodie, a parodie! With a kind of miraculous gift, to make it absurder than it was."⁵⁷ While parody does in fact make things absurder than they are, today the most common definition of parody is as a "device for comic quotation," that is, to make fun of or ridicule something specific, such as a particular text, person or a fad.⁵⁸ Hutcheon feels that in this process, humour is not always necessary, and writes that she views parody as "operating as a method of inscribing continuity while permitting critical distance."⁵⁹ Using parody in this way, as a discursive mode, by recontextualizing or referencing the preformed language material of other texts and discourses, "parody not only creates allusions to another author, another reader, and another system of communication, but to the relationship between the text, or discourse, and its social context."⁶⁰ Considering the use of multiple voices for multiple audiences, Dentith gives

the most useful definition of parody for the purpose at hand, defining it as something, like irony, that assumes a “double-voiced discourse,” “so that we can hear in the writing simultaneous traces of both the characters’ speech and the author’s attitude towards it.”⁶¹

Dalí’s parody of Huysmans’ “black dinner” with his own “white lunch” is an apt example of “double-voiced discourse” in *The Secret Life*, as it functioned both to describe, and add interest to an important meeting, as well as inserting an in-joke with Caresse Crosby, and “sending up” Huysmans’ dark feast. Another particularly notable example is Dalí’s now famous recounting of his courting of Gala, which becomes a sordid, smelly affair as he describes his bizarre adornment ritual and costume, which involved shaving his armpits until they bled and then rubbing them with laundry blueing, slashing his very feminine shirt and smearing his body with a boiled-up mixture of glue and goat’s dung. Further, Dalí’s “sweet nothings” to Gala consisted of hysterical laughter, and the courtship’s climax (some weeks later) involved Gala entreating Dalí to do nothing less than to kill her. Dalí is not quoting any particular text here, but rather the very cliché of the courting ritual, and while there may have been some factual truth to this story, Dalí has evidently taken the formula and made it comically visible by “taking X and inserting Y.” In this way the text is duly “doubly-voiced” in its ability to be read “straight,” as a direct and unmediated account of Dalí’s odd behaviour, and equally so as a parody of a shop-worn narrative that underpinned so much popular writing and endless melodramatic film narratives in the 1920s and ‘30s.

Looking at Dalí’s humorous, “double-voiced” approach, in an article entitled “Salvador Dalí, Writer,” French scholar Georges Borgeaud warns the reader that despite Dalí’s seeming frivolity, “The writer Salvador Dalí is to be taken seriously.” Considering

Dalí's strategies and intent in the following assessment of his writing in general, Borgeaud offers some intriguing insight in an attempt to comprehend what might be called Dalí's "protocol." "To approach Dalí we must discard all analytic systems and all rationality, too, but not our perspicacity," Borgeaud cautions. "It would be a mistake to think that Dalí is like an adolescent playing hooky or causing an uproar, or that he obeys crazy impulses or creates scandal for his own pleasure." Instead, he suggests, Dalí's writings

... give evidence that his "paranoiac" nature—to use Dalí's own term—has a mad sense of continuity ... One must recognize that he has constructed it superbly, proudly, and that it finds its nourishment in general human stupidity. Too bad for the dupes, bravo for those who do not allow themselves to be taken in, even as they admire the workings of the trap.⁶²

Borgeaud's assessment of Dalí's humour, as serving the purpose of asserting the artist's psychic and intellectual liberty as well as establishing his intellectual superiority by "cretinizing" the public and snickering with the cognoscenti, is important, as it should always be kept in mind that Dalí shares a joke with his "victims" equally as much as they are the butt of the very jokes at which they are laughing. Borgeaud also situates Dalí's parody very much in light of his wilful "paranoia," or his "mad sense of continuity," in which the artist creates his own absurd parallel universe with its unique code of ethics, laws, characters and aesthetics. In this regard Dalí may well have been looking at the kind of literature that parodied the human condition, in works by authors such as Voltaire, Alexander Pope, and especially considering Dalí's frequent emphasis on consumption, expellation, cannibalism, the bodily and the abject, Jonathan Swift and

François Rabelais, whose weird worlds and bizarre characters circulated in perverse cosmologies that parodied contemporary culture.

Rasilla is singular among critics in citing Dalí's persistent use of parody in his text, as a self-reflexive and bathetic device that both asserts his presumed megalomania and simultaneously undermines it. In *The Secret Life* she posits that one "can identify a double text integrated by the autobiography and the parody that deconstructs it." Most significantly, she draws parallels with the possible "double reading" of parody with Dalí's paranoiac critical method, stating that "the mechanics of parody uses similar procedures allowing the will of the reader to decide the interpretive direction of his reading into autobiography, psychoanalytical confession or parody." In other words, she explains, "*The Secret Life*, criticized on so many occasions for its scandalizing exhibitionist content, became an act of meta-fictional revelation and reflection."

Acknowledging the "double coding" of Dalí's text, then, not only provides an insider's position and opens up the work to alternate interpretive strategies, it also, Rasilla suggests, through somewhat histrionic textual performance, places into question the very act of self-narration. Indeed, she claims that "The parodic text embedded in Dalí's autobiography discloses through various devices such as grotesque humour, games of *mise-en-abîme*, and the methodical disappointment of the reader's expectations, some crucial paradoxes and problems posed by the autobiographical genre ..."⁶³ Specifically, she points out that "In his narrative Dalí questions the objectives of autobiography, deconstructing with his techniques of grotesque humour and deformation the mimetic foundation of the genre."⁶⁴ While Rasilla's assessment of Dalí's autobiography as largely parodic is convincing, she also acknowledges the crucial point that both "straight" and

parodic readings are simultaneously possible, and provides an example of two potential approaches to Dalí's famous courting scene with Gala. While Rasilla offers a well-crafted Freudian-style analysis of the text, by way of example, she warns that Dalí may well be leading us on and "planting" interpretive "bait" for the reader, rather than offering genuine insight. "Throughout his narrative," she writes, "Dalí toys with his readers and makes them participants of his obsessions and deliriums, by transforming them into characters of his grotesque comedy and victimized spectators of his obscenities, incongruence and short-cuts of communication."⁶⁵

Rasilla concludes her essay with sound advice for any reader approaching any text by Salvador Dalí: that they must steer clear of "traps" Dalí sets using the lures of specific interpretive strategies, as well as attempting, to a certain degree, to justify, and defend against the "duplicity" numerous writers have accused Dalí of in writing his memoirs, on these very grounds. According to Rasilla, Dalí's "bewildering pathological display may only victimize, deceive or puzzle the reader" while, she maintains, "a more distant and parodic reading can empower him *vis-à-vis* the relentless scandalizing current running through the work by providing the perspective necessary to interpret the intricate textual double game of Dalí's paranoiac life."⁶⁶

Dalí's "Striptease in Pink Limelight"

While by no means all of *The Secret Life* should be viewed as parodic, the importance of considering Dalí's "double-voiced" approach is, as Rasilla postulates, essential to avoid being "victimized or deceived" by Dalí. This is perhaps most evident when considering the consequences of "believing" Dalí's assertions in the text, or reading it without the necessary nuance or suspended disbelief that Rasilla claims can empower

or “arm” the reader against the onslaught of Dalí’s “madness.” Indeed, if there is one rule of thumb for measuring whether or not Dalí is “joking” or attempting to “cretinize” the reader, it is perhaps in the level of severity of his assertions. That is, that the more hyperbolic or offensive Dalí is, the more likely he is to be self-parodying, ironic, obfuscatory, or attempting to put the reader “on.” And by all measures, the most offensive aspects of *The Secret Life*, at least to the majority of mid-century readers, were his references to his “perversions,” masturbation, and in particular, his episodes of extreme wilfulness and cruelty, recounted in a number of stories in which the artist performs physically and psychologically violent acts upon innocent people, such as his nurse, his kindly old physician, school chums, his sister, and his first girlfriend.

In a famously acerbic review of *The Secret Life* written in 1944, entitled “Benefit of Clergy,” the English writer George Orwell was exceedingly affronted by the cruel acts Dalí claims to have performed in the book, and by the perspective and style of the book in general. His essay is of particular interest regarding the subject of this chapter, in that Orwell takes *The Secret Life* at face value, overlooking in most cases even the remotest possibility of Dalí’s tone being ironic, parodic or humorous. That is not to say that Orwell had no reasons to dislike the book on other grounds. His strong upright moral stance, socialist perspective and investment in the Republican causes of the Spanish Civil War—all polar opposites to Dalí’s ethos of the early 1940s—would naturally predispose him against Dalí even before he had read *The Secret Life*. Indeed, the British author of *Animal Farm* and *1984* spent several months as a militiaman fighting with the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) in Catalonia at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War.⁶⁷ Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, published in 1938, minutely details his Republican

affinities and experiences during the combat. Thus, he harboured a highly personal and politicized interest in Dalí, as a Spaniard, as a Catalan, and as a political figure increasingly associated with a Spanish Nationalist position. By way of setting the scene in his introduction to *Homage to Catalonia*, British author Julian Symons notes that Orwell was staunchly left-wing, socialist, and harboured a “puritanical strain that accompanied [his] revolutionary romanticism,” an estimation that serves well the analytical trajectory at hand.⁶⁸

According to Etherington-Smith, Orwell, “knew and understood Catalonia and the Catalans, their exuberant irony, and their love for hyperbolic and energetic bad taste.” That said, Orwell’s complete imperviousness to the irony, hyperbole, and energetic bad taste that saturates *The Secret Life* is, to say the least, surprising. Even with Orwell’s moral and political position in mind, “Benefit of Clergy” reads as quite an astonishing epistle in terms of its vitriol towards Dalí’s person and work and in particular for Orwell’s “straight” reading of the text. For parody to be effective, or “brought into being,” it is essential that the reader understand the “code” or recognize the object of the parody, as one of the features of parody is that “it depends for its effect upon recognition of the parodied original, or at least, upon some knowledge of the style or discourse to which allusion is being made.”⁶⁹ According to Hutcheon, “if the receiver does not recognize that the text is a parody, he or she will neutralize both its pragmatic ethos and its doubled structure.” Further, she writes, “A peculiar combination of sophistication and provincality is needed for a good parody, the former for obvious reasons, the latter because the audience must be homogeneous enough to get the point.”⁷⁰ Orwell seems to have lacked this particular combination, at least as it related to the work and person of

Salvador Dalí, and simply believes exactly what the artist writes; a response, it should be noted, of the kind that would have delighted Dalí, who claimed to revel in the “cretinization” of others.

Orwell held a number of objections to *The Secret Life*, and he is, in no uncertain terms, disgusted by the “self” Dalí presents in his memoir. He is particularly fascinated with the work as a sign of the moral and aesthetic corruption of the times. “Dalí is by his own diagnosis narcissistic,” he writes, “and his autobiography is simply a strip-tease act conducted in pink limelight.” “But,” he points out, “as a record of fantasy, of the perversion of instinct that has been made possible by the machine age, it has great value.” Orwell’s most pungent pronouncement—and there is an abundance from which to choose—is quite simply that “It is a book that stinks. If it were possible for a book to give a physical stink off its pages, this one would.” Further, he claims that

The point is that you have here a direct, unmistakable assault on sanity and decency; and even ... on life itself. What Dalí has done and what he has imagined is debatable, but in his outlook, his character, the bedrock decency of a human being does not exist. He is as anti-social as a flea. Clearly, such people are undesirable, and a society in which they can flourish has something wrong with it.⁷¹

Orwell is particularly unnerved by Dalí’s sexual “deviations,” and appalled that “well into adult life [Dalí] keeps up the practice of masturbation” and worse, does it “in front of a looking glass.” Two things that stand out in the drawings and reproductions in the book, Orwell notes, are “sexual perversity and necrophilia,” and there is a “fairly well-marked excretory motif as well.” The writer also cites with disdain “the rather pansified drawings of youths,” though noting that “Dalí also boasts that he is not

homosexual, but otherwise seems to have as good an outfit of perversions as anyone could wish for.”⁷²

Although acknowledging the shock value of *The Secret Life*, Orwell never considers the possibility that Dalí’s detailing his stated “outfit of perversions” might be a parody itself of psychoanalytic interest in matters sexual, and consequently overlooks Dalí’s ironic, hyperbolic and creative use of Freudian symbolism and methodology. Missing Dalí’s send-up, and taking his “mad genius” persona at face value, Orwell claims that “[W]hat he clearly needs is diagnosis.” Furthermore,

The question is not so much *what* he is as *why* he is like that. It ought not to be in doubt that his is a diseased intelligence ... He is a symptom of the world’s illness. The important thing is not to denounce him as a cad who ought to be horsewhipped, or to defend him as a genius who ought not to be questioned, but to find out *why* he exhibits that particular set of aberrations.⁷³

Orwell’s following objection rests in a “straight” reading of Dalí’s claims of cruelty, and he unquestioningly adumbrates the atrocities Dalí so proudly showcases: the “delirious joy” he felt after kicking his sister in the head when he was six; his claim of having flung a little boy off a suspension bridge; “knocking down and trampling on a girl”; his “five year plan” to sustain a tortuously chaste relationship with his first girlfriend before “deserting her,” and his contemplating fulfilling Gala’s request to kill her by hurling her from a tower.⁷⁴

Summarizing *The Secret Life*, Orwell notes that “The story ends in a blaze of respectability.” “Dalí, at thirty-seven,” he writes, “has become a devoted husband, is cured of his aberrations, or some of them, and is completely reconciled to the Catholic Church. He is also, one gathers, making a good deal of money.”⁷⁵ The latter remark

points to another strand of censure in Orwell's essay, and the fulcrum of the severity of his attacks upon Dalí rests in his belief that Dalí and artists equally as "contemptible" are given highly unmerited license, no matter what abominations they produce or enact. This Orwell describes in terms of the practice described as "benefit of clergy," the privilege of moral exemption enjoyed by British clergy, to describe the treatment he believes Dalí has received.

The artist is to be exempt from the moral laws that are binding on ordinary people. Just pronounce the magic word 'Art' and everything is O.K.: kicking little girls in the head is O.K.; even a film like *L'Age d'or* is O.K. It is also O.K. that Dalí should batten on France for years and then scuttle off like a rat as soon as France is in danger. So long as you can paint well enough to pass the test, all shall be forgiven you.⁷⁶

Orwell also accepts unchallenged what is probably the most offensive passage in Dalí's memoir—and perhaps the most obviously parodic, although in the darkest of senses. That is, the notorious "let them eat cake" attitude the artist adopts to describe his choice of refuge from an occupied Paris as based on the criteria of culinary opportunities. It occurs at the point in Dalí's narrative, sometime in late 1939, before Paris was occupied, when he and Gala were forced to leave the city. "The mobilization occurred," writes Dalí,

and the Grand Hotel was shut down. Back in Paris, I examined the map of France, I studied my winter campaign, trying to plan it out in such a way as to combine the possibility of a Nazi invasion with gastronomical possibilities, for in Front-Romeau the food was rather bad, and I was possessed by a frenzy for appetizing dishes. I finally put my finger on as close as possible to the Spanish frontier and at the same time on a neuralgic point of French cooking: Bordeaux. That would be one of the last places the Germans reached if, as seemed to me highly probable, they should win. Moreover Bordeaux naturally meant Bordeaux wine, jugged hare, duck liver *aux raisins*, duck *aux oranges*, Arcachon Claire-oysters

... Arcachon! I've got it! That is exactly the spot, a few kilometres from Bordeaux, to spend the war-days (381).

Despite Dalí's blatantly calloused commentary and the ethos of privilege, according to all of Dalí's biographers, the reality of the situation was as terrifying and uncertain for Dalí as anyone else, and his claim of turning exodus into a gastronomic event is, it will be argued below, fully intended to be as shocking and sinister as it is grim and tasteless.

Based primarily on Dalí's open discussion of his own "perversions," and his provocative assertions of cruelty and indifference to the suffering of others, Orwell viewed *The Secret Life* as nothing less than a transcription of a sick and contemptible mind directly to the manuscript paper. Although the English writer concedes Dalí's use of embellishment in his writing, nowhere does he consider the possibility of "double-voiced discourse" or parody. As far as Orwell is concerned, Dalí's work is "diseased and disgusting, and any investigation ought to start from that fact."⁷⁷ Attempting to reconcile Dalí's exceptional technical abilities with what Orwell clearly views as a detestable character, he maintains that "against this has to be set the fact that Dalí is a draughtsman of very exceptional gifts. He is also, to judge by the minuteness and the sureness of his drawings, a very hard worker." Dalí is an "exhibitionist and a careerist, but not a fraud." Given this, Orwell concedes that "One ought to be able to hold in one's head simultaneously the two facts that Dalí is a good draughtsman and a disgusting human being."⁷⁸

While there is no guarantee that Dalí was not, according to Orwell's criteria, "a disgusting human being," as with Dalí's public persona, his "button pushing" in his artistic life, and his outrageous pronouncements, the question that might well be asked

here (*pace* Orwell), “is not so much *what* he is as *why* he is like that.” According to Orwell, Dalí is simply “a symptom of the world’s illness,” who possesses two outstanding things: “a gift for drawing and an atrocious egotism.” How then, Orwell asks, in reference to Dalí’s claim to want to be the French emperor at the beginning of the book, do you “become Napoleon?” According to Orwell, the only escape is “*into wickedness*.” “Always do the thing that will shock and wound people.”⁷⁹ While acknowledging that Orwell might very well be right, that Dalí could be seen, at that time, as a “symptom of the world’s illness,” and as profoundly “wicked,” at this point a similar question might be posed: not “why is he like that?”, but “why does he makes such a great display of being like that?”

From the beginning of *The Secret Life*, Dalí goes to great pains to establish his egotism, as well as his complete lack of sentimentality and a penchant for treating others with cruelty. In Chapter One, entitled “Anecdotic Self-Portrait,” he relates a number of incidents that are evidently meant, as the title implies, to convey and highlight his depraved character via a series of nineteen anecdotes. The first begins with the artist, at age five, pushing a young friend over a cliff “some fifteen feet below.” Later, as the boy is being treated for his “badly injured head,” Dalí sits eating cherries, “in a delightful hallucinatory mood” as he watches basins full of his victim’s blood being carried out of the house before him. In anecdote II, Dalí blithely recounts his kicking his three-year-old sister in the head for fun. In VIII, Dalí beats away a female admirer who attempts to caress his bare foot, “until they had to tear her, bleeding, out of my reach.” In XI, the much-loved mayor of Figueres drops dead at Dalí’s feet at the end of one of the artist’s lectures. In XV, at another lecture, a crazed man attempts to kill Dalí. Elsewhere in the

text, Dalí also boasts about his having scratched his nurse's face with a safety pin because a sweet shop was closed, and about attacking his doctor and breaking his glasses as the man attempted to pierce his sister's ears.

Other incidents, which occur later in the text, are painted in more detail, no doubt for a more galling effect. The first is when Dalí is approached on a Madrid street by an aged beggar-woman asking for money. Instead of giving her alms, Dalí buys a bunch of white gardenias from a beautiful flower vendor nearby for one hundred pesetas, and cruelly presents these to the old woman instead of the much-needed money (204).

Another such incident takes place when Dalí is crossing the street in Paris, and spies a legless blind man on a plank with wheels, hoisting himself across the street. When no one is looking, Dalí maliciously kicks the invalid's vehicle, and sends the man flying across the street, cowering in fear (327). Adding insult to injury, Dalí then considers asking this beggar, "plunged in abjection," to relinquish his money. Both events, Dalí makes clear, leave him feeling perfectly self-satisfied, thus establishing his evident pride in his own wickedness.

A similar episode, singled out by Orwell, is equally galling. As a young man Dalí begins a courtship with a sweet, innocent young girl who falls madly in love with him. According to Dalí, he treats her with appalling callousness. He proceeds to tease her sexually without following through on his suggestions, dominates her life, alienates all of her friends, and delights in making her cry and treating her with the utmost harshness. Orwell notes that "He resolves to keep this up for five years (he calls it his 'five year plan'), enjoying her humiliation and the sense of power it gives him. He frequently tells her that at the end of five years he will desert her, and when the time comes he does

so.”⁸⁰ Discussing his increasing attempts to “enslave” her, Dalí recounts the following passage and sums up much of his treatment of this unnamed woman:

I exacted the subservience of her sentiments in a literal way, and every infraction of my pitiless sentimental inquisition had to be punished by her bitter tears. A contemptuous tone directed at her, slipped as if unintentionally into a casual conversation, was enough to make her feel as though she were dying. She no longer expected me to be able to love her, but she clutched at my esteem like a drowning woman (150-51).

While this episode seems to confirm Dalí’s innate cruelty, it is perhaps worth looking at this account from the perspective of Ian Gibson, whose research has unearthed the identity of this unknown girl. Based on letters exchanged between the two, he documents a perfectly ordinary, and very tender love affair which began sometime in 1920, between one Carme Roget and Salvador Dalí. Most significantly, Gibson had the opportunity to interview Roget, just before her death in 1993. In her own words, Roget paints a picture of a tender, chaste, and very romantic affair. “I was his only girlfriend, and we continued together until he left for Madrid,” Roget informs Gibson,

We were only children! ... We were so innocent! Our love was romantic, romantic. Once, when he kissed me, I hardly knew what was happening and ran to tell my friends! Salvador was handsome, he had long sideburns and above all he was very affectionate and very funny. When I was with him I used to kill myself laughing!⁸¹

Roget’s description clearly differs drastically from Dalí’s and indeed, she was to explain to Gibson that she was the one who ended the relationship, not, as Dalí stated, himself, in a brutal end to his supposed pre-determined and tortuous “five year plan.” Also worth noting is Roget’s emphasis on Dalí’s humour, and thus this episode might be interpreted, together with many similar incidents in *The Secret Life*, as an in-joke directed

at Roget within the pages of the text. Dalí well knew that Roget would read or be informed of the passage, in which she is discreetly left unnamed, and would see it for the fabrication that it was. Indeed, how else might one construe Dalí's absurdly childish word-game in which he states, "without doubt, she fully shared realization that I did not love her. Indeed I knew and she knew that I did not love her; I knew that she knew I did not love her; she knew that I knew that she knew that I did not love her" (145).

Another one of Dalí's "victims," his sister, Ana María Dalí, also offers a chronicle very contrary to the one Dalí spins. According to Dalí specialist Robert Radford, Ana María was highly disturbed by her brother's "creative" storytelling in *The Secret Life*, and was convinced that he had not been born "wicked," but had been debauched by the dark and perverse influence of Surrealism, and in particular, by Gala, the Surrealists' muse.⁸² Determined to set the record straight, Ana María wrote her own memoir of her brother's early life as she experienced it, in *Salvador Dalí visto por su hermana*, a small volume published in 1949. In her memoir, Dalí's sister depicts a happy, peaceful existence in Figueres, and offers insight into the Dalí household, which was typical for a bourgeois provincial Spanish family of the period. In her memoir Ana María does not gloss over her brother's idiosyncrasies or annoying personal traits, but for the most part, there is nothing in her story to corroborate Dalí's own depiction of his natural "evil" tendencies.⁸³

Dalí's humour noir

It can safely be gauged, then, that Dalí's stated malice in his autobiography bears little if any relation to actual fact. The question remains as to why the artist was so insistent upon presenting himself as cruel and sadistic. To this it might be answered that it was shocking and entertaining. Moreover, as Orwell observed, referring to Dalí's

repeated imagery in his work of the putrefying donkey, “If you threw dead donkeys at people, they threw money back.”⁸⁴

Fanés also queries Dalí’s transition in the text from “decadent” and sadistic youth to reactionary and pious Catholic. For him, Dalí is not redeemed at all, but instead the artist’s nature remains sadistic post-conversion, as the *détournement* merely inverts his iniquitous tendencies, when he turns to the rigid “inquisition” of his “renaissance,” or the “narcissistic corset” provided by Gala, and by the authority of reactionary politics and morality. For Fanés, Dalí is not redeemed, but simply inverts the dynamic of “master and slave,” so that he can continue to enjoy the pleasure of cruelty as the recipient, rather than the inflictor. “This subject touched by the ‘spirit of evil,’ Fanés writes, “this ‘I’ who narrates the eventful journeys of his own construction, could not abandon that cruelty of sadism, so laboriously and brilliantly cultivated in the first part of the story.”⁸⁵

Instead, Fanés writes, “That constant urge to slap, to give kicks without stopping, that joy before the pain and the blood had to be replaced if he wanted to continue surprising us, by some other thing, once released—with the appearance of Gala—of that narcissistic corset that contained it.” “If more aggression was needed,” Fanés maintains, “why not use the whip of a reactionary vision of history? Is not the repression caused by this order, after all, a form of suffering? The iron submission to hierarchy, is this not also a source of contempt and humiliation? Does the lack of freedom not also create a perverse game, of master and slave?”⁸⁶ Fanés, then, views Dalí as intent on presenting himself as perverse throughout the text, in which case his conversion to religious piety and conservative politics was merely to serve Dalí’s own sexual or psychological requirements of a perpetual ritual of dominance and submission.

An alternate hypothesis is offered to Fanés here, and assumes that Dalí did not simply invert his impulses, but was intent on demonstrating that he had, indeed, converted from a callous narcissist to one who has genuinely discovered “goodness,” and who now followed a righteous path, ending the book, as Orwell puts it, in a “blaze of respectability.” Therefore, in order for this conversion to have impact, it was necessary for Dalí to set himself up as “evil” as possible within the relatively believable boundaries of the parameters of his “real” life before his conversion, thereby making himself a good candidate for redemption; a redemption that was made all the more dramatic by what proceeded it. And the language Dalí chose to present himself as sinister and wicked was that which he culled from a literary tradition much admired by the Surrealists and their satellites, who often attempted to delineate a canon of writers who were thought to exemplify the darker, abject or absurd forces that Surrealism was determined to harness or depict. Bataille, for instance, privileged the work of a specific group of writers whom he viewed as exemplary of what he termed the “literature of evil,” while Breton sought to define a particular sensibility that he felt permeated the Surrealist canon, which he termed “black humour.” Based on comparisons and overt references in his memoir, it is evident that in many parts of *The Secret Life*, Dalí was self-consciously drawing upon this tradition of the bizarre and disquieting, particularly in the decidedly disturbing work of writers such as de Sade and Machiavelli, as well as more overtly literary figures such as Huysmans, Jonathan Swift, Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Alfred Jarry, Raymond Roussel, Guillaume Apollinaire, Jacques Vaché, the Comte de Lautréamont and others.

By referencing this cluster of texts, Dalí clearly aligned himself with the Surrealist movement and its circle, and was perhaps attempting to carve a place with his contemporaries, among books such as André Breton's *Nadja*, Georges Bataille's *Story of the Eye*, or Louis Aragon's *Paris Peasant*. But seeing as Dalí was intent upon distancing himself from the avant-garde in *The Secret Life*, from "decadent" culture, and especially from the Surrealists, Dalí's emphasis upon this tradition is clearly at odds with his stated directive to "become classic." Upon closer examination, at the finale of the book it becomes evident that Dalí decidedly moves away from what he describes as the Surrealists' evil and perverse sensibility. In fact, quite early in the text he already claims that the "vice of congenital negativism" of such writers has "confused and perverted their taste" and turned them into "evil angels" (74). Dalí, on the other hand, announces that he has managed to escape from this path of lifelong wickedness, and has taken another direction, embracing tradition, and seeking faith in the light of the Catholic Church. This naturally reinforces the arc of the narrative in that in both style as well as content, Dalí replaces a Surrealist sensibility with a different, presumably more worthy model, thus reinforcing the theme of his conversion. The remainder of this chapter will consider the lineage of "evil" and "absurd" writings upon which Dalí draws in the writing of his autobiography in order to convey his natural wickedness, as well how Dalí resolves this aspect of his personality, as he presents it, in the last few pages of *The Secret Life*.

Fanés looks to Georges Bataille, the self-styled "enemy from within" of the Surrealists, for the sources of "evil" in Dalí's autobiography, and points to the predominantly French literary tradition described by Bataille as the "literature of evil," as outlined in his book *Literature and Evil (La littérature et le mal)*, first published in 1957.

In this book, Bataille groups together Emily Brontë, Charles Baudelaire, Jules Michelet, William Blake, the Marquis de Sade, Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka and Jean Genet, and looks at the embrace and function of so-called evil in the work of these writers.

“Literature is not innocent,” Bataille declares. “It is guilty and should declare itself so.”

By way of explaining his rubric, Bataille writes in the preface that “Turmoil is fundamental to my entire study; it is the very essence of my book. But the time has come to strive towards a clarity of consciousness ...” Further, he writes that “These studies are the result of my attempts to extract the essence of literature. Literature is either the essential or nothing. I believe that Evil—an acute form of Evil—which it expresses, has a sovereign value for us. But this concept does not exclude morality: on the contrary, it demands a ‘hypermorality.’”⁸⁷ For Bataille, then, Evil becomes an almost sacrosanct entity, an extreme form of passion or worship, which he believes is exemplified in writers such as Genet, Brontë and de Sade.

By grouping Dalí’s work among these writers, Fanés accepts Dalí’s assertion of his own “evil” as unproblematic, and assumes, as does Orwell, that Dalí was “naturally” wicked, and “embraced” evil, as those in Bataille’s compendium presumably did. However, even from the first days of his joining the Surrealists, Dalí veered away from the dark pessimism and the sinister embrace of malevolence that fascinated Bataille, and sided with Breton, whose approach toward the undeniably attractive darkness of chosen writers was more playfully menacing and ironic. And in keeping with the assumption proposed here that Dalí’s main discursive mode in *The Secret Life* is that of parody, it is perhaps more prudent to question Dalí’s “acts of evil,” which seem so strangely jarring and out of place in a work that otherwise often portrays the artist as

cowardly, self-absorbed, and foppish, despite his avowedly monstrous egotism. Indeed, one might deduce that while Dalí is presumably drawing upon the diabolical aura of the “literature of evil” to convince the reader of his youthful wickedness, thereby making his conversion at the end of the book more dramatic and convincing, he is simultaneously parodying aspects of the genre. Consequently, it is constructive to look beyond Bataille’s canon of the “literature of evil” to another tradition as outlined in a book that no doubt influenced Bataille’s own, and one of which Dalí was highly cognizant: André Breton’s *Anthology of Black Humour*.

Breton’s *Anthology of Black Humour*, begun in 1935, finished in 1939, and finally published in 1945 was, according to Breton scholar Marc Polizzotti, “originally intended as ... a showcase for the Surrealist conception of humour.” Like Bataille, here Breton has gathered together a list of authors and artists who share a common ethos, in this case, that of “black humour,” a term now part of the contemporary lexicon, and one Breton intimates he coined himself.⁸⁸ The book lists excerpts from forty writers from a variety of primarily European nationalities, some of which overlap with Bataille’s list. These include Jonathan Swift, de Sade, Thomas de Quincey, Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Baudelaire, Lewis Carroll, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arthur Rimbaud, Jean-Pierre Brisset, O. Henry, André Gide, Alfred Jarry, Raymond Roussel, Guillaume Apollinaire, Franz Kafka, Jacques Vaché, and others. In addition to these writers, Breton also lists a number of artists associated with the Surrealist movement whose artwork or writing he believed shared the sensibility of “l’humour noir.” These included Hans Arp, Leonora Carrington, Pablo Picasso, Francis Picabia, Marcel Duchamp and, to be sure, Salvador Dalí. Breton included in the anthology an excerpt from key texts from each of these artist and writers,

each of which he commenced with a short preface, introducing the work, and discussing its place in his canon of “black humorists.”

In the entry dedicated to Salvador Dalí in the *Anthology*, Breton focuses on Dalí’s paranoiac-critical activity, and lists an article Dalí wrote for the Surrealist journal *Minotaure*, entitled “The New Colors of Spectral Sex Appeal.” In this piece, Dalí offers absurd ruminations on questions such as “the weight of ghosts,” “the reason for obesity in ghosts,” and “how does one become spectral?” Dalí’s comic conceit, and one that he frequently employs, is to discuss these bizarre questions using the grandiose, pseudo-scientific language of the academic or expert, creating an absurd *entente* with the reader, who is forced to enter Dalí’s realm of bizarre logic. A representative example is his “explanation” for ghostly weight-gain: “The reasons for the alarming increase in weight, the compact heaviness, the realist and extra-soft sagging of today’s ghosts derive only from the primary and original notion of the materialization of the idea of ghosts, which, as we shall quickly see, resides in the feeling of ‘virtual volume.’”⁸⁹ Typically, here as elsewhere, Dalí’s deadpan delivery never betrays his humorous approach.

In the introduction to the *Anthology*, Breton cites the futility of attempting to define any kind of humour, and writes that, “One might just as well try to extract a moral for living from suicide.” Nevertheless, he does endeavour to do define black humour, which he calls a “superior revolt of the mind” and the “mortal enemy of sentimentality, which seems to lie perpetually in wait.” By way of comparison, Breton quotes Freud’s sufficiently dark example: “the condemned man being led to the gallows on a Monday who observes, ‘What a way to start the week!’” “Given the specific requirements of the modern sensibility,” he explains, “it is increasingly doubtful that any poetic, artistic, or

scientific work, any philosophical or social system that does not contain *this kind* of humour will not leave a great deal to be desired, will not be condemned more or less rapidly to perish.”⁹⁰

Breton appears equally certain of the importance of black humour as a form of metalanguage, in the sense that it literally subjugates all other forms of communication. “The value we are dealing with here,” he insists, “is not only in ascendancy over all others, but is even capable of subsuming them, to the point where a great number of these values will lose the universal respect they now enjoy.” “We are touching upon a burning subject,” Breton announces,

we are headed strait into a land of fire: the gale winds of passion are alternately with us and against us from the moment we consider lifting the veil from this type of humour, whose manifest products we have nonetheless managed to isolate, with a unique satisfaction, in literature, art, and life. Indeed, we have the sense—if only obscurely—of a hierarchy in which the total possession of humour would assure man the highest rung ...”⁹¹

Lowering Breton’s ardour a few notes, from a contemporary perspective, it is difficult not to read in the poet’s observation of this “modern sensibility” an outline of what is today called “postmodern irony,” in its function as a self-reflexive or metalinguistic form of communication, a double-voiced commentary that can be profoundly “dark” and humorous at the same time.

Breton’s attempt to define this new kind of humour in psychoanalytic terms moves closer to the reason why he felt inclined to include Dalí in his anthology, even though the Dalí excerpt Breton includes in his anthology focuses more on absurdity than on cruelty. Quoting Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, he writes:

Like wit and the comic, humour has in it a *liberating* element. But it has also something *fine and elevating*, which is lacking in the other ... ways of deriving pleasure from intellectual activity. Obviously, what is fine about it is the triumph of narcissism, the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be compelled to suffer. It insists that it is impervious to wounds dealt by the outside world, in fact, that these are merely occasions for affording it pleasure.⁹²

This imperviousness, indexing the "triumph of narcissism," is precisely that which characterizes Dalí's own "cruel" humour, which must be delivered absolutely straight and without mercy for his subject. "Long live the *individuality* of the sharks (Marquis de Sade) who eat the weak ...," Dalí writes in a letter to Buñuel in 1939, a statement that perfectly summarizes the ethos behind the callous and self-serving episodes of cruelty in Dalí's memoir.⁹³

As with so many other aspects of *The Secret Life*, it is difficult to locate exactly where Dalí's influences in the realm of black humour might lie. However, Breton's and Bataille's compendia are extremely useful in this regard, particularly as they underscore the degree of self-consciousness with which the Surrealists and their circle drew upon and were fascinated by the phenomenon of evil and of the darker side of humour and human nature. Clearly, Dalí has gone to great pains to maintain his place in the canon of these writers, among whom he is already listed. In his prefatory remarks on Dalí's entry in his anthology, Breton describes Dalí as possessing "an intelligence of the highest order," and explains that with the paranoiac-critical method, "he undertakes a methodological effort of organization and exploitation, which tends to gradually reduce the hostile aspects of daily life and overcome this hostility on a *universal scale*." According to Breton,

Dalí never forgets that the human drama mainly emanates from, and is exacerbated by, the contradiction between natural necessity and logical necessity—two necessities that manage to fuse only in rare flashes and that in the dazzling glare of that flash reveal the country (no sooner lit than dark again) of “objective chance”: “Paranoid-critical activity is a force that organizes and produces objective chance.”⁹⁴

Breton’s analysis of Dalí’s “black humour” is tied up with his wilful, “paranoiac” interpretation of phenomena, and the absurd incongruity this can lead to, when relying upon “objective chance” rather than ordered interpretation. The manifestation of the bizarre in Dalí’s work, and of strange congruities and random acts, to be effective, always had to be delivered with a decidedly “pokerfaced” approach, that is, without “giving the game away.” How this played out in Dalí’s artistic practice is exemplified in the instructions Dalí gave to two aides during a lecture he presented in the early 1930s, which he describes in his memoir. The artist requested they advance solemnly during his oratory and carefully strap a loaf of bread to his head. “This operation must be performed” Dalí explained, “with the utmost seriousness, and even with a touch of the sinister” (321).

Finkelstein also notes incongruity as a key aspect of Dalí’s humour, regarding a simple formula he feels explains Dalí’s pseudo or parodic “scientific” approach to various bizarre or seemingly incompatible phenomena, which the artist delivers in a mock serious style, as he does in “The New Colors of Spectral Sex Appeal.” He looks to the French writer of *Ubu Roi* fame, Alfred Jarry, also featured in Breton’s *Anthology*, in terms of possible influence upon Dalí’s writing style. According to Finkelstein, Jarry was “a forerunner of Surrealism who developed a form of humour that breached the boundaries between the serious and what is not serious, between the waking experience

and dream.” Finkelstein assesses Jarry’s elevation of humour and the absurd as being “at the level of a discipline.”⁹⁵

Finkelstein considers, in particular, Jarry’s concept of “Pataphysics,” a pseudo-science, “as applied to the most absurd and hallucinatory notions, that should interest us, because it largely serves as a model, although not necessarily a direct one, for Dalí’s scientific pretensions.”⁹⁶ For Jarry, Pataphysics was the “science of imaginary solutions, which symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments,”⁹⁷ a description that has been contextualized as “an inner attitude, a discipline, a science, and an art, which allows each man to live his life as an exception, proving no law but his own.”⁹⁸ While traces of Jarry-style imaginings are perhaps more readily observed in Dalí’s more whimsical writings, not the least of which is “The New Colors of Spectral Sex Appeal,” a few instances in *The Secret Life* suggest Jarry’s influence at work directly; for example, in a footnote to a discussion on the good health of people with domineering personalities:

When a war breaks out, especially a civil war, it would be possible to foresee almost immediately which side will win and which side will lose. Those who will win have an iron health from the beginning, and the others become more and more sick. The ones can eat anything, and they always have magnificent digestions. The others, on the other hand, become deaf or covered with boils, get elephantiasis, and in short are unable to benefit by anything they eat.

To this absurd observation, Dalí adds his deadpan “punch-line,” writing “A rigorously controlled statistical study along this line could not fail to be of the highest scientific interest” (217 fn).

Other authors in the Surrealist “canon” more directly referenced in *The Secret Life* include, in addition to Huysmans, the idiosyncratic French writer Raymond Roussel much admired by Dalí, who painted an important work in 1938 entitled *Impressions of Africa*, evidently in homage to Roussel’s 1910 novel of the same name. In *The Secret Life*, Dalí tells us that he “upheld Raymond Roussel against Rimbaud,” and he quotes from the linguistically experimental *Impressions of Africa*, suggesting that “the subways of New York do not run on iron rails; they run on rails of calves’ lungs!”, a remark which he footnotes as “an idea borrowed from Raymond Roussel, the greatest French imaginative writer.” Indeed, certain aspects of word play, double-meaning and darkness in further passages in *The Secret Life* may continue to suggest the influence of Roussel, a man whose work Jean Cocteau felt that one was in danger of falling “under a spell from which there was no escape.”⁹⁹

The extent to which Roussel’s stylistic influence is evident in Dalí’s work is difficult to assess, although Dalí is certainly intent on associating his own name with that of the French writer, as with that of de Sade, Voltaire, and many other men of letters whose names appear sprinkled throughout *The Secret Life* as a sort of literary spice. These allusions display Dalí’s erudition as well as indexing the artist’s heritage in the tradition of black humour, but nowhere is this more pronounced than in the work of that great precursor to and hero of the Surrealists, Isidore Ducasse, otherwise known as the Comte de Lautréamont, author of the poetic novel *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1869). Lautréamont was, according to Bataille, such an obvious choice for his *Literature and Evil* that in an introductory note to his book he explains that “I have omitted from this collection a study on *Les Chants de Maldoror* which stood so well on its own that it

seemed superfluous.”¹⁰⁰ Ducasse does appear, however, in the *Anthology of Black Humour*. Perhaps the very embodiment of black humour or irony, Ducasse held a special place in the pantheon of Surrealist writers, even scripting the phrase often cited to epitomize the Surrealist ethos, that of something being as “beautiful as the encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.” But for Dalí, Lautréamont held an even closer place, as in 1933 Picasso advised the publisher Albert Skira to entrust the illustration of an edition of *Les Chants de Maldoror* to Dalí. The project was launched, and the book appeared in 1934 when Dalí was thirty years old.¹⁰¹

Aspects of the language and personality of the protagonist of Ducasse’s classic work, *Maldoror*, appear occasionally in Dalí’s autobiography, as in a particularly dark passage in *The Secret Life*, when Dalí claims he was doing nothing less than encouraging a depressed friend to commit suicide. Noticing a whitish bundle falling from a window in a nearby building, he asks “Was it Maldoror?” and explains that, when he was a young man, “The shadow of Maldoror hovered over my life” (202-3). This shadow was, within the economy of *The Secret Life*, no doubt a reflection of Dalí’s avowed cruelty, particularly where his writing was concerned. According to the sinister and evil protagonist of Lautréamont’s classic work, “There are some who write seeking the commendation of their fellows by means of noble sentiments which their imaginations invent or they possibly may possess. But *I* set my genius to portray the pleasures of cruelty!” Following this, Maldoror asks the same question that Orwell does in “Benefit of Clergy”; that is, “if cruel, can’t one possess genius?” To this Maldoror replies, “My words will provide the proof: all you need do is listen to them, if you like...”¹⁰²

While in a number of sites, Dalí's autobiography conveys the dark sensibility epitomized by *Maldoror*, it was also no doubt Ducasse's hyperbolic, exclamatory and comically—through overstatement—sinister language that is noticeably reflected in Dalí's autobiography. For example, Dalí's use of the imagery of the crustacean's "armoured outside" reveals a marked influence from passages from *Les Chants de Maldoror*. "The crustacean" writes Dalí, "is ... able, with the weapons of its anatomy, to protect the soft and nutritive delirium of its insides, sheltered against all profanation ... " (9). Ducasse, on the other hand, writes, "It is useless for you to encrust yourself with the cartilaginous carapace of an axiom you consider firm."¹⁰³ Or, in language characteristic of Dalí's hyperbolic pronouncements, Ducasse writes, "A regal soul, inadvertently surrendering to the crab of lust, the octopus of weakmindedness, the shark of individual abjection, the boa of absent morality, and the monstrous snail of idiocracy!" As for Dalí's stated pleasure in making others miserable, Ducasse cites Maldoror noting that The Creator says this to his creations: "You have done nothing against me, that I do not deny. And for my pleasure, I make you suffer."¹⁰⁴

David Lomas considers the appeal and influence of Maldoror in *The Secret Life* and other of Dalí's written works. "The renowned excesses of Dalí's writing style and his humour are other areas where an unmistakable influence of Maldoror can be discerned," he maintains, and discusses a chapter on humour in French literary critic Léon Pierre-Quint's 1930 book about Lautréamont, which, he suggests, "would have caught Dalí's eye no less than the one on sadism." According to Lomas, Pierre-Quint sees the comic in Lautréamont as an instrument of revolt. Its tone, he suggests, "is close to sarcasm and the laughter it provokes is actually a grimace—an observation that finds a ready counterpart

in Dalí's painting." Lomas also notes that there is much in Lautréamont's writing that points to Dalí's own directive of "cretinizing" his readers, and that *The Secret Life* "is littered with episodes of gratuitous cruelty recounted without any hint of shame or remorse that seem to be modeled on similar episodes in *Les Chants de Maldoror*." Translated to the etchings for Lautréamont's *Chants* Dalí produced for Skira, Lomas notes that "it is the cohabitation of sadism with the comic that is so perverse and, by the same token, so redolent of Lautréamont."¹⁰⁵

Throughout *The Secret Life* Dalí references a number of historical figures who were notable for the "evil" in their writing or lives, including de Sade, Ducasse and Hitler. Not included, however, in Bataille's or Breton's rosters of writers and artists, is another "evil angel" who appears with frequency in *The Secret Life*: that of Niccolò Machiavelli, that ruthless, black-clad strategist associated today with merciless political manoeuvring, and a loosely defined form of "evil." In reference to his own conniving and devious tendencies, throughout the course of the book, Dalí refers to himself as "Machiavellian" and at the end of Chapter Eleven, he even creates an illustration which depicts a figure presumably meant to be Machiavelli, as well as writing the word "Machiavellism" twice in the image. While at this point in the book this association is no doubt intended to position Dalí as scheming, unfeeling and self-serving, the comparison is equally humorous. That Dalí would cite himself as Machiavellian, associating his trifling schemes with those of the powerful Italian diplomat and author of *The Prince*, can only make his own machinations appear miniscule and ineffectual by comparison. Nevertheless, Machiavelli's presence in *The Secret Life* continues to reinforce the "shadow of evil" over the text, and can be read on either register (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Salvador Dalí. "Machiavellism."

Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 284.

Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.

© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí /SODRAC (2009).

The work of the writers in the domain of "evil" and "black humour" which Dalí references or imitates in *The Secret Life* does much to create the atmosphere of dark humour and shameless wickedness that Dalí wishes to establish as part of his life before his redemption and discovery of Catholicism and classicism. Once he has been redeemed by tradition and the church, Dalí's presumably diabolical position is rejected in favour of the world of "angels." In an aside earlier in the text, Dalí writes that "All poets have sought one single thing: the angel. But their vice of congenital negativism has confused and perverted their taste and turned them into evil angels, and if it is true that it is always the spirit of evil that animates the Rimbaudian and Maldororian angels this is due to the sole and unique fact of the inadaptation to reality that is consubstantial with poets."

While poets, according to Dalí, who no doubt includes Breton, Lorca and Gala's former

husband Paul Éluard among them, may have fallen under the spell of darkness, “Painters, on the other hand, having their feet much more securely on the ground, do not need to grope blindly and, possessing a means of inspiration far superior to that of poets—namely the eye—do not need to have recourse to the viscous confusion of the mental collapse into which poets must inevitably fall.” As a painter, then, Dalí was able to access the divine, and therefore his *métier* helped to pave the road to his redemption. “This is why,” he writes, “only painters are and will be able to show you true angels and true gods, as Raphael did with so much reality and good sense from the height of his imperial Olympus of divine genius” (74).

As has been established, the “plot” or movement of Dalí’s novelistic memoir requires that the artist be seen, for the bulk of the story, as unformed, wicked, and therefore ripe for redemption by true love and the church, and for a remarkable turn toward “tradition” and “form.” Without a dramatic change from one position to the other, there could be no real movement or drama in Dalí’s conversion or personal “renaissance.” Dalí is unambiguous about the fact that this conversion has taken place at the end of the book, writing that “As a child I was wicked, I grew up under the shadow of evil, and I still continue to cause suffering. But since a year ago I know that I have begun to love the being who has been married to me for seven years; and I am beginning to love her as the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church demands, according to its conception of love ...”

Conclusion

This chapter has considered various critical strategies for approaching *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, particularly in terms of literary influence, and as regards the

presence and agency of parody in the work. In particular, it has examined the nature and parameters of Dalí's humour, and its function as a "double-voiced discourse" that speaks to a number of audiences on several potential interpretive registers. Dalí makes every attempt to posit his "genius" by showcasing his learning through allusion and stylistic imitation throughout the work, and draws upon a tremendous variety of other texts for inspiration. In particular, Dalí looks to the canon of writers established by the Surrealists, and Breton in particular, as they fall under what the poet describes as "black humour."

While drawing upon this "literature of evil" adds a sinister and Surreal element to the text, it also, it has been argued here, serves a narrative function; that is, to establish Dalí as "wicked" and therefore in dire need of the redemption he claims to have found at the end of the book. This theme is corroborated in one of the most important literary allusions in the text; that of Wilhelm Jensen's novel of 1903, entitled *Gradiva*, read, as it was, through a Surrealist gloss as defined by an analysis of the work by Sigmund Freud. How the influence of Jensen, and in particular of Freud, figure in *The Secret Life* is the subject of the following chapter, which considers Dalí's embrace of the "science" of morphology, as well as establishing what Dalí calls his new "cosmology," or "life system" according to which he claims he will structure his future life.

¹ Salvador Dalí, "Sharp Sybaritic Realism," introduction to *Hyperrealism*, by Linda Chase (New York: Rizzoli, 1973), 4.

² Salvador Dalí, *Hidden Faces* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1974), xi.

³ Joseph-Lowery, 5. Translation mine.

⁴ Bertram D. Wolfe, *New York Herald Tribune* (December 27, 1942) (CDSS), np.

⁵ Dawn Ades, ed. *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 426.

⁶ Haakon Chevalier, "Translator's Foreword," in Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, vii.

⁷ Lake, 91.

⁸ Dalí is referring here to German philosopher and polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) who argued against randomness and maintained that there must be a “sufficient reason” for anything to exist, or anything to occur.

⁹ Salvador Dalí, *Ten Recipes for Immortality* (private printing, 1973), as quoted by Robert Descharnes, in the Preface to Etherington-Smith, xii. N.B.: Eugène Carrière was a Symbolist artist known for his monochrome palette and smoky technique, whose work involved startling contrasts of light and shade.

¹⁰ Etherington-Smith, 262. See Dalí, *Correspondance de J.V. Foix 1932-1936*.

¹¹ Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 3-4.

¹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³ Benjamin DeCasseres, “In the Realm of Books,” *New York Journal American*, Jan. 3, 1943 (CDSS).

¹⁴ Bertram D. Wolfe, review of *The Secret Life* for the *New York Herald Tribune* (December 27, 1942) (CDSS), n.p.

¹⁵ Jack Spector, “Traduttore, Traditore,” Preface to Salvador Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un génie?*, ed. Frédérique Joseph-Lowery (Lausanne: L’Age d’homme, 2006), 7. Translation mine.

¹⁶ Secrest, 182.

¹⁷ Fanés, “*La Vida Secreta: Una Literatura del Tumulto*,” 39-40. Translation mine.

¹⁸ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Against Nature*, trans. Robert Baldick (London, New York, etc.: Penguin Books, 1959), 26-27.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Caresse Crosby, *The Passionate Years* (New York: Ecco Press, 1979), 287.

²² Haakon Chevalier, “Salvador Dalí as Writer: Surrealism Takes to the Typewriter,” *The Saturday Review* (April 15, 1944), (CDSS), n.p.

²³ Haakon Chevalier, *Translator's Foreword*, in Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, v.

²⁴ Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, xii- xiii.

²⁵ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 464.

²⁶ William Jeffett, “General Franco,” in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 434.

²⁷ Anon, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Jan. 2, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.; Anon., *St. Paul Minnesota Dispatch*, Dec. 19, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.; Clifton Fadiman, “Books: Reports from England and the Subconscious,” *The New Yorker*, Jan. 2, 1943, 50-51; Sterling North, *The New York Post*, December 23, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

²⁸ This work is generally interpreted as a reference to the Munich Agreement in 1938, with the umbrella referring to Chamberlain, and the telephone indexing the attempted “telephone diplomacy” between the British Prime Minister and Hitler. See Elliott H. King, “The Enigma of Hitler,” in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 304-308.

²⁹ Konrad Heiden, introduction to Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, and Cambridge: The Riverside Press 1943), xv-xxi.

³⁰ Ralph Manheim, “Translator's Note,” in Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, xii.

³¹ *The Secret Life* manuscript and draft font, The Centre for Dalinian Studies, Figueres, Spain.

³² Anon, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Jan. 2, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.; Anon., *St. Paul Minnesota Dispatch*, Dec. 19, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.; Clifton Fadiman, “Books: Reports from England and the Subconscious,” *The New Yorker*, Jan. 2, 1943, 50-51; Sterling North, *The New York Post*, December 23, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

³³ Walter Benjamin, as quoted in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 257.

³⁴ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 474.

³⁵ Stuckey, review of *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*.

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_7_87/ai_55149253/pg_1.

³⁶ DeCasseres, np.

³⁷ André Thirion, *Révolutionnaires sans Révolution* (Paris: Robert Laffont), 1972, as cited in Robert Descharnes, *Dalí*, trans. Eleanor R. Morse (New York: Harry N. Abrams), 26.

³⁸ Polizzotti, 384.

³⁹ Secrest, 134.

⁴⁰ Sebastià Gasch, “Salvador Dalí,” in *L'expansió de l'art català al món* (Barcelona: privately printed, 1953), 143-4, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 193-4.

⁴¹ Romero, 117.

⁴² Josep Pla (alias Tristán), "Salvador Dalí visto desde Cadaqués," *Destino* (Barcelona), (September 28, 1946), 3-5, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 493.

⁴³ Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 2000), 194-95.

⁴⁴ Finkelstein notes possible correspondences between Dalí and Duchamp, and maintains that the procedures adopted by Dalí "reveal, indeed, some affinity with Duchamp's endeavour to suggest a framework of meaning that would allow acceptance and negation of a thing in the same breath," that is, he writes, what Duchamp refers to as "irony of indifference." However, he warns, such a comparison should not be drawn too closely, as "although Dalí was, in his own way, similarly jealous of his prerogative of not committing himself to any one stance, an ironic indifference was never quite his hallmark. Nor was he ever close to Duchamp's notion of 'dry art' [a sort of "empty" or "mechanical" form of art] or relentless effort to preserve the inviolable purity of his conception" (Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 244).

⁴⁵ Robert Hughes, "The Two Faces of Dalí," *Time* (March 13, 2000), www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,996320-2,00.html.

⁴⁶ Alain Bosquet, *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí* (Paris: P. Belfond, 1983), 69. Translation mine.

⁴⁷ Margaret A. Rose, *Parody/Meta-fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 86.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Reynolds Morse attempts to define Dalí's "cretinizing" project by quoting the January 1, 1945 edition of *Life* magazine which claims, in an article on Dalí, that "to 'cretinize,' according to Dalí is 'to drive everybody nuts'" (Morse, 112).

⁵⁰ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 238.

⁵¹ Georges Borgeaud, "Salvador Dalí, Writer," in *Homage to Salvador Dalí: Special Issue of the XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 56.

⁵² Carter Ratcliff, "Dalí's Dreadful Relevance," *Artforum* (November 1982): 65.

⁵³ Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson, eds. *Performing the Body/Performing the Text* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 2.

⁵⁴ Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," in *Bodies that Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 231.

⁵⁵ It should be noted here that Susan Sontag, in her well-known essay "Notes on Camp," does not categorize Dalí's work as camp, so much as "precious," although she does not consider the artist's personality. "What is extravagant in an inconsistent or an unpassionate way is not Camp," she writes. "Neither can anything be Camp that does not seem to spring from an irrepressible, a virtually uncontrolled sensibility. Without passion, one gets pseudo-Camp—what is merely decorative, safe, in a word, chic. On the barren edge of Camp lie a number of attractive things: the sleek fantasies of Dalí, the haute couture preciousness of Albicocco's *The Girl with the Golden Eyes*. But the two things—Camp and preciousness—must not be confused" (Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 284).

⁵⁶ Carter Ratcliff, "Swallowing Dalí," *Artforum* (September 1982): 37. It should also be acknowledged here that in critical analyses of Dalí and his career, Dalí is often considered to be the sole agent at work in the creation of the Dalí "construct," a view that bypasses issues of reception and what might be termed "niche marketing." Plainly, especially in pre-war Paris and pre-, during, and post-war America, what Dalí had to offer evidently hit a nerve with a popular audience, who "devoured" Dalí, and the popular press, who also swallowed whole and actively sought Dalinian excess, which always made great copy. Thus, it could be argued, the press and the public "made" Dalí perhaps as much as Dalí "made" himself.

⁵⁷ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1966), 124.

⁵⁸ Rose, 20.

⁵⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 20.

⁶⁰ Rose, 44.

⁶¹ Simon Dentith, *Parody* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 8-9.

⁶² Borgeaud, 53-56.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

- ⁶⁷ Etherington Smith, 277.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, vii.
- ⁶⁹ Dentith, 38.
- ⁷⁰ Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody*, 27, quoting Dwight Macdonald, ed. *Parodies: An Anthology from Chaucer to Beerbohm—and After* (New York: Random House, 1960), 567.
- ⁷¹ Orwell, “Benefit of Clergy,” 175-76.
- ⁷² Of all the ironies and indignities, Orwell’s essay, railing against perversions, and calling for the social responsibility of art, was to be considered obscene and therefore immoral itself. Apparently “Benefit of Clergy” was intended for publication in the 1944 edition of the English publication the *Saturday Book*, but was cut out of the tome by the publishers, Hutchinson’s, before distribution due to the unsavoury content of the article. As such, it did not appear in print until 1946 (Etherington-Smith, 277).
- ⁷³ Orwell, “Benefit of Clergy,” 179.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., 171-72.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 173.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 177.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 184.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 178.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 182.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 172.
- ⁸¹ See Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 117, re. his conversation with Doña Carme Roget, Figueres, September 23, 1993.
- ⁸² Robert Radford, *Dali* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997), 24.
- ⁸³ Ibid. See Ana María Dali, *Salvador Dali visto por su hermana* (Barcelona: Parsifal Ediciones, 1993).
- ⁸⁴ Orwell, “Benefit of Clergy,” 183.
- ⁸⁵ Fèlix Fanés. “*La Vida Secreta: Una Literatura del Tumulto*,” 38. Translation mine.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. Alastair Hamilton (London: Calder and Boyars, 1973), n.p.
- ⁸⁸ André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour*, ed. and trans., Mark Polizzotti (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), xii.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 325.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., xiv.
- ⁹¹ Ibid.
- ⁹² Ibid., xviii. Freud’s quotation is uncited. It may also explain elements of Dali’s own definition of irony, in his prose poem “Saint Sebastian,” likely inspired by Freud’s very reference to the ego’s imperviousness to the “arrows of reality,” when he writes that “Irony, I have already said, is nudity; it is the gymnast who hides behind the pain of St. Sebastian” Salvador Dali, “Saint Sebastian,” *L’Amic de les Arts* (Sitges), vol. 2, no. 16 (July 31 1927): 52-4.
- ⁹³ Luis Buñuel Archive, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, as quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 451.
- ⁹⁴ Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour*, 325.
- ⁹⁵ Finkelstein is quoting Roger Shattuck, in *The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant-Garde in France, 1885- World War I*. New York: Vintage, 1968, 34, quoted in Finkelstein, *Salvador Dali’s Art and Writing*, 221.
- ⁹⁶ Finkelstein, *Salvador Dali’s Art and Writing*, 221.
- ⁹⁷ Shattuck, 242, quoted in Finkelstein, *Salvador Dali’s Art and Writing*, 221.
- ⁹⁸ Roger Shattuck, “What is ‘Pataphysics’?” *Evergreen Review*, no. 13 (May-June, 1960), entire issue, as quoted in Maurice Marc LaBelle, *Alfred Jarry: Nihilism and the Theatre of the Absurd* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1980), 137.
- ⁹⁹ Mark Ford, *Raymond Roussel and the Republic of Dreams* (Ithaca: New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), xxviii.
- ¹⁰⁰ Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, n.p.
- ¹⁰¹ Pierre Argillet, “Salvador Dali’s Graphics,” in *Homage to Salvador Dali: Special Issue of the XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 135.
- ¹⁰² Comte de Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse), *Lautréamont’s Maldoror*, trans. Alexis Lykiard (London: Allison & Busby, 1970), 4-5.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 142.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 53.

¹⁰⁵ David Lomas, “Maldoror,” in Ades, *Dali: The Centenary Retrospective*, 4.

CHAPTER 4: Morphological Echoes: Freud, Gradiva and Dalí's Cosmogony

The spark that spreads through the universe in all its dimensions. A unique something that transcends our lives, and justifies Everything—Her, Me, the Totality of the World—Gala is herself, and all women; and also the cosmos.

Salvador Dalí,
The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí, 1976.¹

Introduction

This chapter takes as its subject two key figures in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* other than Dalí himself, that of Sigmund Freud and Gala, and two key concepts that underpin the conversion narrative of the autobiography, that of morphology and cosmogony. From an early age Dalí had, like so many people of his epoch, been influenced by the writings of Sigmund Freud, much as psychoanalysis had staked a common ground for Surrealist conceptual and aesthetic directives. Freud's influence is keenly felt throughout *The Secret Life*, in Dalí's language, writing style, and his interest in his own psychological development. This is most evident in the artist's veritable transubstantiation of his wife Gala into the figure of Gradiva in the text, a character from a novel of the same name made famous by Freud, who offered a psychoanalytic interpretation of the work that was to have a profound influence on Dalí and the Surrealists.

Dalí's appropriation of the *Gradiva* narrative, itself a narrative of redemption, reinforces one of the key themes of the text: that of "morphology," or the "science" of metamorphosis, as people and things become, he maintains, what they were predestined to be. This is exemplified in Dalí's assertion that he was fated to be rescued from madness by Gala, and saved from wickedness by the Catholic Church, much as he

continued to fulfill his destiny as the “saviour of modern art.” In this way he sets up a conceptual binary in the text which hovers between psychoanalysis and morphology, the first which maintains that humans are a product of their environment, and the second which posits the idea of predetermination. Dalí signals a move away from Freud, however, in many locales in the text, where he not only parodies Freudian language, methodologies and psychoanalysis itself, but also suggests that he has mastered Freud’s analytical techniques, and even transcended them.

This move to a new paradigm for what can be described as Dalí’s life system, the artist positions under the rubric of “cosmogony,” indexing his move away from a leftist, Surrealist, vanguard ethos based upon psychoanalytic theory, to a reactionary, “classic” and metaphysical one founded upon a “morphological” episteme. In this way, Dalí continues strategically to negotiate and mobilize the events and concepts he documents in his memoir, and move them toward the redemptive climax at the end of the text, where Dalí embraces his new “cosmogony” and becomes what he was preordained to be.

A Conceptual Inquisition: Dalí’s Life System

Much of *The Secret Life* is concerned with the strategic attempt to position Dalí in the eyes of a number of audiences, as the artist sought to differentiate himself from the Surrealist movement, the avant-garde, atheism and leftist politics with which he had previously been affiliated. Before having written the book, Dalí had indeed gone through a number of phases in his aesthetic and political life, and his voracious intellectual curiosity had exposed him, although on a relatively superficial level, to countless works of philosophy and scientific theories that helped to inform his thinking. As Finkelstein writes, “Dalí needed to function within the constraints of some intellectual system or

other,” an observation that is evinced in Dalí’s insistence in his memoir on succinctly, if not obsessively, defining his position, and points very much to a deep-rooted need for directives and parameters in which to work.”² Throughout the 1930s, these had more or less been delineated through his connections with the Surrealist movement, where manifestos were plainly spelled out, politics were decidedly left-wing and intellectual and creative initiatives were based, to varying degrees, upon a Freudian paradigm.

After Dalí’s break with Surrealism, the embrace of his new political direction, and his ever-increasing and highly lucrative popularity during his American exile, Dalí evidently found these old systems and guidelines ineffective or inappropriate for his proposed new direction. Judging from *The Secret Life* and other documents of the period, such as *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí*, both exuberantly declarative in tone, and intent on defining Dalí’s outlook and direction, the artist had spent considerable mental energy devising a new “life plan” according to which he would live. This included not only claims for a fresh artistic direction, but also moral, psychological, mystical and philosophical routes. As discussed at the beginning of this thesis, two of the key words in the text are those of “form” and “inquisition,” which in Dalí’s lexicon relate to the idea of defined boundaries and ethical and intellectual parameters. Dalí, in fact, employs a very specific term in the text to denote the idea of a life system, that of “cosmogony”; that is, the creation of a cosmos; in this case, Dalí’s private conceptual universe in which he lays claim to a “formed” and holistic structure. Typical of Dalí’s writing, he introduces the word at a key juncture in the text, as a focal point, and then repeats it, delineating his very specific and highly personal meaning. In this way, through recurrence of the term itself,

and repeated definitions of it, Dalí establishes the parameters and importance of his stated new cosmogony, and its implications for his life and art.

The word cosmogony first surfaces toward the end of *The Secret Life*, after Dalí suffers his *crise de coeur* regarding his artistic direction, and determines that his “surrealist glory was worthless,” and that “the important thing was to render the experience of my life ‘classic’—that is, to endow it with a form, a cosmogony, a synthesis, an architecture of eternity” (350). Four pages later, Dalí explains that “to be classic meant that there must be so much of ‘everything,’ and of everything so perfectly in place and hierarchically organized, that the infinite parts of the work would all be the less visible. Classicism thus meant integration, synthesis, cosmogony, faith, instead of fragmentation, experimentation, scepticism” (354).

Dalí further obliges the reader by explaining what he means by cosmogony in the final chapter, when he has decided to launch his grandiose new project with which, with characteristic hubris, he attempts to encompass nothing less than “everything”:

—all, all, all. Cosmogony, cosmogony, cosmogony! The conquest of all, the systematic interpretation of all metaphysics, of all philosophy, and of all science, according to the fund of Catholic tradition which alone the rigor of the critical-paranoiac method would be capable of reviving. Everything remained to be integrated, to be architectonized, to be morphologized (383).

This is followed a few pages later by an even clearer designation of this crucial term, which points to an entity that is all-encompassing. “For Cosmogony is an ‘exclusive whole,’” Dalí writes, “Cosmogony is neither Reaction nor Revolution—Cosmogony is Renaissance, hierarchized and excluding knowledge of everything” (387).

Dalí envisions the instigation of his new “life plan” as a birth, in keeping with his initiative of a personal renaissance, but also in terms of his predestination as a saviour figure. Like the exhausted Virgin Mary perched on a donkey and looking for a place for the nativity of Christ in Bethlehem, Dalí describes his life as a series of travails before the “glorious” moment of birth/rebirth. “But before giving birth to this cosmogony,” he writes,

which for nine years I had felt pressing and growing and giving me kicks in the depths of my logical bowels I would have to continue on the road of my life, which the war of Europe might even involuntarily bar, in order to be able to continue to attend to my moral, material and capricious “needs,” as for a pregnant woman—which I was and which I continually am for the honour and glory of everyone (390).

Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet

Dalí evidently had in mind a great change ushered in by his new “cosmogony,” which included a novel aesthetic direction, and a distancing from Surrealism, the avant-garde, and his former political affiliations. As *The Secret Life* progresses, Dalí also implies that while he was not rejecting the teachings of his “spiritual father” Sigmund Freud outright, he was indeed moving on to a different paradigm that was to inform his world view and various theoretical approaches. In an interview in 1957, in typically “Dalinian” English, the artist explains this transition in his own words. “My first period is influenced by Freud completely,” he explains. “Now, psychoanalysis is no more interest for me because now I am interested only about nuclear physics and these extraordinary heavens in the metaphysics ...”³ Here Dalí is referencing a later period in his artistic development, which he called “Nuclear Mysticism,” however, the fact that the artist

began very consciously to make this transition from a psychoanalytic episteme to one based more readily in science and religion is very much in evidence in *The Secret Life*.

Despite Dalí's suggestion that he had exhausted psychoanalysis, the artist was not to abandon his Freudian roots altogether, and for the remainder of his career he was to continue, in many instances, to draw upon psychoanalytic insights, language and imagery, especially in his commercial work, in film, advertising and graphic design. This was for the most part for the general audience who would forever associate him with Surrealism and popular psychology. That is not to say, however, that Dalí ever was anything resembling a strict or solemn follower of Freud, or that his work was "Freudian" in any conventional sense to begin with, and in order to understand just what kind of Freudianism Dalí was departing from, it is crucial to grasp how psychoanalysis informed Dalí's work in his early career, and how it is treated in *The Secret Life* itself.

Like many intellectuals of his day, Dalí became interested in Freudian psychology early in the century, several years before his association with the Surrealists. Ian Gibson describes Dalí's and many of his countrymen's introduction to Freud's work via the publishing house Biblioteca Nueva, whose published Spanish translations throughout the early- to mid-1920s were reputedly "devoured."⁴ By 1922, when Dalí enrolled at the Royal Academy of Arts in Madrid, he would have had access, in Spanish, to the first two volumes of the *Complete Works: The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and as well, *A Sexual Theory and Other Essays*, which included *Three Essays on Sexuality*, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, "On Dreams" and "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." By mid-decade, Gibson believes Dalí had also likely at least dipped into *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, and *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. Most

important for Dalí was *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which was published in Spanish in 1924, and Gibson notes that many passages in Dalí's personal copy were underlined. The young artist apparently read and re-read the work religiously, and in *The Secret Life* Dalí reveals that the text "presented itself to me as one of the capital discoveries of my life, and I was seized with a real vice of self-interpretation, not only of my dreams, but of everything that happened to me, however accidental it might seem at first glance" (167). It is no understatement, as Gibson rightly states, that "Freud revolutionized his attitude to himself and to society."⁵

Once Dalí encountered the Surrealists his interest in and knowledge of Freud was a true common ground, as Surrealism was a movement almost completely based on a psychoanalytic paradigm, in which Freud was, to use his own words, a sort of "patron saint."⁶ But that is not say that Dalí's relationship with Freud was straightforward, or that he fully understood or faithfully followed Freud's writings or methodologies. In fact, Dalí's approach to Freud, in his writing as much as his painting, was extremely wilful, and increasingly selective and "paranoiac," in the sense that Dalí parsed Freud's writings, to a sometimes absurd degree, according to his own intellectual and creative needs. Stephen S. Kayser puts Dalí's approach to Freud at that period most succinctly in an article in the 1942-43 issue of *The Pacific Art Review* that draws heavily on *The Secret Life*, and examines Dalí's new "cosmogony" and spiritual direction in his art. "His semi-Freudian efforts," Kayser suggests, "may still lead to some misunderstanding. In order to avoid that, it is necessary to distinguish between psychoanalysis as a *method* and as a *doctrine*. Dalí could not use the method, but he was influenced by the doctrine which shaped his philosophy."⁷

While Kayser indexes Dalí's quirky and highly subjective use or referencing of Freud in his work, it is perhaps more in keeping with the artist's comedic ethos that one might approach him in terms of the influence of "Froid," as Dalí comically spells his name in the original manuscript of *The Secret Life*.⁸ As Robert Radford warns, "when so sophisticated a stylist as Dalí adopts postures of pastiche and irony, derived from the literature of psychoanalysis, the stability of any psychoanalytic speculation based on such material is extremely hazardous."⁹ Indeed, it is fair to say that while Dalí revered Freud, and was familiar on at least a superficial level with a substantial body of his work and ideas, as with so many phenomena, the artist was capable of both referring to and incorporating Freudian concepts in his work, while simultaneously "sending them up." Lomas corroborates this view, and suggests that "Dalí's mad parody of Freud might be seen as undermining whatever claim psychoanalysis has to serious attention."¹⁰

Rasilla also considers Dalí's parodic use of Freud, in his painting and elsewhere, and suggests that, like Dalí's performative character, which can be construed as an attempt to undermine modernist gravitas and the concept of the artistic genius, Dalí's ironic approach is also intended to destabilize psychoanalytic interpretive strategies by "expos[ing] the limits of psychoanalytical or Freudian mechanics" in such common currency among the intelligentsia in the first half of the twentieth century.¹¹ Looking specifically at *The Secret Life*, she suggests that Dalí "subtly mocks and subverts the Freudian psychoanalytic paradigm for its attempt to grasp the self and give a mechanic answer to the complex universe of human spirit." However, Rasilla cautions, "within his parody, Dalí does not try to reformulate psychoanalysis and much less the genre of autobiography, but rather he exposes the paradoxes and difficulties of communication

and the illusion or artificiality of artistic mimesis.”¹² It does not, however, require a scholarly approach to determine that Dalí is toying with psychoanalysis and with the reader’s understanding of it. As Patterson Green notes in his review of *The Secret Life* in the June 1943 issue of *California Arts and Architecture*, “The talented Mr. Dalí is simply making hocus-pocus with the Freudian vocabulary, to befuddle the gullible believer. You avoid befuddlement by the simple process of avoiding belief.”¹³

While Rasilla situates Dalí’s parodic approach to psychoanalysis in terms of cultural critique, Finkelstein and Ades hold alternative, although similar, views on the subject. Finkelstein suggests that Dalí’s continuous effort of “reading Freud against the grain,” of “juggling with Freud’s concepts and reformulating his theory,” was for the purpose of liberating himself from Freud’s influence. Finally, it was a liberation, like that from Breton, and his own father, from “yet another father figure, Freud, and the strictures imposed by his theory.”¹⁴ Dalí’s use of Freudian concepts and symbolism in his later autobiographical writings, Finkelstein adds, “served Dalí’s needs of the moment quite admirably in offering conscious interpretations of the past and in their greater utilization of self-analysis couched in psychoanalytical terms.” However, as far as Finkelstein was concerned, this wanton sampling of Freudian references “is symptomatic of his later attitude that he made full use of any psychoanalytical tidbit that fit in with his self-marketing needs.”¹⁵ Ades, too, cautions against psychoanalytic approaches to Dalí’s visual works, in particular, and writes that “Dalí is in fact treating the iconography of the science of psycho-analysis as though it were common property, in the way that religious iconography was common property in the Middle Ages.”¹⁶

While it may be assumed that much of the Freudian subtext that Dalí incorporated in his Surrealist work was parodic, “paranoiac” or simply a sort of commercial *lingua franca*, he evidently took the discipline and its founder very seriously on some levels, and seems to have genuinely revered Freud as a man, as an intellectual, and as a celebrity. However, as Dalí makes clear in his autobiography he had at that time begun to explore and embrace another paradigm, a new “science” he called “morphology.” Indeed, the idea of “morphology”—essentially metamorphosis—had been of interest to Dalí from an early age. This was especially true of the cognitive phenomenon of projection, which he enframed as his “paranoiac-critical method,” in that it required the mental “morphology” or transformation of visually experienced phenomena. In an essay examining the influence of Leonardo da Vinci on Dalí’s work, David Lomas maps Dalí’s intellectual trajectory concerning the concept of morphology, and writes that during the 1930s the artist avidly read classics such as Edouard Monod-Herzens’s *Principes de morphologie générale* (1927) and D’Arcy Wentworth Thomson’s *On Growth and Form* (1919), along with other, less well-known works on the subject.

According to Lomas, these authors “collated the results of scientific studies of morphology in such fields as mathematics, physics, engineering and biology, presenting them in a form that was palatable for the non-specialist.”¹⁷ He suggests that Dalí was also likely apprised of other works in the genre, including Theodore Cook’s *The Curves of Life* (1914), an “exhaustive compendium of spirals of all conceivable kinds in nature and art,” and other classics such as Renaissance mathematician Luca Pacioli’s *On the Divine Proportion*, of 1509. Lomas argues that “the aim of popular scientific writers on morphology was to draw out commonalities of form and structure in order to illustrate

basic principles in the natural world, as in art.” He asserts that it is evident from the body of work that Dalí produced in the mid-1930s, that “exposure to the literature on morphology sharpened his eye for detecting unexpected resemblances between forms ...”¹⁸

How Dalí conceived the idea of morphology, to what phenomena he applied it and in what way he appropriated the term for his own purposes, comes closer to being elucidated on the third page in *The Secret Life* where Dalí ruminates upon the idea of “form.” After mentioning morphology, Dalí writes in parentheses, “glory be to Goethe for having invented this word of incalculable monument, a word that would have appealed to Leonardo!” (3). For Dalí then, following Goethe, who was indeed credited as being one of the first men of science to conceive of the concept, morphology indexed, quite simply, “the science of the form, formation and transformation of living organisms.”¹⁹ Dalí explains the importance of this science in a letter to Buñuel written in 1939, in which he describes Marxism as “the most imbecilic theory of our civilization,” which “prevents us from understanding anything about the phenomena of our epoch—about a young and materially marvellous science such as “morphology.”²⁰

Heeding Dalí’s description of morphology, then, as a “young and materially marvellous science,” and far superior to other systems of thought such as Marxism, Dalí also appears to have viewed it as an emergent discipline with the potential for “meeting,” and presumably challenging the more established one of psychoanalysis. Seeing that Dalí’s paranoiac-critical method was so well-regarded by French psychologist Jacques Lacan and was taken relatively seriously in Surrealist circles, it is also quite possible that Dalí had hoped to be a figure of importance in what he viewed as this “young science.”

While Dalí does not go into great detail as to how morphology fits into his “cosmogony,” the term does point back to the book’s theme of personal, professional and spiritual transformation, of metamorphosis and renaissance, and shows how certain words and concepts Dalí introduces weave together in complex and highly resonant modes. It also very much ties in with Dalí’s idea of predestination, that “every rose grows in a prison” and that “Form is always a process of inquisitorial process of matter” where for Dalí, among other things, “inquisition” means the restraining or defining boundaries of form. This is most pronounced in the premise of the book, which posits the aptly-named Salvador’s predestined role as the saviour of modern art, and is corroborated in the great energy Dalí expends attempting to portray his relationship with Gala as predestined.

More specifically, Dalí presents morphology as an alternative to Freudian psychology, which is based on the idea of personality development through a series of conflicts between the conscious and the unconscious, the shifts between the id, ego and superego, and in response to certain significant, often traumatic life experiences. This belief system was incompatible with Dalí’s “science” of morphology, which was based on the assumption of predestination or divine providence, the certainty that while growth was inevitable, the outcome was always predetermined. “Everything modified me,” Dalí writes in *The Secret Life*. “Nothing changed me” (4). Fundamentally, the difference between the two “sciences” that Dalí puts forward is that of the traditional nature vs. nurture dichotomy. In Freudian psychology nurture, or environmental causes, are considered primary factors in personality development, whereas the way in which Dalí defines morphology, nature determines everything, although Dalí suggests that the

origins of this nature are metaphysically- or spiritually-based rather than the result of purely empirical phenomena.

That Dalí viewed the new science of morphology as an alternative, if not an equal, to Freudian psychology is rendered graphically in a painting Dalí executed in 1939 in his new classic style to commemorate his one and only meeting with Sigmund Freud in 1938.²¹ The painting depicts three classicizing, Leonardoesque figures, reminiscent of Renaissance religious paintings, floating in the clouds. Not unusual for this period, Dalí has depicted the figures without faces, their heads merely implied in the void of the clouds through which the cerulean sky can be seen. On the left is a female figure, whose back is toward the viewer, and who emanates from a cloud, literally “morphing” from cloud to woman. On the right are two figures, the first of whom is a woman, whose arms are wrapped around an androgynous angel-child who kneels before her. Dalí entitles this work *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet*, and presumably, the female figure in the middle personifies Psychoanalysis, “greeting” the young “science” of Morphology, embodied in the angel-child. That the figure on the left holds an olive branch suggests a peaceful meeting of the two disciplines, but she also refers to an actual visit with Freud, in which the artist evidently came as a representative of Surrealism.

In *The Secret Life*, Dalí recounts his many attempts to meet Freud, particularly in three voyages to Vienna, although the doctor was “invariably out of town for reasons of health.” Finally, the artist reports, he was able to procure, via the writer Stefan Zweig, an audience with the father of psychoanalysis on June 6, 1938, while Freud was in exile in London. According to Dalí, who had brought his canvas *The Metamorphosis of Narcissus* to show the doctor, they spoke little, but “devoured each other with their eyes.” Dalí

explains that Freud knew nothing about him but his painting, “which he admired,” but that suddenly Dalí was possessed to appear as a “dandy of ‘universal intellectualism’ in the old man’s eyes.” “I learned later,” Dalí imparts, “that the effect I produced was quite the opposite.” Dalí describes how he tried to interest Freud in an article he had written on paranoia, but the older man seemed transfixed by Dalí’s person, and not interested in the article. “Before this imperturbable indifference, my voice became involuntarily sharper and more insistent,” Dalí writes. “Then, continuing to stare at me with a fixity in which his whole being seemed to converge, Freud exclaimed, addressing Stefan Zweig, ‘I have never seen a more complete example of a Spaniard. What a fanatic!’” (24-25).

In this recollection, Dalí translates what could have been a solemn and intellectual exchange of minds into an awkwardly humorous situation where no one less than the father of psychoanalysis pronounces Dalí a “fanatic.” Nevertheless, his review of the encounter between the “two geniuses” is relatively believable. Conversely, in an artist’s statement for an exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1939, entitled *Dalí, Dalí!*, the artist reformulates this *entente*, commemorated in the painting *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet*. Here Dalí transforms the encounter into a mythological event, in which Freud might be viewed as personifying Psychology, and Dalí as represented by the “angel child” aspect of Morphology. “In the enflamed proscenium of torrential beauty that are the constructions of Palladio,” Dalí pronounces ostentatiously, “the world’s greatest architect, Psychoanalysis, still very young in spite of a forehead wrinkled with soft furrows of sadness, meets Morphology for the first time, Goethe’s child, a veritable angel! Dalí was the only living painter to witness this meeting.”²²

Perhaps because of the comedic and overblown mythological gloss with which Dalí conveyed his remembrances, for many years few people believed that Dalí had actually met with Freud. Fleur Cowles, however, one of Dalí's early biographers, was the first Dalí scholar to uncover documentation, in Freud's correspondence with Stefan Zweig, which records the event, and Freud's reaction to it. Freud's response, dated June 7, 1938, shows his disdain for the Surrealists as a group, but while he admittedly describes Dalí as having "fanatical eyes," nevertheless suggests an alternative perspective to the one described by the artist:

Dear Dr. Zweig:

I have to thank you indeed for the introduction of our visitor of yesterday. Until now I was inclined to regard the Surrealists—who seem to have me adopted as their patron saint—as one hundred per cent fools (or rather say, as with alcohol, ninety-five per cent). This young Spaniard, with his ingenuous fanatical eyes, and his undoubtedly technically perfect mastership, has suggested to me a different estimate. In fact, it would be very interesting to explore analytically the growth of a picture like this. From a critical point of view, one might still say that Art by its definition would refuse enlarging its scope so widely, unless the quantitative relations of unconscious material and preconscious elaboration should be kept within certain limits. In any case these are serious problems from the psychological point of view.

Cordially yours,
Freud.²³

Beyond Dalí's dubious and obviously embellished version of the encounter, which he portrays as a sort of comedy sketch, Freud's letter is the only extant eyewitness account of the meeting, and what really transpired, in more detail, and the reactions on behalf of both parties in any more meaningful sense can never be accurately determined. What Dalí "does" with the event of this encounter, however, is highly revealing in its own right, as the artist strategically reformulates the proceedings by the end of the book.

Here Sigmund Freud, the single most important figure in the Surrealist pantheon, is enlisted to pronounce the death of Surrealism, and the beginning of Dalí's "renaissance."

"Finished, finished, finished, finished, finished, finished, finished, finished—what is finished!" Dalí writes in the last few pages of *The Secret Life*. And in the paragraph which follows this pronouncement, far from the awkward exchange he describes at the beginning of the book, Dalí now opportunistically maintains that during their encounter, he and Freud had in fact engaged in a profound and meaningful discussion about the state of the world, politics and religion. "The day I went to visit Sigmund Freud in his London exile, on the eve of his death, I understood by the lesson of classic tradition of his old age how many things were at last ended in Europe with the imminent end of his life," Dalí writes. "He said to me, 'In classic paintings, I look for the sub-conscious—in a surrealist painting, for the conscious.'" Dalí then suggests that this was indeed the death knell of the movement, announced by none other than the Surrealist's "patron saint." "This was the pronouncement of a death sentence on surrealism as a doctrine, as a sect, as an 'ism'" he writes (398).

"At this moment," Dalí continues, "Freud was occupying himself mainly with 'religious phenomena and Moses'; a situation which conveniently corresponds to Dalí's own conversion at the end of the text and his interest in tradition and religion. "And I remember with what fervour he uttered the word 'sublimation' on several occasions. 'Moses is flesh of sublimation.'" Following this, Dalí again announces his direction, this time in the context of psychoanalysis, cosmogony, morphology, and the modern sciences in general. "The individual sciences of our epoch have become specialized in these three eternal vital constants," Dalí adumbrates: "the sexual instinct, the sense of death, and the

space-time anguish,” in which he refers to the foundations of psychoanalysis, that of eros and thanatos, and that of the “space-time anguish” of Einsteinian physics. “After their analysis, after the experimental speculation, it again becomes necessary to sublimate them,” Dalí writes, suggesting a move from the paradigmatic cure of psychoanalysis, to a more productive state of sublimation, itself a Freudian concept, of sexual and other presumably wasteful or “negative” energies for purposes conducive to his cosmogony. These he meticulously lists: metaphysics, religion, style, technique, faith, rigour, individuality, hierarchy, tradition and renaissance. “The sexual instinct must be sublimated in aesthetics,” he writes,

the sense of death in love; and the space-time anguish in metaphysics and religion. 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 nihilism, technique; instead of scepticism, faith; instead of promiscuity, rigor; instead of collectivism and uniformization—individualism, differentiation, and hierarchization; instead of experimentation, tradition. Instead of Reaction or Revolution, RENAISSANCE! (398).

Typical of so much of *The Secret Life*, in this episode, Dalí transforms an actual encounter into an opportunity to further his own ends strategically, and to feed into the formulation of his stated new belief system. In this case, it was both to recount an important meeting with a very significant and revered personage of the period whom Dalí greatly admired, and also to invite comparison with, or event to “trump” Freud, whom Dalí evidently also viewed as something of a rival. This the artist articulates in his *Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, some years later, in which he writes of the encounter that “Two geniuses had met without making sparks. His ideas spoke for him.

To me, they were useful crutches that reinforced my confidence in my genius and the authenticity of my freedom, and I had more to teach him than I could get from him.”²⁴

Mirroring Lacan

While Dalí implies in *The Secret Life* that he has, if not matched, then superseded Freud, the Austrian doctor still manages to escape with his dignity intact. The same cannot be said, however, for another prominent psychoanalyst of the period, Jacques Lacan, someone much more on Dalí’s career level, and with whom there were genuine reasons for Dalí to feel the need to best. Once again, in one of Dalí’s anecdotes, the artist rearranges facts of an important meeting in order to serve the needs of his narrative, and perhaps to invite the very kind of psychoanalytic interpretation he is sending up. In the chapter entitled “Anecdotic Selfportrait,” Dalí recounts that Lacan, “a brilliant young psychiatrist,” telephoned him in Paris after having read Dalí’s article “The Inner Mechanism of Paranoiac Activity” in *Minotaur*, one of the Surrealist press vehicles of the era. “He congratulated me and expressed his astonishment at the accuracy of my scientific knowledge of this subject, which was so generally misunderstood,” Dalí boasts. The artist likewise explains that although he is extremely anxious about the interview, he was nevertheless “flattered finally to be considered seriously in strictly scientific circles” (18). While waiting for Lacan to arrive, Dalí notes that he is busy at work on a portrait of the Vicomtesse de Noailles, which he was painting on highly reflective copper. As the glare from the metal was distracting him from his painting, he describes how he found it necessary to plaster a piece of white paper on his nose to deflect the light.

During Lacan’s visit, Dalí explains that the two partook of a magnificent discourse, in which they were in a “constant dialectical tumult,” and both were surprised

to discover that their views were “equally opposed, and for the same reasons, to the constitutionalist theories then almost unanimously accepted” (18). During this exchange, Dalí claims that he cannot determine the nature, as he can with Freud, of the “alarming manner in which the young psychiatrist had scrutinized my face from time to time. It was almost as if the germ of a strange, curious smile would then pierce through the expression,” he observes, feigning bewilderment. Dalí concludes that most likely Lacan was “intently studying the convulsive effects upon my facial morphology of the ideas that stirred my soul ...” (18). Upon looking in the bathroom mirror after Lacan leaves, however, Dalí discovers that his colleague’s strange looks have to do, not with his admiration for Dalí’s astounding intellect, but with the fact that the painter has left the piece of paper glued on his nose for the entire exchange.

Considering Dalí’s description of his meeting with Lacan, which features mirrored surfaces so prominently, with the reflective copper of the painting and the bathroom mirror, observers are no doubt accurate in suggesting that Dalí was alluding to Lacan’s now-famous formulation of the “mirror stage.” This was the subject of the psychoanalyst’s first official contribution to psychoanalytic theory in the form of a paper which he delivered at the Fourteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress at Marienbad in 1936, and consolidated in 1949 as the essay now known as “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I* as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” the first of what are known as Lacan’s *Écrits*. In the paper, Lacan explains the mirror stage as a crucial phase in the development of infant subjectivity, and suggests a process through which the child’s identity is determined as “reflected” in the “mirror” of others, and then codified as s/he enters the “symbolic” realm of language.

Robert S. Lubar interprets this episode as highly significant in *The Secret Life*, and one that deserves careful analysis in psychoanalytic terms. “To dismiss this amusing anecdote as an apocryphal story would be,” according to Lubar, “... to miss the complex ways in which Dalí views an historical event—his actual meeting with Dr. Lacan—through a prism that reflects his psychoanalytic understanding of the subject of portraiture itself, the latent content, one might say, of the ‘Anecdotal Self Portrait’ and of *The Secret Life* as a whole.” Focussing on the fact that Dalí is in the process of painting a portrait when Lacan arrives, he suggests that “this entire anecdote is staged in relation to Dalí’s work on a portrait painting,” which “underlines the fact that the subject of the anecdote is the dialectic of self and other.”²⁵ Lubar situates the white paper on Dalí’s nose in terms of Freud’s well-known 1927 essay on fetishism, citing the case of the young man who, primarily as a result of semantic confusion, fetishizes the “shine on the nose” of a woman, and therefore puts Dalí’s *gaffe* firmly “within a psychoanalytic grid.” Lubar likewise interprets Dalí’s hand-washing after Lacan leaves as the “ultimate guilty gesture signifying a symbolic trespass against the father,” while in due course, the emphasis on their mutual gazes, the reflective surfaces and portraiture suggest to him that in this anecdote, “Lacan represents Dalí’s mirror image.”²⁶

While Lubar’s skilful psychoanalytic interpretation of Dalí’s recount of his meeting with Lacan is convincing, the fact that Dalí has manipulated the events of this encounter in a very strategic manner makes, to once again evoke Robert Radford’s words, “the stability of any psychoanalytic speculation ... extremely hazardous.”²⁷ As was his wont, Dalí very much arranged the time and circumstances of the event of this meeting of the minds to serve his own narrative and comedic ends, and any approach to

episodes such as these has to take into account that Dalí is very much conscious of the psychoanalytic implications, and invariably toys with them. For instance, Dalí claims at the beginning of the anecdote that he was thirty-three years of age when the event occurred, which would make the meeting *circa* 1937, five years after he had painted the portrait of the Vicomtesse, and four years after his article that interested Lacan, “Nouvelles considérations générale sur le mécanisme du phénomène paranoïaque du point de vue surréaliste,” appeared in *Minotaure*.²⁸ This suggests an earlier meeting, possibly in the later months of 1933, although according to Greeley, the two first met in 1930, to discuss Dalí’s essay of the same year, “The Rotting Donkey.” After this time, she notes that the two held a dialogue of sorts on the subject of paranoia via various Surrealist journals. This is of significance, as Greeley believes this correspondence was to influence the publication, in 1932, of Lacan’s doctoral dissertation, entitled *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*.²⁹ Of further relevance is Dalí’s fabrication that he had painted the Vicomtesse’s portrait on reflective copper, a medium upon which he rarely, if ever, painted. The Vicomtesse’s portrait, now in a private collection, is of oil on panel, neither a ground nor medium known for its reflective properties.³⁰

That Dalí insists on the mirror and the reflective surface in this anecdote, and has changed the dates of his meeting with Lacan to one year after Lacan’s introduction of his theory of the Mirror Stage showcases Dalí’s own erudition and investment in psychology via his recognition of Lacan’s work. It also, by introducing the “gag” of the paper on the end of his nose, allows him to ridicule it, and therefore to trump Lacan, whom Dalí would have regarded as both a colleague and competitor in the study of paranoia and paranoiac

phenomena. By extension, not only does Dalí thumb his nose, quite literally, at Lacan but, as he does with his subtle ridicule of Freud, at psychoanalysis itself.

Otto Rank and *The Trauma of Birth*

Considering his treatment of Freud and Lacan in *The Secret Life*, it is evident that Dalí had an ambivalent relationship with psychoanalysis at this juncture in his career, which he tried to reconcile, on some level, with his new embrace of the deterministic “science” of morphology. One place where psychoanalysis and morphology do indeed meet, however, is in Dalí’s discussion of intrauterine life, which combines his interest in psychoanalysis and morphology while reinforcing the metaphysically-based “renaissance” and rebirth theme of the text. Directly following Dalí’s discussion and accompanying drawings of Freud in *The Secret Life*, Dalí begins with a brief, just over six-page Chapter Two, entitled “Intra-Uterine Memories,” in which he discusses what he considers to be his pre-natal recollections, later childhood memories and observations of childhood behaviour that he believes mimic the pre-natal experience. This chapter does much to outline the prevalence, especially during this period of his career, of sleep and birth imagery in the artist’s painting, and reinforces the birth and rebirth symbolism in *The Secret Life*.

Dalí takes as his starting-point a work written in 1924 focussing on the psychological impact of being born, written by Otto Rank (1884-1939), an Austrian psychologist, writer and therapist who was once a part of Freud’s inner circle, and who spent the latter part of his career in the United States. This was *Das Trauma der Geburt*, translated into English as *The Trauma of Birth*, not, it should be noted, as Chevalier has translated it for Dalí, as *The Traumatism of Birth*.³¹ The focus of much of Rank’s work,

which often bordered the disciplines of philosophy and sociology, was on the psychology of the artist and of creative activity in general, the meaning of myths, literature, education and the tensions between the individual and the collective. Dalí evidently wanted to make his book as unique and far-ranging as possible, and where better place to start an autobiography than in the womb? “I propose to begin the book of my secret life at its real and authentic beginning,” Dalí writes, “namely with the memories, so rare and so liquid, which I have preserved of that intra-uterine life ...” In doing so, Dalí also claims that this may succeed in “provoking the apparition of similar recollections” in the reader. Most importantly, he is confident that this description will “undoubtedly be the first of this kind in the world since the beginning of literary history to see the light of day and to be described systematically” (27).³²

That the subject of pre-natal life and memories had already long fascinated Dalí is evident in just how instructive this chapter is in offering a number of interpretive cues and outright explanations of many of Dalí’s pictures of the period and earlier: his famous images of fried eggs; the prevalence during the war period of parachute imagery; and most of all, his “marsupial centaurs,” a concept likely inspired by Rank’s writings. In homage to Rank, in parts of this chapter, Dalí employs pseudo-technical language in the style of psychoanalytic literature, albeit interspersed with his trademark hyperbole, abundance of adjectives, and extreme attention to the visual. That said, exactly what the tone or agency of this short “essay,” as it reads as, is meant to be is difficult to ascertain. This is a challenge articulated by Clifton Fadiman in a review of *The Secret Life* in 1943: “Does Dalí really remember his prenatal life?” he asks, “Or is he remembering the books he has read? Or is he kidding? Or all three?”³³

Dalí begins his discussion by describing the “lost paradise” of the womb, which is “the colour of hell ... the colour of flames, of fire” and is also “soft, immobile warm, symmetrical, double, gluey.” In particular, it was dominated by a vision he describes as “fried eggs in the pan, without the pan,” an image which appears in a number of his paintings from the 1930s, and which, he explains further on, were “his eyes, very likely.” Next Dalí ruminates upon the phenomenon of sleep, in which one “periodically recovers that paradisial state,” and considers, as a primal desire to avoid anxiety by returning to the womb, the foetal position often taken in sleep or postures of fear. He then goes on to describe how children frequently play at what he calls “making grottoes,” such as forts or enclaves in which they feel safe and protected, which he again likens to the desire to return to the womb.

The inspiration for Dalí’s ruminations on the pre-natal experience, Dalí writes, is the “quite sensational book by Doctor Otto Rank entitled *The Traumatism of Birth*,” which, he tells us, “cannot fail to enlighten the reader really curious about himself who desires to approach this question more scientifically” (27). According to Dalí, his own “personal memories of the intra-uterine period” correspond in every way to Rank’s description of what he calls the “lost paradise” of the womb. Taking Freud’s ideas on the possible effects of birth trauma as a starting point, Rank advanced a theory of anxiety that attempted to explain neurosis, to breach the gap between the somatic and the psychological, and to simplify and abbreviate the therapeutic process.³⁴ Rank was the first to look at the universally-experienced trauma inflicted during parturition, a process considered harrowing in that the infant, when transitioning from the safe, warm, quiet environment of the womb to the outside world, is suddenly “flooded with excitation it

cannot master.”³⁵ This trauma, according to Rank, can have two results, both of which require the overcoming of tremendous anxiety. The first, a neurotic fixation upon returning to the womb; the second, to launch the child into “forward-thinking, and productive creativity.” The nature and quality of the birthing experience was also of great importance to Rank, who believed that “a difficult birth would be more anxiety-producing than one that was uncomplicated.”³⁶

In *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank looks at phenomena such as infantile anxiety, sexual gratification, and the production of neurotic symptoms, but also at how the importance and prominence of birth imagery features in mythology, art, religion and philosophy, an approach that clearly appealed to Dalí, who summarized Rank’s theory as follows: “It seems increasingly true,” he writes in *The Secret Life*,

that the whole imaginative life of man tends to reconstitute symbolically by the most similar situations and representations that initial paradisial state, and especially to surmount the horrible “traumatism of birth” by which we are expelled from the paradise, passing abruptly from that ideally protective and enclosed environment to all the hard dangers of the frightfully real new world, with the concomitant phenomena of asphyxiation, of compression, of blinding by the sudden outer light and of the brutal harshness of the reality of the world, which will remain inscribed in the mind under the sign of anguish, of stupor and displeasure (27).

Dalí further considers Rank’s ideas in the following paragraphs, such as his discussion of suicide as the final manifestation of the desire to return to the womb, as well as that of sleep, in which “man periodically recovers ... something of this artificial death, something of that paradisial state” (29).

It might be noted here that Dalí sketched a quick portrait of Freud during their meeting, which he includes in one of the photograph sections in *The Secret Life*, and

which, notwithstanding Freud's somewhat bulbous cranium, is quite a prosaic likeness, despite the eighty-three year old man's dying of cancer. Dalí insists in *The Secret Life*, however, that as he received the news that Freud was in London, and close enough to visit, he was in the middle of eating snails in a restaurant. "We had not yet recovered from the effect of this news when I uttered a loud cry. I had just that instant discovered the morphological secret of Freud! Freud's cranium was a snail! His brain is in the form of a spiral—to be extracted with a needle!" (23). To illustrate this "observation," Dalí adds a "morphological" drawing of Freud to *The Secret Life*, produced from memory, and specifically for the book, in which he depicts Freud in the process of having his brain transformed into a number of spirals resembling nothing less than a snail's shell (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Salvador Dalí. [With Dalí's spelling] "Morphologie" du crâne de Sigmund Freud d'après le principe de la volute et de l'escargot. Dessin d'après nature deux ans avant sa mort.' Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 24. Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain. © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí /SODRAC (2009).

In a footnote of *The Trauma of Birth*, Rank writes about the idea of the “purely genital signification of the Sphinx’s body as womb” and mentions an image he had seen in a book of a “sphinx-like” human being with the teeth of a beast of prey *under a snail’s shell*, the feelers growing out of the eyes” (Rank’s italics).³⁷ This may well have inspired Dalí’s “morphological” drawings of Freud in *The Secret Life*, in which he depicts Freud’s skull transforming into a snail’s shell. Dalí’s miss-spelled hand-written caption reads “‘Morphologie’ du crane de Sigmund Freud d’apres le principe de la volute et de l’escargot.” Dalí would have his readers believe that this drawing was inspired by his eating escargot in a restaurant, but it also decidedly points to the symbolism of Freud’s brain, like Gala’s person, providing a womb-like space in which Dalí could gestate.

Dalí draws upon *The Trauma of Birth* for a variety of purposes in his memoir: as an opportunity to showcase his own erudition in the realm of science and art; to offer interpretive strategies or “clues” regarding the subject matter of a number of his paintings; and finally, to “extend the reach,” temporally speaking, of his autobiography to hyperbolic lengths for comic and dramatic effect. The emphasis on intrauterine memories also has wider resonances within the book, however, re-establishing the theme of birth and rebirth and, to a certain degree, Dalí’s relationship with Gala, who creates that “armour” for him, inside of which is the soft “meat,” as with the lobster Dalí is so famous for depicting.

At the beginning of Chapter One, Dalí alludes to this concept of the “morphology of hard and soft,” writing that “The crustacean is thus able, with the weapons of its anatomy, to protect the soft and nutritive delirium of its insides, sheltered against all profanation, enclosed as in a tight and solemn vessel which leaves it vulnerable only to

the highest form of imperial conquest in the noble war of decortication: that of the palate” (10). Likewise Gala, towards the end of the book, becomes Dalí’s armour, or his mother, who protects him in the womb of her presence and fortitude. “Instead of hardening me, as life had planned,” Dalí explains,

Gala with the petrifying saliva of her fanatical devotion, succeeded in building for me a shell to protect the tender nakedness of the Bernard the hermit that I was, so that while in relation to the outside world I assumed more and more the appearance of a fortress, within myself I could continue to grow old in the soft, and in the supersoft (316-17).

Dalí’s *Amour Fou*

While the spectre of Sigmund Freud hovers weightily over *The Secret Life*, the other figure of primary importance in the book is certainly that of Dalí’s wife Gala, whose presence intersects with Freud, as Dalí has orchestrated it, in a decidedly “morphological” manner. This involves Dalí’s interest in what is commonly known as the “Gradyva myth,” a story that has as its theme one of personal transformation, highlighting once again the primacy of rebirth, or renaissance in Dalí’s “cosmogony.” Also, because the relationship between Gala and Dalí is presented as such an odd and extraordinary affair in the book, many scholars tend to approach it on psychoanalytic terms, particularly under the rubrics of gender, co-dependence and power.

In his biography of Gala, Tim McGirk notes that “Dalí’s autobiography tells much of his worship for Gala’s every orifice, but is remarkable for the little it reveals of Gala’s character,” and indeed, while Gala features so prominently in *The Secret Life*, it is remarkable how little a sense the reader acquires of Gala herself, mediated as she is through Dalí’s adoring eyes.³⁸ In fact, Dalí hints only once in *The Secret Life* at

something resembling Gala's interior reality, during the culmination of their courting period in which she asks Dalí to "croak" her. With what might, for once, be considered unintentional humour, Dalí writes that "[I]t suddenly occurred to me that she, too, had an inner world of her own desires and frustrations." "Only Gala's secret life," the artist continues, "could unveil the real reasons for her resolve. But although she has authorized me to write of this, I refuse to do so." This, Dalí claims, is out of pure narcissism, although the perpetual manner in which Dalí manages to bypass any hint of Gala's interior life suggests that it may have been more out of respect for his already beleaguered wife's privacy (245-46). At one time there were rumours that Gala was writing her own autobiography, but if this were the case, it is not surprising that the project never came to fruition.³⁹ As she did throughout Dalí's career, Gala remains perpetually mum, and Dalí makes no effort to paint any picture of her other than that of his ideal, and idealized, mate. If there were any tensions in their marriage, Secret notes, "one cannot find the slightest hint. Gala was perfection; she made his life; she was his all." However, she notes pointedly, "He says this over and over again with such clamour one wonders why he protested so much."⁴⁰

Gala was born Elena Dmitrievna Diakona in Kazan, Tatarstan, Russia in 1894. As a young woman, she moved to Paris to marry Paul Éluard, whom she had met in a sanatorium in Clavadel, Switzerland in 1913, and with whom she had one daughter, Cecile. Gala notoriously neglected Cecile, who, it should be noted, is never once mentioned or even alluded to in *The Secret Life* despite Gala's prominence in the text, and Dalí's position as the girl's step-father. Having an open relationship with Éluard, both had many lovers, and at one time, they were engaged in love "triangle" with the

German Surrealist Max Ernst. Dawn Ades describes Gala as “fierce, intelligent, highly educated and intensely private,”⁴¹ while Whitney Chadwick cites her charms as located in her “clarity and strength of purpose, her mysterious moods and dramatic dark eyes” which “captivated many and angered a few.”⁴²

Despite the invariably bad press Gala continues to receive from critics and commentators to this day, where she is often depicted as an avaricious harpy, there must have been something remarkably beguiling about her character judging from the effect she had on the many men who were her lovers and admirers into her eighties. Certainly Gala held a privileged place in the realm of the Surrealists, and was known in the later 1920s as their great, although decidedly severe muse, in her role as a “*perceur de murailles*,” or piercer of walls, an expression used by Éluard in his 1925 poem, *Au défaut du silence*, referring to Gala’s penetrating eyes and intense stare.⁴³ By the time Gala and Dalí began courting, Gala had become accustomed to playing the role of the muse, and Dalí immediately understood that this was to be this extraordinary woman’s role in Dalí’s “cosmogony.” Regarding this inevitability, Chadwick observes “Dalí’s desire to universalize the image of Gala, to remove her from the real to an ideal plane where, liberated from the constraints of space and time, she would become part of an unbounded reality.” Gala, in fact “stimulated his search for a mythic structure that could contain her image,” according to Chadwick, and as Dalí reminds the reader at every juncture, Gala was destined to become “his Penelope, his Helen of Troy, his Gradiva.”⁴⁴

Dalí depicts his meeting with and courtship of Gala in Cadaqués in 1929 in one of the most humorous and colourful passages of the book, one which Etherington-Smith describes as “perhaps unrivalled in contemporary literature.” “The anointing himself with

goat's dung, the pearl necklace, the inverted dandyism, are extremely funny as well as ludicrous," she writes, "as Dalí could not admit to ordinary emotion or an ordinary reaction to what was, after all, the far from unusual pursuit of a male innocent by an experienced and cunning woman."⁴⁵ Dalí did, of course, manage to win Gala's hand, despite the dandyism and the dung, and after that time he and Gala, ten years his senior, were more or less inseparable until her death in 1982.

Although Dalí's love for Gala is writ absurdly large in *The Secret Life*, and Dalí does everything he can to convey a match made in heaven, critics are often confused by and sceptical of the dynamics of this undeniably peculiar couple. Cowles notes, for instance, that in his memoir, Dalí is unable to hide "his terrifying devotion and dependence on his wife, which he never stops proclaiming." "This may be," she offers, "one of the great love stories of its time; on the other hand, it may be the most eccentric and most inexplicable."⁴⁶ While Cowles views Dalí's avowed love for Gala in terms of psychological and social co-dependence, Juan Antonio Ramirez takes a more jaundiced view of Dalí's histrionic devotion, writing that "The myth of his love for her parodies the *amour fou* of the orthodox surrealists, and I see nothing absurd in viewing all that as a low blow intended to ridicule the official preachings of André Breton."⁴⁷

No doubt one of the issues complicating Dalí's relationship with Gala is the common view of Dalí as homosexual, compounded, as he frequently claimed later in life, by his being "completely impotent." Indeed, while mention of the great friend of Dalí's youth, Lorca, is suspiciously minimal in *The Secret Life*, there is much to suggest the two were lovers, although, as the artist insists in later interviews, Dalí refused to engage in sodomy, despite Lorca's efforts to the contrary. Dalí makes no secret, however, of having

a crush on a young schoolfriend, a boy nicknamed Buchaques (meaning “pockets”), whom he frequently kisses on the mouth. Dalí’s attraction to women is made equally as clear, however, throughout *The Secret Life*, although it becomes obsessively focused on Gala after they have met. Dalí is frank about his occasionally playful, or unstable gender identification, however, which seems surprising in a book written in and for conservative mid-century America, where “gender play” was, to say the least, not a particularly welcome subject in literature produced for a mainstream audience.

One example of Dalí’s addressing his gender identification in *The Secret Life*, and Dalí’s association of his own body with the female form, occurs when he is writing about an artists’ model whom he must paint at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid, and who had “a very perfect face and a delightful pink body, like a lovely porcelain.” While Dalí was painting her, he claims, she “suddenly evoked for me the image of myself when as a child I would stand naked before a mirror, with my king’s ermine cape over my shoulders.” As he had already related at the beginning of his childhood memories, Dalí reminds the reader that “I would sometimes conceal my sexual parts by holding them between my thighs so as to look as much as possible like a little girl.” While painting the model, Dalí recounts his emotional turmoil: “executed from the model of that disquieting double of myself as a child-king, I would spend my whole time mentally evaluating the relative beauty of these two kings, the one in the memories of the past, the other in actuality, posed before me on a platform, the two bitterly struggling in jealous competition.” In this competition, Dalí explains that he “felt that the real absence of the male sex organs in the idealized Dalí (whom I saw come to life again before me) constituted one of his most

advantageous attributes, for I have desired ever since to be “like a beautiful woman ...” (169-70).

Although Dalí offers this surprisingly frank omission, he also felt the need to qualify it, aware that this association with the feminine might be construed as an index of his possible homosexuality. As such, Dalí ends this sequence with the statement that “in spite of the fact that since my first disappointed love for Buchaques I have continued to feel a complete sexual indifference toward men. (No! Let there be no misunderstanding on this point—I am not a homosexual)” (170). Despite Dalí’s declaration, much in the way of speculation has been written on the subject of Dalí’s sexuality, and his relationship with Gala. Most notably, critical responses tend to focus on the Gala-Dalí relationship in terms of Dalí’s need to reconcile his female and male self through his identification with Gala and various young girls who serve in *The Secret Life* as her precursors, or “early versions” of Gala. The implication is that by “fusing” with Gala, Dalí was able to enact or fulfill the “female” side of his nature.

Along these lines, Carter Ratcliff maintains that when Dalí “reconstructed himself in the mirror of Gala’s body” he devised a “sexuality of engulfment,” which he likens to that of consumerism. Revisiting Dalí’s frequent metaphors of cannibalism, digestion and excretion in *The Secret Life*, Ratcliff suggests that Dalí recognized himself as a “licker and swallower, a masticator and ingester” and that Dalí’s “post-Gala version of maleness” is determinedly female as well as being “endlessly versatile.” Inspired by Gala, according to Ratcliff, Dalí turned the “androgyny of his transvestite days from a panicky subterfuge into an aesthetic of the mouth, a source of power that has made him one of the century’s two or three most famous artists.”⁴⁸ While Dalí certainly does not

position his relationship in these terms, he does suggest a sort of “fusion” that can be read in terms of the masculine and the feminine. “It is mostly with *your* blood, Gala, that I paint my pictures,” Dalí proclaims in *The Secret Life* by way of explaining his habit for co-signing his paintings. It is for this reason, he declares that “I have always used her name with mine in signing my work” (301).

While speculation as to the nature of the Gala-Dalí relationship or “construct” offers infinite exegetical possibilities, there is no doubt that one of the main themes of *The Secret Life* was the great love between Dalí and Gala, and of Gala being instrumental in Dalí’s development as an artist, a man, and a socially functional human being. Dalí describes this aspect of the book as the “romantic portion,” and the role it plays in *The Secret Life* ends with a remarriage, under the new sign of his “classic” life, that of the tradition of the Catholic Church. “I began my idyll with Gala with the intention of killing her,” Dalí explains. “Today, at the end of my ‘biography,’ after seven years of living with her, and at the moment of my metamorphosis into the Dalí of tomorrow, I decide to marry again, concluding the romantic portion of my book by a true marriage” (394). In the epilogue, Dalí explains that he wants “only two things: first, to love Gala, my wife; and second, that other inescapable thing so difficult and so little desired—to grow old” (399).

Further on, Dalí explains that “since a year ago I know that I have begun to love the being who has been married to me for seven years; and I am beginning to love her as the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church demands, according to its conception of love” (399). Clearly the final phase of his journey with Gala ends with a rebirth, as part of Dalí’s own renaissance, so that Dalí can marry Gala again, but “instead of remarrying in

a ‘revolutionary’ way with another, I want to do it again with the same one, with Gala, my wife, and this time I want it to be affirmed and made sacred by the Catholic Church” (400).

In a review of *The Secret Life* for *The New Yorker* in 1943, Clifton Fadiman writes that “When Dalí is not talking about himself, he is talking about his wife, Gala, of whom perhaps the safest thing to say is that she seems to make him a very fine mate.” Dalí’s book, observes Fadiman, “is approximately equally divided between Galamania and Megalomania. I do not believe any other human being has ever written about his wife as Dalí does, and I cannot believe anyone will ever again.”⁴⁹ Dalí certainly gives this impression on a number of occasions and actually says as much in the speech he gave at the launch of *The Secret Life*, where he claimed that, “... the unique and exclusive protagonist of my book is my wife.”⁵⁰ Within the confines of the text itself, Dalí also declares to Gala that “One day I shall write a book about you, and you will become one of those mythological Beatrices that history is forced to carry on its back, lashed by the fury of my whip and spitting fire in the rage of its resentment” (270). Bearing in mind Dalí’s mythologizing of Gala in his autobiography, the reader can only wonder if Dalí had not already written that book, which is the very one they are reading.

Considering Dalí’s comments, it is worthwhile re-examining Dominique Bona’s assessment of Dalí’s autobiography, in her 1996 biography of Gala, entitled, *Gala: La mujer más enigmática del siglo XX*. For Bona, Dalí’s book has only one purpose: “*The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* is,” she writes, “after ten years of life in common, a song of love to Gala, to whom the book is dedicated.” Gala, Bona avers, is the one essential for Dalí, and “Until the final line, she is the great secret of the book and the obsession of the

author."⁵¹ There is, in fact, much to corroborate this hypothesis, as Dalí states as much, although again using the circular, comedic wordplay he employs elsewhere in the book. “If the secret of my influence has always remained secret, the secret of Gala’s influence has been to remain in turn doubly secret. I had the secret of remaining secret,” Dalí writes.

Gala had the secret of remaining secret within my secret. Often people thought they had discovered my secret, but this was impossible, because it was not my secret but Gala’s. Gala’s secret and my secret formed the two evenly balanced scales of our justice, but the indicator of these scales was formed by Gala, standing erect, sculptured in gold ... (315).

Whatever the critical view of Dalí’s marriage with Gala, no one will ever know whether it was guided by psychological dependency, genuine *amour fou*, an elaborate ruse or an ironic performance. What is certain, however, is that next to Dalí, when it comes to *The Secret Life*, Gala is the star of the show as the saviour’s saviour: she is a narrative device, the leading lady, goddess, amanuensis, psychoanalyst, friend, lover, doctor, mother, muse, critic, cheerleader, lover and wife. What motivated this remarkable woman to stay with Dalí, who was evidently a very odd and difficult man, seems surprising, as Gala never lacked male attention, or refrained from soliciting it.

No doubt, Dalí’s endless display of gratitude and tireless iteration of his love for Gala had to do not only with the artist’s need to create his own myth, but to help Gala fulfill hers and therefore help to immortalize her as well. Dalí says as much in *The Secret Life*, writing of their courtship that “She considered me a genius—half mad but capable of great moral courage. And she wanted something—something which would be the fulfillment of her own myth. And this thing that she wanted was something that she was

beginning to think perhaps only I could give her! (230).” Taking Dalí’s lead, then, it is evident that the artist had every intention of giving Gala what she wanted, quite literally mythologizing her, and it seems in return her task was to be one of the martyrs to the cause of his genius. While Gala is very much a construct around which Dalí shapes a large portion of his text, she is also a member of Dalí’s audience, and therefore the book must be considered, to some degree, as a “love song to Gala.”

The Gala/Gradiva Myth

As Gala and Freud form the most notable presences in *The Secret Life* besides that of Dalí, it is not surprising that the two should converge in the text, or that Dalí should incorporate them ideologically in the fabulation of his personal myth, personified in the concept of *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet*. Where these two figures meet is in Dalí’s version of the story *Gradiva*, a work of interest to Sigmund Freud, adopted by the Surrealists, and co-opted by Dalí to exemplify his redemption by his wife in the morphological process of his own renaissance.

First published in 1903, *Gradiva* is a novel that was written by a minor German writer named Wilhelm Jensen. In the novel, the protagonist is an archaeologist called Norbert Hanold, a young man so devoted to his profession that there is no place in his life for women or romance. Nevertheless, the archaeologist becomes intrigued to the point of obsession by a classical Roman marble relief which depicts a beautiful woman gracefully walking in her filmy *chiton* (Figure 8). Hanold calls the girl Gradiva, meaning, “she who advances,” based on the surname of Mars, Gradivus, which means “he who walks in battle.” In a dream, Hanold sees Gradiva as a victim of the Pompeiian tragedy in the

wake of the eruption of Vesuvius, and consequently, he travels to Pompeii on a sort of pilgrimage.

Figure 8: Salvador Dalí, "Gradiva."

Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 239. Ink on paper, c. 1941.

The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.

© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

In this ancient city, he sees a woman walking across the street, whom he mistakes for Gradiva herself. This woman miraculously turns out not only to be a contemporary German, but a friend from his childhood, the memory of whom Hanold had suppressed. Falling in love with Zoë Bertgang, as the heroine turned out to be named, conformed to his delusion in order to affect a cure for Hanold's neurotic obsession.⁵²

Interested in the psychological implications of Jensen's novel, in 1906 Freud wrote an essay analyzing the work, entitled "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*," which, when translated into French in 1931, saw the character of Gradiva quickly adopted by the Surrealists as a sort of beautiful mascot in keeping with the often idealizing and mythologizing penchant among the circle, and as an icon of what the

Surrealists called “mad love,” or *amour fou*. In his interpretation, Freud is interested in Zoë Bertgang’s ability to help the protagonist bring to the surface memories which he has relegated to his subconscious mind—the “return of the repressed” in Freudian parlance—and through role-playing or revelation similar to psychoanalysis, she brings about a cure which he refers to as the “medication of love.”⁵³ For many Surrealists (Breton and André Masson in particular), Jensen’s work and Freud’s interpretation of it evidently had great meaning. So too for Dalí, even in his post-Surrealist period. This is particularly so in regards to his mythologizing of his relationship with his wife, and in a footnote in *The Secret Life* he writes that “When I began to read this novel, even before coming upon Freud’s interpretation, I exclaimed, ‘Gala, my wife, is essentially a Gradiva’” (233).

Figure 9: Salvador Dalí. “Gala, celle qui avance.”
Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, p. 113. Ink on paper, dated 1942.
The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain.
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Material conflating Gala and Gradiva are present in both text and illustration throughout *The Secret Life*, most notably on the introductory page to Part Two, indicating that this section of the book of Dalí's life would be dominated by the Gala/Gradiva myth. The image is in Dalí's "fairy book" style, and is of a nude Gala, from the back, straddling a boat with a bird's head on the prow, out of which sprouts a branch signalling "new growth" (Figure 9). The caption for the work is similar to the dedication of the book: "Gala: celle qui avance," or, "Gala: she who advances," and forms a saucy visual pun as Gala advances away and leaves the reader "in her wake." By co-opting Jensen's narrative, and Freud's interpretation of it, Dalí creates a defined and highly mythologized structure to the "story" of his life with Gala in *The Secret Life* that runs parallel to and intertwines with his other self-mythologizing components, such as those associated with tropes of birth, death and rebirth. That is, Dalí adopts the general theme of Jensen's prefiguring of his ideal relationship, the idea of predestined love, as well as Freud's interpretation of the story's "cure" as the "medication of love." At the end of the book, Dalí draws out the meaning of the name Gradiva, "she who advances" for his own purposes, implying that Gala also teaches him to identify and bravely stride toward his goals, and his "glory," allowing him, too, to advance.

Finkelstein views the Gala/Gradiva myth Dalí develops in *The Secret Life* as a key to understanding the text, as well as demarcating a pivotal point in Dalí's career, visually punctuated by his painting *The Endless Enigma* which he believes marks a transition from "a quasi-scientific discipline anchored in Surrealist theory and in his own project of regression," to "a metaphysical system pivoting at times around a mythologized Gala figure serving as the deity presiding over his activities and

formulating his new ‘reality principle.’”⁵⁴ He argues that the multifarious role played by Gala in Dalí’s life and art “indubitably required a mythological imagination, with its open-ended symbols and fluid images, to give it form.” What he calls “The Gala myth,” determines part of the “larger body of mythical themes and personas built by Dalí as a device for communicating his own subjective experiences as collective or universal truths on a level that would appear to transcend rational thought, time and history.”⁵⁵

Both Finkelstein and Vilaseca rightly point to the function of Dalí’s “false memories” in the creation of the Gala/Gradiva myth. That is, like Hanold in Jensen’s *Gradiva*, it was imperative that Dalí “sense” or “envision” Gala before they actually met, as his ideal woman and predestined mate.⁵⁶ Hence, Dalí needed to devise artificial reminiscences in which this presentiment of Gala was to occur, which he does in the various accounts of his childhood visions and imaginings. In his chapter entitled “False Childhood Memories,” for example, Dalí discusses the fairy-tale image of a Russian girl, “swathed in white furs and deeply ensconced in a sled, pursued by wolves with phosphorescent eyes” which strikes him in the same obsessive way that the relief of “Gradiva” struck the protagonist in Jensen’s novel. First glimpsed in an optical device Dalí calls the “magic theatre,” at his teacher, Senior Traite’s private chambers, Dalí paints this moment in sufficiently idiosyncratic purple prose:

... the image of the little Russian girl ... which I instantly adored, became engraved with the corrosive weight proper to nitric acid in each of the formative moulds of my child’s flesh and soul ... This girl would look at me fixedly and her expression, awe-inspiringly proud, oppressed my heart ... The extreme vivacity provided a moving contrast to the infinite sweetness and serenity conveyed by an oval face and a combination of features as miraculously harmonious as those of a Madonna of Raphael.

“Was it Gala?” he asks. “I am certain it was” (41).

Later in the narrative, wilfully mistaking a girl he later sees for the “little Russian girl,” Dalí writes, “I shall call her Galuchka, which is the diminutive of my wife’s name.” This, according to Dalí, “is because of the belief so deeply rooted in my mind that the same feminine image has recurred in the course of my whole love-life, so that this image having, so to speak, never left me, already nourished my false and my true memories” (43). Gala continues to be prefigured late in Dalí’s childhood in various forms, listed by Dalí as “Galuchka, Dullita, second Dullita, Galuchka Rediviva, the fire-lighter, Galuchka’s Dullita Rediviva!” (118). He writes that

Love of this kind, ever more unreal and unfulfilled, allowed my feelings to overflow from one girl’s image to another, even in the midst of the worst tempest of my soul progressively strengthening my idea of continuity and reincarnation which had come to light for the first time in my encounter with my first Dullita. That is to say, I reached by degrees the conviction that I was really always in love with the same unique, obsessing feminine image, which merely multiplied itself and successively assumed different aspects, depending more and more on the all-powerful autocracy of my royal and anarchic will (118).

In the second phase of the Gala/Gradiva myth, Dalí meets Gala, who cures him of his impending madness, and makes it possible for him to enter the world of the Surrealists, of fame and fortune, and of notoriety. Gala, “teaches” Dalí how to live: “... I had become Gala’s pupil,” he states, simply. She had taught him, he lists, the “principle of pleasure,” of “reality,” how to dress, how to go down the stairs without falling, how to eat properly, “how to recognize our enemies,” and the “principle of proportion,” among other skills. Gala is Dalí’s “Angel of Equilibrium, the precursor of my classicism,” he gushes. “Far from becoming depersonalized, I got rid of the cumbersome, sterile and dusty tyranny of

symptoms and of tics, tics, tics. I felt myself become master of the new and more and more conscious violence of my acts” (316-17).

In Part Three of *The Secret Life*, Dalí deploys the third part of his Gala/Gradyva myth. He writes that he has achieved everything he could have asked for as an artist, yet he suddenly sinks into a terrible depression, and in response he and Gala rush home to Port Lligat to allow him to recuperate. Dalí has achieved everything he could ask for, he explains to Gala, yet he finds himself mired in a debilitating funk. “There is nothing the matter with me,” he explains. “I know that my glory is there, within reach, ripe as an Olympian fig; I have only to clench my hand and my teeth to feel the juice of its materiality flow ... And yet I feel myself the slave of a growing anguish—I don’t know where it comes from or where it is going!” (347). Dalí once again develops neurotic symptoms of which Gala had originally helped cure him, including “that of going mad and dying!” He cannot sleep, and can no longer swallow—an important function in Dalí’s symbolic lexicon of consumption and gustatory processes. Once these symptoms have manifested themselves, pathetic fallacy soon steps in to enhance the setting. Beloved fishermen and locals from Cadaqués and Port Lligat are abused by their own progeny and find themselves bloated and ill from poor digestion, and then, a terrible wind characteristic of that region of the Empordà begins to blow, and “did not relax its unleashed violence” (348).

Then, in a pivotal moment, evidently intended as the climax of the book, Dalí awakens to find the *tramontana* has stopped blowing, and the fishermen have disappeared. Instead, he finds Gala “bowed over my slumber, like the divine animal of anxiety of the body of the ‘chrysalis Lazarus’ that I was.” Instantly he realizes, “My

surrealist glory was useless,” indicating that Dalí’s depression was brought on by a sense that his work, defined as it was by Surrealism and a dubious celebrity is not “meaningful,” spiritually endowed or important. Instead, he suddenly recognizes that

I must incorporate surrealism in tradition. My imagination must become classic again. I had before me a work to accomplish for which the rest of my life would not suffice. Gala made me believe in this mission. Instead of stagnating in the anecdotic mirage of my success, I had now to begin to fight for a thing that was “important.” This important thing was to render the experience of my life “classic,” to endow it with a form, a cosmogony, a synthesis, an architecture of eternity” (350).

As the “chrysalis Lazaras,” Dalí uses the metamorphic imagery of the emergent butterfly for the final rebirth of his creative spirit. “For like a chrysalis, I had wrapped myself up in the silk shroud of my imagination, and this had to be pierced and torn to enable the paranoiac butterfly of my spirit to emerge, transformed—living and real.” At this point Dalí acknowledges the debt he owes to Gala, but also that he must now advance on his own, to become his own Gradiva. “Once already Gala Gradiva had cured me of madness with the corporeal reality of her love,” he writes,

Having become practical, I had been able to achieve my surrealist “glory.” But this success threatened to relapse into madness, for I was shutting myself up in the world of my realized image. It was necessary to break this cocoon. It was necessary for me really to believe in my work, in its importance outside of myself! She had taught me to walk; I had to advance like a Gradiva, in my turn (349).

Dalí’s cocoon-like “prisons,” he explains, meaning the paradigms and parameters of his “former” life, “were the condition of my metamorphosis, but without Gala, they threatened to become my coffins, and again it was Gala who with her very teeth came to tear away the wrappings patiently woven by the section of my anguish, and within which

I was beginning to decompose.” “Arise and walk!” Gala commands Dalí. And obeying her, Dalí claims that “For the first time I experienced the ‘savor’ of tradition upon feeling myself touching the earth with the soles of my feet. ‘You have accomplished nothing yet! It is not time for you to die!’” (349-50).

As the redeemer in the narrative of Dalí’s life, Gala is the catalyst for her husband’s “morphology” from decadent and disordered youth to focused and presumably meaningful adulthood. Dalí’s version of the Gradiva myth is also extremely effective, as far as the narrative of Dalí’s life goes, in aggrandizing Gala’s stature to a person extraordinary enough to be the “Savior’s” partner, and perhaps, in accommodating Gala’s own desire to be mythologized. By embracing the Gradiva myth, as resonant as it was with Freudian undertones and associations, Dalí both incorporates psychoanalysis, in the sense of releasing repressed memories, curing neuroses and hence the possibilities of a productive future, and uses it as a means to signal a transition away from a Freudian paradigm. In this way Dalí accepts a metaphysical and religious redemption, rather than one that was initiated through the “scientific” initiatives of psychoanalysis.

The Manikin with the Sugar Nose

The Gradiva myth is not the only one within *The Secret Life* that points to a Freudian schema, or to a divergence from a psychoanalytic episteme. It is, in fact, in another tale where Dalí makes evident his irreverence toward Freudian psychoanalysis, implying his having mastered, if not outgrown the model. This is a short piece entitled “The Manikin with the Sugar Nose,” in which Dalí claims the reader will immediately recognize him “as the person of the king who is the other protagonist of this medieval Catalanian popular tale ...” Following this introduction, Dalí recounts a very brief story

reminiscent of *Arabian Nights*, in which a king, who nightly takes, and then kills, the most beautiful women in his kingdom, is foiled by a wily maiden who puts a mannequin, with a nose made of sugar, in the bed to fool him. When the king strikes her with his sword, the mannequin's nose flies into his mouth and, tasting the sweetness, he realizes he would have preferred the maiden alive rather than dead. At this point, the young girl reveals herself to the king, and they duly fall in love and live "happily ever after" (234-5).

The extent to which Dalí wilfully distorts and often gleefully parodies Freudian analysis is rendered comically evident following the recounting of this tale, which itself takes up less than one half of a page. Once finished, Dalí offers the "Interpretation of the Tale of the Wax Manikin with the Sugar Nose," which begins with the entreaty, "Let us try now to interpret this story in the light that psychoanalysis by my own original methods of investigation can shed upon it." Compared to the page or so that comprises the actual tale, Dalí then spins a long-winded and comically overblown psychoanalytic investigation which, no doubt to emphasize the ponderous nature of his task, takes up almost another five pages. Dalí goes into a seemingly endless pseudo-scientific description of the tale, which he delivers with hyperbolic brio as he ruminates upon the "non-repugnant character of the wax" and "that substitute and euphemistic illusion necessary to the nostalgic pleasure of the necrophilic 'passional aberration.'" He then moves on to the abject, evoking "coprophagic phantasms" and the "desire for waste matter," to the requisite paroxysms, ejaculations, and to be sure, equates the castration complex with the falling off of the nose, which leads to fears of punishment experienced by the multiply-afflicted "cannibalistic copro-necrophile" (238-9).

In a typical passage of this “analysis,” with clear shades of Jarry and Rabelais, Dalí writes, “Thus the hypocritical warmth of the wax in a symbolic situation would replace the atrocious crudity of the real intention of these phantasms,” and to do so would require “all the candles of copro-necrophilic consummation already lighted for the nuptial feast which could couple these two passions that together constitute the peak of an aberration and perversity.” And just in case the reader misses the effrontery of Dalí’s venture, he is careful to point it out in a footnote, in which he writes, “A very precise study of the wax candle, written in 1929, led me to the conclusion that this object lends itself to a whole series of symbolic situations in which non-terrorizing unconscious representations of intestinal and digestive metaphors lead to the apotheosis of human waste matter—the turd.” Once finished climbing the “vertiginous slope of [his] hypothesis,” Dalí finally concludes, using the most banal language for droll contrast, that “The king wanted to eat corpse, and instead of the taste of corpse he found that of sugar”; that this was the “cure of the king’s psychic disturbances,” and finally, he writes, “Thus was realized once more that myth, the leit-motif of my thinking, of my aesthetic, and of my life: death and resurrection!” (239).

Dalí’s inclusion of this tale, and his “analysis” of it, parodies Freud’s own well-known readings of various myths and stories, such as his interpretation of Jensen’s *Gradiva*, and including the psychoanalyst’s exegeses of, for instance, the myth of Medusa, or of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *The Sandman*.⁵⁷ By sending up Freud’s analytic methodologies, Dalí not only attempts to match the psychoanalyst at his own game, but to “exceed his master.” In other words, by destabilizing Freudian psychoanalysis in such a pronounced way, Dalí suggests that while he might still find psychoanalysis useful for his

own purposes, he has now mastered it to the point that he can quite effectively parody it. As he makes clear elsewhere in the book, he has met, impressed and “taught” its founding father, and can now “sublimate” it and “advance.”

Once he has performed his pseudo-Freudian autopsy on the Catalan folk tale, Dalí turns to one of the most important passages in the text, recounting his courtship with Gala, in which, Dalí claims, after a long and tortuous build-up of what moves toward the consummation of their relationship, Gala asks Dalí, instead, to kill her.” “Gala now described her insurmountable horror of the ‘hour of her death,’ which had tortured her since childhood,” he writes. “She wanted it to happen without her knowing it, ‘cleanly,’ and without experiencing the fear of the last moments” (245). After this, Dalí explains that Gala revealed *her* “secret life” to *him*, as she “dissect[ed] herself alive” by telling him the reasons for her pain and anguish; secrets which Dalí announces that he refuses to impart to the reader. Finally, Dalí considers obliging Gala by killing her, but discovers that “something limped in my enthusiasm,” and he decides, triumphantly, against it. This is apparently a key moment in the healing process of Dalí’s presumed madness. Dalí then returns to “The Wax Manikin with the Sugar Nose,” and clarifies the presumably “real” “moral” or “meaning” of it several pages later, as it relates to Dalí’s cosmogony.

“Yes!” Dalí writes, “Gala, the wily beauty, Gradiwa of my life, with the sabre-stroke of her avowal had just cut off the head of that wax manikin which I had watched since childhood on the bedecked bed of my solitude, that wax manikin of her double, the chimerical Galuchka of my false memories, whose dead nose had just jumped into the delirious sugar of my first kiss!” Consequently, Dalí claims, “Gala thus weaned me from my crime, and cured my madness. Thank you! I want to love you! I was to marry her”

(248). Dalí presents this tale as an echo and iteration of both “The Manikin with the Sugar Nose,” and the Gala/Gradiva myth, reworking the theme of madness and cure, or death and resurrection and the “medication of love” with which he credits his Gala/Gradiva. Hence, throughout the text, Dalí is able to mythologize Gala to the extent that she is “worthy” to be the partner of the great “saviour of modern art.” She has been inextricably spun into the fabric of his cosmogony, as a key element in his morphology and as a catalyst for his “resurrection” or renaissance, as he is reborn at the end of the work. The extent to which Dalí’s life and cosmogony are inflected and guided by Gala’s healing hands, Dalí sums up on the final page of *The Secret Life*, where he exclaims, simply, “Gala, you are reality!” (400).

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the first half of this dissertation, which has been dedicated to close readings of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and toward establishing the work as a highly novelistic enterprise based on the conventions of the conversion narrative. It has also offered a number of strategies for approaching the work, in terms of literary conventions, iconography, autobiographical theory, style, parody, and psychoanalytic imperatives. In the chapters that follow, the focus will shift to extratextual elements of Dalí’s memoir, considering the artist’s intended and actual audiences, the agency and marketing of the book, how the work functions as a manifesto, and finally, Dalí’s mobilization and circumnavigation of his past and present political affinities. In this sense, the thesis shifts from an emphasis on what Dalí overtly states in his autobiography, to what it is he very pointedly does not say, or says in notably cryptic or abstruse ways. As such, the subject moves to a focus on Dalí’s strategies of disclosure, or the tension

between fact and fiction; that is, the actual, experienced events of Dalí's life, and how he omits or conveys these for his own narrative, declarative or political ends.

¹ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 145.

² Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 265.

³ Mike Wallace, "Wallace vs. Dalí," uncited magazine interview (SDML), 1957. See also, the transcript for a different Mike Wallace television interview conducted in April 19, 1958, in the Harry Ransom Centre website, University of Texas at Austin, http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/multimedia/video/2008/wallace/Dalí_salvador_t.html.

⁴ Antonio Marichalar, review of *El nuevo glosario: Los diálogos de la pasión meditabunda*, by Eugenio d'Ors, *Revista de Occidente* (Madrid), vol. 1, no. 4 (October 1923): 26, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 155.

⁵ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 155-6.

⁶ Cowles, 271.

⁷ Stephen S. Kayser, "Salvador Dalí's Search for Heaven," *The Pacific Art Review* (Winter 1942-3): 36.

⁸ Dalí, Salvador, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un génie?*, 92.

⁹ Robert Radford, review of *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing 1927-1942: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, by Haim Finkelstein, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 139, no. 1133 (Aug. 1997): 559.

¹⁰ David Lomas, "Sigmund Freud" in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 437.

¹¹ Rasilla, 101.

¹² *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³ Patterson Greene, review of *The Secret Life*, *California Arts and Architecture* (June, 1943): 8.

¹⁴ Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 254.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁶ Ades, *Dalí*, 76.

¹⁷ David Lomas, "Painting is Dead—Long Live Painting!: Notes on Dalí and Leonardo," *Papers of Surrealism*, no. 4 (Spring, 2006), 14, <http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal4/acrobat%20files/Lomaspdf.pdf>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹ John M. Opitz, "Goethe's Bone and the Beginnings of Morphology," *American Journal of Medical Genetics*, vol. 126, no. 1, (2004): abstract, 1.

²⁰ Letter from Dalí to Buñuel, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 449. From the Luis Buñuel Archive, Ministry of Culture, Madrid.

²¹ See Salvador Dalí, *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet*, oil on canvas, 1939, private collection. In Descharnes and Néret, p. 326, figure 729.

²² Salvador Dalí, *Dalí, Dalí!* (New York: Julien Levy Gallery, May 1939) in Dalí, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, 336. Dalí finishes this vignette by writing "Behind a balustrade two figures are also watching attentively,—one, immobile, is Bocklin; the other, slowly approaching, corresponds exactly with Nietzsche's description when he wrote "Poetry advances with a face veiled like Egyptians."

²³ Cowles, 271-72.

²⁴ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 121.

²⁵ Lubar "Salvador Dalí: Portrait of the Artist as (An)Other," 112.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁷ Radford, review of *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 559.

²⁸ Salvador Dalí, "Nouvelles considérations générale sur le mécanisme du phénomène paranoïaque du point de vue surréaliste," *Minotaure* (Paris) no. 1 (June 1933): 65-7.

²⁹ Greeley, "Dalí's Fascism; Lacan's Paranoia," 472. See Jacques Lacan (1932), *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité* (Paris: Seuil), 1975.

³⁰ See *Portrait de la Vicomtesse de Noailles* (Portrait of the Vicomtesse de Noailles), c. 1932. Oil on panel, private collection.

³¹ Originally published in English by Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London, in 1929. The edition used here is Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco and London: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973). Dalí's description of his alleged intrauterine memories in his autobiography could have been suggested, as does Jean Alsina in his exegesis of *The Secret Life*, by St. Augustine's *Confessions*, in which the Bishop of Hippo wonders about life in the womb, and the state of the pre-natal soul. See St. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans., Henry Chadwick (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7. Likewise, Breton and Éluard's collaborative series of prose poems entitled *The Immaculate Conception* of 1930, which traces the life path of a protagonist, possibly Jesus Christ, or simply "everyman," from conception to death. The series begins with the heading "Intra-Uterine Life" in which the foetus is presumed to see from inside of the womb. See Breton, *What is surrealism?*, 49.

³² Here Dalí notes that "While engaged in the translation of my book, Mr. Chevalier has called my attention to another chapter of "intra-uterine" memories discovered by his friend Mr. Vladimir Pozner in Casanova's *Memoirs*" (26, fn).

³³ Clifton Fadiman, "Books: Reports from England and the Subconscious," *The New Yorker*, Jan. 2, 1943, 50.

³⁴ Esther Menaker, *Otto Rank: A Rediscovered Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 63.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* Rank's italics.

³⁸ Tim McGirk, *Wicked Lady: Salvador Dalí's Muse* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 107.

³⁹ Ades, *Dalí: the Centenary Retrospective*, 437.

⁴⁰ Secrest, 184.

⁴¹ Ades, *Dalí: the Centenary Retrospective*, 437.

⁴² Chadwick, 30.

⁴³ Martin Ries, "André Masson: Surrealism and His Discontents," *Art Journal*, N.Y., vol. 61, no.4, (Winter 2002): 78.

⁴⁴ Chadwick, 38.

⁴⁵ E-Smith, 279.

⁴⁶ Cowles, 162-3.

⁴⁷ Juan Antonio Ramirez, "The Dalinian Utopia and Artistic Waste," in Fanés, *Dalí. Mass Culture*, 253.

⁴⁸ Ratcliff, "Swallowing Dalí," 35.

⁴⁹ Fadiman, "Books: Reports from England and the Subconscious," 50.

⁵⁰ Anon., *Town and Country*, Jan. 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

⁵¹ Bona, *Gala: La mujer más enigmática del siglo XX.*, 281. Translation mine.

⁵² Ries, 77-78.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, 236.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 259.

⁵⁷ See Sigmund Freud (1907), "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume IX, ed. and trans., James Strachey (London, Hogarth Press, 1955), 1-96; "Medusa's Head" (1922), in *The Standard Edition*, vol., XXVIII, 273-274; and for Freud's discussion of Hoffmann's work, see "The 'Uncanny'" (1919) in *The Standard Edition*, vol. XVII, 217-256.

CHAPTER 5: Poetry in America: The Very Public Life of Salvador Dalí

It is difficult to hold the world's attention for more than half an hour at a time. I myself have done so successfully every day for twenty years. My motto has been: "Let them speak of Dalí, even if they speak well of him."

Salvador Dalí,
September 1958 entry of
Diary of a Genius.¹

Introduction

"As secret as a circus parade and as artistically glamorous as its tarnished tinsel" was how journalist Benjamin DeCasseres described *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* in his review of the book launch for Dalí's memoir for the *New York Journal American* in January 1943.² DeCasseres is referring to the immense amount of publicity, or more aptly, "hype," that accompanied the writing and release of Salvador Dalí's autobiography in America between 1940 and 1944; promotion that was generated primarily by Dalí and what might be called his "team," or those around him invested in his career. Dalí and this circle, in fact, went to great extremes to promote the book in the popular press from the moment Dalí arrived as an exile from Europe in August of 1940 until the last of the book reviews petered out in later 1944. From this perspective, and with an irony that Dalí surely intended, it is quite possible that *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was, *pace* its title, one of the most public books ever written.

Dalí was early among fine artists to comprehend fully the power of the press and the efficacy of a strong public image in an era that was itself beginning to recognize the influence of modern communications methods and technologies, in the form of print, radio, the newsreel and the publicly staged event. Primarily by promoting himself, and

being promoted by interested parties, throughout the 1930s Dalí accrued a tremendous amount of celebrity in the United States, and thus developed a sound understanding and command of the popular media by the time he arrived in America in 1940. Dalí had much invested in both maintaining his celebrity and artistic presence in the United States during his exile, and it was well within his interest to harness various media for the promotion of this image, and to present a particular “package” to his American audience, a demographic which he referred to as the “masses.” While the artist availed himself of the press, wrote popular articles, artists’ statements in catalogues, and even distributed a declaration directed at the American public, he evidently concluded that a mythologized, revisionist “history” of his life, entirely scripted and illustrated by himself, was what he needed to establish the “Dalí brand” he wished to promote in America during the 1940s.

The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí was, like most autobiographies, a promotional vehicle for its author. Where Dalí’s autobiography is exceptional, however, is in the lengths to which Dalí went to promote the book, and, the extent to which it was written to serve directives of his career. One of these directives was Dalí’s project of ingratiating himself with the American public as, at that period, the cultural sector of the “New World” was developing a newfound appreciation for art from its own continent. This was in part a reaction to what was viewed in negative terms by many Americans as the “infiltration” of artists, writers, poets, musicians, designers and architects from Europe; the exiles and émigrés who defined the avant-garde and modernist imperatives that had hitherto set the bar for taste and innovation throughout the Western world. Consequently, *The Secret Life* is also very much part of Dalí’s project to distance himself from other European exiles, and to insert himself into the populist American landscape.

Dalí's venture was not exclusively venal and self-serving however, and the extent to which the Spanish artist provided the American public with an accessible and popular representative of the European vanguard, and especially Surrealism, is considered here, as is Dalí's role as a "cultural broker," via his ability to bridge certain gaps between so-called "high art," the avant-garde and American popular culture. The success of this project is examined in relation to the reception Dalí's book and its accompanying promotional campaign, and the degree to which the work informed American popular culture.

As will be discussed in the following chapters, while the American public was Dalí's stated and overt audience in his autobiography, it was by no means his only intended one, and must also be considered in light of Dalí's efforts to distance himself from the Surrealist movement, to establish a new style based on academic and Renaissance traditions, and Dalí's presumed "hidden" political agenda. This chapter functions, then, as an introduction to one of the many audiences Dalí intended for his book, and specifically for a reading of *The Secret Life* as a strategic document intended to maintain Dalí's celebrity in the United States, to ingratiate himself to a popular American audience, to position himself as an artist "for the masses," and to distance himself from the exiled European avant-garde.

Art in American circa 1940

Hitler's invasion of Poland on the first of September 1939 augmented an already considerable exodus from Europe of intellectuals and artists involving many of the world's leading scholars, scientists, psychologists, musicians, architects, writers, poets and painters. Many seeking refuge from the terror of World War II fled to the Western

Hemisphere, including the U.S., bringing European paradigms, aesthetics, and philosophies to the “New World” where, as is well documented, they were to influence the arts and other disciplines profoundly.³ Dalí and Gala were very much part of this migration, and after a stay in the French south-western coastal town of Arcachon, the pair left Paris for Spain when the Nazis reached Bordeaux in June of 1940. Gala went to Lisbon, while Dalí went to visit his family in Figueres, and then to Madrid and on to meet up with Gala in Portugal, where they secured passage on a ship from the American Export Line to New York. They arrived, as part of the influx of Surrealists and other members of the avant-garde, on the other side of the Atlantic, on August 16, 1940.⁴ The couple were to remain in America until 1948; hence it was eight years before they returned to Europe.

The artistic atmosphere which European émigré artists encountered in late 1930s and early 1940s America was of a completely different nature from that to which they were accustomed, and while highly influential, the imported avant-garde was by no means universally welcomed. In fact, after the First World War, the United States had entered a period of relative isolationism that lasted until 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbour. This phase saw an emphasis on cultural nationalism, and discourses about the “national spirit” gained currency with artists and writers. Alfred Stieglitz, for example, the American photographer and art dealer, who in the prewar years had promoted an international view of modernism, adopted a cultural nationalist position arguing against American art with a “French flavour.” After closing his famous gallery the 291 in 1917, Stieglitz’s new art galleries focussed on a select group of American artists. These

included the Intimate Gallery, open between 1925 and 1929, and the aptly named An American Place, open from 1929 to 1946.⁵

Although the more experimental artists still looked to Europe, and especially Paris, for cues to avant-garde and modernist imperatives, in the 1930s increasing emphasis was placed on art by and for Americans. Much of this had to do with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which involved programs to aid the unemployed and to revitalize the U.S. economy, including a number of projects that resulted in work for artists. Various initiatives over the decade included The Public Works of Art Project, set up in late 1933; The Section of Painting and Sculpture in the Treasury Department, established in October 1934 and lasting until 1943; and The Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (FAP), which ran from 1935 to 1943. These ventures employed thousands of artists, and resulted in vast numbers of artworks, including thousands of paintings, sculptures, murals, prints, photographs and posters, many of which were located or exhibited in public spaces and therefore accessible to a wide demographic of Americans.⁶

One of the consequences of The Federal Art Project was to give the American arts community the sense that American art and "high" culture were worthy and important. Also, relatively generous salaries provided by The Federal Art Project led to the development of the concept of art as a profession in a way that was novel in the U.S. Particularly in New York City, artists began to meet and discuss art in Greenwich Village in bars and coffeehouses which paralleled the cafés of Paris, in both cases so important to the circulation and fermentation of artistic creativity, ideology and community. Consequently, artists in New York began to develop a sense of collectivism, and the

long-term effects of the FAP's support would prove crucial to the painters later known as the Abstract Expressionists who, post-war, were to witness New York City transform into the world's new art capital.⁷

Despite the isolationism of the interwar years, many American artists and intellectuals had a reasonable awareness of contemporary cultural events in Europe, and were frequently exposed to at least the most influential European modernists, through publications, exhibitions, travel and word of mouth. Nevertheless, as Sam Hunter explains, the new generation of the 1930s still laboured under the "heavy yoke of American provincialism."⁸ Further, the general public, as well as the majority of culturally-minded Americans continued to favour and champion the Midwest Regionalists and, particularly in Eastern urban centres, still very much preferred the Social Realists."⁹ Consequently, when Dalí and Gala disembarked from the *Excambion* in 1940, American art veered between the Social Realism favoured by the public and sundry formalist derivations of European abstraction, although a certain faction of younger artists were also exploring diverse techniques, processes, styles, and subjects, including collage, automatism, and various filmic and photographic techniques.¹⁰ One thing was certain, and that was that America and its artists were very much interested in America and American art.

Where art was concerned, Salvador Dalí fit into the American cultural imaginary in terms of his association with Surrealism and the European avant-garde. More culturally-minded Americans had come into contact with European Surrealism as early as the mid-1920s, through a few important exhibitions, and a select few had been to Paris and had been exposed first-hand to the "scene" there. For the most part, however,

information about art was circulated in North America through print media, including exhibition catalogues, journals, magazines, broadsheets and newspapers.¹¹ As a result, during his trips to the U.S. throughout the 1930s, Dalí, along with other European Surrealists, were to find that not just the vanguard, but the American public had a marked awareness of Surrealism, although it little resembled the movement or aesthetic they had developed themselves in Paris. Instead, visiting Surrealists discovered a censored, commercialized and de-politicized new manifestation, which might well be said to have been, if not Bowdlerized, then certainly Americanized.

According to Keith L. Eggener, in an article discussing the relationship between Surrealism and popular entertainment, American newspapers and magazines had begun discussing Surrealism with increasing regularity as early as 1925, just one year after the publication of André Breton's first Surrealist manifesto. By the mid-1930s, articles on Surrealist art and artists could be found in a broad range of illustrated high-circulation periodicals, which included *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek*.¹² Many Americans also encountered Surrealism *à la mode*, through the annals of fashion and advertising, as Surrealist imagery and what came to be seen as the Surrealist "style" became increasingly *de rigueur* from the mid-1930s on. Surrealism had been appropriated by visual merchandising and fashion production of all kinds, from the designs of dresses, hats and jewellery, to furniture and the covers and fashion layouts of *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vanity Fair*, to shop windows and fashion shows. By 1940 Surrealism, or at least a commercialized, prettified illusionist version of it, had become the new idiom for the fantasy language of fashion in the U.S. as much as it had in Paris of the later 1930s.¹³

As early as 1931, at the opening of the first group show of Surrealist art to be held in America, “Newer Super Realism,” at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, Director A. Everett “Chick” Austin’s interpretive strategy involved situating Surrealism very much in terms of fashion, entertainment and popular culture. He writes,

We can take pleasure in what we have today and pride in knowing that we are in fashion ... These pictures are chic. They are entertaining. They are of the moment. We do not have to take them seriously to enjoy them. We need not ... demand that they be important. Many of them are humorous and we can laugh at them. Some of them are sinister and terrifying, but so are the tabloids. It is much more satisfying aesthetically to be amused, to be frightened even, than to be bored by a pompous and empty art ... After all, the paintings of our present day must compete with the movie thriller and the scandal sheet.¹⁴

As evinced by Austin’s rhetoric, advertisers and those involved with the culture industry, such as arts publishers, gallery owners and museum directors responsible for circulating the bulk of information about Surrealism during the politically sensitive interwar years, evidently, for the most part, “thought it economically prudent to cast the movement in relatively non-threatening terms.”¹⁵ This no doubt meant downplaying the sexual and “perverse” manifestations of Surrealism, its more sinister and macabre aspects, questionable references to religion, and also its “Bolshevik,” left-leaning politics, or indeed politics of any persuasion. “When Americans at this time spoke of Surrealism’s attachment to Marx,” Eggener remarks, “they were usually talking about Groucho or Harpo.”¹⁶

Together with a few gallery owners and museum curators, such as the MoMA Director Alfred Barr and Curator James Thrall Soby, “Chick” Austin, Henri Matisse’s son the art dealer Pierre Matisse, and the wealthy art collector and dealer Peggy

Guggenheim, it was Dalí's American dealer, the impresario and gallery owner Julien Levy who had much to do with bringing Surrealism to America and especially with popularizing it in the entertaining and "zany" sense that was to become synonymous with Dalí. In her study *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*, Martica Sawin describes Levy's gallery as a "veritable beachhead of Surrealism in the United States."¹⁷ "I wished," Levy explains in his *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, "to present a paraphrase which would offer Surrealism in the language of the new world rather than a translation in the rhetoric of the old."¹⁸

Levy was interested in transforming Surrealism to fit an American palette, and as the one most heavily invested in promoting Dalí in America, he was primarily responsible for introducing and marketing Dalí to the American public in the 1930s and early '40s. Levy also produced elaborate and highly innovative catalogues for Dalí's shows, which consistently played up the humorous, lighter, apolitical character of Dalí's art. In *The Secret Life*, Dalí describes Levy as "a bird flown in from America" in Paris in the early 1930s:

This bird had large black wings like those of El Greco's angels, and which one did not see, and was dressed in a white duck suit and a Panama hat which were quite visible. It was Julien Levy, who was subsequently to be the one to make my art known to the United States. He confessed to me that he considered my work [*The Persistence of Memory*] very extraordinary, but that he was buying it to use as propaganda, and to show it in his own house, for he considered it non-public and "unsaleable." It was nevertheless sold and resold until finally it was hung on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art, and was without a doubt the picture which had the most complete "public success" (318).

Levy also recollects his purchase of Dalí's "most complete 'public success,'" *The Persistence of Memory*, a work that caused such a sensation in America that he described

it as “10 by 14 inches of Dalí dynamite.”¹⁹ “In those days,” he writes, “\$250 was a high price, more than I had ever spent for a painting,” and recounts that his father was pleased “when I told him that if he liked it ‘so would America.’”²⁰ America would like it alright, and Levy’s canny merchandising sense and knowledge of the American market very much helped to present Dalí as something of a side-show to the dominant, populist American models of art practice, rather than merely as an import from Europe, which carried with it the danger of positioning him as “other,” elitist or effete. Levy understood that in order to “conquer” the U.S., Dalí had to ingratiate himself with the nation, and he encouraged the artist to “Americanize” as much as circumstances would allow, and therefore to insert himself in the increasingly dominant paradigm which privileged American art. “With growing chauvinism,” Levy wrote, “America rushed to support American art and show new prejudice against all that was European ... I had both European and American artists in my gallery, but except for Dalí, there were no sizeable sales of my European imports.” Without a doubt, Levy observes, “the American shows sold better” (158).

Nothing in Dalí’s writing of the thirties and early forties indicates that the artist held anything but the most marginal interest in contemporary American art in terms of vanguard or modernist imperatives, and his intent was certainly not to participate in the increasingly vibrant “New World,” and primarily New York “scene.” Dalí had much larger aspirations, and instead of attempting to join the American vanguard ranks, he instead set his sights on courting and capturing the American public, embracing the idea of imposing his own style and aesthetic upon the American “masses.” Dalí wanted to offer something new to Americans, but in their own, popular language. “America!” he

writes, “I wanted to go over there and see what it was like, to bring my bread, place my bread over there” (324). “And what was going to make the most impression on them,” Dalí enthuses, “was precisely myself, the most partisan, the most violent, the most imperialistic, the most delirious, the most fanatical of all” (325).

Dalí carried out his new role with gusto and, in no small part thanks to Levy, by the time Dalí was to arrive in America as a refugee in 1940, he had already enjoyed tremendous celebrity as an artist and public figure for several years in the U.S., through exhibitions, press articles, commercial enterprise and his three previous voyages, highly publicized, in 1934, 1936 and 1939. His *Persistence of Memory*, exhibited in 1931 in Connecticut and in Levy’s New York gallery in 1932, truly caused a sensation. “The Wet Watches,” as they were occasionally described, were infinitely spoofed and discussed, and the painting’s renown in the U.S. was a calling card on the dust jacket of *The Secret Life*, instantly recognizable, as it remains today, vying with Dalí’s moustache as one of his “trademarks.”²¹ By the time Dalí and Gala arrived in New York in August 1940, the artist had also exhibited in two Carnegie Internationals, participated in the Universal Exhibition in Chicago in 1933-34, had had five one-man shows at the Julien Levy Gallery and lectured in 1935 at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), both in New York. He had likewise taken part in the first Surrealist exhibition in the U.S., *Newer Super Realism*, held at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1931 with Picasso, Duchamp, Ernst and Man Ray; showed in the important *Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings and Photographs* at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1932; and in 1936, showed twelve paintings in the seminal group exhibition *Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism* at the MoMA.

As a testament to his celebrity in America in the 1930s, Dalí appeared in *Vanity Fair* in 1934 and, in 1936, even garnered an appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine in a photograph taken by Man Ray. Meanwhile his 1939 Julien Levy Gallery exhibition—a resounding success—was featured in *Life* magazine, *Art Digest* and many other high profile publications.²² As if this list were not impressive enough, diversifying from his already broad output of painting, prints, assemblage-making and writing, Dalí's ballet *Bacchanale* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1939.

While considered the consummate Surrealist in America, throughout the 1930s Dalí became increasingly alienated from the avant-garde and the Surrealist group. Realizing the potential for fame and fortune in the U.S., and ready and willing to embrace American popular culture and mass media, he clearly followed Levy's lead to cater to "the masses," and to blur the line between art and commerce, even going so far as to produce graphic designs for advertising and popular magazines and, thanks to Levy's manoeuvring, producing a series of comic drawings for the mass-circulation journal *American Weekly*.²³ Most notably among these lines, Levy was also responsible for orchestrating Dalí's Surrealist "funhouse," the aquatic fantasy structure populated by half-naked "liquid ladies" hired for the occasion, the Dream of Venus pavilion erected at the New York World's Fair in 1939. While sponsors wanted admission to the pavilion to be forty cents, Dalí apparently insisted it only be twenty-five. "I paint for the masses," he claimed, "for the great common man, for the people. If you charge people forty cents they won't come."²⁴ Further pointing to Dalí's determination to embrace the American populace and its popular institutions, Eggener writes that "It is not without significance that Dalí's 'Dream of Venus' pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair was located on the

midway beside such attractions as Morris Gest's 'Little Miracle Town,' home of the "World's Greatest Midget Artists."²⁵

Finally, still pre-1940, Dalí was inadvertently the subject of two widely publicized American-based scandals. The first originated at a party organized by the American socialite Caresse Crosby and Julien Levy's wife Joella Levy in January 1935, the "Bal onirique," held in the Dalís' honour at Le Coq Rouge in New York. Gala's costume, a red cellophane dress, was accessorized with faux lobsters, while perched on her head was a celluloid baby doll. The doll was mistakenly identified by members of the press to represent the recently kidnapped Lindburgh baby, and was thus considered in appallingly bad taste, resulting in international press coverage.²⁶ The second was due to the publicity generated after Dalí upset a fur-lined bathtub he had placed in a display window at Bonwit Teller department store in downtown Manhattan in March of 1939, a commission arranged, once again, by Levy. After discovering that his display had been altered without his permission, Dalí attempted to destroy the work, crashing the bathtub through the plate glass display window along with himself, and being thrown out with the bathwater, as it were, into an astonished crowd who had gathered to watch the spectacle on the street. Despite the fact that not a single photograph captured the incident, this second "scandal" was also widely publicized and frequently spoofed. Dalí's lengthy and hilarious account of it in *The Secret Life*, and his subsequent stay in jail while he was held for sentencing, is one of the comic highlights of his autobiography (372-376).²⁷

While Dalí had accomplished all this before his arrival as a refugee in 1940, he continued to become even more publicly "visible," and by 1941 Dalí had a bewildering array of projects underway, not the least of which was the widely publicized writing of

his autobiography. A number of his works went on display in an exhibition on advertising art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which included pieces by other artists such as Picasso, André Derain, Marie Laurencin and Georgia O’Keeffe. He also collaborated with Duke Fulco di Verdura on jewellery designs, produced drawings for a jewellery advertisement for *Vogue*, and in April worked for the first time with the photographer Philippe Halsman, who would become a long-time collaborator. Between April 22 and May 31 Dalí was given yet another solo exhibition, simply entitled “Dalí,” at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York, which would subsequently be shown at the Arts Club of Chicago and the Dalzell Hatfield Galleries of Los Angeles. The last page of the catalogue for the exhibition featured a hand-written “teaser” with captions, writing and drawings for *The Secret Life*. “Can one remember one’s prenatal life?” is the label for one image, next to which is written “Explained in the book.” “Why are there always so many crutches?” asks another. “Explained in the book,” and so on. Another promotional “event” for Dalí’s forthcoming memoir was the appearance in May of excerpts from *The Secret Life* in the high-profile magazine *Town and Country*, a publicity venture that, according to Benjamin DeCasseres “created a sensation.”²⁸

Dalí and Gala spent the summer of 1941 at the Del Monte Lodge in Pebble Beach, California, where on September second, the artist helped host a benefit dinner for The Museum of Modern Art in aid of exiled European artists. “A Surrealist Night in an Enchanted Forest” was a great success socially, and in terms of public relations (although a financial flop), attracting guests such as Gloria Vanderbilt and Bob Hope. In September Dalí and Gala were staying at the St. Regis hotel in New York to prepare for the opening of his ballet *Labyrinth*, choreographed by Léonide Massine, which opened at the

Metropolitan Opera House on October eighth. Dalí was also contracted by Twentieth Century Fox that year to produce a nightmare sequence for the 1942 film *Moontide*, which was eventually cut from the film, as the producers felt it would be too disturbing for the audience. On November 18th the artist was the subject of a highly publicized MoMA retrospective curated by James Thrall Soby under the directorship of Alfred H. Barr. By way of contrast, as well as for obvious comparisons, the MoMA show was staged in conjunction with a similar exhibition on fellow Catalan Joan Miró, which was held in an adjacent gallery. After closing in February, Dalí's show was sent on an eight-city tour, through Northampton, Cleveland, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Williamsburg, Utica, Detroit and ending in Omaha.

In 1942, leading up to the publishing of *The Secret Life*, Dalí began to concentrate more intensely on his painting of society portraits for people such as the Marquis de Cuevas, Mrs. Dorothy Spreckels Munn, Helena Rubenstein, and others. Among many other projects that year, the artist also produced a variety of advertisements, and published an illustrated article in *Esquire* magazine. As well, during these three years, Dalí painted over a dozen canvases, and did numerous drawings, sketches and designs, as well as producing the illustrations for *The Secret Life*.²⁹ Needless to say, Dalí was a busy man, and was generating a wide variety of work geared very much toward an American public on a broad social spectrum. Dalí was intent on making his mark in his new home, and claimed that "America has only developed, to the extent of paroxysm, one of the most characteristic and almost monstrous 'secrets' of my personality—my capacity for work."³⁰ Considering the amount of effort Dalí put into his career and his social network during the period up to and during the writing of *The Secret Life*, as Sawin observes, "It

is small wonder that for the American public the term Surrealism was synonymous with the name Dalí.”³¹

While Dalí was immensely prolific and eclectic in terms of creative production in the United States in the 1930s, it was his comedic, entertaining persona, and the highly accessible nature of his art that so seized the country’s interest. The youthful, handsome, highly photogenic Catalan always put on an engaging show for the press, and before long, Dalí the man, and the “Dalinian style” had become a genuine popular culture sensation. Indeed, Dalí’s public success was a true phenomenon, and in his *History of Surrealist Painting*, Marcel Jean writes that “Dalí had launched one of those crazes which regularly grip everyone in America, from top to bottom of the social scale, like an epidemic.” “The Dalinian version of Surrealism,” he continues, “was apparently the latest brilliant successor to the Coué method, mah-jongg, the Charleston, the song *Valencia*, and so many other dazzling and ephemeral fashions.”³²

Dalí and Cultural Brokerage

According to Eggener, Dalí and other invested parties had much to gain from distancing themselves from “European” Surrealism, including its ties with the Communist Party, and other-left wing affiliations, the darker aspects of Surrealist “cosmogony,” and from the avant-garde in general. Eggener suggests that “Museum directors and gallery owners, people with an investment in the art, were producing much of the earliest American copy on Surrealism, and during the politically fractious 1930s they may have thought it economically prudent to cast the movement in relatively non-threatening terms.”³³ Eggener notes that journalists “noted little aesthetic or ideological difference between the Surrealism of the 1920s and that of the 1930s, and few mentioned

the movement's automatist or abstract painters apart from Miró ...” Before 1934, when Dalí first visited America, “The most widely discussed and highly praised ‘Surrealist’ artists in America ... were Giorgio de Chirico and Pierre Roy—neither of them official members of the group, a fact scarcely acknowledged by the American press.” After Dalí's arrival on this side of the Atlantic, “the movement's brightest star on America's shores was unquestionably Dalí.”³⁴

Indeed, it was almost exclusively because of Dalí that Surrealism was known at all beyond circles interested in vanguard art in the U.S., although certainly not the kind of Surrealism that Breton and most of the Paris-based Surrealists would have approved of or acknowledged. Most, if not all, of what people learned of Surrealism in America came from popular sources, Eggener suggests, in part because few Surrealist writings had been translated into English before 1936, and few English-speaking critics “knew or cared that this odd little band of francophone malcontents had set their sights on liberating human consciousness from reason and, as Breton put it in his 1924 manifesto, from ‘aesthetic or moral concern.’”³⁵ Even if such materials had been accessible, and Surrealism had enjoyed representation from “authentic” French sources such as Breton, it might well have been crushed under the weight of its own gravitas. As Julien Levy wrote regarding his 1932 exhibition, “If Breton had been there at that time there would no doubt have been a more orthodox representation. Manifesto heavy, [Surrealism] would have collapsed of its own rigidity.”³⁶

Because of Dalí's high profile in America, the Spanish artist came to represent a sort of “pop” Surrealism in the U.S., far from the original French, Bretonian model. Eggener indexes this particular trajectory of Surrealism in the United States in the 1930s

that played a key role in its reception: “drained of its political content and reconstituted as entertainment,” he notes, “Surrealism was frequently cast as the close cousin of cartoons and popular cinema.”³⁷ Consequently, there was much to gain from refashioning the movement, and its “No. 1 Surrealist” as a benign, “wacky,” and amusing *divertissement* up to and during the war years. Eggener maintains that in creating his “American” persona, embodied in Breton’s famous epithet of Avida Dollars, or “greedy dollars,” “Dalí diminished the more threatening aspects of his personality while maintaining his fascination, much as some American critics had lessened Surrealism’s threat by aligning it with cartoons and comedy. Dalí was strange,” he writes,

but in an old familiar way, like a lewd uncle or a talking mouse. Observing those like Disney and the Marx Brothers, whom the American writers and curators had turned into Surrealists, Dalí the Surrealist extraordinary, remade himself into Dalí the entertainer, the celebrity, the man famous for being famous.³⁸

While Levy was influential in channelling the artist’s energies, Dalí’s popularity in the United States had much to do with his own natural affinity for publicity and his canny showmanship. As Dalí was endlessly in the public eye, he increasingly understood the power of his persona and the influence of the press, as well as his own abilities to manipulate them. However, the Dalí “phenomenon” in the U.S. is complex and involves the consideration of the artist’s work and intent as much as the American public’s relationship to and understanding of the “art world,” the media, and the parties invested in making copy or money out of Dalí’s product and personality. Mapping Dalí’s rise “from arch-Surrealist in 1932 to the darling of American consumer culture and the *bête*

noir of Modernist criticism in 1939 ... ,” Lubar suggests that it follows a complex trajectory,

marked by ideological transformations within the Surrealist movement, the increasingly embattled position of Modernist art on the world stage, and the ability of Madison Avenue advertising firms to recuperate the historical avant-garde’s revolutionary political and social initiatives as new forms of commercial equity.³⁹

Considering these factors, Dalí’s popularity in the United States might also be understood as performing a mediatory role between what was at the time a pronounced disparity between “fine” art and mass or popular culture, or what Thomas Crow has deemed, “a necessary brokerage between high and low,” very much “as a kind of research and development arm of the culture industry.”⁴⁰

For many Americans, Dalí represented not just a populist version of Surrealism, but an accessible version of that vague entity known as the avant-garde or the “European [read *French*] artist.” His work, executed in a highly appealing and impressive academic style, provided entrée to what could otherwise be a perplexing phenomenon of modern art to a demographic not familiar with the intellectual and conceptual specifics of the Paris-based historical avant-garde. While Dalí’s symbolism was complex, bizarre and occasionally “shocking,” it was nevertheless easily explained as simply “Freudian,” and to be deciphered according to Dalí’s “personal symbology.”⁴¹ Correspondingly, Dalí’s embrace of popular media, entertainment and advertising, such as cartoons, funhouses (and not to forget he was very soon to collaborate, or attempt to collaborate, with Walt Disney, Alfred Hitchcock and Harpo Marx), and his willingness to appear in popular magazines as content or contributor, cannot be underestimated in helping to acclimatize

the U.S. to European vanguard art or in bridging the gap between so-called high culture and popular or “low” production in the 1930s and ‘40s.

Dalí borrowed from American showmen such as P.T. Barnum and Robert Ripley, whose robust personae were highly present in North America throughout the first half of the twentieth century, along with the comic satire and gentle social critiques inherent in the work of comedians such as the Marx Brothers, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and his personal favourite, Harry Langdon.⁴² As a result, Dalí’s performance—and there is much to suggest it was a conscious and highly calculated performance—as the eccentric, effete, egotistical and absurd artist, functioned not only to entertain, but to deflate the gravitas of modernist art in a self-reflexive manner that had a good deal in common with what would later be described as postmodern irony. In other words, Dalí simultaneously made accessible and rendered ridiculous the concept of the avant-garde and modern art in general, to a popular audience often mystified and frequently antagonistic to the increasing flow of European vanguard art into the American cultural arena.⁴³

The fact that Dalí was a genuine mass-culture phenomenon in the United States, a country where he was now exiled for an indefinite period because of WWII, cannot be underestimated in any consideration of *The Secret Life*. Dalí wrote his autobiography to be published in English, in America, primarily for an American audience. While he no doubt wanted to establish himself as a writer, to codify his own personal myths, and, as he states “To liquidate half of life in order to live the other half enriched by experience” (393), it is abundantly clear that Dalí wanted to take control of his public image in America every bit as much as he wished to establish himself there as an artist, writer and

public figure “for the masses.” *The Secret Life* must then be read, to a large degree, as part of Dalí’s project to insert himself into the American cultural imaginary.

In addition to his stated populism, part of this project, as will be discussed in the following chapters, was to distance himself from the avant-garde and the Surrealist movement, and to position himself as a traditional, “classical” style of artist, something along the lines of a Renaissance model. That is, by Dalí’s definition, as an artist who laboured independently from any particular movement, who worked in a traditional, academic technique, who moved in aristocratic circles, but who was also a revered and famous figure, known and, for the most part, loved by “the public.” That said, as will be discussed, Dalí’s stated return to Renaissance and “classic” art was, to the contemporary viewer, not a great departure from his Surrealist work. Also, while Dalí claimed to embrace academicism, his so-called classic art was as much a parody of pompier and Renaissance styles as it was a genuine attempt to return to tradition and grand themes.

While Dalí was, as will become evident, determined to “become part” of America, and his position as class mediator or cultural broker holds possible philanthropic or ethical connotations, it should also be noted that Dalí did, undeniably, “cash in” on the popularity he so determinedly won in the United States, as did artists like Picasso, Miró, Leonor Fini, A.M. Cassandre, Giorgio de Chirico and Miguel Covarrubias, who produced graphic designs, textiles, rugs, hatboxes, fashion photographs and participated in other commercial ventures sponsored by American-based companies.⁴⁴ Meryle Secrest, one of the artist’s biographers, sums up quite succinctly the benefits of Dalí’s commercial activities and products of the period in terms of dollars and cents, some of which were extremely healthy sums for the period. She explains that “Dalí’s

determination to diversify—into ballet, opera, the novel, portraiture and film—was channeled increasingly toward commercial art.” “By 1947,” she writes,

he was being paid up to \$2,500 for an ad, 5,000 for book illustrations and 600 for a magazine cover. His dismembered arms, limp watches, ruined columns, pieces of driftwood, tables with women’s legs, crutches and ants were helping to advertise Gunther’s furs, Ford cards, Wrigley’s chewing gum, Schiaparelli perfume, Gruen watches, the products of the Abbott Laboratories and the Container Corporation of America. They were being reproduced in shop windows up and down Fifth Avenue.⁴⁵

Considering Dalí’s business bonanza in the late 1930s and 1940s, it is hardly surprising that in the majority of writing about Dalí the emphasis is placed on his commercial leanings and “charlatanism.” However, Tim McGirk, one of Gala’s biographers, maintains that Dalí was not the only party responsible for marketing Dalí, and that the artist was very much responding to a market that was hungry for the type of wares he was willing to furnish. “The simple reason for his commercialism,” McGirk suggests, “was that in the United States there was an irresistible demand for anything that Dalí produced.”⁴⁶ In other words, although Dalí was increasingly willing to generate work and make money for commercial enterprise, it cannot be discounted that this was very much in response to the reams of offers and opportunities from companies and individuals hungry to cash in on Dalí’s cachet.

Alternately, Carter Ratcliff suggests that it is too simplistic to accept that Dalí merely capitulated to capitalism. “On the contrary,” he writes, “he adjusted his aesthetic to the “scale” of the marketplace, where “the images of fashion, advertising, the movies and later, television are spewed forth and gobbled up.” According to Ratcliff, “With comic bravura, Dalí inserted himself into those patterns of production and consumption,

thereby devising a market from tastes suited to his palate.”⁴⁷ Accordingly, it might be argued that the market formulated Dalí equally as much as he whipped up enthusiasm for his own services, products and public performances. From this point of view, Dalí was simply filling a niche in the market: obligingly, with brio, and throwing the notion of artistic integrity—a concept which he vociferously rejected—to the wind. “I have never understood the rapidity with which I became popular,” Dalí reveals in *The Secret Life*. “I was frequently recognized on the street, and asked to give autographs. Great quantities of flabbergasting letters came to me from the most varied and remote parts of the country. And I received a shower of extravagant offers, each more unexpected than the last” (343). In later years, Dalí seems to have summed up the situation more succinctly, and when frequently asked why he liked publicity so much, Dalí often flatly replied, “Because publicity likes me.”

While the majority of displaced Surrealists and avant-garde émigrés were nothing less than disgusted by Dalí’s “sell out” in the U.S., as a notable contrast, two of the most prominent Americans associated with the Surrealist movement were tolerant, if not impressed, by Dalí’s commercial ventures, press antics and his “capture” of America. In his own autobiography, entitled *Self Portrait*, Man Ray reveals that he “never doubted Dalí’s integrity or sincerity. I cannot imagine a man devoting a lifetime of work to hoodwink a public for whose opinion he has no respect.” Having worked in the advertising world himself, Ray writes that “I hold no brief against him if his extra-pictorial activities enabled him to sell his paintings. The world is full of unscrupulous businessmen publicizing more harmful products at much greater expense—I’d have to quarrel with the whole world.”⁴⁸ Likewise in Julien Levy’s autobiography, written, it

should be noted, when he no longer had anything to gain from Dalí's reputation. Levy admits that although he found the artist "disquieting" on a personal level, he believed that "Dalí was not a charlatan and, contrary to the general opinion, not even the extravagant showman the press called him." According to Levy, "His news-catching escapades, at least while I knew him, all grew from his conviction that the least 'Dalinian' idea was worthy of realization, and this combined with passion for precision achieves an impressive effect whether calculated or not."⁴⁹

Although this "Dalinian," "populist" or "commercial" Surrealism, as it might be called, was celebrated by the public in the mid-1930s until roughly the end of the war, by no means everyone was taken with this construct, and a number of critics objected to it as what they viewed as an appalling display of venality and decadence during increasingly troubled times. "The Sham of It" was the telling title of an article on Surrealism in *Art Digest* in 1937,⁵⁰ and "Surrealist Circus" was the equally poignant title of another, written in 1943 by the German émigré writer Klaus Mann in the *American Mercury*. In this particularly vitriolic and well-informed attack, Mann inveighs against the Surrealists in America: "... in this writer's considered opinion," he states, "surrealism itself shares the spirit of illogic, negation, vandalism that has found expression politically in Nazism," he writes, and with caustic sarcasm, later adds, "Why shouldn't these people have as good a time as possible, despite wars and Hitlers and other nuisances?" Mann also voices the common slight cited by a number of journalists, that Surrealism was hopelessly outdated. "Deplorably passé in Montmartre and Montparnasse even before the war," he observes, "surrealism has a new lease on life along Park Avenue and in the 57th Street galleries."⁵¹ Indeed, similar critiques were already surfacing as early as 1937, as

exemplified in the title of an article which appeared in the American magazine, *Commonweal* in July of 1937, poignantly entitled “Surrealism Passes.”⁵²

Exiles and Émigrés: The European Avant-Garde in America

Besides the spectre of being labelled as decadent and “deplorably passé,” European Surrealist refugees naturally had various obstacles to overcome in the United States, including language barriers, cultural differences and financial hardship, not to mention dealing with a certain level of xenophobia on the part of the American public. In a 1939 survey published in *Fortune* magazine, it was recorded that more than eighty percent of those who replied to the survey expressed negative feelings about the admittance of European refugees to the United States.⁵³ As well, as Stephanie Barron notes in an article on the subject, “Popular magazines and newspapers carried articles critical of émigrés, which certainly influenced public opinion.” She notes a letter published in *Life* magazine in 1940, with the telling title “Refugees De Luxe,” describing the behaviour of wealthy exiles who virtually took over expensive hotels, luxurious resorts, and patronized fashionable upscale restaurants, where, it seems, they made themselves noticed with their “assertive and flamboyant behaviour.” Barron also cites similar articles with headlines reflecting animus towards the new arrivals, such as “Refugees—Burden or Asset?”; “Spies among Refugees,” and “Refugee Gold Rush” in *American Magazine*.⁵⁴

Clearly, for many, the newly minted European presence in a country with a finely-tuned puritanical strain echoed with notes of resentment, suspicion and distaste.⁵⁵ Reaction to the Surrealists’ arrival in the late 1930s and early 40s was mixed, veering from warm reception by a small cultured American avant-garde to distrust and even

hostility from those less receptive to modern art. Besides Dalí, other exiled and expatriate Surrealists and those associated with Surrealism included Nicolaos Calamiris (known as Nicolas Calas), Leonora Carrington, Max Ernst, Stanley William Hayter, André Masson, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, Wolfgang Paalen, Kurt Seligmann, and Yves Tanguy. This roster also included Marcel Duchamp, who had lived sporadically in New York since 1915, and Luis Buñuel, who, like Duchamp, was not considered a Surrealist, but had gone to school with Dalí and worked with him on the seminal Surrealist films *Un Chien andalou* and *L'Age d'or*. Most significant, perhaps, for the displaced, was the presence on U.S. shores of the Surrealist “pope,” André Breton, who had arrived in New York in June 1941, via Martinique.⁵⁶

Needless to say, when Dalí arrived with the influx of other European refugees in 1940, his American celebrity profile placed his arrival in the U.S. in a completely different category from his peers. Unlike most of the other Surrealists, and exiles in general, as has been demonstrated, there was much to make Dalí feel welcome in America, where he had enjoyed remarkable publicity and fame for several years. Dalí made it clear, at least in his writing, that he did not view himself as a refugee, but as someone who “chose” America for its rich promise and “newness,” although, as Dickran Tashjian suggests, “Dalí, of course, *was* in exile, perhaps more than he realized.”⁵⁷ Nonetheless, as can be imagined, views of Dalí were not homogenous, and although he was a familiar presence, he was still, for many, not simply the familiar “lewd uncle” archetype Eggener describes, but for many, an equally enigmatic and unsettling presence.

The Denver businessman Reynolds Morse, who met Dalí in 1942, and with his wife Eleanor was to become one of Dalí’s most important patrons, wrote of what he

considered to be the general sentiment towards Dalí in the 1940s, which indicates that he had not been completely successful in evading the image of the opportunistic émigré. “There is also some reaction against him as a result of his being a foreigner,” Morse writes, “a feeling that he has come to this country merely to cash in on it, not to become part of it.”⁵⁸ Likewise, but with decidedly more vitriol, an anonymous writer in the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in a review of *The Secret Life*, presumed that for the American public, Dalí “still represents the infiltration of American life of the fifth column of that postwar pseudo-intellectualism of aesthetic Europe which brought the world into the chaos and horror of today.”⁵⁹

Considering *The Secret Life* in terms of Dalí’s project to “sell himself” in America, it can be assumed that his primary intended audience for the book was “the American public,” although, as will be argued in further chapters, Dalí in fact had a number of intended audiences, including the avant-garde, the Surrealists and the guardians of Francoist Spain. It was among the American demographic, however, that Dalí wished to dispel the image of himself as a refugee and as a member of the avant-garde, and to tone down his association with the unpopular European exile community, including the Surrealist group. It is with this in mind that the reader should consider the final few pages of the book, wherein Dalí expounds upon his feelings toward America, as the land of liberty and promise: “... new land! And a land of liberty if that is possible!” he enthuses. “I chose the geology of a land that was new to me, and that was young, virgin and without drama, that of America.” Dalí did not, of course, “choose” America as his new home so much as flee to it as a safe and relatively comfortable refuge. Nevertheless, despite what seems like somewhat shameless pandering to what Dalí

presumably understood as the American imaginary, the artist is convincing, indeed, in his admiration for what he describes as America's unjaded, non-partisan and "sensible" approach to art, the media, and life in general.

In order both to distance himself from Europe in *The Secret Life*, and to ingratiate himself to America, Dalí frequently pits Europe, which he describes as worn out and corrupt, against the "new" and "virgin" United States. He writes, for instance, of his return to Paris in 1939 from New York, self-reflexively summarizing his "approach" to the "New World." Onboard the *Champlain*, he recounts, "I had time to revise and situate more philosophically my feelings of admiration for the elementary and biologically intact force of 'American democracy,' an admiration often expressed in a fervent and lyrical form in the course of this book ..." (377-78). In contrast, "Europe, to which I was returning, was already exhausted with its masturbatory and sterile self-refinement," the failure of which "to synthesize the ideological contradictions of which it had become the speculative grazing ground already predisposed it to the unique solution of war and defeat" (378).

Drawing upon the American credos of "freedom of speech," democracy and liberty, Dalí refashions himself for the American public as an artist for the people, a stalwart champion of artistic freedom, and one not too elitist, remote, or intellectual to participate in those things that defined America to him: its novelty, popular culture, "bad taste" and unbridled capitalism. While Dalí revelled in kitsch and mass culture, he also gauged that what the average American really wanted was something that resembled "high" art, and his stated new direction, in painting, at least, sought to fill that niche. That said, Dalí was also very conscious of the higher social strata, including the American art

world and its celebrities and critics, whom he also defines in *The Secret Life* in contrast to their European counterparts. To be sure, Dalí's discussion of the Paris avant-garde reveals much about his view of the prevailing art paradigm as defined by French directives. Using a pseudo-anthropological descriptive technique, he posits the episteme and evaluative criteria of the avant-garde as bizarre and irrational which, while his critique is no doubt sincere, also serves to validate his own newfound and presumably sensible direction of "returning to tradition."

American critics, Dalí insists, have a much better eye for art, not being bogged down with historical biases and the politics of partisanship. In relation to responses to one of his exhibitions in New York at the Julien Levy Gallery, he gushes that

the articles which I got translated revealed a comprehension a hundred times more objective and better informed of my intentions, and of the case which I constituted, than most of the commentators on my work that had appeared in Europe, where my work was judged only in relation to the "vested interests" which the writers of articles had on their platforms (324).

"In Paris," Dalí notes, "everyone judges things from the aesthetic point of view of his own intellectual interests." Referring generally to the 1920s and 30s, Abstraction and Cubism were the words of the day, he explains, and notes that "A certain critic had fought, continues to fight, and would have sacrificed his life for cubism and non-figurative art" (324). Compared to the rigid, biased views of the French critics that Dalí evokes, he simply writes that "America was different," and explains that "Our kind of aesthetic civil war had not yet touched that country except in purely informative ways. And often what with us had tragic undertones assumed at most an aspect of entertainment in America." Dalí states that "Cubism had never had a real influence, and in America it

had been rightly considered as an indispensable experiment which should properly be filed among the official archives of history” (325).

Writing of a meeting in the 1930s with Alfred Barr, the Director of the Museum of Modern Art, while sketching a rather unflattering portrait of his physical personage, Dalí claims that he is struck by Barr’s knowledge of and perspective on the European art “scene”:

I met him at a dinner at the Vicomte de Noaille’s. He was young, pale, and very sickly-looking; he had stiff and rectilinear gestures like those of pecking birds—in reality he was pecking at contemporary values, and one felt that he had the knack of picking just the full grains, never the chaff. His information on the subject of modern art was enormous. By contrast with our European directors of modern museums, most of whom still had not heard of Picasso, Alfred Barr’s erudition verged on the monstrous (324-36).

It must be remembered that as Dalí wrote this passage, circa 1941, Alfred Barr had staged, or was in the process of staging, with James Thrall Soby, a prestigious exhibition of Dalí’s work at the MoMA. It was in Dalí’s best interest, then, to acknowledge this important contact in America in flattering tones. Nevertheless, it does not weaken his argument that without the vested interests of politics and partisanship, and taking art more as a form of entertainment than doctrine or creed, America had the benefit of the so-called “innocent eye” when it came to the arts. Thus, he writes, “taking no sides, far from the battle, having nothing to gain and nothing to lose or to combat, they could be lucid and see spontaneously what made the most impression upon them among all the things that were happening in Europe” (325).

Drawing on the popular European view of the period that Americans were philistine and puritanical in their cultural sensibilities, Dalí writes that “Europeans are

mistaken in considering America incapable of poetic and intellectual intuition. It is,” he expounds,

obviously not by tradition that they are able to avoid mistakes, or by a perpetual sharpening of “taste.” No, America does not choose with the atavistic prudence of an experience which she has not had, or with the refined speculation of a decadent brain which it does not possess, or even with the sentimental effusion of its heart which is too young ... (325).

Dalí makes claims for America’s superior views on art, its ability to “sniff out” what is good and what is worthy based on inherent merit rather than snobbery, favouritism or prejudice. “America chooses with all the unfathomable and elementary force of her unique and intact biology,” Dalí postulates. “She knows, as does no one else, what she lacks, what she does not have.” “And,” he announces, “all that America ‘did not have’ on the spiritual plane I was going to bring her, materialized in the integral and delirious mixture of my paranoiac work, in order that she might thus see and touch everything with the hands of liberty.” More precisely, what America did not have was what Dalí considered the best of European art, architecture and spirituality—far, it should be noted, from modernist tendencies of the early 1940s:

Yes, what America did not have was precisely the horror of my rotten donkeys from Spain, of the spectral aspect of the Christs of El Greco, of the whirling of the fiery sunflowers of Van Gogh, of the airy quality of Chanel’s décolletés, of the oddness of fur cups, of the metaphysics of the surrealist manikins of Paris, of the apotheosis of the symphonic and Wagnerian architecture of Gaudí, of Rome, Toledo and Mediterranean Catholicism ... (325-6).

Europe, on the other hand, according to Dalí, had recently played itself out by expending its energies on misdirected experiments and revolutions. Indeed, as he viewed it,

Post-war Europe was dying of its political, aesthetic and moral revolutionary experiments which have progressively devoured, weakened and reduced it. It was dying of lack of rigor, lack of form; it was dying, asphyxiated by the materialist scepticism of negativistic, nihilistic theories, of “isms” of all kinds. It was dying of arbitrariness, indolence, gratuity, psychological orgy, moral irresponsibility and promiscuity, the dehierarchization, the uniformization of the socializing tendencies. It was dying of the monstrous error of specialization and analysis, of lack of synthesis, lack of cosmogony, lack of faith (394-5)

Consequently, Dalí lays claim to hopes for the United States as a fresh place for a rational, metaphysical, traditional, academic-style art to take root and flourish. This is what America needed and wanted, he surmises, and naturally, it was for Dalí himself to provide, serving up the nutritious fruits of his creativity to soothe the nation’s collective, culturally malnourished soul.

Hidden Faces, Enchanted Spaces

While Dalí’s stated intention of conquering America was all very grand, behind the scenes was the workaday experience of planning, sketching, painting, meetings, interviews, and writing, at this point centred on *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, and supported by the people and places involved in the creative process. Other than Dalí, the person most invested in and dedicated to Dalí’s autobiography was naturally Gala. Indeed, Gala had, from the very first, been the one to gather and systematize all of Dalí’s writings into coherent and publishable states. One of the first things she did after she and Dalí had begun their relationship was to collect, organize and make legible various loose papers and projects that Dalí was to publish as his first book, *La Femme visible*, in 1930. “Gala had in fact gathered together the mass of disorganized and unintelligible scribbblings” writes Dalí, “... and with her unflinching scrupulousness she had succeeded

in giving these a “syntactic form” that was more or less communicable” (250). Gala persevered as Dalí’s amanuensis through a number of his literary projects, although it certainly must have been a challenging, if not infuriating task. Dalí reveals in *The Secret Life* how, when it came to his work,

Gala wove unwearingly the Penelope’s cloth of my disorder. As soon as she had succeeded in organizing the documents and notes necessary for the methodical course of my work I would begin, in a frenzy of impatience, to mix them all up to find some unnecessary thing which, for that matter, I was almost sure to have left on purpose in Paris and which Gala had advised me to take. For Gala has always known better than I what I needed for my work (301).

Gala nurtured Dalí’s autobiographical project at every step, inspiring, overseeing, transcribing, organizing, and performing a starring role in the book. Dalí wrote *The Secret Life* in French, the language in which he and Gala conversed, and it was Gala’s task to sort through the manuscript, decipher his wilful spelling, weed through his doodles, diagrams and crossed-out text, and keep up with Dalí’s frenetic pace. In the introduction to an exhibition of Dalí’s drawings and paintings held at the Knoedler Galleries in 1943, Dalí declares that since being in America, he “wrote six hundred pages of autobiography at the rate of thirty-five pages a day, of which only four hundred could be published under the title of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*.” He adds a note that “It was then that I experienced the famous writer’s cramp which I first mistook for rheumatism, a pain which became most agreeable under Gala’s massaging hands.”⁶⁰ After nurturing Dalí throughout the process, and transcribing all of these pages in longhand, it is very likely that Gala’s hands needed some massaging as well. In a

footnote in *The Secret Life*, Haakon Chevalier adds a brief translator's note on the text, describing the task:

Mr. Dalí's manuscript, as to handwriting, spelling and syntax, is probably one of the most fantastically indecipherable documents ever to have come from the pen of a person having a real feeling for the value and weight of words, for verbal images, for style. The manuscript is written on yellow foolscap in a well-nigh illegible hand-writing, almost without punctuation, without paragraphing, in a deliriously fanciful spelling that would bring beads of perspiration to a lexicographer's brow.

"Gala," Chevalier notes, "is the only one who does not get lost in the labyrinthian chaos of this manuscript" (fn, 74).

Besides Gala, Chevalier was the other person who would be most invested in the physical aspect of Dalí's writing in the 1940s and '50s, and was later entrusted with Dalí's 1944 novel *Hidden Faces*, as well as his 1948 tract on painting, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, and *Dalí on Modern Art* of 1957. Chevalier was a professor of French at the University of California, Berkeley, and translated a number of books by notable figures of the mid-twentieth century, including works by André Malraux, Louis Aragon, and Victor Vasarely. He was also the author of several novels of his own, including *For Us the Living* (1949) and *The Man Who Would be God* (1959).⁶¹

Haakon Chevalier was most likely brought on to Dalí's literary project through connections at the Dial Press, and by Caresse Crosby, a primary catalyst for the gestation, organization and promotion of *The Secret Life*. Crosby was a wealthy American publisher, poet, actress, inventor, bon vivant, socialite, arts promoter and patron whom Dalí had met in the early 1930s in Paris. Christened Mary Phelps Jacob, she was born into a prominent New England family, and married into another in 1915. Divorced from

her first husband in 1921, the next year Caresse married the poet Harry Crosby, a wealthy scion of a socially prominent Boston family, cousin of Henry James and nephew of the American capitalist J.P. Morgan. Harry and his newly dubbed bride, “Caresse,” were to become legendary in artistic and literary circles in the heady days of Paris of the 1920s, and the French city became their adopted home. Sadly, this was to come to an abrupt end when Harry and a young mistress fulfilled a suicide pact in 1929. The widowed Crosby continued to cultivate an artistic circle throughout the 1930s, but returned to the United States late in the decade, and was next to marry the football player Selbert Young in 1937, although the relationship was to end in divorce in 1940. Crosby later moved to Italy, and established an informal artists’ colony at her castle north of Rome, which gave her the title of Principessa.

When they first moved to Paris in the 1920s, Harry and Caresse immersed themselves in the city’s social and cultural elite and began to travel in literary and artistic circles. The Crosbys established a publishing imprint, originally called Éditions Narcisse, which was later changed to the now famous Black Sun Press in 1928, renowned for producing “beautifully bound, typographically flawless editions of unusual books,”⁶² and publishing the likes of Hart Crane, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway and Ezra Pound. After Harry’s death, Caresse continued as an editor and publisher, putting out collections of her late husband’s work and letters as well as material by Pound and many others with Black Sun. She also established Crosby Continental Editions, a popular book company that published inexpensive paperback books by Hemingway, William Faulkner, Dorothy Parker and others.⁶³ As a writer on her own merit, Crosby wrote the book of poems, *Crosses of Gold* in 1925, and in 1926, *Graven Images*. Her memoir of

1953, entitled *The Passionate Years*, documents an intriguing life played out among some of the most prominent literary and creative figures of the first half of the twentieth century, Dalí among them.⁶⁴

In *The Secret Life*, Dalí writes of being introduced, via the Surrealist writer René Crevel, to Crosby at her Paris apartment on the rue Monsieur, where Dalí describes their supposed “white lunch” (326). The writer Anaïs Nin was also a frequent guest at Crosby’s various residences, and judging from glowing descriptions in her journals, she is obviously highly impressed with her hostess. Nin describes Crosby as having “the buoyancy of a powder puff, a caressing voice ... her fur hat, her eyelashes, her smiles all glittery with animation.” She liked, Nin observes, “artistic and creative copulation in all its forms and expressions, interracial, sexual, spiritual.”⁶⁵ Further, Nin claims that Crosby “trails behind her, like the plume of a peacock, a fabulous legend.”⁶⁶

Much of this legend had to with the Moulin de Soleil, a weekend retreat the Crosbys had purchased from a French acquaintance, Armand de la Rochefoucauld, “one of the richest and most sought-after young men in Europe.”⁶⁷ The Moulin was an old mill, boasting ten bedrooms and a tower, which was situated on the rural estate in Senlis, just north of Paris. *À propos* the literary leanings of the Crosbys, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had lived there more than a century before, and they soon transformed the mill into a gathering place for the international avant-garde of the period. Caresse maintained close ties with the Surrealists, and André Breton, Max Ernst, René Crevel, Dalí and Gala were frequent guests.⁶⁸ One of the walls in the house acted as a “guest book,” upon which the Crosbys invited their friends to sign their names using watercolours kept nearby for the purpose. Caresse records that

the stairway was a kaleidoscopic pattern of multicoloured names; among them were both royalty and rogues, but more were artists, and not a few of these Surrealists. The fumes from master-chef Kurnonsky's pot au feu haloed the regal signature of "George" and D.H. Lawrence's Phoenix clawed at the embellished graph of Indira, Maharanee of Cooch Behar, Louis Bromfield and Salvador Dalí interlocked I's for the only time in history and Hitler's Eva Braun, who once dropped in for a drink with a Viennese White Hunter, and Lady Koo who signed "jade," could have been sisters on that wall.⁶⁹

Evidently, this was particularly rich soil for Dalí to broaden his intellectual, social and political horizons. Describing the famous Moulin in *The Secret Life*, Dalí evokes an exotic, well-heeled hotbed for avant-garde chic in the early 1930s:

Every week-end we went to the Moulin du Soleil. We ate in the horse-stable, filled with tiger skins and stuffed parrots. There was a sensational library on the second floor, and also an enormous quantity of champagne cooling, with sprigs of mint, in all the corners, and many friends, a mixture of surrealists and society people who came there because they sensed from afar that it was in this Moulin du Soleil that "things were happening" (327).

The Moulin was also to be where Dalí first seems to have developed his fascination with American culture, imported by Harry and Caresse to their Paris enclave. "At this period, the phonograph never stopped sighing Cole Porter's *Night and Day*," the artist writes of the Moulin atmosphere,

and for the first time in my life I thumbed through *The New Yorker* and *Town and Country*. Each image that came from America I would sniff, so to speak, with the voluptuousness with which one welcomes the first whiffs of the inaugural fragrances of a sensational meal of which one is about to partake.

I want to go to America, I want to go to America ... (327).

According to Crosby, who had introduced Dalí to Julien Levy, she was the one responsible for getting the terrified Dalí, with Gala, aboard a ship to cross the Atlantic for the first time. She also claims to have “wizened” Dalí up to the New York press, despite Dalí’s glib assertion in his autobiography that he was especially press savvy upon arrival. Crosby describes the docking of the *Champlain* in New York harbour on November 14, 1934, where Dalí was, for the first time, to confront a phalanx of reporters hungry for a story—a scene that was to witness the inauguration of a long and mutual love affair between the two parties. “‘They want to see some of your work,’ [Crosby] explained, ‘these are the gentlemen of the Press and,’ [she] hissed in French, ‘they can take you or leave you.’”⁷⁰

Dalí reveals in his autobiography that he first started writing the general plan of *The Secret Life* in 1938, while he was staying at the estate of Coco Chanel at La Pausa, Roquebrune near Monaco, in the company of the poet Pierre Reverdy. It was during the time of the Munich Crisis. According to Dalí, they were all “glued to the radio,” and the artist was painting his *Enigma of Hitler*, a work which refers to the political events of the period (371). Dalí does not mention Crosby’s role in the conception of his autobiography, but the paper trail suggests that she deserves more credit than Dalí, or current scholarship indicate. Indeed, judging from a letter she sent to Dalí before he and Gala left for America, Crosby emerges as the one who suggested the project and encouraged Dalí to write his memoirs:

I am counting on you and Gala visiting me at my country place in Bowling Green, Caroline County, Virginia. Your rooms are ready and waiting for you ... it will be a tranquil place for you to work. I hear that you now have enough material together to start the book of memoirs that I am planning

to bring out this fall. It is absolutely necessary that you be here during the summer months to work on this with me.⁷¹

Crosby's emphasis points to her insistence that Dalí "work on this with [her]," and worth noting is the authoritative tone she uses regarding the book *she* is planning to produce.

The letter also suggests that Crosby invited Dalí to Virginia with the express purpose of working on the project. Nin records that it was planned that Crosby would publish the book using her own printing press that was to be set up in a barn on her estate. Apparently, her hostess had also hoped to publish a translation of Breton's *Nadja*, books by Kay Boyle, Blaise Cendrars, Raymond Radiguet, Henry Miller and Nin herself; however, the plan evidently came to naught.⁷² Crosby was also originally going to translate *The Secret Life*, but the reality of dealing with the various drafts, redrafts, Dalí's idiosyncratic prose, indecipherable handwriting, and mystifying spelling became too laborious a task.⁷³ Instead, Chevalier was enlisted, and the American imprint the Dial Press was chosen as the publisher.

This was an astute choice, and one likely orchestrated by Crosby, with her connections in the publishing industry. The Dial press was originally an affiliate of *The Dial* magazine, an immensely influential and important vanguard arts and literature magazine that flourished in the 1920s, and which boasted some of the twentieth century's most important artists and writers as contributors: Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, Marc Chagall, Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound are a mere sampling of equally stellar names that appeared within *The Dial's* pages. While very much separate entities, after *The Dial* magazine folded in 1929, the Dial Press continued to thrive, and enjoyed a similar mandate as the periodical, which was to introduce experimental

modernist work to America, and to attempt to appeal to the intelligentsia and the elite equally as much as to a popular audience.⁷⁴

Crosby left the Moulin de Soleil in 1936, moved back to America, married Bert Young (aptly named, being nineteen years her junior), and searched for a new home. Her criteria were to please Bert, whose “great ambition was to own a place of his own and to farm,”⁷⁵ as much as to create an American version of the Moulin de Soleil. She found just the thing, near Bowling Green, Virginia, in a run-down mansion built in 1836 to the designs of Thomas Jefferson. Hampton Manor, named after the first owner, John Hampton de Jarnette, who allegedly shot arrows at visitors as they approached, stood on five hundred acres of mixed woodland and fields forty kilometers south of Fredericksburg and eight from Bowling Green.⁷⁶ Although run-down when she bought it, Crosby had evidently renovated the mansion quite exceptionally, and Hampton Manor was to play an important role in the creation of *The Secret Life*, in that it was Dalí’s place of residence for most of the time he was writing. The mansion provided a suitably opulent backdrop for his many encounters with the American press and was an appropriately neo-classical setting for the launching of his new “classic” style.

Anaïs Nin and her lover, the American writer Henry Miller, were guests in the early 1940s, and Nin’s journal yields valuable information as to Dalí and Gala’s residence there. Hampton Manor was, she writes, “a Southern version of the enchanted house of *Le Grand Meaulnes*, the enchanted house of Louveciennes.” It was “White, classical, serene, symmetrical, with its tall graceful columns, its terraces of tiles, and the noble proportions of doors and windows.” In equally evocative prose she writes that “Weeping willows arched over it, moss grew like soft carpets at its feet, trailing vines

embraced it. The rooms were high-ceilinged, large, harmonious, uncluttered, with shining parquet floors. Negro servants glided gently about.” “The library,” she noted, “is a treasure room.”⁷⁷

In *The Secret Life*, Dalí explains that “On arriving in America, I almost immediately went to the home of ... Caresse Crosby, at Hampton Manor. We were going to try all together to revive a little of that sun of France which had just set, far away, beyond Ermenonville. I shut myself up,” he asserts, “for five months, spending my time working, writing my book and painting—hidden away in the heart of that idyllic Virginia which constantly makes me think of the Touraine, which I have never seen in my life (391-2). In his first letter home, Dalí told his sister Anna Maria:

We’ve been installed for a few weeks now in this tranquil spot in the middle of an ancient forest. The house is extraordinarily comfortable, there’s a huge library in which we make sensational discoveries with Gala, five servants (all black as anthracite), two horses for riding, a lake in which to bathe, “et tout et tout.”⁷⁸

When the Dalís first arrived at the house, straight from Lisbon via New York, Nin describes her first impressions. “The Dalís appeared for breakfast,” she begins.

Both small in stature, they sat close together. Both were unremarkable in appearance, she all in moderate tones, a little faded, and he drawn with charcoal like a child’s drawing of a Spaniard, any Spaniard, except for the incredible length of his moustache. They turned towards each other as if for protection, reassurance, not open, trusting or at ease.”⁷⁹

Dalí and Gala communicated with each other in French, and although Gala spoke some English, Dalí spoke almost none at all. As a consequence, it fell to Gala to act as interpreter between Dalí and others who did not speak French or Spanish. Nin, whose

father was the Cuban-born composer Joaquin Nin, spoke Spanish, and was able to converse with the artist directly. As follows, Nin soon formed a friendship with Dalí, although Gala apparently kept her at arm's length. "I cooked a Spanish dish," she wrote, "hoping to establish a Spanish atmosphere in which he might expand. But Mrs. Dalí does not care for Spanish cooking."⁸⁰ While Nin is never mentioned in *The Secret Life*, it seems she and Dalí had formed a certain bond during their time at Hampton Manor. "I liked to hear Dalí talk," she writes. "He was full of inventions and wild fantasies ... Dalí liked me and lost his shyness when I came. He showed me his work." "Mrs. Dalí" she notes sourly, "was on her guard against me."⁸¹

While Caresse was away for two months, guest relations apparently became troubled and difficult at Hampton Manor, and Nin notes that "the atmosphere had changed. The meals were marred by undercurrents of hostility." Language was a problem, and "Mrs. Dalí's demands were overpowering. John was tired of running errands. Flo felt alienated from the international art talks. Henry was irritated by Dalí's cheerful and continuous industriousness." Endlessly jovial and productive, and seemingly oblivious to the intrigues around him, "Dalí painted every day, whistling and singing."⁸² Miller, who according to Nin was adding pages to the second part of *Tropic of Capricorn* at the time, "was irritated by Mrs. Dalí's cuddling of Dalí." Hence he "resorted to his favourite weapon: contrariness and contradiction. Everything Dalí said was wrong. There was something wrong even with his preference for lamb!"⁸³ Memorably, she records that Miller had described Dalí's work with the unflattering epithet of "The River Styx, the river of neurosis that does not flow."⁸⁴

Despite Miller's animus toward Dalí, the two inadvertently played an intriguing role reversal: Dalí, the painter, writing, and Miller, the writer, painting. Crosby observes that when she had departed for her two month sojourn,

I already suspected a house divided among guests—Salvador Dalí on one side of the Jeffersonian hallway, painting from dawn till dusk, and Henry Miller on the other, while he completed his book *The Colossus of Maroussi*—and when I returned I found Dalí ankle deep in the pages of his autobiography while across the hall in a room whose walls were tacked with fresh-made watercolours sat the erstwhile scribe at an easel!

In parenthesis she notes that “I later helped edit Dalí's *Secret Life* for publication by the Dial Press and gave Miller his first one-man show of paintings at The Crosby Gallery of Art in Washington.”⁸⁵

Some threads of life at Hampton Manor that Crosby tactfully drops in her memoirs, Nin picks up in her diaries. She tells us, for example, that Caresse was in the midst of divorcing her “Southern gentleman husband,” who showed up, drunk, at the manor with a female acquaintance late one night expecting an erotic congregation which he believed was characteristic of the decadent lifestyle of bohemian artists and intellectuals. Apparently,

He had heard that Caresse had filled her house with artists. He arrived one night, opened all the doors and turned on all the lights. Alas, there was no orgy! ... He ordered everyone to leave, but as no one paid any attention to him, he rushed down the stairs, shouting that he would destroy all of Dalí's paintings. At this the Dalís became alarmed, they dressed, ran downstairs, packed all the paintings and drove away.⁸⁶

This forced sojourn would take the couple to Washington, where they went to see their friend and patron Edward James, godson of Edward VII, in Taos, New Mexico, then they

went briefly off to Hollywood, to return to Hampton Manor for approximately seven months, when Dalí would complete the book in the early summer of 1941.⁸⁷

Gala's role in arranging and facilitating Dalí's career is evident in a description Nin paints in her diary, describing how events unfolded at the manor; that is, not very smoothly. Caresse, Miller, and the American poet John Dudley and his wife Flo, who were all staying there at the time, "had not foreseen the organizational powers of Mrs. Dalí."

Before we were even conscious of it, the household was functioning for the well-being of Dalí. We were not allowed to enter the library because he was going to work there. Would Dudley mind driving to Richmond and trying to find odds and ends which Dalí needed for his painting? Would I mind translating an article for him? Would Caresse invite *Life* magazine to come and visit?

"So," Nin observes sardonically, "we each fulfilled our appointed tasks. Mrs. Dalí never raised her voice, never seduced or charmed. Quietly she assumed we were all there to serve Dalí, the great, indisputable genius."⁸⁸

Dalí and American Mass Media

Beginning with his first contact with popular periodicals such as *The New Yorker* and *Town and Country* at the Moulin de Soleil, Dalí had become increasingly fascinated with American popular magazines in the late 1930s and early '40s when he came to reside in America. He produced a great quantity of work based on the format, from alterations (frequently pornographic) of existing magazine covers such as *Pour Vous*, *Life* and *Match*, to creating his own layouts for feature magazines such as *Click*, to working as a graphic designer and producing advertising imagery for commercial projects. He even published his own popular magazine, *The Dali News* (a play on *The Daily News*)

beginning in 1945. In many ways *The Secret Life* can be viewed as an extension of the “human interest” angle that was often taken on Dalí’s life, as clearly the American press’s avid interest in Avida Dollars pointed the way to a lucrative and effective method of self-promotion that few people, let alone artists, have had the hubris or opportunity to milk to the extent that Dalí began to do in earnest the early 1940s.

Dalí speaks frankly about his relationship with the press in *The Secret Life*, and although patronizing at times, his flattering comments and welcoming attitude seemed to work wonders for greasing the public relations machine in the “New World.” “I love getting publicity,” he writes, “and if I am lucky enough to have the reporters know who I am, I will give them some of my own bread to eat, just as Saint Francis did with his birds.” Revelling as he did in things contrary, Dalí qualifies this remark in relation to the attitudes of other Europeans, explaining that “My shamelessness in this regard struck everyone as in such bad taste that they could not help twisting their mouths into a suggestion of a sneer”(330).

Once again pitting America against Europe, Dalí writes in *The Secret Life* that American reporters “were unquestionably far superior to European reporters. They had an acute sense of ‘non-sense,’ and one felt, moreover, that they knew their job dreadfully well. They knew in advance exactly the kinds of things that would give them a ‘story.’” He writes,

In Europe reporters start out on their interviews with their finished article already in their pockets, composed in advance on the basis of circumstances and coincidences of all sorts, and addressed to a reader who will read it only in order to judge whether what he is told is exactly what he already knew. Europe has a sense of history, but not that of journalism. The American journalist, on the other hand, starts from a criterion based on instantaneity, in which his all-powerful instinct of biological

competition comes first and foremost, enabling him to shoot on the fly those rare and fleeting birds of actuality which he will bring back still warm and bleeding and toss on the desk of his editor in chief ... (330-31).

From the attitude he discloses in his life writing, Dalí very much viewed his dealings with the press as a sort of sport, and as such, provided plenty of those “rare and fleeting birds of actuality” for press-hounds to chase: Dalí was always good copy and willing to oblige all comers by putting on an often extravagantly newsworthy performance. One of his strategies for luring the press to his lair was by making his lair newsworthy, and thus, with Crosby aiding and abetting, during the early 1940s he temporarily turned Hampton Manor, and later the St. Regis Hotel, into “enchanted” spaces full of fantastic objects and home to bizarre happenings. As Nin documents, Crosby was often enlisted to corral the press to her Virginia manse, to publicize Dalí’s “events” and to document the writing of his autobiography.

Indeed, on April 7, 1941, *Time* Magazine reported that Dalí and Crosby had decided to turn the grounds of Hampton Manor into what would have been the world’s first Surrealist theme park. *Time* tells us that “Surrealist Dalí suggested to his hostess that it would be fun to ‘enchant’ Hampton Manor into a surrealist paradise.” This “Freudian fairyland” involved, apparently, gigantic statues of daddy longlegs with the faces of Greek goddesses and medieval heroines, a “headless woman from the recipe of a surrealist magician of the Middle Ages,” as well as “perfumed fountains, loudspeakers making moans from the bushes, corpselike manikins with flowing hair trailing in the waters of the pond,” etc. That construction was underway is clear from period photographs that attest to the fact of Crosby’s having “had a grand piano hauled into the middle of the lake, where it was expected shortly to sprout water lilies,” while “Painter

Dalí” had dunked a manikin near the shore and was trying to “ornament her face with a fork.” Crosby and Dalí planned to charge one dollar admission during the day, and one fifty at night. Proceeds were to go to war relief.⁸⁹

Dalí was carrying on the experiments of the Surrealist spaces and installations such as the *Exposition Internationale du Surrealisme* at the Galerie des Beaux Arts held in Paris in 1938, and had evidently acquired a taste for the large spectacle from the various Surrealist-inspired balls and especially the Dream of Venus pavilion he designed for the New York World’s Fair in 1939, which, like many of his projects, ended in a fiasco, or came to naught. Indeed, this most recent endeavour was also to come to naught as, *Time* reports, the Second Army Corps had just announced plans to take over 110,000 acres of Caroline County for field manoeuvres. This evidently “put the kibosh on this study in sylvan psychopathology.”⁹⁰

The *Indianapolis Sunday Star* records the day-to-day life of Dalí at Hampton Manor, although here it is evident that instead of emphasizing his eccentricities, the artist wishes to appeal to the American work ethic, as he does unremittingly in *The Secret Life*, laying claim to being “probably the most hard-working artist of our day.”⁹¹ “... Dalí rises promptly at 7:30 in the morning” the *Star* records,

and spends most of the daylight hours painting in a large front room downstairs which has been transformed into a studio.

At night he works on his memoirs, sandwiching in time as he can for his ‘living furniture’ (including a breathing chair that he claims he was preparing for his exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, and about which he promises to write in his book).

“I do not go to bed until very late,” he said. “I don’t take very seriously the artist who continually says he has to get ‘inspired.’ One must work, work, work. Painters worked very hard in the renaissance. I can only work when my life is methodic. The maximum of inspiration is the maximum of method.”⁹²

Regarding Dalí's view of America, the journalist records that "He is struck by what he calls 'the poetry of American life,' by the lack of tradition which permits artists to come closer to true expression ..." America will, he feels, "become the most important center of culture because of this very freedom. American response to his work has been 'spontaneous and sympathetic.'"⁹³ The article is accompanied by photographs of Gala and Dalí in the Hampton Manor library, installations in the marshland of mannequins in boats, the Manor itself, and selections of Dalí's paintings.

Figure 10: Dalí with a staged tableau from a photo essay by Eric Schaal, entitled "*Life Calls on Salvador Dalí.*" For *Life*, April 7, 1941.

The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation,
© Estate of Eric Schaal/SODRAC (2009).

By far the most prestigious of magazines to document Dalí's time at Hampton Manor was a three-page article in *Life* magazine. Nin notes how Gala had asked that Crosby invite the magazine for an interview and, although she was not present for the encounter, Nin records that "*Life* magazine came to photograph the place. A piano was hauled up with pulleys to the top of an ancient tree."⁹⁴ The result was a three-page photo spread, published on April 7, 1941, "*Life* Calls on Salvador Dalí" with the subtitle, "Surrealist artist 'enchants' Virginia manor (Figure 10)."⁹⁵

Figure 11: Gala, Dalí, Caresse Crosby (right) and cow in the library at Hampton Manor. For a photo essay by Eric Schaal, entitled "*Life* Calls on Salvador Dalí." For *Life*, April 7, 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, © Estate of Eric Schaal/SODRAC (2009).

A short, three-paragraph article accompanies seven large-scale black and white photographs showing Dalí working busily away at various means of “enchantment.” He, Gala and Crosby are photographed sitting in the library working on *The Secret Life*: Dalí writing, Gala collating, and Crosby, at her typewriter next to a Hereford heifer that has been corralled in the living room for the photo opportunity (Figure 11).⁹⁶ Among other colourful images, Dalí and Gala are photographed sitting by the potbelly stove at the general store, as Caresse, in a leopard-skin coat and muddy rubber boots, orders supplies from bewildered locals at the counter.

Time, *Life*, and various smaller publications mentioned above are just some of the magazines that produced the many articles and features that documented Dalí’s time at Hampton Manor and other locales as he worked on *The Secret Life*. Farther afield was the British magazine *Sketch* which, in April 1941, ran a one-page photo spread of Dalí flanked by a naked mannequin in the library of Hampton Manor, working on his autobiography “which may offer an equally baffling series of puzzles to his admirers.”⁹⁷ This staging, however, is nothing compared to the piece that came out in *Click Magazine*, September 1942, taken at the St. Regis hotel in New York a month before *The Secret Life* was released.⁹⁸ Dalí was apparently approached by the magazine who gave him two of their large-scale pages, allowing him to orchestrate his own highly elaborate photographs, a small amount of text, as well as the graphic design.

The result was entitled “The Secret Life of Dalí, by Dalí.” In a sort of sidebar disclaimer, entitled *Memo to the Reader*, the editor explains the bewildering and exhausting process of working with the Spanish artist:

Take a couple of glass eyes, a papier maché skeleton, a French doll, ostrich feathers, and a collection of spotlights and flood lights. Put them all into a hotel suite along with surrealist Salvador Dalí and photographer Eric Schaal. Add Mme. Dalí, a few editors trying to speak high-school-style French, and a plaster manikin—and you get the picture story to end all picture stories ...⁹⁹

In *Click* Dalí is in fine form, and takes every opportunity to promote his forthcoming book. He merges photographs of himself at work on *The Secret Life* on his “symbolic table” (a supine, naked female model whose head is hidden below the desk) (Figure 12) with rows of glass eyes, plenty of his now trademark ants, and a composite drawing from the book in which a young girl, having just dropped her doll, ecstatically hugs a drooping skeleton (322).

Figure 12: Dalí at his “symbolic table.”

Photograph by Eric Schaal for the photo essay produced by Dalí for *Click* magazine, entitled “*The Secret Life of Dalí*, by Dalí,” *Click*, Sept. 1942. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, © Estate of Eric Schaal/SODRAC (2009).

Dalí decided to animate this drawing for the camera, dressing up in lacy turn-of-the-century little-girl drag and donning a Shirley Temple wig, as he, too, hugs a skeleton—one, no doubt, hunted down by the beleaguered *Click* staff from a medical supply store.

On the second page, Dalí is shown in bed, while two ballet dancers leap into the air above him, gracefully framing his notorious visage. In the bottom half of the page the artist appears again at his “symbolic table,” while an enormous thought balloon rises above him, culminating in three images of Gala with branches growing from her head; one with a melting clock superimposed on her face. The text within the thought-balloon, in miniscule copperplate, is impossible to decipher, while the caption, in the glibbest of prose (likely the result of a not very artful translation from Dalí’s French), reads,

In the morning I work on my new book *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* that will be published in October. As I write on my symbolic table my innermost thoughts, inspired by my wife Gala, flow upward. You can read my thoughts and feel the passage of time floating upward into the drawing of Gala’s face.¹⁰⁰

On another page is a vivid colour photo-montage. The backdrop is an enormous eye of Dalí, in front of which is a mantelpiece, upon which rests a monstrosity with the monstrous head of Medusa. In front of this, Dalí sits in an armchair reading a book sideways. Offering a behind-the-scenes view of the graphic design process, the introductory page shows Dalí hard at work on the two-page spread described above, while the caption below (printed upside-down) tells us this very work “is valued at \$2,000.00.” While this all may seem a bit much, Dalí appears to have won over the staff of *Click* either with his hard work or his perpetual flow of ideas. “Seriously,” the editor writes of the article in the *Memo to the Reader*, “the *Dalí by Dalí* story is more than a

laugh, more than a mad artist chasing the tail of his imagination. It is a serious piece of work; valued in man hours alone it is like one of Hercules' labours.”¹⁰¹

A Book Launched

After much build-up in the American press, and to great fanfare, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was officially launched by the Dial Press in New York City in November of 1941. A hardcover edition with a predominantly black dust-jacket, the front cover featured Dalí's most famous work of the period, *The Persistence of Memory*. Copies were priced at six dollars, but collectors could purchase one of one hundred and nineteen special edition copies which were sold separately, for a higher price. These featured a drawing executed by Dalí inside the front cover, and a letter to the buyer, penned by the Dalís themselves. One such edition, number seventy-six, sports a strutting cock; a fitting image for an artist who had managed to conjure the writing of his memoir into a media event, and who was equally determined to make the book launch a tremendous splash.

While Dalí had managed to harness a suitable patron to nurture the writing and publishing of his memoir, the artist likewise managed to hitch his star to one of New York's most prominent women, in one of New York's toniest locations, for the release party held for his tome. *The Secret Life* was launched at the sumptuous, three-story Fifth Avenue apartment of one of the richest and most famous businesswomen in New York, one Princess Gourielli, otherwise known as the cosmetics magnate Helena Rubinstein. Dalí was fascinated by Rubinstein, a Polish immigrant who had made an international fortune in cosmetics, beginning with a simple chemist's face cream in the early part of the twentieth century. Her second husband, the Georgian Prince Artchil Gourielli-

Tchkonia, was twenty-three years her junior, and his position allowed Rubinstein the title of Princess Gourielli, a designation which she reputedly flouted with obvious pride.¹⁰²

Dalí painted Rubinstein's portrait in 1943, depicting her chained to a rock (à la Andromeda) by her emerald necklace. He also wrote a long and enthusiastic description of her in his *Diary of a Genius*, under the chapter entitled, "How to Become a Super Snob," in which he twins Rubinstein with Paris fashion designer Coco Chanel as "one of the queens of world snobs." According to Dalí, "In 1942, Helena Rubinstein was worth a hundred million dollars," and that "she was a Dalinian personage. Her love of jewels and money, her caprices, her demands were deserving of my full attention."¹⁰³

During the course of 1942 Dalí designed and oversaw the painting of a three-part mural for Rubinstein's apartment. In her memoir, *My Life for Beauty*, first published in 1964, Rubinstein explains that when the murals were finished, Dalí suggested turning the room, intended for gaming, into a music salon. "I will design a fountain spouting from a grand piano," she quotes him as saying. "It will hang from the ceiling and never be played." "That" he added, "is the spirit of surrealism." Fortunately, Rubinstein mentions, Dalí was too busy elsewhere, and she was able to furnish the room according to her original plan. About the murals, Rubinstein writes that "In his surrealistic style he produced three huge panels depicting with great restraint and elegance Morning, Noon and Night." Recounting the evening when the panels were first shown, she writes that "One of my guests asked the artist whether they had any hidden meaning. 'The whole thing is an allegory of life,' Dalí explained. 'It is for the viewer to decipher. If no meaning is found, then there is none.'¹⁰⁴

The evening in question, November 12, 1942, combined Dalí's launch for *The Secret Life* with the unveiling of the murals, and was apparently quite a splendid affair.¹⁰⁵

Benjamin DeCasseres, the book editor for the *New York Journal American* was in attendance, and his account fails to conceal his disdain for an event that was clearly a sensational and well-heeled public relations extravaganza:

It was launched in New York with a tea-and-what-have-you and a gorgeous gathering of clans; intelligentsia, literary, artistic, smart and the crème de la crème of refugees-with-titles. Not to mention a regular blitz of photo-bulbs. Not to mention publishers and press agents. As secret as a circus parade and as artistically glamorous as its tarnished tinsel. The apotheosis of the art racket ...¹⁰⁶

Town and Country offered a less jaundiced view of the event, and managed to document a statement made by Dalí about *The Secret Life*, summarizing, in suitably cryptic and colourful Dalinian language, what the artist lists as the key points of the book. "So few people have heard it" writes the anonymous scribe, "that for the record we cannot refrain from summarizing the oracular utterance of SD at the party given by Prince and Princess Artchil Gourielli to celebrate both the unveiling of a large Dalí triptych in the new triplex penthouse and the publication of his *Secret Life*, or autobiography, a sample of which appeared in these pages over a year ago." Dalí's "oracular utterance" is documented as follows:

Since my arrival in America, I have not made any statement to the press. Today, on the eve of the publication of my book, necessarily polemic, I want to declare four Dalistic points:

- 1) The Eve of aesthetic carnival is finished, and we are going to start a period of Lent, rigour and responsibility.

- 2) Instead of nihilistic confusion of all isms, cubism, futurism, surrealism, born out of the War of 1914, we are going to assist in the birth of a style; after an era of experimental synthesis.
- 3) The dominant colour of the years 1944-1945 will be red: cardinal red of the Renaissance. The dominant stone will be ruby. Kingdom of embryonic morphology.
- 4) After the War, mechanical conception will seem horrible and we will see a renaissance of the great religions, metaphysical, and spiritual problems. Great flourishing of architecture and sculpture.

Finally, Dalí ends his statement by informing his audience that, “Above all this, the unique and exclusive protagonist of my book is my wife.”¹⁰⁷

Once launched, *The Secret Life* sold very well, and received a remarkable amount of press. According to *Publisher's Weekly* Scribner's book store in New York sold eight hundred copies in the first ten days of the book's release,¹⁰⁸ and *The New York Times* of January 24, 1943 lists the work at number four in Non-Fiction in San Francisco.¹⁰⁹ The Center for Dalinian Studies in Figueres has a scrapbook in its holdings, likely assembled by Gala, which was recovered from the Dalí's house in Port Lligat after the artist's death. It is pasted with hundreds of press clippings and reviews of *The Secret Life*, and displays a remarkable spectrum of critical reaction toward Dalí's unusual book. As might be expected, some found the work amusing, comical, enthralling and a work of genius, and others were appalled by the artist's divulgements and alleged cruelty and egotism, while some simply found it dull, pretentious or facetious. Dalí's early biographer Fleur Cowles, a journalist herself, comments that whatever the response to the book, “If you were any author,” taking stock of the high profiles of many of Dalí's reviewers, “to have the attention of such a list of critics, no matter how inflammatory, might in itself be as fine a

bow to your standing as any comment they might make about your work. Few books rate such sizzling fireworks from so distinguished a cast.”¹¹⁰

One member of this distinguished cast was the American playwright Arthur Miller, writing in the *L.A. Times* in January of 1943 in a review entitled “What Makes Dalí Tick?” “I have never read such a frank confession,” he writes, “... in rich Arabian hyperbole he proclaims himself the greatest living genius—and then chuckles. And he can tell a tale in the best picturesque style.” Miller singles out Dalí’s provocateur status, and writes, “And yet you can’t help liking this candid, amoral boy who grew up to hitch something like genius to the job of mystifying the international highbrow. A bad boy and a decadent, but oh, what a talented one.”¹¹¹ Sterling North of *The New York Post* describes *The Secret Life* as nothing less than an “insanely brilliant autobiography,”¹¹² while Bertram D. Wolfe of *The New York Herald Tribune* offers that *The Secret Life* is “a fascinating and appealing book of complete self-revelation,” and is a work that “leaves no secrets of his soul unexplored so far as he is equal to exploring it (which is pretty far), and least of all the matters which more circumspect autobiographers are most prone to hide.”¹¹³ Benjamin DeCasseres of the *New York Journal American* cautions, “Ridicule the book if you will ... but it will outlast, just as the canvasses of Salvador Dalí will, all our disgust, and our shafts.” The book, he states, “is sincere. It is the life of a most extraordinary individual—of a man who stands absolutely alone in a world of his own creation, a Prospero of a beautiful and absurd universe.”¹¹⁴

While there was a good amount of outright praise for *The Secret Life*, many reviewers were more ambivalent or disquieted in their assessment of Dalí’s memoir. This is the case with Tremain McDowell writing in the *Chicago Tribune* that “No one can

read far without speculating as to whether this is an honest narrative (as Dalí repeatedly insists) or a tongue in cheek performance calculated to sell.”¹¹⁵ Joseph Henry Jackson of *The San Francisco Chronicle* likewise writes that “Dalí is heard in this ‘secret autobiography,’” he writes, “no doubt about it. Never one to express himself quietly, here he fairly screams.” Some, he suggests, “will be fascinated, sometimes startled, by the utter frankness with which he disgorges his private thoughts.”¹¹⁶ Clifton Fadiman of *The New Yorker* offers a more contentious description, writing that *The Secret Life*, “written in feverish, cascading, tumescent prose, is a grinning nightmare of a book whose originality you cannot deny.” “Dalí speaks of his megalomania,” Fadiman wittily notes, “somewhat as if it were an interesting special talent, like ambidexterity or exceptional vision. Indeed, he takes it so for granted that one might say he is almost modest about it.” Fadiman concludes that “I do not think you can toss this book aside as exhibitionistic trash. It is a true human document and will remain so as long as paranoia is human.”¹¹⁷

While compliments could be outright or backhanded, there was also a healthy amount of outrage and disgust in response to *The Secret Life*. Howard Devree of *The New York Times* writes that “Nothing seems to me more characteristic of the man and his work than the frank admission by the way that at last he determined to capitalize on the stupidity of people and, in effect, make them pay for his living ... this isn’t even an interesting case history,” he opines, “as in Freud or Ellis; it is just an endless recountal [sic] of the trivia of showing off and one of the most boring books I have ever encountered.”¹¹⁸ Patterson Greene of *California Arts and Architecture* magazine also finds aspects of *The Secret Life* tedious. “The events reported are sometimes acutely boring, but they served to fill up space” he states flatly. “Four fifths of the verbose

autobiographical matter may be dismissed with a word,” he suggests, “and there is no reason why the word should contain more than four letters.”¹¹⁹

Reviewing Dalí’s autobiography in the February 1, 1943 edition of *Art Digest*, Sol A. Davidson is irritated by the lack of insight yielded on matters artistic in *The Secret Life*. He is particularly put off because he feels that Dalí has failed to illuminate his own artwork—as far as Davidson is concerned, the unstated purpose of a book written by an artist. “When reading this schizophrenic account of self, one looks for an answer to Dalian art—perhaps the autobiography will disclose a clue to this thus far unfathomable art, but no!” Instead, Davidson protests, one hears the gossip, boasting and the preferences of Dalí’s “adolescent mentality.” He sees “no note of genius in Dalí’s book,” although he is convinced that “the Freudian scholars will jump with glee at this unthought-of opportunity to examine the surrealist’s mental viscera and how it operates.”¹²⁰ H.P. Lazarus, writing in the February 6, 1943 edition of *The Nation*, claims that Dalí “calls this book his ‘secret life’ because he has created a substitute for his real life, from which he divorced himself on grounds of incompatibility.” Nevertheless, the critic does note the import of Dalí’s gesture as equally as he posits the artist’s disingenuousness, claiming Dalí “has turned the whole world into himself in what is perhaps the greatest feat of willed obscurantism of the times ... It is a work of supererogation, reading Dalí, for if one can stomach his self-obfuscation, one has also to swallow his attempts to bamboozle the reader.”¹²¹

While a number of critics focus on Dalí’s wilful obfuscation, his adolescent mentality and his attempts to “bamboozle” the reader, others, like Orwell, set their sights on the perceived immorality of a text that an anonymous writer at the *St. Paul Minnesota*

Dispatch describes as nothing less than a “Handbook for the Future of Sin.”¹²² Like Orwell, a number of reviewers describe *The Secret Life* using the metaphor of a “book that stinks.” Leonard Hood is one of these, writing for the Oklahoma City newspaper that “Translator Haakon Chevalier and the Dial press have given Dalí his unsuppressed desire, an exquisite public internment between two elegant crepe covered slabs, his autobiography ... Buried alive, his stream of subconsciousness has already putrefied. The stench is terrific.”¹²³ Likewise, in a letter to the editor in response to the Dec. 28 issue of *Time* magazine in which appeared a review of *The Secret Life*, Second Lieutenant Herb Rathley of Ellington Field Texas, claims that the book, and the review of it, forced him to open the barracks’ windows “to let out the stench that permeated the home of our aviation cadets.” The letter was signed “Yours—for more down-to-earth realism, and less lace-pantied surrealism.”¹²⁴

Although critical reaction to *The Secret Life* was pungent indeed, the extent to which Dalí’s autobiography had infiltrated popular culture in the years directly following its publication is evident in two references to the text in other writings of the period. The first of these is by the much-loved American humorist James Thurber. Indeed, Thurber had something of a stake to claim in Dalí’s memoir, as very likely Dalí’s title for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was intended to reference Thurber’s own immensely popular short story, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*, which first appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1939 (it was made into a movie in 1947).¹²⁵ It follows the character of Walter Mitty, an ineffectual and henpecked husband in whose vivid escapist fantasies he becomes a dashing surgeon, a heroic airplane pilot and a charismatic naval commander. Apparently, the character struck a chord, and “Walter Mitty” was to become popular shorthand in

America for a timorous person who dreams of a more exciting life and an assertive bearing. According to one source, “A leitmotif of Mitty’s secret life—the “ta-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa” of the befuddling machines mastered in his fantasies—became a popular slogan and tag-line during World War II. Everybody, it seems, knew and was Walter Mitty.”¹²⁶

At a mere two thousand, one hundred words, it seems likely someone might translate *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* from *The New Yorker* for Dalí, who loved flipping through American magazines, including that particular one (327), or at least suggested to him a parallel with the popular story. Not only does this further point to Dalí’s embrace of American popular culture, but it also suggests affinities between himself and Walter Mitty, the ordinary, ineffectual man with grandiose visions; a characteristic still known today as the “Walter Mitty complex.” If so, it suggests, by association, an enframing of the entire book as a series of grandiose fantasies made by a meek and beleaguered man.

Thurber certainly read Dalí’s title as a reference to his own work, and his response to Dalí’s *Secret Life* appeared in the guise of a book review published in the February 27, 1943 edition of *The New Yorker*, pointedly entitled *The Secret Life of James Thurber*. In it the humorist juxtaposes his own very ordinary American Methodist upbringing with that of Salvador Dalí, essentially adumbrating the differences in their stores of what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls “cultural capital”—that is, the effects resulting from a person’s rate and amount of exposure and access to various cultural discourses and artifacts.¹²⁷ Using his own humour as a buffer for his critique, Thurber also suggests that the self-indulgence of *The Secret Life* is irresponsible,

considering the political situation mid-war. “I have only dipped here and there into Salvador Dalí’s *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*,” Thurber writes, “because anyone afflicted with what my grandmother’s sister Abigail called ‘the permanent jumps’ should do no more than skitter through such an autobiography, particularly in these melancholy times.”¹²⁸

Recounting some of the vignettes in the work, Thurber winnows out those that portray the youthful “dreamer of dreams” with obvious parallels to Mitty. He is particularly miffed by the fact that his own “published personal history,” which came out in 1933, only sold for \$1.75, while Dalí’s life narrative was priced at \$6.00. This difference becomes a microcosm of the larger issue of the cultural difference between Dalí and himself. “Let me be the first to admit that the naked truth about me is to the naked truth about Salvador Dalí as an old ukulele in the attic is to a piano in a tree, and I mean a piano with breasts.” Later he notes that “This difference can be stated in terms of environment. Salvador was brought up in Spain, a country coloured by the legends of Hannibal, El Greco, and Cervantes. I was brought up in Ohio, a region steeped in the tradition of Coxey’s Army, the Anti-Saloon League, and William Howard Taft.” Further, “What Salvie had that the rest of us kids didn’t was the perfect scenery, characters, and costumes for his desperate little rebellion against the clean, the conventional, and the comfortable.” In contrast, the people around Thurber “consisted of eleven maternal great-aunts, all Methodists, who were staunch believers in physic, mustard plasters, and Scripture, and it was part of their dogma that artistic tendencies should be treated in the same way as hiccups and hysterics.”¹²⁹

Here Thurber pits the Surrealist Sophisticate against the Average American, which made for humorous contrast as much for a critique of Dalí's preciosity and his émigré status. The same formula is used in A. Allen Smith's book satirizing the arts in America, entitled *Life in a Putty Factory*, published in New York in 1945. In a chapter entitled "Report on a Quest for Culture," the author assesses Dalí and his memoir as effete, pretentious and avaricious. This view is portrayed in a fictional conversation held among three characters, one of whom is Dalí, another a "prominent producer" from Hollywood who did not speak French, and the third, the man's wife, who did, and consequently was performing a clandestine translation of the artist's speech.

"What's he say now, Mama? He'd ask.

"He says he's writing his autobiography," explained Mama.

Dalí blabbed on.

"Now what's he saying, Mama?"

"He says his autobiography is the greatest autobiography ever written."

"Tell me what he says next."

"He says his autobiography begins when he was in his mother's womb."

This was something! The famous producer cursed himself for his ignorance of French, which continued to flow from Dalí's lip.

"Now Mama! What's he say?"

"He says," said Mama, "that while he was in his mother's womb he remembers every minute of the time."

Dalí did finish his autobiography and several publishers wanted to bring it out. He took it, however, to the Dial Press because Dial contains the same letters as Dalí. I haven't read the book and don't intend to, but Dalí's publisher told me it was marvellous.

"Craziest book I ever saw in my life," he said. "Tells how he likes to pick up a chipmunk and bite it on the head. How he once fell in love with a girl's runny nose. All kinds of stuff like that."

"Do you think he is crazy?" I asked.

"Who, that guy? He's crazy like I.J. Fox. Makes more money than me and you put together."¹³⁰

Conclusion

Smith points to Dalí's media savvy in this final line, presuming that his autobiography was intended to be a "pot boiler" or "media event," and certainly, few people by the 1940s had a greater awareness of the power of the press and other modern forms of mass communication than Salvador Dalí. As established in this chapter, Dalí had privileged access to the American media, courted them, and turned them very successfully to his advantage. Whether the American public liked Dalí and his autobiography, or hated them, it was certain that the Spanish artist managed to maintain a distinct public presence in America: a presence that was firmly established by the event of the writing, content, and promotion of his life narrative.

While *The Secret Life* served the very strategic purpose of promoting Dalí in the U.S., of establishing his position as a distinctly populist artist, and positing him as an enthusiastic part of the American cultural imaginary as opposed to an opportunistic émigré, Dalí also had some very specific directives he wanted to establish in terms of his aesthetic and creative direction. In this sense, *The Secret Life* not only promoted Dalí in America to a popular American audience, but was also intended to address the keepers of culture by defining Dalí's new career direction, which was in many ways the polar opposite of the historical avant-garde, and as far from the Surrealist movement as possible. In this sense, Dalí's autobiography functioned not only as a promotional manoeuvre for Dalí's career and work to date, but also as an artistic manifesto or declaration of his new career direction; a project that will be discussed in the following chapter.

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- ¹ Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 171.
- ² DeCasseres, n.p.
- ³ Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1995), x-xi.
- ⁴ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 453-458.
- ⁵ Erika Doss, *Twentieth-Century American Art* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 77; Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, Second Edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, and New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 1109.
- ⁶ Doss, 97-116; Stokstad, 1109.
- ⁷ Ibid.; Serge Guilbaut, "The Second World War and the Attempt to Establish an Independent American Art," in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 49-99.
- ⁸ Sam Hunter, "Surrealism in Transition: Paris and New York," in *The Surrealist Vision: Europe and the Americas*, eds. Nancy Hall-Duncan and Sam Hunter (Bruce Museum of Art and Science 1998), 47.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Sawin, xi.
- ¹¹ Keith L. Eggener, "'An Amusing Lack of Logic': Surrealism and Popular Entertainment," *American Art*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Autumn, 1993): 32.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ For further inquiry into the relationship between Surrealism and fashion, see Dilys E. Blum, *Shocking! The Art and Fashion of Elsa Schiaparelli* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004); Richard Martin, *Fashion and Surrealism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987); the chapter entitled, "Surrealism in the Service of Fashion," in Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920-1950* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 66-90; and Hannah Crawforth, "Surrealism and the Fashion Magazine," *American Periodicals*, vol. 14, no. 2 (2004): 212-246.
- ¹⁴ A. Everett Austin, quoted in Eggener, 38, citing Deborah Zlotzky, "'Pleasant Madness' in Hartford: The First Surrealist Exhibition in America," *Arts Magazine*, 60 (February 1986): 59.
- ¹⁵ Eggener, 33.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ Sawin, 79.
- ¹⁸ Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 80.
- ¹⁹ Levy, 80.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 71.
- ²¹ Isabelle Dervaux, *Surrealism U.S.A.* (New York and Hatje Cantz Verlag, Germany, 2005), 14.
- ²² Dawn Ades, ed., *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 489-98 and Dervaux, *Surrealism U.S.A.*, 14.
- ²³ The series ran between December 16, 1934 and July 7, 1935, and included amusing cartoons by Dalí of his views of New York, "The American City," Broadway, "American Country Life," "Gangsterism," and a "Crazy Movie Scenario of M. Dalí, the Super-Realist," among others. See Michael R. Taylor, "Gangsterism and Goofy Visions of New York, 1935," in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 240-42.
- ²⁴ Margaret Case Harriman, "Profiles: A Dream Walking, Salvador Dalí," *The New Yorker*, July 1, 1939, 27.
- ²⁵ Eggener, 35.
- ²⁶ Etherington-Smith, 187.
- ²⁷ Sawin, 78; Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 487-498.
- ²⁸ DeCasseres, n.p. See Salvador Dalí, excerpts from *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí in Town and Country*, May 31, 1941, 94-98.
- ²⁹ Chronology compiled from Fèlix Fanés, et al., *It's all Dalí: Film, Fashion, Photography, Design, Advertising, Painting*. (Barcelona: Fundación "la Caixa" and Figueres: The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, 2005), 26-31 and Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 495-501.
- ³⁰ Salvador Dalí, "Dalí to the Reader," in *Dalí 1943* (New York: Knoedler Gallery, 1943), n.p.
- ³¹ Sawin, 78.
- ³² Marcel Jean, *History of Surrealist Painting* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 261.
- ³³ Eggener, 33.

³⁴ Ibid., 32-33.

³⁵ Ibid., 34.

³⁶ Levy, 79-80.

³⁷ Eggener, 32.

³⁸ Ibid., 43.

³⁹ Robert S. Lubar, "Modern Art and Mass Culture in America: The Case of Salvador Dalí in 1939," in *Dali: Mass Culture*, ed., Fèlix Fanés (Barcelona: Fundació "la Caixa," and Figueres: The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation and the Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofía, 2004), 239.

⁴⁰ Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 35.

⁴¹ Reynolds A. Morse, "The Dream World of Salvador Dalí," *Art in America*, vol. 33, no. 3 (July 1945): 112.

⁴² "Harry Langdon is one of the purest flowers of the screen, and of our CIVILIZATION as well," Dalí writes in his 1929 essay "... Always, Above Music, Harry Langdon," published in the Spanish journal *L'Amic de les Arts* no. 31, March 31, 1929. "Compared to him Keaton is a mystic and Chaplin a degenerate; the good side of Chaplin is his primitive mechanization and not his arty transcendental sentimentalism." In Dalí, *Oui: The Paranoid-Critical Revolution*, 80.

⁴³ This naturally holds true in the United States as much now as it did in the 1930s and early 1940s. Dalí is still one of the most popular and best-known artists in America. If not among academics or lovers of fine art, then certainly among the "masses," who maintain a robust trade in Dalí reproductions, and flock to retrospectives and exhibitions of his work and to the highly popular Salvador Dalí museum in St. Petersburg, Florida.

⁴⁴ For a sampling of the type of commercial products the Surrealists produced, see Martin, *Fashion and Surrealism*, and Ghislaine Wood, *Surreal Things: Surrealism and Design* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2007).

⁴⁵ Secrest, 189.

⁴⁶ Tim McGirk, *Wicked Lady: Salvador Dalí's Muse* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 105.

⁴⁷ Ratcliff, *Swallowing Dalí*, 35.

⁴⁸ Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (London: André Deutsch, 1963), 246-7.

⁴⁹ Levy, 197.

⁵⁰ Sibella Skidelsky, "The Sham of It," *Art Digest*, February 1937 (CDSS), n.p.

⁵¹ Klaus Mann, "Surrealist Circus," *American Mercury*, Feb. 1943, 174-181. A condensed version of his article also appeared in the *Sunday World Herald*, Jan. 31, 1943, C25.

⁵² Barry Byrne, "Surrealism Passes," *Commonweal*, July 2, 1937, 262-63.

⁵³ Stephanie Barron, "European Artists in Exile: A Reading between the Lines," in *Exiles and Émigrés: The Flight of European Artists from Hitler* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1997), 19.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. According to Barron, "The press also published articles that were more sympathetic to the refugees." These included articles in *The Nation*, *The New Leader*, *The New Republic*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Art Digest*. *The New Yorker*, in particular, pointed out the potential contribution of what the *American Mercury* called "Hitler's Gift to America," in terms of American arts and culture (Barron, 20).

⁵⁶ Sawin, ix-x.

⁵⁷ Tashjian, 90.

⁵⁸ Morse, 120.

⁵⁹ Anon, *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Jan 2, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

⁶⁰ Salvador Dalí, "Dalí to the Reader," *Dalí 1943*, n.p.

⁶¹ As an aside to the drama that was Dalí, during the time he was working on *The Secret Life* in 1942, it seems, Chevalier was leading a secret life of his own. The translator had met the nuclear scientist Julius Robert Oppenheimer, famous for leading the Manhattan Project, at Berkeley in 1927 and, as Chevalier's correspondence reveals, both became members of a secret unit of the American Communist Party comprised of Berkeley professors, between 1938 and 1942. In 1942 Chevalier was reportedly asked to obtain details of secret atomic research then being conducted at the radiation laboratories at Berkeley. The writer allegedly approached his friend Oppenheimer with the proposal, but was rebuffed by the scientist, who termed the scheme "treasonable." Oppenheimer's delay in reporting the incident to the authorities would later contribute to his own difficulties in obtaining security clearances vital to his work. The revelation also resulted in Chevalier's becoming one of the first persons to be investigated by Joseph R.

McCarthy's House Subcommittee on Un-American Activities. There is no evidence, however, that Dalí was aware of Chevalier's political leanings or his clandestine activities of the period.

Though Oppenheimer later withdrew his allegation, Chevalier was subsequently pressured to resign from his teaching post. He continued to work as a translator for the United Nations for several years, and was sent, in 1945, to Nuremberg to act as a translator for the Nuremberg Trials. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), 143; Gale Research Company, "Chelavier, Haakon (Maurice) 1901-1985," (Contemporary Authors Detroit: Gale Publications, vol. 116), 66; and Wikipedia, "Haakon Chevalier," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haakon_Chevalier.

⁶² Wikipedia, "Mary Phelps Jacob," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caresse_Crosby.

⁶³ Autobiographical information on Crosby/Peabody from the following sources: Caresse Crosby, *The Passionate Years* (New York: Ecco Press, 1979), 334-35, 339; Anne Conover Carson and William Claire, interview, "Touched by Caresse," *Horizon*, June 1986, 35-41; Wikipedia, "Mary Phelps Jacob," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caresse_Crosby.

⁶⁴ In addition to her literary achievements, Crosby had another claim to fame: that of inventing the brassière. While variations on the brassière theme arose as the corset began to fade from feminine attire, Crosby was the first to patent the device in 1914, and to coin the term "brassière"—giving it the cachet of a French name that referred, chastely, to the arms rather than the intended contents of the garment. At that time, there was little interest in her invention, and as a result, she sold her company to Warner Brothers Corset Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, for \$1,500—a remarkably small sum for an invention that was to become a staple of twentieth-century women's dress (Crosby, 71-74).

⁶⁵ Anaïs Nin, *The Journals of Anaïs Nin, 1939-1944* (London: Peter Owen, 1970), 39.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁷ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 359.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 360.

⁶⁹ Crosby, 252.

⁷⁰ Crosby, it should be noted, is quick not to take all the credit for Dalí's American adventure, writing "It is often reported in print that I 'introduced' Salvador Dalí to America and this could be interpreted to mean that I was responsible for bringing his work before the eyes of the American public, which is not exactly true. It was Julien Levy who 'promoted' Dalí as an artist, and I only introduced him to the Press" (Crosby, 331).

⁷¹ Anne Conover Carson, *Caresse Crosby: From Black Sun to Rocasinibalda* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1989), 73.

⁷² Nin, 40.

⁷³ Etherington-Smith, 262.

⁷⁴ Gayle Brown, *The Dial: Arts and Letters in the 1920s* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), 8.

⁷⁵ Crosby, 342.

⁷⁶ Etherington-Smith, 260.

⁷⁷ Nin, 38.

⁷⁸ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 460, from an unpublished letter in Don Pere Vehí Collection, Cadaqués.

⁷⁹ Nin, 39-40.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸⁵ Crosby, 345.

⁸⁶ Nin, 44.

⁸⁷ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 461.

⁸⁸ Nin, 40.

⁸⁹ Anon, "Enchanted Garden," *Time*, Monday, April 7, 1941, *Time Magazine*, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,765449,00.html?promoid=googlep>

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, xi.

⁹² Anon., *Indianapolis Sunday Star*, April 6, 1941 (CDSS), n.p.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Nin, 44.

⁹⁵ Anon, "Life Calls on Salvador Dalí," *Life*, April 7, 1941, 98-100.

⁹⁶ Crosby writes of this incident: "I also prodded my prize heifer into the library where she chewed a contented cud in front of the fire while the celluloid reeled. The trouble with Hampton's Pride was that she didn't want to go back to the barn and had to be pushed in sitting position down the front steps (Crosby, 345-6).

⁹⁷ Anon, "Dalí Mystifies Dalí," *The Sketch*, April 1941, 18.

⁹⁸ See Fanes, *Dalí: Mass Culture*, pps. 204-205 for reproductions of this photo essay.

⁹⁹ Salvador Dalí, "The Secret Life of Dalí, by Dalí," *Click*, Sept. 1942, 34-38.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰² According to Dalí, the prince "never opened his mouth except to blow smoke rings," and then gleefully notes how hurt Helena Rubinstein was when she overheard one of her guests saying that "In Georgia you're a prince if you just own some sheep." However, according to Dalí, "While the Prince's title might have been suspect, the Princess' bank account was coat-of-arms enough" (Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 208-9).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Helena Rubinstein, *My Life for Beauty* (New York: Paperback Library, 1972), 89-90.

¹⁰⁵ This date is based on a letter in a file at The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, from Rubinstein's secretary, dated Nov. 13, 1942. "Princess Gourielli has asked me to send you the enclosed check for 2,000, on account and to say that she hopes you were pleased with yesterday's party. The Princess has asked me to send her best wishes to you and Mrs. Dalí. Sincerely, Shirley Leffler, Secretary to Princess Gourielli." The cheque was presumably to go toward Dalí's forthcoming portrait of Helena Rubinstein, or the three large canvases that served as murals in her Fifth Avenue apartment.

¹⁰⁶ DeCasseres., n.p.

¹⁰⁷ Anon, *Town and Country*, Jan. 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹⁰⁸ Anon, *Publisher's Weekly*, Jan. 16, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹⁰⁹ Anon, *The New York Times*, Jan 24, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹⁰ Cowles, 161.

¹¹¹ Arthur Miller, "What Makes Dalí Tick?," *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 31, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹² Sterling North, *The New York Post*, Dec. 23, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹³ Bertram D. Wolfe, "A Hero to His Surrealist Self," *The New York Herald Tribune*, December 27, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹⁴ DeCasseres, n.p.

¹¹⁵ Tremaine McDowell, *The Chicago Tribune*, Jan 3, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Henry Jackson, "Artist Dalí Screams His Autobiography," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 27, 1942, 26.

¹¹⁷ Fadiman, n.p.

¹¹⁸ Devree, n.p.

¹¹⁹ Greene, 8.

¹²⁰ Sol A. Davidson, "Books," *Art Digest*, Feb. 1, 1943, (CDSS), n.p.

¹²¹ H.P. Lazarus, "Dalí's Autobiography," *The Nation*, February 6, 1943, (CDSS), n.p.

¹²² Anon., *St. Paul, Minnesota Dispatch*, Dec, 18, 1942 (CDSS), n.p.

¹²³ Leonard Hood, "Folly of Dalí," *Oklahoma City*, Jan. 24, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹²⁴ 2nd, Lieut. Herb Rathley of Ellington Field, TX, Letter to the Editor, *Time*, Jan. 18, 1943 (CDSS), n.p.

¹²⁵ Ian Gibson believes that Dalí may have devised the title for his book as suggested by a nineteenth-century pornographic curiosity entitled *My Secret Life*, believed by Gibson to have been written by Henry Spencer Ashbee, a minor Victorian writer. See Ian Gibson, *The Erotomaniac: The Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2001).

¹²⁶ Robert H. Bell, "James Thurber 1894-1961," *Writings of Robert H. Bell*, from *The Columbia Companion to the Twentieth Century Short Story*, Columbia University Press, 2001, <http://www.williams.edu/English/faculty/rbell/scholarship-and-criticism/HersheysThurber.html>.

¹²⁷ See Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *The Inheritors: French Students and their Relation to Culture*, trans. R. Nice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

¹²⁸ James Thurber, "The Secret Life of James Thurber," *The New Yorker*, Feb. 27, 1943, 15.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

¹³⁰ A. Allen Smith, *Life in a Putty Factory* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1945), 156-57.

CHAPTER 6: Anti-Surrealism and the Anti-Modernist Manifesto

This is the moment when Dalí really chooses his vocation, making his entry into the symbolic order of art to become the youngish old master of anti-modernism.

Steven Harris¹

Introduction

In the previous chapter, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* was considered in its role as a public relations document, with the intended purpose of reifying Dalí's public persona according to his own design, generating excitement about his autobiography and his work in general, and ingratiating himself to a popular American audience. In contrast, this chapter takes as its subject two other important strategic functions of the text. The first is as a response to Dalí's rejection by the Surrealists, and more specifically, as a rebuttal to what was essentially a smear campaign launched against Dalí in America by various members of the avant-garde, and André Breton in particular. The extent to which Dalí both circumnavigates and simultaneously addresses Surrealism and its self-styled "pope" in the book is considered here, underscoring a textual conflict between two of the movement's most prominent and strong-willed affiliates, as they engaged in a power struggle to define the movement in the American cultural imaginary.

One of the ways in which Dalí dealt with his contentious relationship with his former Surrealist colleagues and, despite his expulsion from their ranks, his invariable association with the movement in the public eye, was to "incorporate surrealism in tradition" (350): that is, to redefine Surrealism according to his newly stated directives, and to found his own style. This style, which Dalí called "classic," was in response to the artist's avid anti-modernism, and based on Renaissance and academic models in keeping

with his move to a reactionary, conservative moral stance and the embrace of Catholicism. As with other documents of the period, Dalí uses the forum of *The Secret Life* to position himself in opposition to the “abominable,” “mechanical” and “mediocre catastrophes” of modern art, and to outline his stated new “classic” aesthetic direction (4).

In this sense, it will be argued, Dalí’s autobiography functions on one level as a manifesto: anti-Surrealist, anti-modernist, and decidedly “classic,” although Dalí was evidently still grappling with precisely what this entailed in terms of his actual art practice. The complex negotiations that he performs in the text, in terms of issues of reception, revisionism and self-styling, require consideration of period documents concerned with the discourses and dialectics at hand, as well as close attention to the work itself. To acknowledge the Surrealist politics within the pages of *The Secret Life*, however, is to bring the reader closer to an understanding of the strategic function of the work, as well as facilitating the decryption of some of the more abstruse passages in the work.

Surrealist Crossword Puzzles

The way in which Dalí structures the telling of his career as an artist in *The Secret Life*, and the public face he presents to his American audience, suggest that he was a free agent in his creative practice, barely absorbing influence or doctrine from others, and hardly participating in the avant-garde or Surrealist project to any significant degree. Dalí has in fact carefully downplayed his involvement in the Paris art world, which despite his ten-year tenure as one of its most prominent members, is given almost no discussion in the book. Seeing as Dalí had been such an active participant in the Spanish avant-garde

throughout the 1920s, before joining the Surrealist movement, and highly and notoriously engaged with the French Surrealists and wider creative circles throughout the 1930s, there was no means by which he could avoid mention of his affiliation with what might be called “orthodox” Surrealism. Nevertheless, Dalí invariably downplays his participation in and association with the movement as much as possible in *The Secret Life*, and simply cites it as a movement that “appeared to me the sole one offering me an adequate outlet for my activity” (250). When afforded notice, however, it is for the most part in negative or derisive terms, or through implication or indirect reference.

Most strikingly, the poet André Breton, the founder of the Surrealist movement, and Dalí’s exceedingly influential mentor, friend and occasional disciplinarian during his Surrealist period, is barely mentioned in the four-hundred-page text. This is a particularly notable omission as, while relations had disintegrated between Breton and Dalí by the time they had both taken residence in America, the friendship and creative alliance between the two when Dalí joined the Surrealist movement in 1929 had been, considering a few exceptions, mutually enthusiastic and beneficial. Indeed, Breton’s role in Dalí’s creative development and artistic career was paramount throughout the 1930s. In an interview published in 1973, Dalí states of Breton that “He had immediately assumed the guise of a second father to me ... The Surrealists to me were a kind of nourishing placenta and I believed in Surrealism as in the tablets of the Law.”² Breton in turn had originally viewed Dalí as the “incarnation of the Surrealist spirit”; a boon to the movement which, already several years old when Dalí joined, was showing signs of creative stagnation.³ Waxing enthusiastic over his newfound Surrealist colleague in 1929, Breton wrote that “With Dalí it is perhaps the first time that our mental windows have

opened completely and that we are going to feel ourselves slipping upwards towards the trapdoor to the fulvous sky.”⁴

The relationship between Dalí and Breton was not without incident, however, and in an attempt to preserve the movement’s “purity” in 1934 Breton required Dalí to defend what seemed to him to be an overly enthusiastic interest in the person of Adolf Hitler. After undergoing a trial before the Paris Surrealists (and putting on quite a spectacle in the process) the Spaniard managed to persuade Breton that his interest was not politically motivated but was a “pathological phenomenon” in which Dalí understood Hitler as a “delirious dream subject.”⁵ Despite this close call, over the next five years Breton became increasingly uneasy about aspects of his colleague’s behaviour, including what he interpreted as an emergent reactionary stance, an aversion to the communist and revolutionary leanings of the Surrealist group, and Dalí’s increasingly commercial and publicity-oriented behaviour. By 1939 Dalí had begun, once again, to include images of Hitler in his canvasses; a gesture that had nearly rendered him a Surrealist *persona non grata* in 1934, and considering the political situation at the later period, could only provoke Breton and what remained of his faithful Surrealists to the breaking point.

The direction of Dalí’s painting, in particular his *trompe-l’oeil* images, also became problematic for Breton, and by May 1939, in what was to be the final edition of the Surrealist journal *Minotaure*, the poet refers to it as “already threatened by profound, real monotony. By dint of trying to refine his paranoiac method,” Breton sniffs, Dalí “is beginning, as one can see, to lapse into entertainment of the nature of *crossword puzzles*.”⁶ Worst of all, especially for the poet, who was fundamentally opposed to

colonialism and maintained a profound interest in what were at the time considered “primitive” cultures and objects, in the same issue he reveals,

(I have this from Dalí himself and I’ve taken the trouble to make sure that no humour was involved) that all the present trouble in the world is racial in origin, and that the best solution, agreed on by all the white races, is to reduce all the dark races to slavery. I do not know what doors such a declaration can open for the author in Italy and America, the countries between which he now oscillates, but I know which they’ll close. After this I cannot see how, in independent-minded circles, his message could be taken seriously.⁷

Breton plainly had sufficient motive to distance himself and Surrealism in general from Salvador Dalí, and as follows his public denigration of the Catalan artist must be considered in light of Breton’s own agenda to “maintain the purity of the movement,” and to prevent Dalí from further overshadowing his brainchild with his undignified behaviour, a debased aesthetic and commercial pandering. However, given Dalí’s penchant for courting ire, it is equally as likely that Dalí was intentionally inciting a possible schism with Breton. Considering Dalí’s racist pronouncement and offensive gestures were directed at an audience Dalí knew all too well would be hostile to them, these are problematic to decipher as anything other than provocations. Rejecting “the name of the father” was, to be sure, something of a mandate for Dalí who, in an epigraph in his *Diary of a Genius*, was to quote Freud’s dictum that “He is a hero who revolts against paternal authority and conquers it.”⁸

Wherever he stood on the subject of “race” or regarding people of African ancestry, it seems plausible, considering the artist’s habitually ironic and provocative stance, that Dalí’s expulsion was consciously provoked.⁹ While received scholarship suggests that Breton’s condemnation in *Minotaure* was to have effectively dismissed Dalí

from the Surrealist movement, what seems to have been an attempt on Breton's behalf at "damage control" came too late. Dalí's public escapades, commercialism, suspect politics and what Breton and others viewed as the decline of his work had overshadowed the Surrealist movement to the extent, or so Breton was convinced, of disaffecting those with a serious interest in the Surrealist project. In a letter to the Austrian-born painter Wolfgang Paalen written in the summer of 1939, Breton adumbrates his own disinterest in the never-to-be realized October issue of *Minotaure*. "I've ignored the issue of *Minotaure* envisaged for October ..." he writes. "International problems have existed for months, the newspapers talk about it it's a period of tremendous confusion, with rare chances for hope." While the imminent war was naturally a prime concern, another great problem for the journal was Dalí. "A lot of criticism of *Minotaure* is going on," Breton informs Paalen. "Mabille wrote that Dalí has killed sales of the latest number in America and in France the reception has been no less reserved."¹⁰

In light of the animus between Dalí and Breton before coming to America, complicated as it was by the terrors of war and the turmoil of exile, reconciling the break in Paris after Breton's excommunication of Dalí in the pages of *Minotaure* seemed unlikely on the other side of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, according to Dalí, he had telephoned Breton in June 1941 to welcome the poet to New York on the very day of his arrival on U.S. shores, as Breton and his family had escaped the war in France, via Martinique. They made plans to meet the following day. "But the same evening," Dalí was to document later, "friends told me that Breton had just been calumniating me again, calling me an admirer of Hitler. This was too false and dangerous a thing to do, at that period, for me still to agree to see him."¹¹ Hence Breton and Dalí went their separate

ways, but as events would have it, the dynamics of their now broken relationship were about to change drastically, as Dalí, Breton and a worthy representation of Surrealists all found themselves in exile in America in the years immediately before and after 1940.

While Breton had been the undisputed and much-respected leader of the Surrealist movement in Paris, revered for his vision and intellect, the poet was to discover that in the “New World,” Surrealism, or a commercialized, often cartoonish version of it, was inextricably associated with Dalí in the public eye, and few people, save a handful of émigrés, knew or cared who André Breton was. Having been unceremoniously expelled from the movement (provoked or not), Dalí evidently savoured this turn of events, claiming America, and what might be called “Dalinian” Surrealism, for himself. Breton retaliated as he could, in an effort to salvage the reputation and integrity of the movement that was originally the fruit of his imagination and labours. Beginning with Breton’s expulsion of Dalí in the pages of *Minotaur* in 1939, this “turf war” continued to rage in the United States as both Breton and Dalí fought for the Surrealist “title,” through various forms of print media, not the least of which was *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Consequently, Breton’s conspicuous absence from the book, and Dalí’s treatment of the Surrealist movement in general, must be considered in light of this mêlée between two fiercely invested, strong-willed and determined men, as it played itself out in print in North America until the mid-1940s.

Two Surrealisms in the “New World”

As has been discussed in previous chapters, Dalí sailed smoothly into American culture and clearly filled an extremely high profile and remarkably lucrative niche in the cultural arena there. For Breton, however, the move was reportedly a painful one fraught

with hardship and alienation. With his wife Jacqueline and young daughter Aube, Breton arrived in the U.S. via Martinique in June 1941, and he was to remain until 1946. The family had very little money, and to make matters worse, Breton refused to learn English, which resulted in social isolation, poor employment opportunities, and even cost him a teaching position at the recently founded New School for Social Research.¹²

Polizzotti maintains that while Surrealist visual culture had become familiar to an American audience, the language barrier prevented the movement's precepts from being disseminated there. The few of Breton's writings, or those of the other Surrealists, that were available in English often appeared in poor and difficult-to-access translations. Besides, as Eggener suggests, in America, "few English-speaking critics knew or cared that this odd little band of francophone malcontents had set their sights on liberating human consciousness from reason ..."¹³ While the American public's interest had been piqued by the more entertaining and superficial aspects of Surrealism, it would take the canny and highly invested Dalí to fill the niche required to "sell" it to the American public. Dalí understood this fully and his shining star sveltely stole any thunder that Breton might have made upon his arrival in the United States as a representative of the Surrealist movement. While much of this celebrity had to do with the impact of Dalí's painting and design work, the artist likewise understood the reach and agency of America's most powerful medium of the day. This was the published text, and Dalí both courted the media and produced a number of documents in highly appealing, flamboyant English, with which he masterfully "worked" the undeniably shameless marketing of his persona. Indeed, the power of the written word, including that of *The Secret Life*, cannot

be underestimated in the trajectory of the dissemination and promotion of Surrealism—or at least the “Dalinian” version of it—in the U.S. in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Reviewing the texts produced in America by Dalí and Breton of the period between 1941 and 1945, it is apparent that the two were conducting a heated discourse via their published writings. The poet singled Dalí out for what he viewed as his misdemeanours, by name and infraction, publicly maligning him in museum catalogues, published lectures, vanguard journals, and eventually a journal of his own creation, entitled *WWW*. Conversely, in his many declarations, artist’s statements, and especially in *The Secret Life*, Dalí pointedly circumnavigates Breton, effectively annulling his presence and significance from his “official record.” However, while the artist barely acknowledges Breton at all in his writing, the presence of Breton and the Paris Surrealist group he represented are keenly felt as a subtext, and very much as what cultural theorist Dick Hebdige would describe as a “present absence,” that is, a sort of black hole around which the text is structured.¹⁴

To appreciate the interaction between Breton and Dalí in print in the U.S., it is important to acknowledge their mutual rivalry, and the fact that they each understood that there were two, very different “Surrealisms,” as defined by each respectively. The first of these is that associated with Dalí: the commercial, comedic, showy, satirical, visually appealing manifestation of the movement that was associated in the late 1930s and early ‘40s for the most part with the fashion and entertainment industries and with the more eccentric side of the American upper crust and intelligentsia. According to Dalí, *he* was the authentic voice of Surrealism, being a Surrealist not by membership in the movement, but by birth or natural affinity, and as he saw it, his embracing of “the masses” was true

to the Surrealist (and notably communist-inspired) mandate, of Lautréamont's dictum (often cited by Breton) that "Poetry must be made by all, not by one."¹⁵ It was also a reflection of his own "authenticity" in that, as he so often proclaimed, he refused to be hamstrung by restrictions of taste, propriety, ethics or politics—that is, in his opinion, true to the 1924 Surrealist manifesto's edict that Surrealism was to be completely free from rational, aesthetic or moral restrictions.

To Breton and most of the other Surrealists in exile or otherwise, Dalí represented a Surrealism co-opted and gone awry: an "ersatz" Surrealism, given their assumption that the Spanish artist had monopolized, commercialized and cheapened the movement for his own self-promotion. From this perspective, held by the émigrés and the diminutive American avant-garde, on the other side was the "authentic" or autonomous Surrealism that Breton, Max Ernst and other exiles laboured to maintain as vital, removed as it was from its indigenous Paris habitat. This was, in the eyes of those involved, the Surrealism of revolutionary leanings, communist sympathies, leftist politics, intellectual aspirations, automatist revelations, creative innovation and moral integrity. Ruth Brandon examines this problematic between Dalí and Breton in America, and posits that "It continually posed the question: who embodied Surrealism?" "For the Surrealists themselves," she writes, "the question answered itself: obviously, Breton. But for the rest of the world (and, especially, America), the answer was equally obvious: Dalí. Who ever heard of André Breton? And who had *not* heard of Salvador Dalí?"¹⁶

As is evident in Breton's writings during his exile in America, the poet was resolved to maintain a *bona fide* Surrealist voice in the U.S. This involved a campaign geared toward distinguishing "true" Surrealism from that spectre defined by "Avida

Dollars,” the now-famous anagram Breton devised during this period to refer to Dalí, distinguished in the footnotes of later editions of his *Anthology of Black Humour* from “the early Dalí, who disappeared in around 1935 to make way for the personality better known as Avida Dollars, fashionable portraitist recently converted to the Catholic faith and to ‘the artistic ideals of the Renaissance.’”¹⁷ As for Breton’s new epithet for him, the artist was, characteristically, to turn it to his advantage by embracing it. It was, Dalí was to claim scathingly, “the only truly brilliant intuition Breton ever had in his life.”¹⁸

Summing up the displaced Surrealist situation *in situ* was a remarkably clear-sighted and deeply acerbic review in the February 1943 issue of *American Mercury* by Klaus Mann, the German writer of the celebrated 1936 novel *Mephisto*. Mann mingled with the avant-garde émigrés in New York, and understood the European political situation, the challenges of immigration and “otherness” in the United States (he was Jewish, German and homosexual) as well as the cultural machinery of America, which he embraced, having lived there on and off for years, and being, in fact, in the process of becoming a U.S. citizen in 1944.¹⁹ Disgusted by what he considers the “fiddling” of the “true” Surrealists while Europe was burning, he names his article “Surrealist Circus,” positions Surrealism as profoundly socially irresponsible, and partially concedes to Hitler’s pronouncements on their art as degenerate. “Not everything defamed by Hitler as ‘cultural Bolshevism’” he writes, “is necessarily culture.”

Surrealism, for instance, is not. Indeed ... Surrealism itself shares the spirit of illogic, negation, vandalism that has found expression politically in Nazism. If the Hitler program, in Hermann Rauschning’s phrase, is a revolution of nihilism, Surrealism is the revolution of nihilism in art.²⁰

Mann is relatively sympathetic to the Spanish painter here, claiming that it is incorrect to assume that Surrealism “is the personal hobby of an ingenious young man named Salvador Dalí.” “Though the talented Catalan may be regarded by the uninitiated as the very embodiment of Surrealism,” Mann explains, “he is in fact not even a genuine Surrealist. We have the word of the high priests of the cult for that.” Mann saves his antipathy for the “high priests,” stating that

The point of the matter is that there is no such thing as Surrealism. There are only Surrealists—a coterie of poets, journalists, painters, sculptors and suckers who stick together, purport to admire one another, and abuse those who don’t belong to their set. The chief and founder of the Surrealist tribe is a French critic and visionary named André Breton. His first lieutenant is Max Ernst, a painter of German birth. If you want to become a Surrealist—which offers certain social and emotional advantages—you need the blessing of these two gentlemen. They may reject you regardless of how ecstatically Surrealist you may be in thought and conduct and artistic output.²¹

As a final blow—and one that would no doubt delight Dalí—Mann tosses the Surrealist movement to the wind as spent, watered down, and hopelessly irrelevant and irreverent considering the period. “The sad fact is that the group around Breton and Ernst has lost much of its lustre of late,” he writes, “maybe it finds more competition in New York than in Paris. Not that the Surrealist circus has lost its appeal altogether—on the contrary, it is still prospering—but it is no longer what it used to be in the old days.”²² According to Mann, Surrealism had become utterly *démodé* in Paris, and was now simply a commercial or stylistic venture among the Park Avenue elite of New York. “Of course,” Mann goads, “some of the more daring gadgets have to be sacrificed—the anti-capitalist and anti-God stuff, for example, is a trifle too hot for Park Avenue palates.”²³

Although Mann somewhat confounds Dalí's commercial trajectory with Breton's more cerebral and "exclusive" variation, as far as Mann was concerned, Bretonian or so-called orthodox Surrealism was simply irresponsible, pandering, hopelessly cliquish and profoundly passé. Nevertheless, in exile, Breton attempted to keep his movement alive among a number of other Surrealists and those affiliated with the group who were living in, or had recently arrived in America, mostly in and around New York.²⁴ Breton organized activities for this set, including games, debates and gatherings, as well as continuing his defamation campaign in the press against dissenters of the movement, the most prominent of whom was naturally Salvador Dalí. While the majority of these documents are beyond the conceptual framework of this dissertation, a sampling of Breton's invective against Dalí and others is offered here, in order to set the scene for the artist's attempts at retaliation, as read through *The Secret Life*.

One of the first things Breton did when he arrived in the U.S. was to plan for a proposed Surrealist journal. Before this materialized, however, the temporary Surrealist vehicle in America was to be an avant-garde arts periodical entitled *View*, issues of which were indexed with the explanatory subtitle, "through the eyes of poets." Launched in 1940, *View* was the creation of the American poet Charles Henri Ford and the novelist Parker Tyler, who often published writing by and about the Surrealists, and 7-8, the October-November 1941 number, overseen by Breton, was exclusively dedicated to Surrealism.

This issue commences with an interview with Breton conducted by Ford, who asks if the poet has read an article by Louis Aragon in the commercial Hollywood paper *The Clipper*, which brings Breton to the notion of what is known in contemporary

parlance as “selling out,” and to further anti-Dalí rhetoric characteristic of much of his writing and interviews of the period. “Nothing will be done,” he claims,

until a truly clinical study is made of this specifically modern malady ... which makes these intellectuals radically change their opinions and renounce in a masochistic and exhibitionist manner their own testimony, becoming champions of a cause quite contrary to that which they began serving with great fanfare.

The next question is “What is the present orientation of Surrealism?,” to which Breton answers,

What is ending is the illusion of independence—I will even say the transcendence—of the work of art. In spite of precautions taken at the beginning of Surrealism, and the reiterated warnings that followed, this deviation has not been completely avoided. It shows itself in *egocentrism* (the poet or artist begins to overestimate his own gifts, scorning the precept of Lautréamont: “Poetry must be made by all, not by one,” which remains one of the fundamental tenets of Surrealism); it brings with it *indifferentism* (he sets himself above the *mêlée*, believes himself entitled to an Olympian attitude) and is generally ratified by *stagnation* (he swiftly exhausts his individual resources, is capable only of sapless variation on the threadbare theme).

In addition to Aragon, Breton cites as offenders Paul Éluard, and, of course, “Avida Dollars, in New York, hunting sensational publicity to illustrate ... the beginning of his ‘classical period.’” “It is clear,” Breton avers, “that neither the one nor the other, even though they persist in advertising it, has anything more in common with Surrealism.”²⁵

Breton’s campaign to discredit Dalí in print reached its zenith just as the Spanish artist was finishing *The Secret Life*, and the year or so after its publication. This included the only extant reference Breton makes to the autobiography; an oblique one in an interview in the inaugural and only issue of *Arson: An Ardent Review*, a British arts

magazine produced by the English-based Surrealist Toni del Renzio. This text is notable for being the first in which Breton publicly described Dalí as “Avida Dollars.” Drawing on innumerable period references to Dalí, he writes:

The rustle of paper money, illuminated by the light of the moon and the setting sun, has led the squeaking patent-leather shoes along the corridors of Palladio into that soft-lit territory of Neo-Romanticism and the Waldorf Astoria. There in the expensive atmosphere of *Town and Country*, that megalomania, so long passed off as a paranoiac intellect, can puff up and hunt its sensational publicity in the blackness of the headlines and the stupidity of the cocktail lounges.”²⁶

Among his other jibes, Breton’s mention of *Town and Country* could point to a number of Dalí’s appearances in the American society magazine, but likely refers to the publication of the promotional excerpt, which appeared in the May 31, 1941 issue, from the as yet unpublished *Secret Life*.²⁷

Dalí’s New Surrealism

While Breton sought to distance himself and the Surrealist movement proper from Dalí via a program of persistent denunciation of the artist in a good number of his published writings, Dalí, on the other hand, seems to have retaliated by minimizing and belittling the Surrealist movement in his narrative, and, for the most part, by simply “disappearing” Breton from the record. Indeed, although Breton and Surrealism loomed large in Dalí’s life in the decade before he wrote his autobiography, the poet is mentioned a scant six times in Dalí’s four-hundred-page autobiography, and even then mostly in passing. These pointed omissions not only signal the power struggle between Dalí and Breton, read in a negative sense through pointed omission and circumlocution, but were

also, as the Spanish artist well knew, serve as a potent gesture, implying that Surrealism's "voice" in America was none other than his own.

Dalí presents his artistic career in *The Secret Life* as completely self-directed, and none but the most bombastic, amusing or notorious of his dealings with any of the Surrealists are dealt with in the text. For example, one of the most well-known episodes regarding Dalí's relationship with the Surrealists had to do with Breton's consternation over the scatological elements in Dalí's painting *The Lugubrious Game* in 1929. This episode is relegated to a mere footnote on page 219. None of the political engagements with the Surrealists are mentioned, in particular the event in which Dalí had to exonerate himself regarding his accused "Hitlerisme," nor his expulsion via the pages of *Minotaure*, although these episodes take up much textual space in later works by Dalí, such as his *Diary of a Genius*. Gibson is disgusted by these exclusions and "betrayals" in what he describes as Dalí's "megalomaniac memoir," and cites a number of the artist's crimes of omission:

... his reverence for Breton in the early 1930s, attested in their correspondence, goes unacknowledged—indeed, Breton is hardly named; we are asked to believe that, within a year of joining the Surrealist ranks, Dalí had rejected automatism, had invented the slogan "the conquest of the irrational" (in fact first formulated in 1935) and had embarked on a covert programme to take control of the movement and redirect its energies; Dalí claims all the credit for creating "the fashion of Surrealist Objects," with no reference to their forerunners or to Breton's explicit instructions for their propagation ...²⁸

While unable to disavow French Surrealism completely due to his inextricable association with the movement in the public eye, Dalí defines himself in his

autobiography as hostile to more or less all of the movements, artistic and political, of the 1920s and '30s, and casually groups Surrealism as one of them, writing that

The whole pre-war and post-war period is characterized by the germination of “isms”: Cubism, Dadaism, Simultaneism, Purism, Vibrationism, Orpheism [sic], Futurism, Surrealism, Communism, National Socialism, among a thousand others. Each has had its leaders, its partisans, its heroes. Each claims the truth, but the sole “truth” which they have demonstrated is that once these “isms” are forgotten (and how quickly they are forgotten!) there remains among their anachronistic ruins only the reality of a few authentic individuals (351).

While writing the Surrealist movement off with the mass of “isms” he cites as ineffective flashes in the pan, when the artist does afford it mention, it is invariably with a healthy dose of disdain, rendering its creative element as misguided and hopelessly spent, and often employing the rhetoric of cancer and disease. While Dalí does little to discuss Surrealist creative endeavours, for the most part he disparages automatist practices, and Surrealist politics. In Chapter Eleven, for example, he notes the “disorganization and the incapacity of the Surrealist group to carry through anything requiring a minimum of practical effort directed to no matter what end” (310). Returning to Paris in 1939, he writes that “upon my arrival in Paris I learned that the Surrealist group had found nothing better to do during my absence than to set up the weariless continuation of ... pure automatism in opposition to my new search for the aesthetic hierarchization of irrational imagination” (378).

While Dalí’s distancing himself from the Surrealist movement in comments such as these are more generally directed, Dalí also tosses some very pointed barbs at Breton in particular. These are so pointed, in fact, that they must be considered as direct rebuttals to Breton’s own campaign to malign Dalí. While the poet’s public denigrations of the

artist were direct and far from subtle, however, Dalí's rebuttals were effected for the most part either through omission, minimization, or caustic humour, all of which were intended to undermine Breton's authority. In Chapter Ten of *The Secret Life*, for example, Dalí explains what he claims had always been his *modus operandi* in terms of the power structure of Surrealism and his "use" of it. Implying a bead drawn at Breton, he admits to his need to supersede those who threatened his primacy and individuality. "The Surrealist group appeared to me the sole one offering me an adequate outlet for my activity," he writes.

Its chief, André Breton, seemed to me irreplaceable in his role of visible chief. I was going to make a bid for power, and for this my influence had to remain occult, opportunistic, and paradoxical. I took definite stock of my positions, of my strongholds, of my inadequacies and of the weaknesses and resources of my friends ... (250-51).

This passage, citing Dalí's "bid for power," is naturally revisionist in light of his by then broken relations with Breton, yet it clearly outlines the artist's need to "exceed his master." As Georges Borgeaud points out, "Throughout Dalí's writings one finds a jealous combativeness toward contemporaries ... André Breton was his favourite target. Their quarrels were fed by their mutual admiration. Neither one wanted to be treated as secondary."²⁹

In a typical passage from *The Secret Life* maligning the Surrealist's political engagements, Dalí asserts that "Political preoccupation almost immediately ruined the activity of the surrealists like a cancer." "From time to time," he writes, he and Gala "received the visit of a small group of intellectual Surrealist friends who all hated one another passionately and who were beginning to be gnawed by the canker of left and

right ideologies” (276). “Preoccupations of a political nature had turned a great number of them toward the left,” Dalí reports of his former colleagues, “and a whole surrealist faction, obeying the slogans of Louis Aragon, a nervous little Robespierre, was rapidly evolving toward a complete acceptance of the communist cultural platform.” The “inner crisis of surrealism” came to a head, Dalí explains, the day when,

upon my suggesting the building of a ‘thinking machine’ [a form of surrealist object], consisting of a rocking chair from which would hang numerous goblets of warm milk, Aragon flared with indignation. ‘Enough of Dalí’s fantasies!’ he exclaimed. ‘Warm milk for the children of the unemployed!’” (338).

As Breton’s engagement was so intimately bound up with his leftist, revolutionary politics, Dalí likewise delights in pointing out that the Surrealist “revolution” was hopelessly ineffective in the light of “real” world politics or the events of either the Spanish Civil War or World War II. This the artist amusingly implies in an episode in Chapter Thirteen, which takes place in Barcelona in 1934, during a pre-Spanish Civil War uprising known as the October Insurrection. Attempting to flee anarchist bombs, Dalí writes of his friend the gallery owner Josep Dalmau, who suddenly appears in the doorway of the Dalís’ lodgings to warn the couple to flee. According to the artist, “His fly was wide open and within it he had placed a number of a review that I had asked him to get for me. On the cover of this review I read a title, *La Révolution Surréaliste*” (355). This publication, *La Révolution Surréaliste*, was a journal produced by André Breton, and Dalí’s mention of it, lodged in such an undignified and comical place on Dalmau’s person is undoubtedly a dig at Surrealist politics, but especially at Breton, indexing the evident impotence of Surrealism in the face of “authentic” revolution.³⁰ Dalí had drawn a

caricature-like image of this episode, featuring a scrawny, pathetic Dalmau standing in a doorway with the said document wedged in his trouser buttons. For some reason, however, most likely because it went too far in making Dalí's acerbic point, the image did not appear in the final version of the book.³¹

While documenting the growing ill-health of the Surrealist movement, which he implies has completely lost sight of its original vision, Dalí finally pronounces it nothing less than dead; a dictum that was a direct affront to Breton and the movement he founded. Dalí stages this verdict not in his own words, however, but via the words of Surrealism's "patron saint" Sigmund Freud, no less, and in conjunction with the psychoanalyst's own physical decline in 1939. Dalí narrates his encounter with the great psychoanalyst in more than one place in his memoir, and most significantly, he relates the following at the close of the text. "The day I went to visit Sigmund Freud in his London exile, on the eve of his death," Dalí writes, "I understood by the lesson of classic tradition of his old age how many things were at last ended in Europe with the imminent end of his life. He said to me, 'In classic paintings, I look for the sub-conscious—in a surrealist painting, for the conscious.'" "This was the pronouncement" Dalí declares, "of a death sentence on surrealism as a doctrine, as a sect, as an 'ism'" (397).

Dalí's creative narration of this declaration, as if Freud himself had announced the death of Surrealism, was certainly written with a healthy dose of *schadenfreude* directed at Breton. The poet had briefly met with Freud in the summer of 1921 in Vienna, but it was apparently a most unsatisfying visit in which the two did nothing but exchange pleasantries.³² Breton did manage to follow their encounter with a brief correspondence, which apparently fizzled out, after which he made numerous further attempts to meet

with Freud, all of which had been unsuccessful. As a consequence, the poet could not have been anything but galled by the fact that it was Dalí, his budding nemesis, who had succeeded so recently in securing an audience with Freud, and who came away with what Dalí made out to be such a pithy response to himself and his work, not to mention his presumed post mortem on the Surrealist movement itself.³³ Dalí's paraphrase of Freud's words, his conflation of Freud's demise and the death of Surrealism, and his flaunting of his meeting with this great man were no doubt intended, to a certain degree, as a provocation directed at the founder of the Surrealist movement who had begun so persistently and publicly to malign the artist.

It was not enough merely to distance himself from the Surrealists, and to ridicule what he depicts as their sloth, fractious and impotent politics and dearth of creativity. Dalí even goes so far as to embrace the epithet of the "Anti-Surrealist." During the writing of *The Secret Life*, an article appeared in the American avant-garde journal *View* in June 1941, written by Greek poet and Surrealist Nicolaos Calamiris, who went by the alias Nicolas Calas. Also in exile in America and in close contact with other displaced Surrealists, including Breton, Calas rails against what he sees as Dalí's turncoat politics, his amorality, and his having demolished his Surrealist credibility.³⁴ Aptly, he entitles the piece "Anti-Surrealist Dalí: I Say his Flies are Ersatz"; an appellation which Dalí characteristically turns to his advantage by embracing. "Just recently ...," the artist writes in a footnote in *The Secret Life*,

I felt that I needed, among other things to have someone write a pamphlet on me bearing a title something like "Anti-Surrealist Dalí." For various reasons I needed this type of "passport," for I am myself too much of a diplomat to be the first to pronounce such a judgment. The article was not

long in appearing (the title was approximately the one I had chosen), and it appeared in a modest but attractive review ... (207 fn.).

Although relegated, as much Surrealist mention is, to a mere footnote in Dalí's memoir, this is a key passage for locating Dalí's new creative direction. The artist's mention of diplomacy is particularly revealing, pointing to his tendency, as with so many things, to appeal to a number of audiences, and to "fence sit" while history unfolded around him and he could opportunistically choose his new directions without burning an untoward number of bridges. Clearly, as Dalí had been so blatantly excluded from Breton's Surrealist camp, the artist was intent on distancing himself from this group, and invariably showing himself superior to it. This is evidently what Dalí means by his being an "Anti-Surrealist," and as follows, Dalí's "jumping ship" via Breton's (undoubtedly provoked) expulsion, in fact proved to be an extremely astute move on his part. As evinced in Mann's article, he was able to distance himself from what was clearly becoming a *démodé* and obsolete liability in the U.S. and Paris, as new "isms," such as Abstract Expressionism, were beginning to dominate the art world.

That said, Dalí well knew that even though he renounced the Surrealist movement, he remained inextricably associated with the term Surrealism in the United States and elsewhere. This continued to yield benefits for the artist, however, and in fact, he was still very much able to benefit from what remained of the movement's chic, and his own particularly eccentric and amusing brand of Surrealism in the U.S. continued to be in tremendous demand. Reconciling this dichotomy, Dalí writes toward the end of the book that "I was going, then, to put myself outside the order of the alphabet of Surrealism, since, whether I wished it or not, "I was Surrealism" (378-79). This last

statement, that Dalí “was” Surrealism, it should be noted, was another dig directed squarely at Breton, founder and self-styled “pope” of the movement, who was to voice the very same phrase at a later date.³⁵

How Dalí was to reconcile his renunciation of Bretonian Surrealism with his own unshakeable epithet of being America’s “No. 1 Surrealist,” was by attempting to do nothing less than “reinvent” Surrealism in America. As such, in *The Secret Life* he proposes a new direction for the energies of his revamped one-man “Dalinian” movement, and one completely at odds with Surrealism’s revolutionary stance and insistence on “psychic automatism.” In the epilogue of *The Secret Life* Dalí declares, paraphrasing a similar, celebrated suggestion by Paul Cézanne, that “it is necessary to try to make of Surrealism something solid, complete and classic as the work of museums.”³⁶ “Yes!” he writes, “I announce its life, I announce the future birth of a Style ...” (397). That Dalí had clearly mapped out his strategy to sideline Breton, usurp Surrealism and transform the movement for his purposes alone, he makes clear early on in the text. “If you decide to wage a war for the total triumph of your individuality, you must begin by inexorably destroying those who have the greatest affinity with you,” he writes. “All alliance depersonalizes; everything that tends to the collective is your death; use the collective, therefore, as an experiment, after which strike hard, and remain alone!” (250-51).

Dalí and the Manifesto

Dalí’s new “Style” is one that he announced in *The Secret Life* and a few other documents he wrote during the first few years of the 1940s, in order to announce his new creative direction. While Dalí is intent on distancing himself from Surrealism, or

transforming Dalinian Surrealism into something “solid, complete and classic,” these texts also reflect a reaction formation not only to Surrealism, but to modernism in general, as Dalí defined it. His proposed new style was what he called “classic,” purportedly a return to Renaissance and academic ideals, although very much grounded in contemporary issues and subject matter, and often bordering on caricature and kitsch. In this sense, aspects of *The Secret Life* can be viewed as a form of manifesto, in which Dalí not only announces, but also defines the parameters of his new aesthetic direction.

Dalí’s strategic use of *The Secret Life* as a rebuttal to his foes, and as a manifesto was not something new for the artist, and a review of his published corpus testifies to the fact that the artist was consistently and intensely conscious of his positioning within the perpetually changing cultural climate throughout his entire career; a career that was spent in the heat of a number of western centres of art, and spanned seven decades of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1920s, Dalí in fact became an avid writer of manifestos, as well as tracts, treatises, lectures, open letters, critical essays, poems and articles that are or resemble manifestos in their declarative, and often exuberant language and emphatic denial or championing of various movements, trends, styles and phenomena. A tremendous boon for the Dalí historian, these documents map the changes in the artist’s ideological and creative progress, as well as illuminating the development of his painting and other forms of creative production.

The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, it will be argued here, is very much part of Dalí’s “declarative” continuum, and the artist’s exuberant championing of academic, representational and Renaissance art, his fervent denial of many aspects of modernist art, architecture and design, and his embrace of kitsch and popular culture are considered as

important conceptual elements of the book in their own right. This is particularly so in terms of how Dalí uses this stance strategically, in order to taunt, as well as distance himself from the avant-garde and the Surrealist group while simultaneously embracing America and its culture. Dalí's proposed "solution" to the modernist "mediocrity," as he defines it, is the focus of the manifesto embedded in the text, as is his stated move to become what he calls "classic," signalling a new painting style which he details in his autobiography.

Dalí's exposure to and presumed appreciation of the manifesto as a communications gesture stems from when Dalí was a young man, where he was in close contact with the Catalan avant-garde, and his time at the Residencia within a circle of radical and experimental artists, writers and thinkers. Decidedly leaning to the political left at this period, and interested as he was in the world of art, politics and intellect, Dalí would have been familiar with Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx's 1848 *The Communist Manifesto*, the original model for the manifesto for the left and the avant-garde in the West throughout the twentieth century, and of profound influence and historical significance for later proclamations, treatises and political statements concerned with aspects of art and culture.³⁷ Closer to home, Dalí would also have had at least a second-hand familiarity with various declarations and tracts put forth by important Spanish intellectuals such as Ramón Gómez de la Serna, alias Tristán, who released his *Futurist Proclamation to the Spaniards* in 1910; with Joaquin Torres-Garcia's *Art-Evolution (In Manifesto Style)* of 1917; or José Ortega y Gasset's *The Point of View in the Arts* of 1924. Most significantly, the young artist would also have been familiar with various artistic manifestos that filtered into Spain primarily from Germany, Italy, Zurich, and naturally

Paris, such as the *Initial Manifesto of Futurism* of 1909 and other Futurist declarations, *The Dada Manifesto* of 1918, Jorge Luis Borges (and others') *Ultraist Manifesto* of 1921, and most significantly, the *First Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924.

While the ideological aspect of the manifesto was no doubt important to Dalí, as the consummate performer and contrarian, the artist would also presumably have been attracted by a format which, in its literal sense, means "to be struck by the hand,"³⁸ and is hewn with the very tools of Dalí's trade: hyperbole and "strategies of excess."³⁹ Most poignantly, especially in terms of the analysis of *The Secret Life* suggested in this thesis, Dalí's *modus operandi* was to influence public opinion, and the manifesto is a construct designed to deliberately manipulate the public point of view. "Setting out the terms of the faith toward which the listening public is to be swayed," writes comparative literature scholar Mary Ann Caws "it is a document of an ideology, crafted to convince and convert."⁴⁰

Being the self-confessed contrarian that he was, Dalí would also have appreciated what Caws describes as the manifesto's "oppositional tone," invariably "constructed of *againstness*."⁴¹ Caws also suggests that, at least in the twentieth century as relates to the avant-garde, the manifesto is a profoundly modernist project, as various clusters of artists and intellectuals sought to redefine the boundaries and ends of art and culture.⁴² While Dalí had initially embraced modernism, by the time he wrote *The Secret Life*, his directive, and indeed, the very basis of the manifesto strand of the memoir was profoundly and vociferously anti-modernist, at least according to his own definition of the term "modernism." This makes what might be called the activist aspect of Dalí's work a contradiction in terms, at least as regards his later work, demonstrating how Dalí

absorbs and employs modernist strategies for his own ends equally as much as he expounds upon the very shortcomings of modernism itself.

Dalí produced a quantity of what might be termed manifestos or “declarative” documents both before and after he wrote *The Secret Life*, all of which were used strategically to promote his own work and define his position in relation to various artistic and intellectual movements and cultural paradigms. These began with his first noteworthy published essay, on the subjects of irony, patience and putrefaction, among others things, which was dedicated to Lorca, and entitled “St. Sebastian” (1927). This piece was followed by various essays and ruminations in the Catalan avant-garde publication *L'Amic de les Arts*, with titles such as “Current Topics: Right and Left” (1927), “Art Film, Antiartistic Film” (1927) and the emphatic ode to the purist modernist aesthetic, “Poetry of the Mass-Produced Utility” (1928). The latter, extolling the virtues of the “aseptic, antiartistic and joyful precision” of things mass produced, and decrying “Horrible decorative art!” segues to the “Manifest groc,” or the “Yellow Manifesto (Catalan Antiartistic Manifesto),” which Dalí wrote in conjunction with two Spanish colleagues Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch in March of 1928. With its exuberant acclaim of the products of modernity, mechanization and “hygiene,” it is clearly modeled on the manifestos of the Futurists, or more specifically, those of the Ultraists, a Spanish movement based on the Futurist model.⁴³

Following this period, and before he was to join the Surrealist movement, Dalí's writing becomes increasingly oriented toward Surrealism, although it still displays a certain ambivalence toward it. This is the case in Dalí's essay in *L'Amic de les arts*, “The New Limits of Painting” (1928) in which he writes, “The assassination of art, what a

beautiful tribute!” “The Surrealists are people who honestly devote themselves to this. My thought is quite far from identifying with theirs, but can you still doubt that only those who risk all for everything in this endeavour will know all the joy of the imminent intelligence?”⁴⁴ This phase culminates with the “Review of Antiartistic Tendencies” (1929) which, through its emphatic emphasis on things “worthy” and still “of use,” implies Dalí’s concession to Surrealism, including his mention of dream objects, hysteria, documentaries, and a French book that “one can still read,” Surrealist poet Benjamin Péret’s *Le Grand jeu*.⁴⁵

Finkelstein believes that Dalí’s fixation with his own positioning within the art world during the later 1920s was symptomatic of his desire to “entrench his position as a critic and theoretician on the forefront of the avant-garde movement in Barcelona.”⁴⁶ Consequently, Dalí’s intellectual interest in art and the cultural systems and developments of the period must be viewed in terms of his active engagement with the vanguard, not exclusively as a creator of art, but as a potential shaper of taste and style; a consciousness and critical viewpoint that carries over to *The Secret Life*. Following this period, in the first three quarters of the 1930s, Dalí’s writings duly and enthusiastically reflect his allegiance with the Surrealists, but also his desire to instate the supremacy of his paranoiac-critical method over that of automatism, which he hoped to supersede. Works that state his position, and therefore function in some form as manifestos of this period, include writings such as “The Moral Position of Surrealism” (1930) in which the artist maintains that “The *Surrealist revolution* is, above all else, a revolution of a moral order” and the “only one in modern occidental thought having a spiritual content.”⁴⁷ Two of Dalí’s best known essays of this time are “The Rotting Donkey,” in which Dalí puts

forth the idea of paranoia as a tool for “systemizing confusion,”⁴⁸ and “The Sanitary Goat,” whereupon Dalí decries sentimentalism and “goodness,” and suggests that such “poetic thought” is a great potential “corrupter of life.”⁴⁹

A particularly notable document useful for situating Dalí in terms of ideology and aesthetics in the mid-1930s is a tract the artist published in Paris in 1935, *The Conquest of the Irrational*. *Conquest* is central to consider as a precursor to the manifesto-like aspects of *The Secret Life*, especially in relation to Dalí’s later turn to Catholicism. In this document Dalí looks at, among other things, contemporary discourses such as the effects of modernity, and the growing phenomena of mass culture and fascism. Cutting through the thicket of Dalí’s prose, the reader will determine that, having long turned away from his lauding of mass production and purist modernism in the *Yellow Manifesto*, here Dalí now suggests that the masses, having been “cretinized” by the modernist project, and having had religion, or more precisely, Catholicism “taken from under their noses,” now seek to appease their “moral,” and “paternal affective” hunger at the breast of any “Hitlerian nursemaid”—i.e., fascism. In “The Conquest of the Irrational,” Dalí maintains that Surrealism has stepped in as a possible alternative, writing that “It is from all this that the colossal nutritive and cultural responsibility of Surrealism is born, a responsibility that is becoming more and more objective, pervasive and exclusivist with each new cataclysm of collective starvations ...”⁵⁰ By the time of his writing *The Secret Life*, however, Dalí has definitively abandoned the directive of Surrealism, and instead suggests *himself* as the “saviour of modern art,” and the herald of the new age of Catholicism, faith, and “monarchic anarchy”; a position through which he would

“appease for some hundred years the spiritual, imaginative, moral and ideological hunger of our epoch” (176).

Of particular relevance are the documents chronicling Dalí’s “classic” and Catholic *volte face* which began in 1939, during and after his expulsion from the Surrealist movement. In these Dalí demonstrates a conscious effort to present himself as “reborn” in a new style and to have embraced a new moral, political and philosophical episteme. Dalí is undoubtedly resolute, once he decides to “corner” the American market and “become classic,” to let everyone know what he is doing and precisely why he is doing it. In order to appreciate fully Dalí’s new creative and ideological shift away from the Surrealist paradigm, and to isolate those elements that maintain Dalí’s tradition of manifesto writing in *The Secret Life*, it is essential to consider two key texts that foreshadow or corroborate aspects of Dalí’s autobiography. The first of these is his *Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness*, a flyer Dalí produced in 1939, and the other, entitled *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí*, which is an artist’s statement written for a catalogue for the exhibition of Dalí’s work at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York in 1941.

These two documents can be considered in terms of Dalí’s “classic” period, both of which, like *The Secret Life*, he wrote in America, in English, for a “mainstream” American market. Presumably in response to this market, Finkelstein notes how Dalí’s writing style changes as well as his direction at this juncture in his career, observing that “The new writings were thus often given to a straightforward and quite simplistic mode of communication.” While this might well be ascribed to the necessity for clarity and simplification required for translation, Finkelstein suggests that this “dumbing down”

was a result of Dalí being “fully cognizant of the fact that his new reading public probably had no knowledge of, or even sympathy for, the finer points of the Surrealist discourse.”⁵¹

In response to the fiasco which resulted from creative interference caused by the sponsors of his Dream of Venus pavilion staged at the New York World’s Fair in 1939, Dalí immediately penned his militant *Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness*. He evidently chose the “declaration” format as a nod to American history. He likely surmised that the American public was less accustomed to the artistic manifesto than the European avant-garde, and he knew that the format was associated with leftist politics, and in particular, *The Communist Manifesto*.⁵² Dalí clearly indicates in this document that his new audience is comprised of “the American masses,” and to drive this point home, according to Julien Levy, he had hundreds of the declarations printed up on green handbills which he ordered to have dropped from an airplane over New York City.⁵³

The Declaration is a particularly revealing document in terms of Dalí’s efforts to carve a niche for himself in the imaginary of New York City. In it, Dalí champions artists’ right to “total expression of their biological reality.” He quotes Breton’s famous definition of Surrealism from the *First Surrealist Manifesto* that describes Surrealism as “Pure psychic automatism, by means of which it is proposed to transcribe, either in writing, or in speech, or in any other manner, the true workings of thought, dictated by thought without any rational, aesthetic or moral control.”⁵⁴ This passage, which was doxa for Dalí before he left the Surrealist movement, later became an instrument for goading Breton after he left, as “proof” of Breton’s divergence from his own dictum, as he

notoriously monitored and expelled Surrealists who did not conform to his strict code of rationale, aesthetics or morality. The quotation's presence here, however, indicates that at this point Dalí still welcomed his association with the Surrealist movement, and it was only after his return to Paris, and his presumed expulsion from the Surrealist ranks in the pages of *Minotaure*, that Dalí very quickly decided to "become classic." Even so, there are many indicators in this document that Dalí was already preparing for change, as he courts public opinion, embraces mass culture, and intimates his program to "take over" America, as he describes he does to Paris in *The Secret Life*, writing "Once there, with the work that I would bring, I would definitely seize power!" (204).

Besides the author's evident presumption of a popular audience, the *Declaration* heralds *The Secret Life* in that it is characteristically grandiose, verbosely embellished, obtuse and seemingly stream-of-consciousness, yet strewn with "clues" to Dalí's intentions. Half way through, for instance, Dalí vilifies the "middlemen of culture" who "systematically rejected, toned down, mauled and chewed" any "authentically original idea." Ingratiating himself with a populist American demographic, he writes that "The public is infinitely superior to the rubbish it is fed daily," and that "The masses have always known where to find true poetry." For the grand finale, Dalí concludes by gushing, "NEW YORK! ... I LOVE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART."⁵⁵ About this document Dalí was to write in later years that it was "my own personal declaration of war against stupidity. I had just given the powers of the irrational their standing in America. A Dalinian victory."⁵⁶

The *Declaration* called to artists to defend their right to creative expression and artistic license, praised the superiority of "the masses" in interpreting his art, and exalted

New York. In contrast, *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí*, a short piece Dalí wrote as the artist's statement for the catalogue for his 1941 show at the Julien Levy Gallery, while still manifestoesque in tone, has a markedly different focus. Written at the same time Dalí was finishing his memoir, *The Last Scandal* is a key document for understanding the declarative aspects of *The Secret Life*, and in many ways can be viewed as a précis of Dalí's stated artistic directive in his autobiography.

The premise of *The Last Scandal* is that it was written by a man named Felipe Jacinto, a friend of Dalí's who, having recently encountered the Catalan, was privy to a declaration of his new direction. Felipe and Jacinto are Dalí's second and third names, and it was an open secret or in-joke that Dalí had penned the work himself.⁵⁷ This narrative conceit, however, provided the author the agency to speak about himself in the third person, an affectation he adopted at this period in his life, and was to use for the rest of it. It was also a comic device, as Dalí is portrayed (by himself) as something of a self-aggrandizing buffoon who makes grandiose pronouncements and does embarrassing things like choke on his Armagnac. Although this self-parodying approach is amusing, it also serves to downplay the heavy-handed didacticism of Dalí's missive.

"Behold my strategic position," the writer "quotes" Dalí as stating, "the left flank of my imagination has just contacted the right flank of my realism, while the reserve of my technique is on the march and has promised to arrive on time." What this cryptic statement means is revealed further on, where the "narrator" explains the following:

... Dalí has found once more the means of remaining alone and totally removing himself from that crowd of followers and imitators which he sees multiplying too rapidly about him, and he does this with a gesture of absolute originality, indeed: during these chaotic times of confusion, of rout and of growing demoralization, when the warmed over vermicelli of

romanticism serves as daily food for the sordid dreams of all the gutter rats of art and literature, Dalí himself, I repeat, finds the unique attitude towards his destiny: TO BECOME CLASSIC! As if he has said to himself: "Now or never."

While these words parallel the epilogue of *The Secret Life*, *The Last Scandal* is written in a patently clearer and more declarative format. "Behold the luck," Dalí continues, "the grace and the miracle that in this year of Spiritual Sterility 1941 there can still exist a being such as Dalí, capable of continuing the conquest of the irrational merely by becoming classic and pursuing that research in *Divina Proportione* interrupted since the Renaissance." Finally, the speaker streams his invective toward modern art, in the sense of its tendencies towards abstraction, geometricism, minimalism and automatism, and extols the virtues of "form," especially in his newfound formulation as a "classic" artist; that is, the producer of meticulously painted, narrative, figurative works, as opposed to those governed by the *informe*, or abstract character of much modernist art. "FORM, FORM, FORM" Dalí writes, as in introduction to one of his famous lists beginning with "SHAPE FIGURE CONFIGURATION CONFORMATION FIGURATION ARRANGEMENT DISPOSITION PROPORTION STRUCTURE DESIGN OUTLINE" and followed by some two hundred further terms that roughly correspond to the meaning of "form."⁵⁸

The Anti-Modernist Manifesto

Using Dalí's *Last Scandal* as a guide to the artistic manifesto that runs through *The Secret Life*, it becomes clear that Dalí has interspersed throughout the memoir his anti-modernist directives and his announcement of his move to "become classic." In a contemporary review of *The Secret Life*, Patterson Greene of *California Arts and*

Architecture magazine notes the doctrinal aspect of *The Secret Life*, writing that “The book sets forth an artistic credo; sets it forth piecemeal, to be sure, but with conviction in the pieces. Put them together and they make sense.”⁵⁹ It will be argued here that Dalí’s “credo” is indeed located throughout *The Secret Life* in “pieces,” and that there are in fact three main sites in which Dalí embeds his manifestoesque pronouncements. The first of these is an ongoing dialogue interspersed throughout the text which denounces the modernist project in many of its manifestations. The second is a list at the beginning of Chapter Eleven, entitled “My Battle,” in which Dalí carefully lays out thirty things that he is “for” and “against.” The third site is at the finale of the book, in which Dalí exuberantly lauds Renaissance art, classical subject matter, embraces rigour and form, and hails the virtues of his new style, wrapped up as it is with his own personal Renaissance, and the Renaissance of Europe.

Dalí commences with the declaration of his artistic direction in *The Secret Life* by stating his “mission” outright. “My parents baptized me with the same name as my brother—Salvador—and I was destined, as my name indicates, for nothing less than to rescue painting from the void of modern art,” Dalí explains, and, more precisely, as the antidote of “this abominable epoch of mechanical and mediocre catastrophes in which we have the distress and the honour to live.” “If I look toward the past beings like Raphael appear to me as true gods;” Dalí expounds, and “I am perhaps the only one today to know why it will henceforth be impossible even remotely to approximate the splendours of Raphaelesque forms (4).

Not only “Raphaelesque” forms, but form in general, is once again the key word in this declarative register of the memoir. As in his *Last Scandal*, “form!” is Dalí’s battle

cry in *The Secret Life*, where Dalí pits this concept against a modernism which, as he defines it, is profoundly amorphous, or *informe*. As discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation, the idea of form signifies for Dalí in many ways in his autobiography: in relation to his personal “call to order”; his turning away from the “decadence” of the avant-garde and the political left; and his sublimation of the wayward and “loose” aspects of his former life by rigour, tradition, hard work, marital fidelity, hierarchy and religion. Dalí’s repeated insistence upon the concept of form in his autobiography naturally implies the absence of its opposite, or “other,” the formless, and this dialectic is one which Dalí is careful to set up from the very beginning of *The Secret Life*.

The concept of formlessness, or the *informe*, is crucial for understanding the anti-modernist directive of Dalí’s autobiography, although the artist’s original use of the French word *informe* has been translated in the memoir by Chevalier as “amorphous” and therefore does not carry with it the collective associations held by the Surrealists in the English translation.⁶⁰ Much current critical debate addresses this particular conception of the *informe* today, particularly in the writings of Rosalind Krauss and Yves-Alain Bois, whose own work stems from issues of the *informe* as associated with a passage written by Surrealism’s self-styled “enemy from within,” Georges Bataille, as proposed in a short entry in a parodic list of references entitled the “Critical Dictionary” that appeared in Bataille’s periodical *DOCUMENTS* in 1929. In it Bataille explains that a dictionary begins “when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks.” Thus, the *informe*,

is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing has its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself

squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only formless amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit.⁶¹

Dalí was well aware of this particular gloss on the concept of the *informe* and various critical discourses with which it was engaged, even having highlighted the word in an article entitled “Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques” which he wrote in the May 1932 edition of *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution*.⁶² By the 1940s, however, Dalí had ascribed a highly subjective meaning to the *informe*, as it related to artistic practice and aesthetics. With his newfound emphasis on “BECOMING CLASSIC,” for Dalí the *informe* had come to index automatist art practices, and especially abstraction, including all the modernist tendencies he abhorred: mechanization, streamlining, geometrics, purism, primitivism and minimalism. In this sense, the tension between form and *informe* was that between mimetic, academic, figurative art and the modernist inclination toward simplification or the distortion of form.

With his emphasis on form, Dalí is participating in a larger discourse that began in the early part of the century, where the issue of form and its representation was one of the primary problematics of theoretical debates about aesthetics. As Dawn Ades suggests, “‘Form’ ... was a term that had by the 1920s become closely associated with the language of abstraction, constructivism and non-objective art.” “Nonetheless,” she explains,

it was still a word that could happily mutate between the principle of pure geometries (circle, square, sphere, cube and so on) and models of natural growth and structure. Within the many discussions about abstraction and figuration, it was non-aligned, and so particularly serviceable for those who refused the imitative representation of man, beast and apples but

abjured abstract or non-objective art of the highly theoretical and rational kind ...”

According to Ades, Bataille’s conception of the *informe* is “in part set against this background of debates about form and meaning in modern art.” “Formless,” for Bataille, then, “is not just an adjective with a particular meaning but a word with a job to do, and this job is to ‘declassify,’ to suborn identity.” Ades views this as “a parody of academic philosophical method” but also “with an eye to the apparent formlessness of, for example, automatism he gives very specific ‘concrete’ examples: spider (twice), worm and spit.”⁶³

Although Dalí appropriates this debate for his own ends, wherein form comes to signify figuration, and *informe* to signify automatism and abstraction, like Bataille, Dalí also gives specific examples of the *informe*. Once Dalí has established the primacy of form in the epilogue of *The Secret Life*, as discussed at the beginning of this thesis, he commences the book, at the opening of Chapter One, by employing an extended metaphor with which he sets up the polemic that defines the “movement” of the manifesto embedded in the text: the tension between form and *informe*. Dalí achieves this by using food as a metaphor: pitting hard-shelled crustaceans, who represent form, against food that he suggests is *informe* in character, in this case, spinach. “I like to eat only things with well-defined shapes that the intelligence can grasp,” Dalí writes. “I detest spinach because of its utterly amorphous character, so much so that I am firmly convinced, and do not hesitate for a moment to maintain, that the only good, noble and edible thing to be found in that sordid nourishment is the sand” (9). Having established that the *informe*, or abstract, is detestable, he then moves to discuss crustaceans: creatures

which he is famous for using in his visual production, in the form of the lobster. “The very opposite of spinach is armour,” Dalí maintains, metaphorically referring to the defined boundaries of form.

That is why I like to eat armour so much, and especially the small varieties, namely, all shell-fish. By virtue of their armour, which is what their exoskeleton actually is, these are a material realization of the highly original and intelligent idea of wearing one’s bones outside rather than inside, as is the usual practice ... the crustacean is thus able, with the weapons of its anatomy, to protect the soft and nutritive delirium of its insides, sheltered against all profanation, enclosed as in a tight and solemn vessel which leaves it vulnerable only to the highest form of imperial conquest in the noble war of decortication: that of the palate.

“Having overcome the obstacle by virtue of which all self-respecting food preserves its form,” Dalí writes, “nothing can be regarded as too slimy, gelatinous, quivering, indeterminate or ignominious to be desired ...” (10). “Thus,” Dalí exclaims, “I know exactly, ferociously, what I want to eat!” and thus Dalí announces his championing of crustaceans over spinach, or form over *informe*, figuration and academic technique over abstraction, non-objective art and automatism. Dalí then shifts his argument to that of cultural consumption, writing, “I am all the more astonished to observe habitually around me creatures who will eat anything, with that sacrilegious lack of conviction that goes with the accomplishment of strict necessity” (10). In other words, Dalí posits his disgust not only at the avant-garde, but at the people who “buy in” to or accept as unchallenged the idea of the *informe* in contemporary art. Consequently, in a large part of the remainder of the book, the artist is intent on convincing this public exactly why “form” is infinitely superior to the *informe*, and thereby legitimizing Dalí’s own talents as

a representational artist, and pitting him in direct contrast to then-current vanguard trends toward non-objective art and the simplification of form.

Throughout his memoir Dalí chronicles, quite faithfully when compared to his extant work, his own progression through the various types of “form” in the guise of modernist painterly styles of the twentieth century, until he reaches Surrealism. As his early corpus demonstrates, Dalí very clearly made the transition through Impressionist, Pointillist, Cubist, Purist, Futurist, New Objectivity, and Arp-like phases, and the influence of Picasso’s classicizing post-Cubist work of the 1920s is evident as well. Nevertheless, the artist maintains that he soon recognized the creative and metaphysical poverty of these experimental movements and that in art school he longed not for the right to “self-expression,” as was the prevailing pedagogical paradigm, but to discover the techniques of the old masters. At the School of Fine Arts in Madrid, Dalí alleges having scorned his teachers, writing “Professor of painting—professor! Fool that you were. How much time, how many revolutions, how many wars would be needed to bring people back to the supreme reactionary truth that ‘rigor’ is the prime condition of every hierarchy, and that constraint is the very mould of form” (161).

Dalí constructs an image of himself as a natural-born old master, who viewed his peers as hopeless dupes being hoodwinked into accepting as doctrine something patently spurious. “The students considered me a reactionary, an enemy of progress and of liberty,” Dalí claims, because of his aversion to modernist painting, defined here in the language of Impressionism privileged in Madrid at the time. “They called themselves revolutionaries and innovators,” writes Dalí,

because all of a sudden they were allowed to paint as they pleased ... But this revolution of impressionism was one which I had thoroughly gone through at the age of twelve ... A single glance at a small Renoir which I had seen in Barcelona would have been ample for me to understand all this in a second. They would mark time in their dirty, ill digested rainbows for years and years. My God, how stupid people can be! (161).

In a footnote Dalí elucidates this view that tradition is profoundly more “revolutionary” than innovation. While incorporating the conventions of his master Perugino, Dalí explains, Raphael learned the skills of “drawing, chiaroscuro, matter, myth, subject, composition, architecture.” Consequently, because of his freedom within the limits of his tradition, Raphael was his own “lord and master.” According to Dalí, “He could work within such narrow limits that he could give his whole mind to doing it.” Thus he was the diametric opposite of Picasso, who was “as great as Raphael, but damned. Damned and condemned to eternal plagiarism ...” Dalí claims that “having fought, broken and smashed tradition,” Picasso’s work “has the dazzle of lightning and the anger of the slave. Like a slave he is chained hand and foot by the chains of his own inventions.” And because Picasso had reinvented everything, he was “tyrannized” by everything. Dalí’s final pronouncement in favour of the great traditions of painting decries, with all the force boldface can muster, “THE POVERTY OF REVOLUTION. Nothing is truer: The more one tries to revolutionize, the more one does the same thing” (171).

In retrospect, Dalí claims that his collaborative work with Buñuel, the seminal avant-garde film *Un Chien andalou* which made him visible to, and desirable as a member of the Surrealists, was very much against the grain of the modernist sensibility as he defined it; that is, in terms of geometric formalism, purist and functionalist tendencies,

automatism, expressionism, and abstraction. According to Dalí, “Our film ruined in a single evening ten years of pseudo-intellectual post-war advance-gardism ... That foul thing which is figuratively called abstract art fell at our feet, wounded to the death, never to rise again ...” Most notably, Dalí sniffs, “There was no longer room in Europe for the little maniacal lozenges of Monsieur Mondrian” (212).

By the time Dalí had embraced Surrealism, and absorbed the styles of de Chirico, Magritte, Ernst, and most notably Tanguy (none of whom he acknowledges as influences in *The Secret Life*) some time around 1930, he writes that he returned to Paris. While the artists listed were highly acclaimed, as was Dalí in avant-garde circles at that time, Dalí revises his history of that early period to position himself as a great herald of tradition, and therefore thoroughly unacceptable to the Parisian vanguard from the beginning of his tenure there. The artist claims he was greeted in Paris with great hostility to his meticulously painted work, and that “What could be called Modern Art, even in surrealist circles, had risen to arms, alarmed by the demoralizing and destructive power which I came to represent.” Dalí’s art, the artist claims, was “violent and audacious” and “subversive” in that it was “not ‘young’ modern art.” Indeed, it was “exactly the contrary of that of the snotty apologists of youth, of dynamism, of the instincts of spontaneity and of laziness, incarnated in the degrading residues of poetic cubism and of the more or less pure plastic art that ravaged the nauseating and sterile terraces of Montparnasse” (287).⁶⁴

While Dalí unmistakably avers that he viewed modernist tendencies, for the most part, as a result of laziness, “freemasonry” (290) and elitism, in *The Secret Life* he documents how he was even more appalled by the fascination with and influence upon the Paris art world of Primitivism, a stance that does little to dispel André Breton’s claims

of Dalí's racism. He explains how "an influence blown over from Africa swept over the Parisian mind with a savage-intellectual frenzy that was enough to make one weep." He is incredulous that "People adored the lamentable instinctive products of real savages!" "When I reflected that the heirs of the intelligence of a Raphael Sanzio had fallen into such an aberration," Dalí declares, "I blushed with shame and rage." As a result, he claims that he had to find the "antidote," the "banner with which to challenge these blind and immediate products of fear, of absence of intelligence and of spiritual enslavement; and against the African 'savage objects.'"

The initial result, Dalí reveals, was to respond by extolling the virtues of Symbolist artists such as Arnold Böcklin, Gustave Moreau, the eccentric Spanish architect Antoni Gaudí and the Style Moderne, that is, Art Nouveau, which was laughably *démodé* in the early 1930s (287). One of the lasting manifestations of this campaign was Dalí's famous 1933 essay written for *Minotaure* entitled "Concerning the Terrible and Edible Beauty of Art Nouveau Architecture," essentially a manifesto in which Dalí champions a nourishing, "organic" and refined design based on the forms of nature as opposed to the rough products of "real savages" and the mechanical "monstrosities" resulting from modernist imperatives. He concludes this treatise with a play on Breton's concept of "convulsive beauty," that "Beauty will be edible or will cease to be," implying that worthy art was "consumable," organic, and visually appetizing.⁶⁵

Dalí's claim that he had always reviled modernism, as he defines it, is something that is consistent with his writings from earlier periods, and as Ades suggests, "already in the early years of his affiliation with Surrealism Dalí had dismissed 'modern art' as detestable 'bullshit.'"⁶⁶ Certainly this is true of much of Dalí's direction after the period

of the *Yellow Manifesto*, which exuberantly lauds the machine age and, somewhat later, when it came to design and architecture. Nonetheless, judging from photos of Dalí and Gala proudly showing off their ultra-modern apartment in Paris, and from the streamlined, white enamel-painted Le Corbusier-style interior with which they chose to outfit their first tiny room in their home in Port Lligat, the couple was clearly, at least in the early 1930s, besotted with the purist functionalist aesthetic in design and architecture.

Nevertheless, in order to convince his reader of his convictions, in *The Secret Life* Dalí now claims that this was mere expedience, and contrary to his “true” nature. “On our return to Paris we moved from 7 rue Becquerel to 7 Rue Guaguet,” Dalí explains of his life with Gala in the early 1930s. “This was a modern functionalist building. I considered this kind of architecture to be auto-punitive architecture, the architecture of poor people—and we were poor.” “So,” Dalí alleges, “not being able to have Louis XIV bureaus, we decided to live with immense windows and chromium tables with a lot of glass and mirrors” (324), a chic option that was hardly available to “poor people” then any more than it is now. The modernist project was one that had many facets and which literally developed and transformed before Dalí’s eyes as he lived to witness its many mutations and strands in Paris and New York in the 1920s, ‘30s and ‘40s. Nevertheless, Dalí is intent on presenting himself, by the time of writing *The Secret Life*, as consistently, lifelong and naturally anti-modern and a long-time champion of academic and traditional art, without admitting to any exceptions.

As his life narrative progresses, Dalí increasingly expounds upon his disgust for the “isms” of the avant-garde, the art system, and the current modernist aesthetic as he defined it, evidently in terms of abstraction, functionalism, purist aesthetics, geometrics

and a mechanistic sensibility. In one of the many notable anti-modernist diatribes in his autobiography, Dalí writes that “The whole modern effort that had been accomplished during the Post-War period was false, and would have to be destroyed. Inescapably there must be a return to tradition in painting and in everything. Otherwise spiritual activity would quickly become nothingness.” According to Dalí,

No one knew how to draw any more, or how to paint, or how to write. Everything was on the same level, everything was becoming uniform as it became internationalized. The formless and the ugly became the supreme goddesses of laziness. The empty and pseudo-philosophic gossip of café tables was increasingly encroaching upon honest work in the studio and workshop. And the goddesses of inspiration, instead of continuing to occupy their Parnassus imagined and painted by Raphael and Poussin, were expected to come down into the street and ply the sidewalk trade and give themselves over to the libertinism of all the more or less popular assemblages. Artists fraternized with bureaucrats, spoke the language of the most vulgarly opportunistic demagogues, and impudently joined in the ambitions and frenzies of bourgeoisification of the masses who, bursting with scepticism and mechanical progress, waxed fat in the nauseating well-being of a life without rigor, without form, without tragedy and without soul! All this was hostile to me, and I did not cease to work like a dog! (285).

The above passage, and Dalí’s anti-modernist stance in his memoir in general, is one that was to define much of Dalí’s future directives in the art world. This is made clear in two of Dalí’s later and more blatantly manifestoesque documents that ever more clearly and vociferously state his steadfast “crusade” against modernism as he defines it. The first of these is the technical handbook, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship* of 1948, in which the artist writes in the dedication that “I want to paint a masterpiece and to save Modern Art from chaos and laziness. I will succeed! This book is consecrated to this crusade and I dedicate it to all the young, who have faith in true painting.”⁶⁷ The second is his *Dalí on Modern Art* poignantly subtitled *The Cuckolds of Antiquated Modern Art*,

originally published in French in 1956. “[A]fter all,” Dalí writes, “what is more cuckolded, more betrayed, more afflicted with cracks than this modern art with this mania for the sterilized cleanliness of functional forms and aseptic surfaces ...”⁶⁸ While neither of these texts were officially deemed manifestos, Dalí was to produce three that were in his later career: the first two again announcing new ideological and creative directions, and the last an iteration of his most often stated dicta. These were his *Mystical Manifesto* of 1951, his *Anti-Matter Manifesto* of 1959, and a short tract entitled *My Cultural Revolution*, dated May 18 1968, which Dalí opportunistically had printed up to be distributed to the faculties in Paris during the French students’ rebellion of that month.⁶⁹

Dalí’s Battle

While the cited aspects of *The Secret Life* can be viewed as disparate elements of an anti-modern “manifesto” interspersed throughout the text, Dalí has also embedded a very specific, and very definite manifesto or declaration at the beginning of Chapter Eleven. By way of introducing his “solution” to the modernist “catastrophe,” Dalí puts forth a clear list of thirty theses under the title “My Battle,” with its pointed reference to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* lending it a forceful tone and drawing on an earlier discussion entitled “My Pictorial Struggle” included in his essay “Conquest of the Irrational.” This list is transcribed here in full, as an index of Dalí’s positioning at the time he recounted his life narrative:

MY BATTLE

Against Simplicity
Against Uniformity

For Complexity
For Diversification

Against Equalitarianism	For Hierarchization
Against the Collective	For the Individual
Against Politics	For Metaphysics
Against Music	For Architecture
Against Nature	For Aesthetics
Against Progress	For Perenniality
Against Mechanism	For the Dream
Against Abstraction	For the Concrete
Against Youth	For Maturity
Against Opportunism	For Machiavellian Fanaticism
Against Spinach	For Snails
Against the Cinema	For the Theatre
Against Buddha	For the Marquis de Sade
Against the Orient	For the Occident
Against the Sun	For the Moon
Against Revolution	For Tradition
Against Michelangelo	For Raphael
Against Rembrandt	For Vermeer
Against Savage Objects	For Ultra-Civilized 1900 Objects
Against African-Modern Art	For the Art of the Renaissance
Against Philosophy	For Religion
Against Medicine	For Magic
Against Mountains	For the Coast Line
Against Phantoms	For Spectres
Against Women	For Gala
Against Men	For Myself
Against Time	For Soft Watches
Against Scepticism	For Faith (286)

While this list starkly adumbrates Dalí's aesthetic, moral, and metaphysical position at the time of writing *The Secret Life*, here Dalí's polemics are also clearly at work, in that his choices of working style and artistic direction are often made simply according to the fact of their being the exact opposite of prevailing taste. This "dialectic" approach, where Dalí states a "certitude" and then pits himself in direct opposition to it, is as typical of his contrarian stance as it is an effective strategy for stating his position. "Polemics gave an increasingly sharp form to my ideas," Dalí informs his reader. "Never has it served to modify my ideas, but on the contrary to strengthen them" (185). And

Dalí's current position, he explains in *The Secret Life*, was for the most part determined simply by his insistence upon standing in opposition to prevailing attitudes, for the sake of making himself different, and therefore, presumably, exceptional. Dalí describes the development of this posture in Chapter Six of his autobiography. "In my childhood," he writes,

I always did things "differently from others," but almost without being aware of it. Now, having finally understood the exceptional and phenomenal side of my pattern of behavior I "did it on purpose." It was only necessary for someone to say "black" to make me counter "white!" It was only necessary for someone to bow with respect to make me spit. My continual and ferocious need to feel myself "different" made me weep with rage if some coincidence should bring me even fortuitously into the same category as others. Before all and at whatever cost: myself—myself alone! Myself alone! Myself alone! (116).

While Dalí is insistent upon making his new directives known, and his position, at that moment, clear to the American public as well as to the avant-garde and the Surrealists, Dalí's dialectical approach requires the reader to negotiate the artist's work in diverse ways. Early twentieth-century Spanish writer Rafael Benet suggested that very early in Dalí's career the artist had learned to play two apparently opposing cards: the "traditional card" alongside the "card of audacity."⁷⁰ While Dalí is intent on promoting the idea of a return to academicism, emphasizing the primacy of technique and tradition, he is also very much "pushing the envelope" of what was considered acceptable for vanguard artists, or any serious artist at the time: flirting with commercialism, consciously attempting to appeal to the masses, and worst of all, suggesting the aesthetic and cultural value of academic, narrative, representational art. Greene puts into words the seeming paradox of Dalí's mid-career, mid-century creative production, writing that

“Dalí is, by his own avowal, a traditionalist, not a revolutionist. He would neither revert to the past, as a reactionary, nor break with it, as a revolutionist. Thus he becomes a revolutionist against revolution—against the doctrine that the artist should throw away the past and start from scratch.”⁷¹

The “Classic” Solution

As his “My Battle” list suggests, Dalí was not simply “against” modernism and other things he found offensive, but was equally intent on suggesting a “remedy” to assuage or reverse what he describes as the “abominable epoch of mechanical and mediocre catastrophes” (4). In the third site of *The Secret Life* where Dalí’s artistic statement of his directives can be located, Dalí posits his new “classic” direction, and claims that he had always been firmly rooted in tradition, and announcing outright that “My crusade was for the defence of the Greco-Roman civilization” (287). Testing the waters during his Surrealist period, Dalí recounts that “At the height of the frenzy over surrealist objects I painted a few apparently very normal paintings, inspired by the congealed and minute enigma of certain snapshots, to which I added a Dalinian touch of Meissonier.” In response to this style, Dalí writes, “I felt the public, which was beginning to grow weary of the continuous cult of strangeness, instantly nibble at the bait. Within myself I said, addressing the public, ‘I’ll give it to you, I’ll give you reality and classicism. Wait, wait a little, don’t be afraid’” (314).

As discussed in Chapter Twelve of *The Secret Life*, Dalí claims to have experienced a deep personal crisis toward the end of the 1930s, resulting in his assessment that “My surrealist glory was worthless.” In response, Gala helps him to arrive at the conclusion that he “must incorporate surrealism in tradition. My imagination

must become classic again.” That Dalí writes “again” here is questionable, as there was never a time, judging from his extant paintings and writings, that his work ever was “classic,” “academic” or “traditional” in any notable or consistent way. Nevertheless, he continues that “I had before me a work to accomplish for which the rest of my life would not suffice ... I had now to begin to fight for a thing that was ‘important.’ This important thing was to render the experience of my life ‘classic,’ to endow it with a form, a cosmogony, a synthesis, an architecture of eternity” (350).

“Gala demonstrated to me by a thousand inspired arguments, burning with faith, that I could become something other than ‘the most famous surrealist’ that I was,” Dalí writes, signalling his higher ambitions. After Lorca’s death, he explains, and the repercussions of the civil war in Spain which had “created a suffocating atmosphere of partisanship in the heart of Paris,” Dalí decided to visit Italy and to “dedicate the whole energy of my thinking to my work of aesthetic cosmogony and syntheses which Gala had ‘inspired’ in me at the time of my mortal anguish in Port Lligat.” Wandering through Rome with a copy of Stendhal in hand, Dalí decries the “mediocrity of the conception of ‘modern Rome’” which had destroyed its “divine myth.” For Dalí, it was not the classical past of Rome that had been debased, but its Catholic majesty: “The splendors of Rome are not the peeled bones of the old columns of Caesar,” he writes, “but the teeming and triumphant flesh of the spirit with which Catholicism had ended by covering the barbarian carcasses of architecture of territorial victories” (362).

While the exuberant, declarative and rallying language Dalí employs in the last few pages of *The Secret Life* certainly implies their intent as a sort of personal declaration or manifesto, unlike Dalí’s defined anti-modernist stance or My Battle list, this aspect of

the work is perhaps the least convincing in terms of concrete directives. In fact, it seems the artist had decided to “become classic” before he knew precisely what it meant in terms of his own artistic practice. Evidently Dalí knew that he intended a return to order and tradition as he states in a caption for one of the photographic inserts, “IX. Dalinian Eccentricities Not to be Further Imitated,” in which Dalí writes “Beginning in 1940, Dalí came to consider the eccentric period as closed, and thought it time for the world to enter upon an era of fasting and austerity” (adj. 262). This summarizes Dalí’s move away from the *informe* of the eccentric and experimental, toward the discipline and “austerity” of form. This sentiment is repeated in Chapter Thirteen of *The Secret Life*, aptly subtitled “Metamorphosis, Death, Resurrection,” where Dalí attempts, rather unconvincingly, to explain that

to be classic meant that there must be so much of “everything,” and of everything so perfectly in place and hierarchically organized, that the infinite parts of the work would all be the less visible. Classicism thus meant integration, synthesis, cosmogony, faith, instead of fragmentation, experimentation, scepticism (354).

Dalí’s most fervent declaration of this proposed move away from Surrealism and modernist imperatives is once again summarized in the book just after the artist has pronounced, via the words of Sigmund Freud, the death of the Surrealist movement. Despite his ardour, however, this statement is once again general and abstract, and does not give the reader any sense of the actual “Style” Dalí claims to be founding. Employing a Freudian term, Dalí suggests that the experimental ways of the “eccentric period” of modern art must be sublimated in order to bear new and superior fruit. “Enough of denying,” he writes, “one must affirm.” “Enough of trying to cure; one must

sublimate!” Finally, in one exuberant passage, Dalí leaves the reader with a presumed map of his new aesthetic direction:

Enough of disintegration; one must integrate, integrate, integrate. Instead of automatism, style; instead of nihilism, technique; instead of scepticism, faith; instead of promiscuity, rigor; instead of collectivism and uniformization – individualism, differentiation, and hierarchization; instead of experimentation, tradition. Instead of Reaction or Revolution, Renaissance! (398).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the contentious relationship between Salvador Dalí and André Breton in exile in America, parsing the “paper trail” in which the two engaged in a power struggle concerning the agency and “ownership” of Surrealism at that time. How this intercourse was mapped upon Dalí’s autobiography, and the complex textual and conceptual negotiations Dalí undertook in order to establish his new position in the art world were also considered, particularly in light of Dalí’s use of *The Secret Life* as a form of manifesto: that is, as a strategic document in which the artist declares his official position in the cultural milieu, wherein he proposes to “incorporate Surrealism in tradition,” and wherein he champions his new “Style”: a representational approach drawing upon academic and Renaissance art which he calls “classic.”

While Dalí lauded tradition and technique on the one hand, he was also deeply invested in the commercial side of art, and especially in the cultural politics of taste and what has come to be known as the “high-low divide,” thereby pinpointing the tensions among popular culture, academic art, and certain vanguard imperatives of the epoch. How Dalí navigates these problematics is considered in the following chapter, which queries his interest and investment in taste and popular art forms in *The Secret Life*. The

means by which Dalí uses the “spectre” of kitsch to confront the modernist project’s so-called autonomous directives, as well his positioning himself as an artist for a mass American public will also be considered, particularly as rendered manifest in the suite of drawings Dalí produced to illustrate the book.

¹ Steven Harris, “Beware of Domestic Objects: Vocation and Equivocation in 1936,” *Art History*, vol. 24, no. 5 (November 2001), 742.

² Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, 11.

³ André Breton, *Conversations: An Autobiography of Surrealism*, trans. Mark Polizzotti (New York: Paragon House, 1993), 124.

⁴ André Breton, “Stériliser Dalí,” preface to Dalí exhibition at Galerie Goemans, Paris, 1929, as quoted in *Salvador Dalí, Retrospective: 1920-1980*, ed. Daniel Abadie (Paris: Centre Pompidou, Musée National d’Art Moderne, 1980), 124-5, as quoted in translation in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 289.

⁵ Ades, *Dalí*, 108; Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 426; Etherington-Smith, 168-172; Polizzotti, 392-93; Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 111-114.

⁶ André Breton, “Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste,” *Minotaure* (Paris), May 12, 1939, 17, quoted in Lubar, “Modern Art and Mass Culture in America,” 243.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17, quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 443.

⁸ Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 20.

⁹ Given the dynamics of Dalí’s expulsion from the Surrealist movement, there has been remarkable critical silence regarding Dalí’s attitude toward what Breton calls “the dark races,” and in particular *à propos* some of Dalí’s canvasses executed during his “classic,” American period, in which he attempted to tackle contemporary problems and “universal” themes. Three works of this time juxtapose white-skinned figures with images of the continent of Africa melting or shedding tears. Most notable among these is Dalí’s *Poetry of America—The Cosmic Athletes*, painted in 1943, which, although remarkably few commentators have pointed out its obvious racial theme, starkly juxtaposes Caucasian athletes with a physically battered and disabled African American, behind whom a golden African continent withers. While exegetical approaches to this work will naturally differ, it is difficult to read this profoundly narrative piece as other than an allegory of black-white relations in the United States, and a show of sympathy to those of African descent in America.

¹⁰ Letter from André Breton to Wolfgang Paalen, November 23, 1939, courtesy of Gordon Onslow Ford, quoted in Amy Winter, *Wolfgang Paalen: Artist and Theorist of the Avant-Garde* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), 138.

¹¹ Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 32.

¹² According to Polizzotti, Breton justified his unwillingness to learn English so as not to “‘tarnish’ his celebrated command of French,” although the gesture was widely read as one of arrogance, or to avoid embarrassing himself with a poor grasp and pronunciation of the English language (Polizzotti, 503).

¹³ Eggener, 34.

¹⁴ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 68.

¹⁵ André Breton, interview with Charles-Henri Ford, *View* magazine, no. 7-8, Surrealist Number (October–November 1941), in André Breton, *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, ed., Franklin Rosemont (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 199-206.

¹⁶ Ruth Brandon, *Surreal Lives: The Surrealists 1917-1945* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 411.

¹⁷ Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour*, 323.

¹⁸ Polizzotti, 471.

¹⁹ See Peter T. Hoffer, *Klaus Mann* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978).

²⁰ Mann, 174.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 175.

²³ Ibid., 178.

²⁴ This roster included, among others, Luis Buñuel, Nicolas Calas, Leonora Carrington, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Stanley William Hayter, André Masson, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, Wolfgang Paalen, Kurt Seligmann and Yves Tanguy. It also included the influential support of American art world insiders, A. Everett "Chick" Austin, the charismatic curator of the Wadsworth Athenaeum, Alfred Barr and James Thrall Soby, the respective director and associate curator of the Museum of Modern art, and gallery owners and patrons Julien Levy and Peggy Guggenheim, all of whom provided or procured venues, art-world connections, publicity, cachet and funding.

²⁵ Breton, *What is Surrealism?*, 202-03.

²⁶ Interview with André Breton, in *Arson: An Ardent Review*, no. 1, 1942. n.p., as quoted in Meredith Etherington-Smith, 280. For Dalí's belated rebuttal, see the first page of his *Diary of a Genius*, the entry for May 1952, 19.

²⁷ Salvador Dalí, excerpts from *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, Town and Country*, May 31, 1941, 94-98.

²⁸ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 462.

²⁹ Georges Borgeaud, "Salvador Dalí, Writer," in *Homage to Salvador Dalí. XXe Siècle Review*, special issue (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 56.

³⁰ *La Révolution Surréaliste* was published in Paris between 1924, and 1929. As the October Insurrection took place in 1934, it is much more likely Dalmau would have been asked to pick up a copy of Breton's more recent journal, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which was published between 1930 and 1933.

³¹ Salvador Dalí, "Dalmau: 'La Revolution [sic] Surréaliste.'" Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (not used). Ink on paper, c. 1941 (not used). Present whereabouts unknown. See reproduction in Kropf and Morse, p. 40.

³² Brandon, 162

³³ Ibid., 413-414.

³⁴ Nicolas Calas, "Anti-Surrealist Dalí: I Say his Flies are Ersatz," *View* (New York), vol. 1, no. 6 (June 1941): 1.

³⁵ See Polizzotti, notably chapter nineteen, "I Am Surrealism!", 572.

³⁶ Dalí is referring to Cézanne's stated desire to make of Impressionism "something solid and durable like the art of the Museums," as quoted in Bryson Burroughs, "Nineteenth-Century French Painting," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 13, no. 8 (Aug., 1918): 181.

³⁷ Mary Ann Caws, ed. *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xix.

³⁸ Patricia Cormack, *Manifestos and Declarations of the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1998), 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Caws, xix.

⁴¹ Ibid., xxiii.

⁴² Caws writes that "High on its own presence, the manifesto is Modernist rather than ironically Postmodernist. It takes itself and its own spoof seriously" (xxi).

⁴³ Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 43.

⁴⁴ Salvador Dalí, "The New Limits of Painting," *L'Amic de les Arts* (Sitges) vol. 3, no. 25 (May 31, 1928): 195-6, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 92.

⁴⁵ Dalí, Salvador, "Review of Antiartistic Tendencies," *L'Amic de les Arts* (Sitges) vol. 4, no. 31 (March 31, 1929): 10, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 103-5.

⁴⁶ Haim Finkelstein, "Surrealist Rhetoric and Early Theory of Surreality," in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 71.

⁴⁷ Dalí, Salvador, "The Moral Position of Surrealism," *Helix* (Barcelona), no. 10 (March 22, 1930): 4-6, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 222.

⁴⁸ Salvador Dalí, "The Rotting Donkey," in *La Femme Visible* (Paris: Editions surréalistes, 1930), 11-20, and *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (Paris) no. 1 (July, 1930): 9-12, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 223.

⁴⁹ Salvador Dalí, "The Sanitary Goat," in *La Femme Visible* (Paris: Editions surréalistes, 1930), 23-34, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 231.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Finkelstein, "Reformulated Theory for a New Readership," in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 321.

⁵² Caws, xix.

⁵³ Levy, 219. Dalí may have been influenced here by the Italian Futurists, who "gave distribution of their manifestos a spectacular public life by throwing thousands of copies of their 'Manifesto Against Reactionary Venice' into the Venetian streets from a clock tower," Cormack 7.

⁵⁴ Salvador Dalí, *Declaration of the Independence of the Imagination and the Rights of Man to His Own Madness*, flyer, privately printed, 1939, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 332.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 334.

⁵⁶ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 187.

⁵⁷ In *The Secret Life* Dalí writes that "Just recently, in writing the preface to the catalogue of my last New York exhibit, which I signed with my pseudonym Jacinto Felipe, I felt that I needed, among other things, to have someone write a pamphlet on me bearing a title something like "Anti-Surrealist Dalí" (207 fn).

⁵⁸ Dalí, *The Last Scandal*, 338-39.

⁵⁹ Greene, 8.

⁶⁰ As documented in Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un genie?*, 62.

⁶¹ Georges Bataille, "Informe," *DOCUMENTS* 7, (December 1929): 384, translated by Alan Stoekl as "Formless" in Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Alan Stoekl (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 31.

⁶² In a typically bizarre and cryptic passage, Dalí explains how photographs might be cased in metal cubes and then dipped in molten iron. "This formless fragment of molten iron of any weight and volume will be a typical 'psychoanalytic—anamorphic' object," Dalí explains, about this particular type of Surrealist object. The existence of this object, Dalí continues "will be tenaciously debated by the coming civilizations, and will most certainly cause bloody and barbarous ravages among the highest daytime aspirations of human melancholy and human fetishism." Salvador Dalí, "Objects psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques," *Le Surréalisme au service de la Révolution* (Paris) 6 (May 15, 1932): 45-8, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, 247.

⁶³ Dawn Ades, "Form" in *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS* (London: Hayward Gallery and Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 153-54.

⁶⁴ Fèlix Fanés suggests that Dalí's work was not initially met with hostility in Paris, but with a "sepulchral silence—beyond Surrealist circles and with [writer for *Cahier's d'Art*] Tériade's commentary—that greeted Dalí's first Paris exhibition. It was a silence that was to last for several years." Fèlix Fanés, *Salvador Dalí: The Construction of the Image, 1925-1930* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 129.

⁶⁵ Salvador Dalí, "Concerning the Terrifying and Edible Beauty of Art Nouveau Architecture," *Minotaure* (Paris) 3-4 (December 12, 1933): 69-76, in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 200.

⁶⁶ Ades, *The Centenary Retrospective*, 20. Ades is likely referring to a passage in Dalí's essay "The Rotting Donkey," where Dalí posits Surrealism's transcending more formalist approaches to art then currently in vogue. He writes, "Being quite on the fringes of plastic investigations and other kinds of 'bullshit,' the new images of Surrealism will more and more take on the forms and colours of demoralization and confusion" (Dalí, "The Rotting Donkey" in Dalí, *The Collected Writings*, 226).

⁶⁷ Salvador Dalí, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Dover Publications, 1992), 5.

⁶⁸ Salvador Dalí, *Dalí on Modern Art: The Cuckolds of Antiquated Modern Art*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Mineola, 1996), 51.

⁶⁹ Salvador Dalí, *Mystical Manifesto* (Paris: Robert J. Godet, 1951); Salvador Dalí, *Anti-Matter Manifesto* (New York: Corsairs Gallery, 1958); Salvador Dalí, *My Cultural Revolution*, privately printed, (Paris, May 1968).

⁷⁰ Rafael Benet, "El saló de Tardor," *La Veu de Catalunya*, (October 20, 1926), as quoted in Fèlix Fanés, "The First Image—Dalí and his Critics: 1919 to 1929," in *Salvador Dalí: The Early Years*, ed. Michael Raeburn (London: The Southbank Centre, 1994), 90-96.

⁷¹ Greene, 8.

CHAPTER 7: Biological Bad Taste: *The Secret Life* and “Strategic Kitsch”

Where the Venus of logic vanishes, the Venus of “bad taste,” the “Venus in furs” appears beneath the banner of the only beauty, that of real vital and materialist agitations.

Salvador Dalí,
Dalí on Modern Art, 1957.¹

Introduction

“To become classic!” is Dalí’s battle cry toward the end of *The Secret Life*, as he claims to have embraced academic and Renaissance art, and continues to champion the virtues of form and figurative art. While Dalí struggled to define the term “classic” both in his written corpus of the period, and in his art practice, Dalí was equally intent upon embracing popular culture, and what was a relatively new term in America at the time, that of *kitsch*, in his creative endeavours. Both these directions, including Dalí’s loudly stated return to tradition, and his fervent embrace of commercial and popular art, it is argued in this chapter, were profoundly strategic in intent. That is, Dalí chose to work in styles that allowed him to continue to ingratiate himself with the American public, but also to offer distinct alternatives to modernism, as he defined it. In the process, Dalí was able to provoke the Surrealists, and the avant-garde in general, who, in large part, were defined by the very rejection of the things Dalí so loudly embraced.

What follows, then, is an examination of the discourses Dalí puts into circulation in his memoir concerning what has come to be known as The Great Divide, or the high-low question, which takes into consideration the dialectics between so-called high art, including both the academic and the vanguard, and low art, or that which falls under the rubric of popular culture and bad taste. Issues of taste, in fact, permeate *The Secret Life*, and form one of the many conceptual registers in the book, as Dalí embraces and sends

up both high and low art, as he simultaneously claims to be their most ardent champion. How the artist renders his new aesthetic directives manifest is evinced in one hundred and twelve drawings Dalí included in the text. These, it will be suggested, demonstrate an attempt on Dalí's behalf to enhance the book's narrative, as well as to exemplify, with more than a hint of irony, his newfound artistic direction: as anti-modernist, anti-Surrealist, and as a decided panderer to a mass American demographic.

"To Become Classic!"

How being "classic" was manifest in the concrete involved Dalí painting pictures with classicizing tendencies peppered with references to Renaissance-style classically-inspired architecture. As well, he began to display his recent works in elaborate antique, often Baroque-style frames. At this point in his career, Dalí also took the opportunity to conduct more technical experiments based on classical and Renaissance schematic models, and to give works of this period a more formally rigorous structure than that of his Surrealist period. "Becoming classic" also validated Dalí's academic technique, and apparently gave him license to diversify into a number of different creative and commercial disciplines in the "spirit of Leonardo," including "The conquest of all, the systematic interpretation of all metaphysics, of all philosophy, and of all science ..."

(383). The artist also increasingly references, as he does in mention of the *Divina Proportione*, the Renaissance—a word that was to hold much currency in *The Secret Life*, not only in its literal sense of rebirth, but being the exultant, boldface last word in the text before the epilogue, in terms of Dalí's embrace of Renaissance art, subject matter and painterly techniques.

While Dalí had already sung the praises of academic painters such as Meissonier, and old masters such as Vermeer and Velazquez, in his catalogue for the Dalí exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1941, James Thrall Soby reveals much more of Dalí's Italian visit(s) and his growing "classical" ambitions. Although Dalí only, very briefly, cites one trip to Italy in his memoir, Soby explains that Dalí actually took three prior to WWII, and notes the artist's newfound appreciation for the Italian masters, specifically the works of Botticelli, Piero di Cosimo, Raphael and Uccello. "The effect of these visits has been increasingly evident in his painting," he writes. "Not only has close familiarity with the great Italian tradition still further moderated his disdain for established aesthetic standards, but the impact of this tradition has altered and widened his own technical means."² In part based on sound evidence in Dalí's painting, and in part in an effort to legitimize Dalí's work as "serious," Soby also foregrounds Dalí's newfound appreciation for Baroque and Mannerist art, and cites Caravaggio as a direct influence in terms of Dalí's turn to "dramaturgy" and the bold handling of foreshortening and chiaroscuro.³ The curator likewise traces influences on Dalí's "classic" period canvasses of Italian painters such as Magnasco, Bracelli, Guido Reni, and the architecture of Palladio, although he also points to influences from Spanish Renaissance and Baroque painters. "We were consumed with admiration over reproductions of Raphael," Dalí writes of his trip to Italy. "There one could find everything—everything that we surrealists have invented constituted in Raphael only a tiny fragment of his latent but conscious content of unsuspected, hidden and manifest things. But all this was so complete, so synthetic, so 'one,' that for this very reason he eludes our contemporaries" (353).

The conflation of the words “classic” and “renaissance” also indexed Dalí’s shift from the highly personal and self-mythologizing works filled with intimate and Freudian references of his 1930s Surrealist period, to more universal and traditionally “grand” themes appropriate to wartime and national or political struggle and rebuilding. More succinctly, his pictorial works now deal with the trauma of war, featuring aspects of the life cycle, and in reference to philosophers and philosophy. Some also extol the “poetry of America,” taking the “New World,” in a metonymic or metaphorical sense, as their subject. In keeping with his “plain speaking” in his writing and painting for his new American “mass” public, unlike the long-winded, playful and absurd titles of his Surrealist canvasses, Dalí’s titles now became as glib and matter of fact as his imagery was straightforward. This is sometimes to the point of being facile, such as *The Face of War* (1940-41), *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)* (1940), *Nativity of a New World* (1942), *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943) and *The Poetry of America: The Cosmic Athletes* (1943).

That Dalí would be preoccupied with America and the life cycle as he penned his own life narrative while resident in the United States is hardly surprising, although perhaps the fact that these themes would be rendered so literally on his canvasses is. Most of the paintings in the “classic” style privileged the human form, especially the frequently dark-skinned figure with the ponderously bowed head and the bald, sometimes cracked cranium who appears in works such as *Philosopher Illuminated by the Light of the Moon and the Setting Sun* (1939) and, writ large, the nude half-figure with a door carved in his chest, that acted as a backdrop for Dalí’s 1941 ballet, *Labyrinth*.

One canvas of note in Dalí's classic style is his *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman* of 1940, a work that surely references his writing of his autobiography, and that appears to be both a *memento mori* and a celebration of creation and creativity.⁴ The dark-skinned philosopher/artist/creator figure is central here, this time in a particularly awkward pose and rendered disconcertingly disproportionate. The right hand mimics that of Dalí's in his self-depicting canvas of 1938, *Impressions of Africa*, and therefore suggests this figure is of Dalí himself. In the upper register of the painting, Dalí has placed a shell on one side, a symbol he commonly uses to reference female genitalia. The figure holds a skull-like orb in the other hand.⁵ Scanning from left to right, with the figure representing Dalí in the middle, the work reads as an allegory of life from birth to death. In the middle of the work and of life, the male figure is about to write in the books before him.

Both books have blank pages, and the inkwell, while usually considered a symbol of Dalí's notary father, in this case more likely represents the tools of the writer's trade. The idea of woman as the source of inspiration was "a familiar trope in Dalí's work,"⁶ and here the book is most likely metonymic of the body of a muse of inspiration, or more precisely, of Gala, whose myth, like Dalí's, is literally to be carved from the pages of Dalí's autobiography as it is here with a dinner knife. The knife refers to the practice, in older books that were made with folded paper, of the new owner having to cut the pages for him or herself. While this may indeed be, as has been suggested, a "sadistic detail," it also suggests carving, eating, and also a *tabula rasa* or text revealed for the first time.⁷

Book Transforming Itself conveys a gravitas and simplicity that was new in Dalí's oeuvre, although the distorted rendering of the figure and the awkward squashing of the

central subject matter toward the upper register of the canvas hardly live up to the requirements of divine proportion Dalí extols. Hence the piece remains, through the somewhat caricatural line and idiosyncratic subject matter, a decided continuation of Dalí's earlier work rather than a dramatic change in style, although there is a classicising or traditional timbre lent by the vanitas theme and the conventional symbolism of the shell, the skull and the books. While Dalí announced, circa 1941, that he had "gone classic," considering the work itself, the result was not as convincing as Dalí evidently had hoped. Consequently, his classic period lasted only a few years before he moved on in the later 1940s and 1950s to his next, undeniably flashier style dubbed "Nuclear Mysticism."

This classic period has been virtually overlooked in Dalí scholarship, which perhaps is unsurprising considering that the artist really only changed his subject matter, and slightly altered his style. Dalí attempted to explain his new approach to a writer in *The New Yorker*, who was viewing his most recent work at the Julien Levy Gallery exhibition in 1941. Regarding his *Family of Marsupial Centaurs*, the artist explains that there was "More design, balance, and precise technique ...," while Julien Levy adds that "Dalí is trying to create a modern mythology."⁸ Without Dalí's manifestos and stage directions, however, it is doubtful the general public would have noticed a marked change in Dalí's work. In an aptly entitled article for the exhibition, "The Classic Dalí: Not So Very Different from Dalí the Surrealist," Henry McBride writes in *The New York Sun* that "Salvador Dalí has gone classical. Did you know that? So he says. But you'd never notice it. As far as you and I are concerned, it's the same old Salvador."⁹

Soby notes of Dalí that, “From the beginning of his career, he has striven to revive the Renaissance ideal of the artist as a man whose talents are applicable to the whole problem of aesthetics.”¹⁰ Indeed, the primary element Dalí seems to have taken with him, or conflated with his general idea of “classicism” in the Renaissance model, was to embrace the idea of the “Renaissance man” or the artist as an all-around creator and public figure. Dalí had plainly decided after his break with the Surrealist group—and had the luxury to decide, thanks to his popularity—to create a new artistic paradigm that rejected the current modernist-dominated art system and the unspoken credo of the so-called “autonomous” avant-garde of the period, which maintained a clear distinction from that of the popular. Most significantly, Dalí made a conscious effort not to appeal to an “alternative” few who understood the codes and styles of then-contemporary vanguard art, but to the moneyed and to the aristocratic who valued his fashionable chic and his saucy humour combined with his meticulous and familiar academic technique. Likewise, he catered to the “masses,” and in particular, to the American masses, who were amused by Dalí’s public persona and enjoyed his easily-digested Surrealism or pseudo-academic style.

What the American masses wanted, Dalí evidently surmised, was a kitsch classicism on the one hand, that took the place of, or could be taken for “high” art, and on the other a blatantly ingratiating and cartoonish popular Surrealist style, which he employed in his commercial work. While Dalí benefited greatly financially and in terms of personal fame from this arrangement, Fanés suggests that Dalí’s strategy was not purely for the sake of expedience or venality, or even as a reflection of Dalí’s own taste; instead, it was primarily a provocation against the keepers of “high” culture and the ethos

of the historical avant-garde. “The further Art moved away from ordinary people’s understanding,” he writes,

the more the painter scratched at the wound by participating in activities alien to the strict spirit of high culture; and the higher the dividing wall between the two spheres grew, the keener he was to paint in a manner that brought him closer to an ever broader public, while at the same time distancing him from the modern canon.¹¹

Evidence does in fact suggest that Dalí had in mind a system of artistic supply and demand that was of his own making: that is, his being an artist “for the masses,” yet also part of the aristocratic elite, creating work valued on technique and easily-grasped symbolism and narratives, rather than on cultural capital accrued through contact with the intellectual and political paradigms privileged by members of the Paris avant-garde. Dalí’s decision to “paint for the masses, for the great common man, for the people” also had the undeniable benefit of ingratiating him to an America rife with suspicion and often outright hostility toward the intellectual and avant-garde exiles then migrating to America *en masse*.¹²

Another perspective on Dalí’s avowed embrace of traditional, academic art meant that, as Charles Stuckey points out, “While he stressed that his decision was strictly apolitical, a bias against non-Western and modern art in favour of old master values inevitably aligned him with the cultural policies of the era’s most loathsome totalitarian regimes.”¹³ Stuckey is referring here to the aesthetic and literary censorship and “call to order” instated by period despots, not the least of whom was Adolf Hitler, who famously reviled what he viewed as “degenerate” modernist art, and privileged a state-sanctioned traditionalist representational style which depicted bucolic Teutonic countrysides and

heroic Aryan bodies. In addition to its heavy-handed function as propaganda, classicizing art and architecture in particular was, according to Ann Thomas, a curator for an exhibition that dealt with this subject, “an important referent for the totalitarian regimes of Germany, Italy and Russia during the later 1930s for a number of reasons ...” It was a style that “came with a proven authority; it sacrificed the representation of reality to the presentation of idealized form; and it embraced Nature as a formative influence.” For Thomas, its symbolic value was inestimable “as was its value as a tool of political propaganda and in the hands of ideologues it became the artistic language of power.”¹⁴ While this may well position Dalí as possibly endorsing such regimes, the emphasis on classical and traditional art was, however, equally true in the annals of power in the United States, with whom Dalí was openly attempting to ingratiate himself. And as the Spanish artist well knew, in the U.S., academic art was invariably used in official representational domains, and classicizing architecture had represented “democracy” since independence was established.

While Stuckey’s observation regarding the correspondence between Dalí’s claimed embrace of academic art, classical ideals and “worthy” themes were likewise championed by Hitler and other period autocrats, in reality, Dalí’s “classic” work was in many ways equally as bizarre as his Surrealist work, although simpler and less dominated by a Freudian lexicon. Also, as Dalí well knew, his reputation as a Surrealist and a “degenerate” was far too entrenched for him to redeem himself before the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini, if that was in fact what he had in mind.¹⁵ That said, Dalí had been a Franco supporter from the beginning of the Spanish dictator’s rule, and in 1941, concurrent with his writing of *The Secret Life*, Dalí did vicariously “announce” his

allegiance by beginning a portrait of the Spanish Ambassador Juan Francisco de Cardenás, Franco's official representative in the U.S., resulting in a painting which was completed in 1943.

Dalí's announcement of his commission for a portrait of Franco's Ambassador, via preliminary drawings exhibited at his Julien Levy exhibition in 1941 was, as he surely intended, the final blow for his inclusion in avant-garde or Surrealist circles in exile in America. As Etherington-Smith notes, he "was now distanced even further from the Surrealists in exile, but it is to be supposed that he did not much care," and that "The distance he put between himself and his fellow artist during these years in American would never again be bridged." She further documents the extent to which Dalí simply, to use his expression, took himself "out of the alphabet" of the contemporary art system, and how by 1948, the artist had dispensed even with the services of dealers, opting instead to hire a gallery once every two years to display his work. This withdrawal from the company of painter-colleagues and from the contemporary art scene, "with its complicated web of interrelationships among dealers, critics, and artists," Etherington-Smith proposes, "goes a long way to explain why, for many years, Dalí was not taken seriously by the majority of critics and curators."¹⁶

By creating his own niche in the art market, Dalí was thus able to bypass the unspoken ethical and aesthetic dictates of the avant-garde and set his own standards and terms. Dalí's new career path as an artist was instead based on the Renaissance model, where he relied upon patronage, moved in high circles, created design objects and jewellery, wrote as well as painted, produced spectacles and entertainments, and even, slightly later, revived the factory system which involved the use of assistants—a move at

that time anathema to a modernist paradigm that privileged automatism, gestural painting, “authenticity” and self-expression. In this sense, Dalí had truly followed his childhood dictum, uttered with a manifestoesque determination and exuberance that permeates *The Secret Life*, that “Before all and at whatever cost: myself—myself alone! Myself alone! Myself alone!” (116).

As Dalí’s translator, Haakon Chevalier was intensely familiar with the artist’s intellectual positioning during his “classic” period, and indexes another problematic concerning Dalí’s stated anti-modernism in an essay he wrote for *The Saturday Review* in 1944. “More fundamental a question concerns Dalí’s ‘modernity,’” Chevalier writes.

His avowed effort to recapture the spirit and the technique of Raphael, Vermeer, and other classics, his passion for deep perspective, his hostility to some of the more sensational modern trends in painting, his nostalgia for the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, his war on the mechanical aspects of modern life, all seem to stamp him as anti-modern and “reactionary.”¹⁷

The translator goes on to observe that, in Dalí’s case, he felt that “there is a still unresolved ambivalence, an effort to tap sources of vitality both in the past and in the future which is still in an exploratory phase. But that this twin aspiration is genuine, that it corresponds to a deep and organic feeling for synthesis, I believe there can be no doubt.”¹⁸ Chevalier’s observations point to the fundamental contradiction between Dalí’s “classic” ambitions and his embrace of contemporary subject matter. Indeed, despite the artist’s call for a return to an academic style and a Renaissance ideal, Dalí’s “classic” work was neither purely retrograde nor nostalgic, and remained firmly rooted in contemporary material culture and events. In this sense, Dalí was something of a pioneer in referring to current affairs, popular culture, and contemporary intellectual and

scientific events and discoveries in a so-called fine art context in America. These included such things as depictions of Hollywood celebrities like Shirley Temple and Mae West, references to sports such as baseball, the current war and political events such as the Munich agreement and even, in 1945, the detonation of the atom bomb over Hiroshima. One of his works, *The Poetry of America—The Cosmic Athletes* (1943), takes as its subject what was known as the “race question” in the United States, and includes a depiction of a Coca-Cola bottle seemingly draining the life-blood out of an African-American man.

Evidently, while Dalí was championing a Renaissance and “classical” aesthetic in art on the one hand, he also firmly believed in portraying contemporary subject matter, and embracing popular culture. Hence, on the other hand he was waving a flag of commercialism and kitsch equally as offensive to the avant-garde ethos that set itself apart from capitalist venture as much as it did from tradition and academicism. Charles Stuckey views both sides of Dalí’s work as a form of polemic or critical “activism.” “Nonconformist extraordinaire,” he dubs Dalí, “after his rupture with the modern art establishment no less than before, Dalí took it as his fundamental intellectual responsibility to irritate and transgress, exuberantly and unrepentantly.” Further,

With his unrelenting eccentric self-spoofing antics, his countless commercial-art and fashion projects, and his often blatantly Catholic later works ... it was Dalí’s manifest intention during the second half of his career to distance himself decisively from the anti-academic, anti-decorative, anti-commercial purism and abstraction of the post-1940 art world, which, for its part, wanted nothing to do with him.¹⁹

From this perspective of “self-spoofing antics” and blatant, if not “in-your-face,” commercialism, Stuckey is one of a growing number of scholars who suggest a reading

of Dalí's anti-modernism and embrace of popular culture in terms of parody and cultural critique. Quoting Simon Wilson's introductory essay to an exhibition of Dalí's work at the Tate Gallery in 1980, in which he finds in Dalí's work "the adoption of a visual system ... completely antithetical to the dominant aesthetic of modern art," Conrad suggests instead that "Dalí is not so much diverging from modernism as developing a parodic parallel to it." According to Conrad, "Dalí's imagination does not contradict modernism" but instead, "distortingly duplicates it." Dalí "takes the antiseptic abstractions of his contemporaries and with witty disgust returns them to the tragicomedy of organic pullulating which they thought they had outgrown."²⁰

Conrad's assessment of the "double-voiced" nature of Dalí's later corpus becomes increasingly convincing the more one examines the work itself. Upon first glance much of Dalí's "classic" production appears to be characterized by a pompier or classicizing style, featuring simplistic, grandiose subjects and a rather hackneyed symbolism that Dalí presumably believed that "average" Americans, sometimes completely unapprised of avant-garde thought, art history, or contemporary intellectual trends, would have interpreted as traditional and academic.²¹ However, a more nuanced inspection reveals that the new visual language that Dalí announced in *The Last Scandal* and *The Secret Life*, and had begun to produce in the late 1930s was subtly, and sometimes blatantly caricatural, frequently in reference to contemporary life and popular culture.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the frontispiece for *The Secret Life*, which features pendant portraits of Dalí and Gala, encircled by a classicizing frame featuring Greek vases, classical imagery and architecture in the style of Palladio, and Leonardoesque figures and symbols from Dalí's Surrealist lexicon. While ostensibly in

Dalí's new "classic" or Renaissance style, this montage, with its exaggerated figuration and humorous juxtapositions of unrelated objects, has more to do with the children's book illustrations, strip cartoons or *Mad Magazine* marginalia than it does with "classic" art, however one wishes to define it (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Salvador Dalí. Two-page frontispiece for original 1942 edition of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (moved to inside back cover of Dover edition). Border is collage and ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009)

To assume Dalí's complete capitulation to the American mass market, or to academic, "traditional" art, then, would be erroneous, leaving this style to be read as ironic or as a parody of academic art equally as much as it was a pandering to his newly appointed demographic. That is, according to the reading suggested here, Dalí's painted production of this period was just caricatural enough, with sufficient elements to make it

“comically visible” to suggest, like Dalí’s writing, his desire to both ingratiate himself with an American audience and equally to hint at a self-reflexive position indexing provocation aimed at the modernist paradigm.

For the most part, during Dalí’s “classic” period, the artist continued to employ his Surrealist mode of representation and what he called the “Dalinian code” of imagery from his earlier production, but reserved it primarily for his commercial ventures. These comprised, for the most part, film, advertising, design and fashion, where the Surrealist idiom had become *de rigueur*, and Dalí “churned out” work in this style as his trademark and his “bread and butter.” While Dalí undeniably benefited financially from his commercial ventures, this exaggerated and flamboyant concession to commerce might equally be read as a sort of self-parody of a “sell-out.” As Robert Radford notes, the Spanish artist’s near-manic commercial extravaganza in the late 1930s and early 1940s went a long way in sealing the artist’s reputation as Avida Dollars, thereby underscoring and “confirming the strength of prejudice pervading high art culture against working for commercial projects that were consumed by a mass public.”²²

From this perspective, Radford duly notes the hypocrisy of this schism upon which Dalí placed a pointed finger, since while Dalí was blatantly “crossing the line” from the so-called autonomous avant-garde to the world of business and popular culture, so were other high profile vanguard artists, although in a decidedly more discreet or dignified fashion. “The complaint of making too much money was rarely raised ... against such financially well-rewarded figures as Henri Matisse or Picasso,”²³ writes Radford. Nor indeed, was it raised concerning other artists in Dalí’s orbit who participated in commercial ventures, albeit “high end” ones, primarily in the world of

fashion, such as Joan Miró, Jean Cocteau, Man Ray, Giorgio de Chirico and Leonor Fini, who designed products ranging from hat boxes to luxury carpets.²⁴

New York's "Rainbow of Bad Taste"

Discourses of style and taste in fact permeate *The Secret Life*, where Dalí claims in several places that his own style and aesthetic innovations were to have tremendous impact, if not in painting, then certainly in the spheres of fashion, design and popular fads and fancies. That Dalí had the hubris to believe that his move to "become classic" might be of interest to the general public, and therefore justify his manifesto-like writings on the subject had much to do with the influence he claimed, and as the visual record shows did, to a remarkable degree, exert upon the cultural landscape. This was to the extent of modifying, in various "Dalinian" ways, the urban setting of two major cities in the 1930s and early 1940s, and was, as Dalí would have it in his memoir, part of his project to undermine the modernist, functionalist aesthetic he abhorred.

In his autobiography Dalí writes, for example, of his "discovery" in the 1930s of the now famous *fin-de-siècle* art nouveau Paris Metro entrances designed by Hector Guimard, which, hopelessly out of fashion by that date, were in the process of being demolished. Dalí decided to champion their value, and claims that "The photographer Brassai made a series of pictures of the ornamental elements of these entrances, and people simply could not believe their eyes, so 'surrealistic' was the Modern Style becoming at the dictate of my imagination" (288). Before he knew it, the Parisian *beau monde* had gone mad on objects "in accord with the 1900 type of morphology, which I had been the first to preach." Citing similar instances, Dalí writes that

I found myself in a Paris which I felt was beginning to be dominated by my invisible influence. When someone, who until then had been very modern, spoke disdainfully of functional architecture, I knew that this came from me. If someone said in any connection, "I'm afraid it will look modern," this came from me. People could not make up their minds to follow me, but I had ruined their convictions! And the modern artist had plenty of reasons to hate me (288).

Dalí believed, however, that his own influence "has always outdistanced me to such a point that it has been impossible for me to convince anyone that this influence came from me. But the constant drama of my influence lies in the fact that once launched it escapes from my hands, and I can no longer canalize it, or even profit by it." Indeed, Dalí laments that,

in this connection no one has been more constantly robbed than I ... I was able to perceive my imprint here and there merely in walking about the streets: laces, night clubs, shoes, films—hundreds of people were working and earning an honest living as a result of my influence, while I myself continued to pace the streets of Paris without being able to "do anything." Everyone managed to carry out my ideas, though in a mediocre way (289-90).

While Dalí is undeniably prone to exaggeration, a survey of a certain strain of Surrealist-inspired interior design and fashion of the mid-1930s Paris and later New York and other American cities does in fact show a marked influence of the work of Salvador Dalí although, to a similar degree, also that of Picasso and Cubism, Miró, and Magritte, whose distinct styles and subject matter had been appropriated for various commercial ends. Malcolm Cowley, a period observer of the "Dalí phenomenon," writes in a facetious article that uses as its conceit that of a cultural historian looking back at Dalí's influence in 2043, that "Dalí was, for a time, the dictator and tyrant of the art world ... There is no doubt that French taste changed rapidly and in what he would call a Dalinian direction,

though of course we cannot decide as historians whether Dalí was responsible for the change or whether it merely coincided with his arrival.”²⁵

When Dalí arrived in New York for the second time in 1936, he writes that he was astonished “upon observing that the window-displays of the great majority of shops in the town were visibly under my influence” (289). His aesthetic dominated the windows of chic shops, most of which, in the 1930s, took their fashion cues from French models. Dalí’s influence, and that of Surrealism in general, was in fact to become equally as modish in America in the later 1930s and early 40s as it was in mid-decade Paris. Appropriating Dalí’s popularity as much as the cachet of vanguard or “fine” art, the predominantly Dalinian inflection of Surrealism influenced visual merchandising and fashion design of many varieties, and was to manifest itself on the covers and fashion layouts of high profile style-making publications such as *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Vanity Fair* and *Town and Country*. By the late 1930s Surrealism, or at least Dalí’s brand of it, seemed to have swept over to the U.S. with the other European exiles to create a fashion sensation in America as much as it had in Paris.

Many journalists of the period commented on the increasing merger of fashion, business and Surrealism, as did Frank Caspers in a 1938 survey in *Scribner’s Magazine*, in an article entitled “Surrealism in Overalls.” In this article, Caspers recognized that while Surrealism had been dismissed some years before as “a weird thing for weird people,” it was now recognized as a sellable style and marketing tool by those parties invested in sales.²⁶ While this campaign was not exclusively geared toward Dalí’s “look,” to judge from existing advertisements and products of the period that appropriated the Surrealist aesthetic, Dalí, René Magritte and Man Ray are clearly the most prominent

influences, while Miró, Arp and Picasso were also popular, though less likely to be associated with Surrealism *per se*. Reynolds Morse, also a period-observer, attempts to defend the relationship between Dalí's work and the advertising world, writing in 1945 that

All the nostalgia of one of his masterpieces will be found in a garter ad in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He will be accused of bringing the lofty concepts of his art into a realm where they could not descend without cheapening their ultimate value as museum pieces. Yet on every hand we now accept ads with ridiculous dream-world juxtapositions of extraneous objects selected for their incongruity. A few years ago, before Dalí, our sensibilities would have been outraged.²⁷

Whereas Dalí's style and sensibility were widely imitated in the domains of fashion and advertising of the 30's and 40's, his own work was also avidly sought for the cachet it brought to various goods and services. Meryle Secrest notes that "Dalí's determination to diversify—into ballet, opera, the novel, portraiture and film—was channelled increasingly toward commercial art." By 1947, she notes that Dalí was being paid up to \$2,500 for an advertisement, \$5,000 for book illustrations and \$600 for a magazine cover—exceptional rates by the standards of the day. "His dismembered arms, limp watches, ruined columns, pieces of driftwood, tables with women's legs, crutches and ants were helping to advertise Gunther's furs, Ford cards, Wrigley's chewing gum, Schiaparelli perfume, Gruen watches, the products of the Abbott Laboratories and the Container Corporation of America," Secrest documents, and observes that "They were being reproduced in shop windows up and down Fifth Avenue."²⁸

At the time Dalí was influencing style in the 1930s and '40s, he in turn claims in *The Secret Life* to have been dumbfounded, when he first arrived in New York in the

early 1930s, to find that the great American city was not the modernist, streamlined utopia the avant-garde had portrayed it as, thanks to *Americanismus*, the German term for the European fascination with perceived American machine-age modernism. Instead, he writes that he found the city absolutely stuffed with the most appallingly retrograde and vulgar objects—objects which, to Dalí's mind, were positively Surrealist in themselves, and evidently delighted him to no end. Through these and other ruminations upon American taste, and taste in general in the book, Dalí is able to propound his own aesthetic theories and standards, and in turn, to question the functionalist, geometric and machine aesthetic of the modernist paradigm as he saw it. In this way Dalí strategically posits what he claims as the American predilection for “bad taste” as “proof” of the inaccessibility and sterility of functionalist modernism. What “real” people, or “the masses,” really wanted, he argues, was not Van der Rohe's utilitarian architecture, Le Corbusier's streamlined white furniture or the “little maniacal lozenges of Monsieur Mondrian” (212), but baubles, flash, Orientalism, knock-offs, colour, whizz-bangs, Hollywood, artificial foliage, neon lights, imitation antiques, ornament, nostalgia, popular culture and kitsch.

Upon first arriving in New York, Dalí writes that he was astonished to find that city—from skyscrapers to lampshades—was dominated by cultural artifacts that indicated a yearning for traditional, European-style culture and cachet. To this end, he writes in Chapter Eleven that,

... all my experiences ... only continued systematically to give the lie to the stereotype of the “modern and mechanical city” which the aestheticians of the European advance guard, the apologists of the aseptic beauty of functionalism, had tried to impose upon us as an example of anti-artistic virginity. No, New York was not a modern city. For, having

been so at the beginning, before any other city, it now on the contrary already had a horror of this (332).

In one of the most amusing passages in *The Secret Life*, Dalí describes the confounding of his expectations as he makes the rounds of upscale apartments and hotels in New York, giving the artist an opportunity to paint the city as profoundly kitsch and, more poignantly, the absolute opposite of functionalist modernism:

I began my succession of afternoon cocktail parties at a house on Park Avenue in which fierce anti-modernism manifested itself in the most spectacular fashion, beginning with the very façade. A crew of workers armed with implements projecting black smoke that whistled like apocalyptic dragons were in the act of patinating the outer walls of the building in order to “age” this excessively new skyscraper by means of that blackish smoke characteristic of the old houses of Paris.

“In Paris, on the other hand,” Dalí notes acerbically, “the modern architects à la Corbusier were racking their brains to find new and flashy, utterly anti-Parisian materials which would not turn black, so as to imitate the supposed ‘modern sparkle’ of New York.” He claims that he is equally surprised to find that the first elevator he enters is lit by candle, to lend a nostalgic atmosphere, rather than by electricity. On the wall of the elevator Dalí is confronted with a reproduction of a painting by El Greco which was hung from heavily ornamented Spanish red velvet strips: “the velvet was authentic and probably of the fifteenth century,” he observes. The apartment that was his destination for this venture, Dalí further reports, was furnished with nothing less than “Gothic, Persian, Spanish Renaissance, Dalís and two organs” (333).

The rest of the afternoon Dalí writes of his conducting an unbroken succession of visits to other apartments and hotel rooms, and of being dumbfounded to find that

“Everywhere the electric light was choked by Louis XVI skirts, by Gothic polychrome parchment manuscripts, by manuscript partitions of Beethoven serving as lampshades.”

According to the artist,

One had the impression that artificial ivy grew in all the corners of the woodwork, and that bats, equally artificial, and invisible, were constantly flitting through the propitious darkness of the halls. In the evening, I visited an astonishing motion-picture temple. It was decorated with the most diverse artistic bronzes, from the Victory of Samothrace to Carpeaux; with ultra-anecdotic pictures really painted in oil, framed with an oppressive fantasy of gold moulding; and in the midst of all this one suddenly perceived the plumes of a playing fountain illuminated with the whole iridescent rainbow of bad taste (333).

As part of his anti-modernist project, Dalí often proclaimed at this period his fascination with Art Nouveau, Gaudí, Wagner, and academic art in general, and for he had long been a champion of what was considered, by 1930s modernist standards, as “bad taste.” In *The Conquest of the Irrational*, the artist explains how much he loves exaggeration, and that the most important thing for him was always communication, for which any means, “high” or “low,” “good” taste or “bad,” were equally expedient. According to Dalí, “The illusionism of the most abjectly arriviste and irresistible imitative art, the usual paralyzing tricks of trompe-l’oeil, the most analytically narrative and discredited academicism, can all become sublime hierarchies of thought and the means of approach to new exactitudes of concrete irrationality.”²⁹

In a footnote for *The Secret Life*, Dalí claims that “I have always considered “good taste” to be one of the principal causes of the growing sterility of the French mind; I have always defended, as against French good taste, the fertile and biological bad taste of Wagner, Gaudí and Boecklin” (335 fn). According to Dalí, these artists had been given

a dire reputation by the French and others, while Americans were more open to the possibilities offered by less rigid aesthetic criteria. “Europeans are mistaken in considering America incapable of poetic and intellectual intuition,” Dalí explains.

It is obviously not by tradition that they are able to avoid mistakes, or by a perpetual sharpening of ‘taste.’ No, America does not choose with the atavistic prudence of an experience which she has not had, or with the refined speculation of a decadent brain which it does not possess, or even with the sentimental effusion of its heart which is too young ... (325).

Regarding Dalí’s attitude toward American taste, Carter Ratcliff notes Dalí’s treatment of popular culture and kitsch as being equally, if not more “valid” than that of the avant-garde and of high art, and writes that for Dalí, American culture “has the oneness of a sprawling, often vacuous web of images and associated sentiments.” Accordingly, in Dalí’s view, “high art occupies an ecological niche no more or less important—certainly no more elevated—than any other, in a system of production and consumption, of eating and being eaten, in turn, each element is equal once the system strikes an overall balance.”³⁰

While Ratcliff views Dalí’s interest in and working with what might be called the “kitsch idiom” in the 1930s and ‘40s as a sort of egalitarian approach or “levelling” mechanism, it is perhaps more apt to look at Dalí’s self-consciously “vulgar” productions as what might be called “strategic kitsch.” That is, as a form of aesthetic or cultural critique analogous to Dalí’s caricatural visual satire, and the often offensive subject matter in his writing, embracing “bad taste” on its own terms and therefore as a provocation towards the keepers of the “good.” Dalí’s emphasis, particularly in *The Secret Life*, on the subject of taste, and the flaunting of his breaching of the heretofore

discreet categories of high and low art forms, raised a concern that was key in the intellectual and avant-garde circles of the 1920s, '30s and '40s, as the impact of mass and popular culture, and its effect on high art and the avant-garde were being increasingly debated. Cultural theorist Andreas Huyssen calls this schism "The Great Divide," and claims that "since the mid-nineteenth century, the culture of modernity has been characterized by a volatile relationship between high art and mass culture."³¹ Huyssen uses the term "autonomous art" to signal that which represents the strand of cultural production that displays an "anxiety of contamination" from mass culture, and queries the dialectic that played itself out in the twentieth century precipitating the breakdown or shift of clear distinctions between "high" and "low" in the cultural domain, resulting, in part, in what is now known as postmodernism.

Dialogue encompassing issues of the so-called Great Divide, the popular versus the "autonomous," and the nature of taste were front and centre among vanguard and critical thinkers precisely when Dalí was transforming into an artist "for the masses." In fact, this problematic was likely one of, if not the primary reason, for Dalí's contentious new direction, as he consciously and very strategically used popular imagery and a highly embellished, nostalgic kitsch aesthetic in his work as an affront to the modernist, "autonomous" ethos. German and Austrian theorists in particular had much to say on the subject, equating ornament with kitsch and a debased, retrograde aesthetic. This is the case in Adolf Loos' aptly entitled essay *Ornament and Crime* of 1908, as it is in Siegfried Kracauer's 1927 "Mass Ornament," which posited smooth surfaces, streamlining and lack of embellishment as the very essence of modernism.

Theodor Adorno was equally horrified by the encroachment of popular culture and its implications for the arts, as described in his well-known essay of 1936, entitled “The Schema of Mass Culture.” Appalled by the infiltration of popular tastes upon the “higher” arts, Adorno describes mass culture as nothing less than “a kind of training for life when things have gone wrong,” and cites a number of transgressions in contemporary American culture in particular, as well as the relationship between Surrealism and mass culture spurred on by the unnamed Salvador Dalí.³² “There is no longer either kitsch or intransigent modernism in art,” Adorno asserts. “Advertising has absorbed surrealism and the champions of this movement have given their blessing to the commercialization of their own murderous attacks on culture in the name of hostility of the same. Kitch fares no better as hatred towards it becomes its very element.”³³ As a counterpoint to these arguments, Walter Benjamin takes a more neutral approach to mass culture in his seminal “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936), which considers the pros and cons of the mass production of visual imagery on art and life.

In America, critical opinion was mixed as writings on the subject appeared such as Gilbert Seldes’ much-read 1924 volume *The Seven Lively Arts*, which viewed popular culture in a relatively benign light, as a sort of naïve urban folk art and the “true” voice of the people. The theorist of greatest relevance to the American dialectic of popular versus vanguard is certainly Clement Greenberg, in particular his famous essay “Avant-Garde and Kitch,” first published in the *Partisan Review* in 1939. In it the author puts forth his thesis that avant-garde and specifically abstract art was a defence against what he viewed as the debasement of culture in the form of commercial enterprises resulting in *kitsch*, which was a little-known German word at the time, and one that Greenberg helped to

popularize in the English language. Greenberg's highly formalist assertion, later to become immensely influential, that extreme abstraction in the works of artist such as his cited Picasso, Braque, Mondrian, Miró, Kandinsky, Brancusi, Klee, Matisse and Cezanne, showed a "pure preoccupation with the invention and arrangement of spaces, surfaces, shapes, colours, etc., to the exclusion of whatever is not necessarily implicated in these factors."³⁴

Greenberg used "kitsch" as a term for what is now deemed popular culture, as "popular, commercial art and literature ... chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc."³⁵ While Dalí was one of the first artists of his stature openly to embrace popular culture in the 1920s, '30's and later, what likely appealed to Dalí about kitsch, as Greenberg described it, was as "a product of the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses of Western Europe and America and established what is called universal literacy."³⁶ It is likely that Dalí would have seen the positive aspect of Greenberg's lament that "Kitsch ... is now by way of becoming a universal culture, the first universal culture ever beheld."³⁷ Greenberg, in fact, specifically mentions Dalí, but is evidently not concerned, or perhaps aware, of Dalí's dabbling in popular culture, and pandering to a mass audience, so much as he is with the artist's insistence upon representational art. In a footnote to his essay, Greenberg suggests that "Surrealism in plastic art is a reactionary tendency which is attempting to restore 'outside' subject matter. The chief concern of a painter like Dalí is to represent the processes and concepts of his consciousness, not the processes of his medium."³⁸

Greenberg also uses the term *kitsch* in “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” in the sense it is understood today, as a cheap, poor or overdone imitation of something considered tasteful or “high.” “Kitsch,” writes Greenberg, “using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility.” Greenberg expounds that “Kitsch is mechanical and operates by formulas. Kitsch is vicarious experience and faked sensations. Kitsch changes according to style, but remains always the same. Kitsch is the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times.” Most controversially, perhaps, especially in mid-century America, more or less unfazed by the avant-garde, and popularly still highly valuing “old masters” and academic-style art, Greenberg asserts that “... All kitsch is academic, and conversely, all that’s academic is kitsch.”³⁹

With Greenberg’s definitions in mind, it is worth taking stock of Dalí’s new “classic” style and judging it on its own merits which, as countless commentators from Greenberg on have pointed out, can be classified in every way as kitsch, being academic, operating on a formula of easily-grasped symbols and “faked” sensations, being easily understood, and as a debased version of Renaissance and academic art clearly geared toward the masses rather than a cultured elite or those whom Breton calls “thinking people.” Given, however, what has to this point been described as Dalí’s *modus operandi*, it is far too simplistic merely to accept Dalí’s blatant embrace and implementation of kitsch as unmediated. Indeed, the exaggerated and often absurd aspects of Dalí’s Surrealist paintings, as well as his work from other periods, can be interpreted on one level as caricature rendered in oil and canvas, which the artist created as a self-reflexive mechanism that both participated in Surrealist, Freudian and

“Dalinian” methodologies and doctrines, and simultaneously mocked them in an attempt to maintain a critical distance and undermine their gravitas and esteem.

Dalí’s new “classic” approach likewise involved embracing kitsch as both an ingratiation with a mass public, who presumably viewed the work as unproblematic, and a provocation to the avant-garde and the keepers and makers of “genuine” culture, who did, and continue to position Dalí’s later work as kitsch beyond redemption. In this sense, Dalí’s use of kitsch—at least in his “serious” painting—is both “authentic” *and* profoundly ironic. That is, to be read “straight” by a popular audience and, rather than as a knowing wink at those who would get the joke, as much “strategic kitsch” became from the sixties onwards, as a confrontational gesture that forces the “cultured” viewer to make a decision based on that unspoken, inherently elitist construct of taste, itself based on the very cultural capital the historical avant-garde attempted to bypass.

Dalí’s point of purchase was his knowledge that his embrace and flaunting of popular culture, commercial enterprise and kitsch was a blatant affront to a large part of the avant-garde whose self-appointed task, as Greenberg outlines, was to prevent the very infiltration of kitsch, commercialism and mass culture, except in the most aestheticized or ironic of ways, into the realm of “serious” or “authentic” vanguard art. In the late 1930s and early ‘40s, Dalí was undeniably the most prominent member of the Paris avant-garde in exile in America, and therefore its unofficial spokesperson. This position allowed Dalí, through his flaunting of kitsch and commerce, to trump Breton and other politically-engaged thinkers and artists who, espousing socialist ideals, nevertheless refused to participate—for often worthy reasons—in what was fast becoming the *lingua franca* of “the people”; that is, the very demographic it purported to defend.

Dalí was not, by any means, the only Western artist who was interested in popular culture or the more populist aspects of art and design, and he was working in a period that had recently seen experiments with so-called “proletariat art” such as Russian Constructivism and certain works of the Bauhaus and other arts-based schools and workshops intended to create ergonomically effective, aesthetically pleasing, inexpensive and “rational” products for mass consumption. Marcel Duchamp, the Dadaists, and various strains of Surrealism, Cubism, Futurism, and other artists and movements also incorporated popular objects and imagery in their work and aesthetics, although this was sometimes categorized as “anti-art,” in part for that very reason. Nevertheless, these artists and experiments were invariably positioned as avant-garde and were, for the most part, categorically attempting to bypass or comment upon academicism, elitism, bourgeois “institution art,” modernity, social issues, war or mass culture itself.

Exceptions to this, primarily of American extraction, are artists such as Joseph Cornell, Stuart Davis, Charles Demuth, Gerald Murphy and others whose art practice incorporated contemporary ephemera and popular imagery, and who seem to have found genuine aesthetic value in the products of popular culture devoid of irony. Their work, however, remained in the realm of the vanguard, and was not necessarily intended for popular consumption. Dalí, on the other hand, who wrote in 1939 that “The masses have always known where to find true poetry,” clearly states that his new allegiance is to a popular audience far from experimental or “intellectual” art.⁴⁰ While this is apparent, Dalí’s embrace of kitsch and popular imagery, his exuberant participation in capitalist enterprise, and his claiming for these an equal place with other art forms is often also decidedly ironic as well as a conscious provocation directed toward circles for whom

such transgressions were unconscionable. In this sense, Dalí's work of his "classic" period in particular represented a very conspicuous underscoring of, and attempt to destabilize the ideological barriers between leftist, and often communist-inspired anti-capitalist leanings in the art world that were to many Americans looking increasingly like elitist, exclusionary artistic practices, and the kind of work that appealed to "the people"—what Dalí cited as kitsch, academic, "classic" art, and popular culture.

Until very recently, Dalí's "classic" period production has been habitually written off by the majority of critics with the rest of his "post-Surrealist work," which is more or less synonymous in canonical art scholarship with "bad," "derivative," or cited as unintentional kitsch. A few savvy Americans, however, who were contemporaneous with and invested in Dalí's new direction, were quick to grasp Dalí's strategic imperatives. No one at the time was more invested in Dalí's career than Julien Levy and James Thrall Soby, both curators in their respective galleries, and both highly attuned to the vagaries of Dalí's "classic" period. In his catalogue for Dalí's 1941 MoMA exhibition, Soby felt inclined to mention, if not to attempt to explain, some of Dalí's more garish new concoctions, and he categorizes Dalí within the strain of art commonly viewed as a precursor to the postmodern today, writing that,

At this juncture in his career Dalí declared himself totally uninterested in the aesthetic values of color and line, thus taking his place in the anti-artistic cycle which had begun so violently with the Dadaists. As already briefly noted, he admired painters of the past, particularly Meissonier, whose art was almost wholly notable for its photographic clarity of technique. He claimed to be completely indifferent to richness of pigment or elegance of contour. He not infrequently used offensive combinations of color; he often deliberately painted in the flat, unimaginative tones which popular artists employ in imitation of hand-tinted prints.⁴¹

In a decidedly less tactful letter to the director of the Athenaeum, “Chick” Austin, Julien Levy writes that “Dalí’s paintings I think are hypnotic. The new ones are certainly high in brilliant vulgarity.”⁴²

Illustrating *The Secret Life*

To this point the present chapter has considered *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* in terms of Dalí’s stated artistic strategies, most notably what might be called his aesthetic activism: that is, his vociferous stance against and vigorous gestures in defiance of what he defined as a sterile and utilitarian modernism. Against these the artist pitted academic, Renaissance and “classic” art equally as much as he did popular culture, commerce and kitsch: all things which he evidently posited as anathema to the modernist project. Once teased out from the other aspects of his autobiography, Dalí’s directive becomes apparent, and upon close examination, his paintings of the period also appear, with various degrees of success, to reflect much of the doctrine the artist expounds. Considering, in particular, the interface between text and image, Dalí’s insistence upon mythologizing the events of his life is equally as evident in his draughtsmanship as it is in his writing, and the result is an eclectic, phantasmal mix which does much to enhance the self-styling rhetoric and incessant hyperbole which characterize the text.

As *The Secret Life* is so intensely self-conscious concerning the vagaries and politics of style, however, the most immediate question is how successfully Dalí manages to reflect the aesthetic directives he propounds within the visual domain of the autobiography itself. While a comprehensive exegesis of all the drawings and the ways in which they enhance or resonate with the text is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the remainder of this chapter considers the drawings Dalí produced for *The Secret Life*

strictly in terms of the visual and critical strategies under consideration. While recognizing that by no means all the drawings are relevant to this argument, and that they function, like the text, on a number of conceptual and aesthetic registers, suggested here is a reading of the drawings specifically as rendered for the most part in a simplified language for a “mainstream” American audience, and as a consciously kitsch and frequently cartoonish style reflecting Dalí’s subversion of Surrealist directives and a denial of modernist aesthetics. It also suggests a diachronic approach to the visual material in the text, in terms of the subtle shift in style which Dalí employs to reflect the three documented phases of his life, thereby enhancing the trajectory of the “storyline” of his memoir.

Once again, when considering the presumably strategic nature of Dalí’s style as well as content in his autobiography, when approaching Dalí’s drawings, his audience must be considered. As has been established, Dalí was primarily aiming to appeal to a mass American demographic. However, he also presumed a second audience, in many ways the opposite to the first: that of the avant-garde, in exile or otherwise, and including the Surrealists, from whose ranks Dalí had so recently been expelled. Most pointedly, as Dalí well knew, André Breton would be duly galled at Dalí’s debasement of the Surrealist visual idiom through the Spanish artist’s turn to what will be cited as fairy-book imagery, kitsch, his comical inversion of the “uncanny,” and perhaps worst of all, considering Breton’s staunch atheism, his classicizing, pseudo-Renaissance religious renderings. In this sense, one of the many registers upon which *The Secret Life* can be read is as an attempt to respond to Breton’s many missives, and to *épater* the avant-garde and the Surrealists, by outrightly flaunting the very things they found so offensive in

Dalí's behaviour and academic art and mass culture. Hence Dalí does indeed become, as Greene so aptly stated it, "a revolutionist against revolution," as he gleefully paraded his embrace of America's "whole iridescent rainbow of bad taste" (333).⁴³

Dalí was by no means a novice at book illustration by the time he wrote *The Secret Life*, and had in fact become a sought-after book illustrator, with credits that included, among others, his own superbly illustrated *La Femme visible* (1930), René Char's *Artine* (1930), Georges Hugnet's *Onan* (1934), Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror* (1934), René Laporte's *Le Somnambule* (1935), Tristan Tzara's *Grains et Issues* (1935), and Paul Éluard's *Cours Naturel* (1938). He also provided the illustrations for Breton and Éluard's *L'Immaculée conception* (1930), and Breton's *Le Revolver à cheveux blancs* (1932). For *The Secret Life* Dalí produced the one hundred and twelve drawings that appear in the original 1942 Dial edition, as well as a small number of drawings for the book which were not printed in the final edition, some of which appear in this dissertation.

The original edition also included twelve printed images that Dalí embellished by adding graphics or text, assorted cuts from children's pictographic dictionaries, a map, and clippings, sometimes embellished by the artist, from sources difficult to trace. Also included were two colour plates based on Dalí's paintings. The first comprised the two-page spread of pendant portraits of Dalí (*Soft Self Portrait with Grilled Bacon*, 1941), and Gala (*Automatic Beginning of a Portrait of Gala*, 1932), and the second his *Slave Market with the Disappearing Bust of Voltaire* (1940). Most of the drawings were executed in India ink on paper, and while French and Spanish occasionally appear in the captions, written in Dalí's idiosyncratic script, most of the drawings are accompanied by English

inscriptions (often misspelled), clearly indicating that the artist's primary intended audience was English.

As Dalí was so vociferously opposed to the modernist aesthetic as he defined it in *The Secret Life*, and determined to assert his founding of a new Style, indexed by a suitably proper noun, it was necessary that he employ a graphic approach that was as far as possible from the geometric, abstract, functionalist modernism that he abhorred, and which would differentiate the imagery in the book from that of his Surrealist output which he alleges to have transcended. As he explains in his memoir, Dalí also embraced mass culture and "bad taste," or kitsch, and sought an aesthetic that would appeal to the popular audience for whom he claimed to be writing. As a result, Dalí arrived at a number of styles that reflect various aspects of his life, and different modalities and themes. Compared to the type of imagery Dalí produced for earlier texts, the majority of the illustrations Dalí included in *The Secret Life* are surprisingly literal and self-explanatory in the way they illuminate the text, for the most part directly referencing the people and events about which Dalí writes. Similar to the artist's simplified written language, this approach can also be considered in term of his intended appeal to a popular audience.

Whereas Levy and Soby understood, or at least bemusedly tolerated Dalí's kitsch "classicism," in addressing the drawings for *The Secret Life*, George Orwell, whose tastes were apparently shaped by a modernist and pragmatically British sensibility, evidently did not. As such, Orwell assesses Dalí's organic, phantasmal and anthropomorphic illustrations, some of which stretch kitsch well beyond the realm of caricature, as Dalí's "natural tendency" toward a cloying, retrograde "fairybook" style. In his analysis of the

drawings Orwell fails to detect any possible irony, “strategic” vulgarity, parody of modernism or, despite his ardent socialist leanings, egalitarian tendencies, or even Dalí’s referencing the “rainbow of bad taste” he encountered in New York. Dalí’s kitsch was not conscious, nuanced or tactical in any way in Orwell’s opinion. It was simply dreadful. “When I opened the book for the first time and looked at its innumerable marginal illustrations,” Orwell informs the reader,

I was haunted by a resemblance which I could not immediately pin down. I fetched up at the ornamental candlestick at the beginning of Part I (p. 7). What did this remind me of? Finally I tracked it down. It reminded me of a large vulgar, expensively got-up edition of Anatole France (in translation) which must have been published about 1914 that had ornamental chapter headings and tailpieces after this style.⁴⁴

Focusing on this candlestick and other similar accoutrements which appear within the pages of *The Secret Life*, many of which certainly make reference to the garish decorations Dalí encountered in New York apartments, Orwell notes, “This candle, which recurs in one picture after another, is a very old friend. You will find it, with the same picturesque gouts of wax arranged on its sides, in those phoney electric lights done up as candlesticks which are popular in sham-Tudor country hotels.” “The same impression keeps popping up on page after page,” Orwell continues. “The sign at the bottom of page 62, for instance, would nearly go into *Peter Pan*,” while another figure reminds him of “the witch of the fairy-tale books.” Orwell is as equally nonplussed by a fey image of a horse and unicorn, as he is by the “rather pansified drawings of youths” which he finds throughout. “Picturesqueness keeps breaking in,” Orwell writes, and suggests that all the reader need do is “Take away the skulls, ants, lobsters, telephones and other paraphernalia, and every now and again you are back in the world of Barrie, Rackham,

Dunsany and *Where the Rainbow Ends*.”⁴⁵ In this way, Orwell lumps all of the drawings for *The Secret Life* into a generalized category of sentimental, feminine and child-oriented illustrations characteristic of the often elaborate European fairy-tale books so popular at the *fin-de-siècle*.

Many years later, Nicolas Calas offered a more nuanced view of Dalí’s illustrations for *The Secret Life*, some of which he claims “exude a witty humour.” That said, like Orwell, he remains unimpressed by what he views as the cloying sweetness and sentimentality of some, and writes that, “A few of them, however, are nauseating.”⁴⁶ Pierre Volboudt is much more complimentary about Dalí’s drawing in general than Orwell or Calas, suggesting that Dalí has made his favourite exercise out of “graphic delirium.” “All his resources are at work; speed and patience are applied to the tiniest detail, superior elegance and sharply delineated minutiae.” Citing Dalí’s penchant for the frivolous in his drawings, he also notes the parodic mechanism, stating that “It is undoubtedly in drawing that Dalí excels at pitting himself against that profundidad to which the gesture adjusts its enthusiasm.”⁴⁷ Nowhere is this more evident than in some of the more erotic images that Dalí includes in *The Secret Life*, or those with unappealing or sordid subjects. Indeed, while Orwell and Calas focus on the “nauseatingly” syrupy aspect of some of Dalí’s drawings, they surprisingly overlook that the subject matter is often completely at odds with the sugary style.

These include images such as that of a rotting hedgehog, rendered to resemble a benign and rather furry caterpillar, festering with ants and maggots, under which the artist has scripted the cryptic words “Eruption of final ignominy” (Figure 14). Or, probably the first time to be illustrated in any book, Dalí’s attempt to depict the effects of alcohol

(250), and its after-effects: his own daintily drawn vomit, swirling in a romantic-looking cloud which, after a bender in Madrid, the artist relishes revealing to his readers contains “vermouths, olives, clams, ect., ect [sic]” (195) (Figure 15).

Figures 14 and 15: Salvador Dalí. “Eruption of final ignominy,” p. 94 (left) And “Vermouths, olives, clams, ect., ect. [sic],” p. 195 (right). Original drawings for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Ink on paper, c. 1941.

The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain,
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Dalí’s conscious and exuberant use of the abject in an overblown kitsch, fairybook manner surely undermines the style itself, rendering it self-reflexive and parodic.

Overlooking this possibility, Orwell’s assessment of Dalí’s drawings also tends to paint all the images in the book with the same brush in terms of style, while a closer examination reveals that the artist implemented several different styles with which to express various aspects of his text, and that he used these, for the most part, sequentially in order to augment the storyline.

The fairybook style Orwell abhors in fact predominates in the first part of the book, as it relates to, and reflects the more fantasy-oriented aspects of Dalí’s childhood,

his “true” and “false” memories, and his rich imaginative life as a young boy. This mode can be recognized by its fairy tale imagery and nursery subject matter, whose presumably enchanted aspect is often enhanced by Dalí’s sketchy, arabesque, often bulbous line that borders upon the caricatural. One such example is a drawing depicting a spoon, a woman turning into a spoon, and Dalí as a young boy in a sailor suit holding a crutch (Figure 16). With its anthropomorphic cutlery and the diminutive Dalí looking on, this work, entitled “False memori [sic] of a lady in the shape of a spoon,” could well, as Orwell suggests, have sprung from a nursery rhyme; in this case, Mother Goose’s “Hey Diddle Diddle,” in which the “dish ran away with the spoon.”

Figures 16 and 17: “False memori [sic] of a lady in the shape of a spoon” (left), p. 49, and Untitled (right), p. 97. Original drawings for *The Secret life of Salvador Dalí*, 1942. Ink on paper, c. 1941. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

An image similarly fanciful in aspect is Dalí’s drawing of himself as a king, dressed in the monarch’s costume he describes in the beginning of the book, and holding

the crutch that was to become his sceptre (Figure 17). In this drawing Dalí has distinctly idealized himself as a child, depicting his naked body, in a series of circular forms, as muscular beyond what was physically possible for a young boy somewhere around the age of eight. The enormous crown the child sports, the voluminous locks of hair, and the fanciful, wind-blown cape all portray the young Dalí in costume more as an idealized portrait of the Sun King than as a young Catalan. Once again the crutch-sceptre appears as a motif indexing Dalí's king-like qualities, as well as the power of the child's imagination to transform the ordinary object into something magical.

Part Two of *The Secret Life* takes as its subject the period of Dalí's adolescence and young adulthood, and his introduction to the avant-garde and to Surrealism. Moving away from lighter nursery imagery, this section of the book is dominated by an eclectic arrangement of drawings that intentionally reflect many different styles, signalling Dalí's search for his own artistic voice as he waded through a period of implied dissolution and signalling the still "unformed" aspects of his life during this period. The most cryptic of these are the "erotic metamorphoses" discussed in Chapter Two of this dissertation: embellishments that Dalí has made atop innocent drawings from children's language primers, which with their perverse aspect and menacing overtones are surely intended to reflect Dalí's own "evil" tendencies as he depicts them in the book. Extending from the naive fairybook style, they also reflect what Dalí implies is the "perversion" of his youthful sensibilities as he was increasingly influenced by Surrealist, leftist and vanguard imperatives.

The most impressive of these "metamorphoses" has as its ground a page from a French-language nursery primer which depicts six different animals: a lion, an ox, a dog,

a lamb, a bird and a frog which Dalí has transformed into a masterful drawing of a grotesque head which incorporates, quite ingeniously, all of the animals into the face of a repulsive monster.⁴⁸ In order to emphasize the transformations, Dalí has printed these drawings with the original pages from the text, so the viewer can more easily distinguish the original elements of the work. Dalí's stark transformation of the simple elements from a child's primer into a leering and ghoulish face presumably parallels his own transformation and surroundings, from his innocent early years among the flora and fauna of Cadaqués and Figueres, to an *informe* and abject youth marked by his wicked tendencies, embedded as he was among the most avid and, as he suggests in the text, often "perverse" circles of the avant-garde in Spain, and later Paris.

This grotesque portrait provides a foil for a number of other portraits which collectively form the central focus of Part Two of Dalí's memoir, in which the artist appears to be working in a variety of experimental styles, including Cubist and other modernist modes, some very abstract likenesses, and a work which Dalí cites in a caption as "Picasso's Influence," in which he depicts a monumental nude on the beach, comically grasping her toe, in reference to Picasso's classicising period of the 1920s. As Dalí makes clear with his textual description, these are not to be taken as "genuine" period illustrations in the styles Dalí demonstrates, but illustrative of the kind of work with which the artist had been experimenting while he was in art school. To clarify this, he has captioned some of the sketches accordingly as 1925 or 1926, indicating the date that he embraced the style rather than that of the actual execution of the drawings.

One such example is an abstract portrait over which Dalí has placed a schematic grid. Dated 1925, the drawing is captioned "Picasso's influence was followed by most

typical [sic] extra-plastic preoccupation” followed by what is presumably the title of the work, “Person swallowin [sic] saliva with difficulty” (Figure 18).

Figures 18 and 19: Salvador Dalí. “Picasso’s influence was followed by most typical [sic] extra-plastic preoccupation ‘Person swallowin [sic] saliva with difficulty,’” p.174 (left), and “‘Cubist’ portrait of King Alfonso XIII, Sketch made immediately after our meeting,” p. 163 (right). Original drawings for *The Secret life of Salvador Dalí*. Ink on paper, c. 1940. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Such attribution becomes more complex in a drawing such as his “‘Cubist’ portrait of King Alfonso XIII” (Figure 19), which Dalí has subtitled with the explanatory “Sketch made immediately after our meeting.” Whether or not this was the original sketch, or a later rendition of the original sketch is unknown. However, with its shard-like hatching, and presumably “cubic” framework encircling the moustachioed visage of the monarch, this work distinctly signals Dalí’s interest in Cubism at the time he met the king in 1923. This sort of mystification regarding attribution adds to the eclectic mix of styles in Part Two and reinforces the sense of fragmentation and the stylistic and psychological

dissonance of Dalí's adolescence and young adulthood; a state of affairs which was ultimately to result in a Dalinian subject that was decidedly decadent and "perverse."

Such "fragmentation," and the "perversion" of imagery reflected in the metamorphoses and the portrayed stylistic mix comes together, or is perhaps *formed*, in the Part Three. This section of the book is dominated by another important visual theme which Orwell understandably conflates with the "fairy-tale" imagery in Part One, and which might be placed under the rubric of "anthropomorphic furniture." Embedded collaterally with Dalí's description of his increasingly fashionable presence in Paris and his sojourns and eventual move to the United States, according to the dictates of Dalí's imagination, chairs and telephones all come to life, New York skyscrapers sprout heads and arms and lamp bases grow lips in a mad world reminiscent of a *Bugs Bunny* cartoon or Walt Disney's *Fantasia*.

For Dalí this was a continuation from his earlier work throughout the 1930s with Surrealist objects, the unsettlingly animistic imagery in many of his paintings, and especially his fashionable clothing and furniture design work in the Surrealist idiom with designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli and Jean-Michel Frank. These included his famous shoe-shaped hat, his "desk suit," the sofa shaped like Mae West's lips, and his notorious "aphrodisiac telephone" with its plaster lobster for a handle. That Dalí was preoccupied in his artistic practice at the time with creating, or at least giving the impression of creating, a profusion of such animistic designs is evident in the 1941 interview conducted by the *Indianapolis Sunday Star* recording the artist's day-to-day life at Hampton Manor, where he was in the process of writing *The Secret Life*. "Dalí rises promptly at 7:30 in the morning" the *Star* records, "At night he works on his memoirs, sandwiching in time as he

can for his ‘living furniture’ (including a breathing chair that he claims he was preparing for his exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery, and about which he promises to write in his book).”⁴⁹

Many of the designs, for “breathing furniture” and other “living” objects impossible to execute provide some of the most amusing and intricate of the drawings in the book. One notable example of these is the “mock up” of a chair with a feminine arm donning a glittering bracelet, under which Dalí has written “Project for spectral furniture, with live jewels provided with reflectors for alternative and decreasing lighting” (Figure 20).

Figures 20 and 21: Salvador Dalí. “Project for spectral furniture, with live jewels provided with reflectors for alternative and decreasing lighting” (left), p. 291, 1937, and “Project for an ultra-sophisticated oil lamp for the exclusive use of the aristocracy” (right), p. 294. Original drawings for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Ink on paper, 1940. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí /SODRAC (2009).

This object, which appears in Dalí's earlier works, such as his painting *Singularities* of 1935, reflects his idea of a chair "possessed" by a spectre, sporting living jewels and a lamp sprouting from its head. Dated 1937, this time the dating likely reflects that of the actual execution of the work, as it does Dalí's double-purposing for a number of drawings in the text. As with typical artist workbook designs, Dalí reveals his creative process in this and similar images in the text, as he works up the two ornate forms on the bottom right, as if searching for a shape; then an "early" version of the final object in the background, and the finished design to the fore.

That this illustration likely came from a workbook is suggested by the materiality of the original, which involves two pieces of paper that have been taped together (the dividing line still being visible in the reproduction), and upon which Dalí has distinctly wiped ink off his brush—both marks removed from the printed version in the book. The artist's insistence on highlighting this and other "projects" in *The Secret Life* serves to reinforce the idea of Dalí's "genius," as a mind always at work, and infinitely creative and industrious, as much as they indicate that these are indeed designs "in the works" rather than Surrealist fantasies.

Dalí managed to get much "mileage" out of his conceit of living furniture both in *The Secret Life* and in his artistic practice in general. While these fanciful and humorous objects have a genuine appeal of their own, they are also, it should be noted, profoundly and pointedly opposite to the type of stark, cool and geometric modernist furniture being produced by the most chic and most cutting-edge of designers and architects of the 1930s and '40s, such as Eileen Gray, le Corbusier or Gerrit Rietveld. That Dalí is sending up the streamlined, machine-inspired modernist "snob" aesthetic with his own decidedly organic

and kitsch design objects is implied in Dalí's comment in a footnote in which he describes his idea of an armchair that "breathes" by means of a mechanical pump and cushions that can be blown up. "This armchair I call artificial by contrast with the 'naturalness' of common armchairs," Dalí explains. "The artificial armchair is very useful for putting to sleep old people, children and snobs of every kind" (335 fn). That Dalí's "Project for Spectral Furniture" sprouts a decidedly elegant woman's arm bedecked with sparkling bijoux suggests a parodic rebuttal to chic streamlined and decidedly minimalist interior design so fashionable at the time. In fact, Dalí's own versions of "chic" furniture are so blatantly and comically antithetical to the current fashionable trends in modernist furniture, that they become not simply kitsch, but pointed parodies of kitsch.

Another example of the kitsch object being posited as a rebuttal to the modernist sensibility in *The Secret Life* is Dalí's "Project for an ultra-sophisticated oil lamp for the exclusive use of the aristocracy" (Figure 21). This article, with its hoof-like feet sprouting from an ornate Baroque base, supporting a garish *trompe l'oeil* face with two sets of lips is also, like the other designs, anything but "ultra-sophisticated." It is, in fact, an over-the-top rendition of precisely the sort of object that so offended Clement Greenberg, making a virtue of the very ersatz sophistication that the critic defined as kitsch. Another proposed design is Dalí's "Project for a silver candelabra to illuminate sinbolically [sic] my adolescence," depicting a candlestick holder consisting of a *bricolage* of napkins, plates, a cup and saucer, and knife, fork and spoon, which all stand on end in order hold up three lit candles (Figure 23). With this and similar objects, Dalí transforms the fairy-tale aspect of the earlier text, such as the "Woman in the Shape of a Spoon," into

Surrealist-inspired design objects, with erotic, and distinctly Freudian overtones. While the upright cutlery and other suggestive aspects of this image clearly, and surely intentionally, invite Freudian-style analysis, Dalí undermines potential psychoanalytic approaches by emphasizing the obvious humour and whimsicality of the work.

Figures 22 and 23: Salvador Dalí. Untitled (left), p. 7, and “Project for a Silver candelabra to illuminate symbolically [sic] my ‘adolescence,’” p. 141. Original drawings for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Ink on paper, c. 1940.

The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain,
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Considering psychoanalytic imperatives however, these kitsch chimeras are not only often decidedly phallic or otherwise suggestive, but are indeed reminiscent of the kind of object that Freud deemed *unheimlich*, or “uncanny.” In his famous 1919 essay “The Uncanny,” Freud suggests that despite Western culture’s veneer of rationalism and

supposed rejection of superstition and belief in the supernatural, beneath this surface perpetually lurks a belief in ghosts, otherworldly correspondences, and a lingering sense of object animism. The idea of the uncanny was central to Surrealist creative practice, which hinged upon incongruous juxtapositions and frequently drew for inspiration upon the superstitious and fetishistic tendencies that Freud claimed were deeply embedded in the human unconscious. Here, however, Dalí has categorically tamed his colleagues' dark and ironic use of this Freudian concept, and cleverly conflated this Surrealist staple with fairy-tale and kitsch imagery, the premise of the design "mock up" and the visual pun pointing to a fictive world of his own eccentric devise. Dalí's embedding of his animistic objects within the worlds of children's fantasy and of also of comics, cartoons and advertising, where they were an old staple, serves to undermine his objects' very uncanniness for, as Freud himself noted, "Wish-fulfillments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, animation of inanimate objects, all the elements so common in fairy stories, can exert no uncanny influence here; ... this problem is eliminated from the outset by the postulates of the world of fairy tales."⁵⁰

Dalí orchestrates this transition so effectively that these quirky objects appear less the abject, perverse or erotic psychological stuff of Surrealist dream-objects than as amusing characters from American animated children's films of the period or comical sketches from *The New Yorker*. By combining humour, kitsch, amusing captions, and playing up human tendencies in these drawings, Dalí transforms Surrealist objects rife with Freudian associations and menacing eroticism into veritable cartoon characters with immediate appeal to a popular American audience. In this sense, this strand of illustration in *The Secret Life* can be contextualized as a continuation not simply of Dalí's earlier

Surrealist imagery, but also of the comical sketches and caricatures he had drawn since he was a child. Not the least of these was a series of cartoons he produced for *American Weekly* between December 16, 1934 and July 7, 1935, which included his views of New York, “The American City Night and Day,” “American Country Life,” “Gangsterism,” and a “Crazy Movie Scenario of M. Dalí, the Super-Realist,” among others.⁵¹

In one of these, “How Super-Realist Dalí Saw Broadway,” something not far from Dalí’s and the Surrealist’s entire visual lexicon has been trotted out for amusing effect: fetishistic shoes, the umbrella, dismembered limbs, vagina dentatas, skeletal forms, melting musical instruments, and his old friend the anthropomorphic chair, this time with a fruit dish for a head, and a pillow with a slit strategically placed to imply female genitalia.⁵² This comical compendium of Surrealist imagery, appearing in the entertainment section of a mass-circulation American newspaper, has the effect not only of promoting “Super-Realist Dalí,” but also of directly parodying, or converting into pure kitsch, Surrealist imagery itself.

Despite the popular comic turn, there are a few exceptions to Dalí’s seeming transformation of Surrealist imagery, and judging from examples in *The Secret Life*, it is evident that the former Surrealist had not completely forsaken his former Surrealist mode. A few images in the book continue to reflect, unparodied, Dalí’s psychoanalytically-inflected and highly cryptic former approach, as they do in two works discussed in earlier sections of this dissertation, entitled “Form” (Figure 5) and “Ornamental Inquisition” (Figure 1). One such illustration depicts, on page 39, in a loose, swirling hand, a large, nude man from whose elbow sprouts an inkpot, and out of whose forehead protrudes a drawer; both “Dalinian” symbols from the artist’s earlier,

presumably more serious Surrealist work (Figure 24). Nevertheless, in order to make this carry-over consumable for his new American public, Dalí forsakes his previous, notoriously cryptic titles and complex imagistic amalgams, and instead glibly explains the subject of the work in layman's terms: "False memory probably inspired by the face of a lawyer friend of my father combined [sic] an antique mythological engraving" is the caption for this particular image.

Figure 24: Salvador Dalí. "False memory probably inspired by the face of a lawyer friend of my father combined [sic] an antique mythological engraving," p. 39. Ink on paper, c. 1940. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Another is a swirling sketch reminiscent of the artist's famous "sleeping head," blandly captioned in the book as "False memory of a vast ornamental visage in a state of decomposition" (46). A third, an anthropomorphic building emanating from a thicket, is described prosaically as "Idealistic tower in which took place the 'reveries' about Gala."

(269). Again presumably in the service of simplification for an American audience, Dalí decidedly downplays any Freudian associations, sidestepping the possibility of reference to repressed traumas, subconscious imagery or dream-state emanations, in lieu of his focus on the more familiar language of “false memories” and “imagination.”

The conclusions of Part Two and most of Part Three of *The Secret Life* are dominated by Dalí’s anthropomorphic furniture, presumably reflecting his “commercial turn” in Paris and America beginning in the mid-1930s, and decidedly and highly strategically sending up Surrealist imagery and modernist chic. Toward the book’s finale is an increasing emphasis upon drawings executed in a loose drafting style reminiscent of Renaissance artists such as Da Vinci, Giovanni Battista Braccelli and Raphael. In these sketches Dalí signals his move to “become classic” by employing a pastiche of classical subject matter depicting jousting matches, Bacchic dancing, centaurs and unicorns in a historical and mythological mish-mash. The wispy, flowing style of many of these drawing surely results from their reference to sets and costumes for the “classically”-themed ballets upon which Dalí was working at the time he was writing *The Secret Life*, which included *Mad Tristan* (later renamed *Venusberg*), *Bacchanale* of 1939, and *Labyrinth* of 1941. Dalí devised the storyline for the ballets, as well as the costumes and sets. Choreographed by Leonid Massine and danced by the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, both were staged at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

Taking into account how little the subjects of these drawings are keyed to the text compared to the other images in the book, it is quite likely that, similar to many of Dalí’s stated projects depicted his autobiography, they were taken directly from his workbooks and reused as illustrations in the memoir. This is suggested, in particular, by the very

rapid and slapdash treatment of the captions which, by comparison, are carefully rendered in the other images, and by the handling of the originals where the close cropping of the shapes of the pages imply their having come from an unrelated source.

Considering how widely distributed these images are in *The Secret Life*, Dalí barely mentions the ballets in the text, although the two paragraphs in which they are given mention brim with dropped names and spicy details. Discussing *Bacchanale*, Dalí explains that

This was a ballet that I have invented for the Monte Carlo Russian Ballet. I got along very well with Leonid Massine, who had been a hundred per cent Dalinian for a long time—it was precisely he who was predestined to do the choreography of the *Dance of the Crutches*. Prince Chervachidze, who with the Vicomte de Noailles is the purest representative of the authentic aristocracy of Europe, executed my stage sets with a professional conscience hardly deserved by our gimcrack modern epoch, always in a hurry and lacking in scrupulousness, in which everything is half done and badly done (379).

As for the costumes, one can only pity Dalí's "best friend" Coco Chanel, who was tasked with the labour of realizing Dalí's infinitely bizarre and ergonomically impossible stage garments. Dalí includes a project for two of these in *The Secret Life*, aptly captioned "'Mad Tristan' Project masquerade costumes never executed because is [sic] was 'too mad'" (Figures 25 and 26). According to Dalí, "Chanel worked on my show with a wholehearted enthusiasm and created the most luxurious costumes that have ever been conceived for the theatre." Chanel, he reveals, "used real ermine, real jewels, and the gloves of Ludwig II of Bavaria [who appears as a character in the ballet] were so heavily embroidered that we felt some anxiety as to whether the dancer would be able to dance with them on (379)."⁵³

Figures 25 and 26: Salvador Dalí. “‘Mad Tristan’ Project [sic] masquerade costumes never executed because is [sic] was ‘too mad,’” p. 362 (left), and “Bacchanale,” p. 379 (right). Ink on paper, c. 1940. The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain, © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

Dalí also employs this rather frothy and swiftly-sketched drafting manner to depict primarily classicizing imagery to index his stated return to “tradition” and form, and as the book progresses, the artist implements it increasingly for the rendering of religious themes, portraying Christ-like figures, and Renaissance religious structures such as St. Peter’s Cathedral and the Vatican. The three final images in the book are decidedly in this style, foregrounding Dalí’s ultimate emphasis on tradition and redemption. The first, depicting the exterior of St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome, is captioned “I saw the story of Rome revived in the course of ‘reveries’ during my long strolls,” referring to Dalí’s trips to Italy, where he “discovered the classicism of [his] soul” (Figure 27).⁵⁴ In this image, Dalí combines the current view of the Cathedral’s exterior with spectral figures representing Roman soldiers in battle, thereby evoking, and insisting upon the importance of history and tradition.

Figure 27: Salvador Dalí. "I saw the story of Rome revived in the course of 'reveries' during my long strolls," p. 397. Ink on paper, 1940.
The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation, Figueres, Spain,
© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí/SODRAC (2009).

The epilogue of *The Secret Life* is illustrated with a religious image that is seemingly in Dalí's "classic" style, wherein a saviour figure, presumably Christ—although with parallels to Dalí, the "other" saviour—standing before a classical building crowned with a cross, and holding up a crucifix to ward off a distressed warplane (399). Considering the gravitas of Dalí's final words in the book, focussing on religion and a personal and pan-European renaissance, the message of this image is unambiguously that religion is the supreme antidote to war. Equally so, Dalí's style indicates that the most worthy manner in which to draw and paint is deeply rooted in older traditions rather than those of the "gimcrack modern epoch" (379). This image is similar to that used for the

promotional poster for *The Secret Life*, which appears in the introductory page for Part Three of the book, and its importance to the text, as a tale of redemption or a conversion narrative is paramount. Also teleological is the move from more comedic and playful imagery to that which Dalí presumably intended to be “serious,” indicating that, as in the text, in the images Dalí has resolved his stylistic and ideological confusion and been redeemed by the Catholic Church. As he writes, “One thing is certain: nothing, absolutely nothing, in the philosophic, aesthetic, morphological, biological or moral discoveries of our epoch denies religion” (400).

To summarize loosely the continuum of images in the text, these flow from imagery reminiscent of *fin-de-siècle* fairy-books, to an eclectic mix of styles the artist experimented with during early adulthood, to anthropomorphic and absurdly kitsch imagery reflecting his aversion to modernism and presumed subversion of Surrealism, and end in a vigorously executed style dedicated primarily to classical and religious imagery. While by no means without exception, this trajectory indicates a close interplay between style and content, and image and text, as well as considering the many modes and registers in which Dalí works in the book. Equally, it lends a relatively successful sense of continuity to the images as a whole with his insistence on the imaginative or the metaphysical, be it through fairy-tale renderings, Surrealist uncanniness, anthropomorphic kitsch, or mythological or religious subject matter.

The other constant that connects the images from the beginning to the end of the work is that of the hand-written captions that appear within the visual frame of many of the illustrations. At the time *The Secret Life* was published, it was by not unusual for an artist to inscribe drawings for book illustrations with text, or, for that matter captions for

comical drawings and cartoons, which Dalí draws upon, to a degree, in some of the more amusing images in the work. The extent to which Dalí narrates his images, either providing a direct bridge to the text itself, or as a sort of visual/textual aside to the actual “storyline,” goes much farther than most, however, and is decidedly Dalinian in its exuberance and eccentricity—not to mention the freeform application in terms of the visual field, and the artist’s appalling spelling and grammatical *gaffes*. The extent to which, in some cases, Dalí aestheticizes the words themselves, is also characteristically Dalinian, and his often swirling and stylized copperplate can likely be traced as an influence on Andy Warhol’s use of a similar hand, rendered by his mother, Julia Warhola, in many of his whimsical, mostly commercial drawings of the 1950s. Warhol, who attended art school in the 1940s at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh, and then moved to New York where he, like Dalí, became a commercial artist, would undoubtedly have been exposed to the Spanish artist’s graphic production, and most likely to his high-profile autobiography, including the drawings. This may well have influenced the younger artist’s own use of similar hand-drawn captions in his work throughout the 1950s.

Whether or not the illustrations for *The Secret Life* accurately or convincingly reflect Dalí’s anti-modernist stance, his stated move to “traditional” subject matter, and his directive to “become classic” is an open question, however, and one that will have to be assessed by the individual reader. Nicolas Calas’ view of the drawings as inadvertently “syrupy” and “nauseating,” as well as Orwell’s view of them as unproblematic kitsch serve, however, as something of a litmus test as to how offensive Dalí’s style was in the early 1940s to those whose sensibilities found their allegiance within the vanguard

milieu. These reactions also, in many ways, prove how effective Dalí's style was as a provocation to those who preserved the ideals of various modernist and avant-garde projects, and most certainly, to the Surrealists, whom Dalí also evidently intended to épater.

Conclusion

In this, and the previous two chapters of this dissertation, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* has been considered in terms of its strategic intent and efficacy as a public relations vehicle, as a rebuttal to Surrealist invective, and as a manifesto denouncing the modernist project, and announcing the birth of Dalí's new "classic" style." Also under consideration have been issues of reception, documenting reactions to Dalí and his work in the 1930s and early 1940s in America, and defining his audiences as the American public, André Breton and the French Surrealists, as well as being a denouncement of the modernist project, as he defined it, and its adherents. In this sense, the chapters in question have looked specifically at what it is Dalí says, for the most part, overtly: his announcements, declarations, refutations and proposals.

In the following chapter, attention will be directed to the inverse of this aspect of Dalí's autobiography: to what it is that Dalí does *not* say in *The Secret Life*. These include what he strategically excludes from the narration of his life through conscious omission, self-censorship and opportunistic revisionism in the service of self-"reinvention," political side-stepping and consideration for the privacy of others. This chapter will also examine the way in which Dalí addresses what will be argued is yet another of his intended audiences, that of Nationalist Spain, where, through implication,

sub-text, allusion, and outright pandering, Dalí makes a conscious effort to align his politics with those of Francisco Franco's regime without stating them overtly in the text.

¹ Dalí, *Dalí on Modern Art*, 45. Dalí's mention of "Venus in furs" is a reference to Austrian author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's notorious 1870 novel of that name.

² James Thrall Soby, *Salvador Dalí: Paintings, Drawings, Prints* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1941), 26.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Salvador Dalí, *Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman*, oil on canvas, 1940, private collection. See reproduction in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 320.

⁵ Dalí writes, for instance, in *The Secret Life* of crossing the San Francisco Bridge, where he compares the supporting bars to "ten thousand most beautiful virgins in America," with their "angelic flesh" and "cowrie-shell sea vulvas" (394).

⁶ Michael R. Taylor, "Book Transforming Itself into a Nude Woman," in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 320.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Anon., "Had Any Good Dreams Lately?" *The New Yorker*, November 29, 1941 (CCDS), n.p.

⁹ Henry McBride, "The Classic Dalí: Not So Very Different from Dalí the Surrealist," *New York Sun*, April 26, 1941 (CDSS), n.p.

¹⁰ Soby, 29.

¹¹ Fanés, "Introduction," *Dalí. Mass Culture*, 15.

¹² Case Harriman, 27.

¹³ Stuckey, *The Persistence of Dalí*, online, n.p.

¹⁴ Ann Thomas, "The Appeal of Classicism," in *The 1930s: The Making of the New Man* (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 2008), 221.

¹⁵ Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 29.

¹⁶ Etherington-Smith, 272. The biographer also points out how, in the tradition of artistic patronage, Dalí simply found his own patrons and his own collectors, "many of whom were his alone—that is to say, he 'created' them as collectors for his work only. He hung his own shows and masterminded his own publicity in consumer rather than art magazines, with Gala looking after the finances."

¹⁷ Chevalier, "Salvador Dalí as Writer," n.p.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Charles Stuckey, *The Persistence of Dalí*, online, n.p.

²⁰ Peter Conrad, "Chewing Up the Soft Machine," *Times Literary Supplement* (May 30, 1980): 613.

²¹ In an undated interview, co-patron and founder of The Salvador Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, Eleanor Morse explains that she and her husband Reynolds Morse were "thrilled" by Dalí's technique, which is what initially attracted them to the artist's work. See *Dalí*, DVD, directed by Adam Low (London: BBC Documentary Film, 1986).

²² Radford, *Dalí*, 230

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Chapter Five of this dissertation, footnote 44.

²⁵ Malcolm Cowley, "The Imp of the Perverse," *The New Republic*, Jan. 12, 1943, 88.

²⁶ Frank Caspers, "Surrealism in Overalls," *Scribner's Magazine*, vol. 104, no. 2, August 1938, 17.

²⁷ Morse, 119.

²⁸ Secrest, 189.

²⁹ Dalí, "The Conquest of the Irrational," 417.

³⁰ Ratcliff, *Swallowing Dalí*, 36.

³¹ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), vii.

³² Theodor Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture," in *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991), 78.

³³ Ibid., 59.

³⁴ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 7.

³⁵ Ibid., 9.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁸ Ibid., 7 fn.

³⁹ Ibid., 10, 11.

⁴⁰ Dalí, *Declaration*, 333.

⁴¹ Soby, 15.

⁴² Letter from Julien Levy to "Chick" Austin, probably of April 1943, quoted in Eric. M. Zafran, "I am not a madman": Salvador Dalí in Hartford," in *Dalí's Optical Illusions* (Hartford Connecticut: Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art), 58.

⁴³ Greene, 8.

⁴⁴ Orwell, "Benefit of Clergy," 179-80.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 179-80.

⁴⁶ Nicolas Calas, "Salvador Dalí, Mythomaniac," in *Homage to Salvador Dalí: Special Issue of the XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 89.

⁴⁷ Pierre Volboudt, "The Drawings of Salvador Dalí" in *Homage to Salvador Dalí: Special Issue of the XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, 1980), 68-9.

⁴⁸ See page 169, Dover edition of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*.

⁴⁹ Anon., *Indianapolis Sunday Star*, April 6, 1941 (CDSS), n.p.

⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *The Standard Edition of The Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVII, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 251.

⁵¹ See Michael R. Taylor, "Gangsterism and Goofy Visions of New York, 1935," in Ades, *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 240-42.

⁵² Salvador Dalí, "How Super-Realist Dalí Saw Broadway," *American Weekly*, March 17, 1935. See reproduction in Fanés, *Dalí. Mass Culture*. p. 199.

⁵³ Dalí follows this description of production with the following. "But once more the work was to fail. The moment the war broke out the ballet company hurriedly left for America before Chanel and I had finished our work. In spite of the cables we sent to try to delay the performance the *Bacchanale* appeared at the Metropolitan with improvised costumes, and without my having seen even a single rehearsal! Nevertheless it was, it appears, an immense success (279).

⁵⁴ Dalí uses this expression in the caption for an illustration on page 316, followed by "Cosmogony, a synthesis, and an architecture of eternity."

CHAPTER 8: Spanish Nationalism Under Cover: Dalí (Non)Position in *The Secret Life*

The disasters of war and revolution in which my country was plunged only intensified the wholly initial violence of my aesthetic passion, and while my country was interrogating death and destruction, I was interrogating that other sphinx, of the imminent European “becoming,” that of the RENAISSANCE.

Salvador Dalí,
The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí (361).

Introduction

“Personally,” Dalí writes in *The Secret Life*, “politics have never interested me,” and considering the degree to which the Spanish artist downplays his political past and his current ideological leanings, the reader might be inclined to believe him. Dalí was, however, adept at obscuring, if not revising many of his political views and affiliations in his work, a strategy that served him well throughout his career. “Like East and West,” writes Fleur Cowles in the 1950s, “politics and art are never supposed to meet, but do ... In Dalí’s case, some instinct has protected him from completely advertising his political views.”¹ This instinct, it shall be argued in the chapter that follows, was one that Dalí had finely honed, and one that the artist employed tactically and opportunistically as the occasion, or his artistic practice, required.

The Secret Life was written in the wake of the Spanish Civil War, in the midst of exile from World War II, and witnessed a time in Dalí’s life where he transitioned from the predominantly left-leaning fealties of his young adulthood to lauding the most extreme reactionary faction of Spanish Nationalism, that of the neo-fascist Falange Espanola. While Dalí is by no means inclined to announce this allegiance in his memoir overtly, and in fact goes to great lengths to obscure or deny not only his revolutionary

past, but his reactionary present, the artist does in fact embed the text with enough information to indicate, to an audience apprised of Spanish politics, precisely where his loyalties lie. As such, under consideration in this chapter is Dalí's careful and strategic use of language and reportage, where his inclusions and exclusions of political "material" are neutralized or revealed through implication, intimation, and the traces and aporias left by omission, fabrication, and self-censorship. In order to access these "secrets" of Dalí's "secret life," a quantity of extratextual documentation has been accessed and contrasted with Dalí's text in order to assess the extent of Dalí's revisionism and to parse the political sub-text that, it is suggested, he has embedded in the work.

This chapter, then, considers once again the strategic nature of the disclosure of Dalí's "anecdotic self portrait," and looks at two more of the artist's intended audiences for his book: that of his family in Spain, and in particular, the Spanish Nationalist regime. As Dalí well knew, his autobiography served not only to attest to Dalí's character, but to his political allegiances, and fealties. Consequently, on one level, the book can be read as an ingratiating to Franco's regime, and as a document that Dalí posited as a potential entry visa back to the beloved country of his birth. In light of Franco's militant instatement of national Catholicism, this is evinced most readily in Dalí's ardent embrace of the Catholic Church at the end of the book which, while completing the cycle of the conversion narrative upon which the text is based, also keenly indexes Dalí's political allegiances of the period.

Dalí's Changing Political Affiliations

Dalí's political leanings have always been contentious, from his early life as a student, to later dealings with the Surrealists and the avant-garde, and they continue to

make him suspect, if not a *persona non grata* in certain cultural circles to this day. Dalí's politics, like his religious position, are equally notable for their extremes, as Dalí made the transition from anarchist- to communist-leaning leftist to reactionary right-leaning Franco supporter and from atheist to devout Catholic during the first four decades of his life. While such pronounced transitions suggest passionate commitment, *The Secret Life* is notable for suggesting the very opposite; that is, a disinterest or reticence regarding Dalí's national and ideological allegiances. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the nature and timbre of Dalí's political activities and affiliations as he experienced them in his "lived" life in order to grasp the magnitude of his revisionism, and the expedience and agency of what Dalí evidently viewed as a social necessity, not to mention the implications politics had upon his career.

Dalí's earliest political affiliations were inclined towards anarchism, and were influenced by his father, a middle-class small-town notary, Salvador Dalí Cusí, and his circle, who opposed the centralist Bourbon monarchy, and were converts to the Catalan federalist cause and "stout defenders of the Catalan language which, since the eighteenth century, had been systematically excluded by Madrid from public life."² While Dalí's mother was Roman Catholic, the Dalí household was dominated by Dalí senior's vehement anti-clerical atheism; a stance both father and son upheld until the time of the Spanish Civil War.³ Toward adolescence, Dalí junior had decidedly leaned toward communism, and in a diary of 1919 he extols revolutionary causes and writes, among other slogans, "Long live the Soviet Republic!" In the early 1920s Dalí apparently "thinks of himself as a communist, identifies fully with the workers, loathes capitalism and is an entrenched enemy of the Spanish status quo, with its press censorship and an

army likely, at any moment, to stage a military coup.” As for the Spanish King Alfonso XIII, Dalí apparently sniffs that “he is only interested in hunting and regattas.”⁴

According to Gibson, there is no evidence that Dalí sought to join the Spanish Communist Party, during his adolescent years or otherwise, although he was “certainly prepared to assert his revolutionary ideas in public and, when necessary, to stand up against authority.”⁵ Fanés records that in a 1928 survey by the newspaper *La Publicitat*, Dalí declared that “as far as solving social problems went, he identified with ‘the Communist position,’ while in the realm of personal beliefs he declared himself to be ‘absolutely and *profoundly* anti-religious.’”⁶ Dalí’s atheism and communist proclivities afforded him a comfortable affinity with the Surrealists, whose ranks he joined in 1929 and who were, as is well known, in close, although often strained affiliation with the French Communist Party. Dalí very much upheld the Surrealist line regarding Communism for the first few years of membership in the movement, even giving a lecture for the Spanish non-Stalinist Communist party, the Bloc Obrer i Camperol (BOC) (the Workers’ and Peasants’ Front), in 1931. Notably, the lecture carried the same title as André Breton’s Surrealist journal of the period, “Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution,” signalling the extent to which art and politics were inextricably bound where Surrealism was concerned. While he was visiting the Figueres region that summer, the Figueres paper *Empordà Federal* announced that Dalí, “the formidable artist and great Communist,” had just arrived.⁷

As previously discussed, Dalí’s relationship with the Surrealists had become strained by 1934, when the Surrealists, and Breton in particular, became alarmed by Dalí’s stated interest in Germany’s newly elected chancellor, Adolf Hitler, resulting in

the artist's near expulsion from the Surrealist movement. Dalí managed to negotiate his way out of this, however, by claiming that his interest in Hitler was merely a "paranoiac" phenomenon. By 1935, as outlined in his tract *Conquest of the Irrational*, Dalí was still inclined to state that Surrealism was nothing less than a form of cultural "caviar."⁸ Nevertheless, with Dalí's returns to Spain from Paris, and his subsequent voyages to Italy and the United States, his enthusiasm for Communism, and "orthodox" or Bretonian Surrealism noticeably began to wane. This was no doubt affected at least in part by the events leading up to the Spanish Civil War which commenced in 1936, which further politicized virtually all Spaniards. While the Surrealists, and other notable members of the vanguard, most famously Picasso, passionately sided with Republican causes, as Cowles notes, "During Spain's civil war, Dalí remained on Franco's side, but kept relatively silent."⁹

While in terms of Spanish causes, Dalí was leaning toward the right, he was also enjoying a tremendous amount of celebrity and opportunity in the United States. As a consequence, the artist duly discovered the personal benefits of advanced capitalism, making a communist stance increasingly less attractive. By 1937, according to Gibson, "Dalí had come to the conclusion by this time that Karl Marx was out and the Marx Brothers were in."¹⁰ By 1939 Dalí's ever more vociferous straying from the Surrealist ideology had strained his relations with the movement to the point of no return, and his official expulsion came in the guise of an article in the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* in which Breton accused Dalí of racism, and claimed his work had become redundant and bordered on kitsch. While this was Breton's official line, the discharge was also no doubt facilitated by Dalí's increasingly reactionary political position, and such things as his

reintroducing imagery of Hitler in his work, and revelations to Buñuel, and presumably others, extolling the virtues of the neo-fascist Spanish group, the Falange. Also, while in *The Secret Life* Dalí cites his trips to Italy as having inspired him to embrace Catholicism, as many of his staunchly left-leaning colleagues noted, his conversion arrived at a conspicuously opportune time considering Franco's instatement of National Catholicism at the precisely concurrent moment. By comparison, at this time a number of Dalí's previously free-thinking Spanish friends had also embraced Franco and the Falange, as had Dalí's father, who had become an avid Catholic himself.

Considering the relative dearth of critical commentary and even casual notice regarding possible political content of *The Secret Life*, it is evident that the more virulent or precise political aspects of Dalí's autobiography are embedded subtly enough to be easily dismissed or overlooked. Dalí does, in fact, make every effort to efface all but his most neutral or comical political views in the work, except for a few exuberant pronouncements or asides which are evidently intended to function as his "official" (non)position in light of the wealth of speculation about his ideological affiliations circulating among the avant-garde of the period. These included accusations that dogged Dalí into exile of his "Hitlerism," or presumed admiration of Adolf Hitler, as well as of his Spanish Nationalist affinities, particularly with the Falange.

Addressing these allegations in the tradition of the manifesto, by way of stating his political position, or lack of one, in *The Secret Life*, Dalí claims a complete aversion to revolution and "isms" of the period (fn 350). "Dalinian and only Dalinian!" is his battle cry. The Spanish Civil War changed none of his ideas, Dalí claims, but "On the contrary it endowed their evolution with a decisive rigor." A "Horror and aversion for

every kind of revolution assumed in me an almost pathological form,” Dalí continues, “Nor did I want to be called a reactionary. This I was not: I did not ‘react’—which is an attribute of unthinking matter. For I simply continued to think, and I did not want to be called anything but Dalí.” Addressing the speculation about Dalí’s political affinities, he writes that “already the hyena of public opinion was slinking around me, demanding of me with the drooling menace of its expectant teeth that I make up my mind at last, that I become Stalinist or Hitlerite.” To this the artist replies, “No! No! No! and a thousand times no! I was going to continue to be as always and until I died, Dalinian and only Dalinian! I believed neither in the communist revolution nor in the national-socialist revolution, nor in any other kind of revolution. I believed only in the supreme reality of tradition” (360).

Dalí’s official line, then, in *The Secret Life* is of having always been “outside” of politics, and of a current “non-reactionary” return to tradition, a horror of revolution, and a refusal to participate in organized politics of any kind other than those he deemed strictly “Dalinian.” As outlined above, however, despite his often gross revisionism, Dalí had in fact been deeply implicated in many aspects of organized politics from an early age, and regardless of his avoidance of the subject in his memoir, was, at the time of its writing, closely aligned with Francoist ideologies.

In order to locate the various sites and modalities of politics that inform *The Secret Life*, a turn to Dalí’s own breakdown of the political aspects of his book is in order. This Dalí obligingly, albeit retrospectively, conferred in a personal newsletter he published on November 30, 1945, three years after his autobiography was published. Entitled *The Dalí News*, this publication, essentially a press release, is a humorous “take”

on *The Daily News*. In it Dalí wrote of his “Predictions of *Secret Life* about to be realized,” which he listed as follows (boldface his):

1. Defeat of the racial theory of National Socialism. Manifested in the will of Robert Ley.¹¹

2. End of the experimental period in Art.

Paul Éluard, the greatest surrealist poet has just declared in Paris—“The experimental period of surrealism must be considered closed. A young French painter, de la Vigerie, rediscovered the tradition of Fouquet.”¹²

3. Renaissance of Catholicism in France.

The dazzling influence of the party of Georges Bidault in the recent British elections.¹³

4. Formation of new aristocracies.¹⁴

Evolution toward the hierchization of Russian Communism.

While Dalí’s “predictions” are not immediately evident in the book, as Dalí implies here, the list is particularly useful in underscoring four presumed areas of political engagement which inform the work. Following his lead, then, these include Dalí’s stance concerning Nazism; his anti-modernism and his call for a return to tradition in art; his insistence on the primacy of Catholicism, his own conversion and the political implications of this conversion; and his own proposal for a “new world order.”

While Dalí’s list is typically revisionist, serving his needs of the post-war moment rather than reflecting verifiable fact, Dalí does indeed make predictions in his memoir similar to the ones he claims in *The Dali News*. These occur in the final few pages of the book, where he states his current position, defines his (non)allegiance and announces his exuberant embrace of Catholicism. According to Dalí the “old Greco-Roman civilization” had been exhausted from various revolutionary experiments, from excess, from “lack of rigor, lack of form”, and among a number of other things, lack of faith and

“cosmogony.” These revolutions, he postulates, had all resulted in war. At this juncture Dalí begins his prophecy, claiming that Europe will reject revolutions, embrace tradition and Catholicism, and experience a glorious renaissance. “Europe will awaken from the nightmare of the atrocious torture of the present war, disillusioned by the ‘goodness’ of the revolutionaries for which it will have paid too monstrously dear,” he begins.

It will awaken, I repeat, with its eyes at last opened and dry, from having exhausted its tears, upon the reality of the holy resuscitated continuity of its tradition. The present war only confirms, before all else, the bankruptcy of revolutions. Indeed, the collectivist, atheistic or neo-pagan utopias of Communism or of National-Socialism, whether they mutually aid each other or devour each other, are destined at last to be annihilated and vanquished, both of them, by the individualist reactualization of the Catholic European, Mediterranean tradition. 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. Europe after the present catastrophe of its experience of the post-machinist and materialist civilization of the Post-War, will sink into a kind of medieval period, during which it will again come to lean upon the eternal foundation of the religious and moral values and forces of its past of spiritual civilization. Out of the imminent spiritual crisis of those ephemeral Middle Ages will arise the individuals of the coming renaissance.

Dalí concludes this list of predictions by exclaiming, “Let me be the first fore-precursor of that renaissance!” (394-95), and in this way, he conflates his own stated personal renaissance, which has informed the structure of the entire autobiography, with his projected renaissance of Europe, equating his individual struggle and physical “morphology” with that being undertaken by the “old Greco-Roman civilization.”

While Dalí prophesies a triumphant renaissance for all of Europe, being the staunchly proud Spaniard and Catalan that he was, the reader might well assume that Spain was the prime interest for Dalí here. Indeed, the rhetoric Dalí employed was virtually indistinguishable with that of the jingoism of the Spanish Nationalist regime.

According to Gibson, in June 1940, when the Germans had occupied Paris, Dalí journeyed to Figueres and to Cadaqués. “These were days of extreme elation for the Franco regime, with the newspapers proclaiming daily that Spain’s Nazi allies were on the point of crushing Britain.” At this time France’s fall was “regarded with great official satisfaction, and it was made clear to the nation that, with a victorious Hitler on the one hand and Mussolini on the other, Spain was about to participate in the creation of a new Europe, with imperialist expansion in Africa (and, naturally, the recovery of Gibraltar guaranteed).”¹⁵ As will presently be discussed, Dalí had also been much affected by acquaintances of his youth whom he had encountered in Madrid who had become avid Falange supporters, absorbing their “euphoric rhetoric” on the subject. In response to this encounter, Dalí wrote to Caresse Crosby at the end of July claiming that Spain was about to become the “spiritual saviour of the world.”¹⁶ Surely this is what Dalí meant when he wrote that “Out of the imminent spiritual crisis of those ephemeral Middle Ages will arise the individuals of the coming renaissance,” of which he wanted to be “the first forerunner” (395).

Francoism and The Spanish Civil War

Despite Dalí’s evident enthusiasm for the events unfolding in his native country, the artist gives little mention of the two wars that so profoundly affected him leading up to the writing of his life narrative, and focuses much more on Spain’s positioning regarding both. Nevertheless, while Dalí was, like most people in the Western hemisphere, profoundly affected by WWII, the Spanish Civil War also had an immeasurable impact on Dalí and upon the country so close to his heart. This war, which began in 1936 and ended in 1939, was a military uprising staged by the Nationalists, as

the rebels were called, who were supported by the country's conservative faction, against the young and unstable Republican government of Spain. When an initial coup proved unsuccessful in winning control of the country, a ferocious and bloody civil war ensued. A *cause célèbre* for the left and much of the intelligentsia in many Western countries, the Republicans, or Loyalists as they were known, were given help from the governments of France and Mexico, as well as equipment and supplies from the Soviet Union. They were also joined by approximately 40,000 volunteers from Europe and the United States who fought in the International Brigades, and by 20,000 others who served in medical or auxiliary units. George Orwell, who fought alongside members of the Independent Labour Party as part of the POUM militias (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista*, or The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification), was among them, as were other men of letters such as Ernest Hemingway, André Malraux and W.H. Auden. The Nationalists, in turn, received aid in the form of troops, tanks, and planes from Fascist Italy and from Nazi Germany, whose military was to stage the horrific air strike at Guernica in Northern Spain, memorialized in Picasso's famous mural *Guernica* of 1937.

The war was the result of a decades-long schism that had evolved in Spanish social life and politics. Those who were to become Republicans comprised urban and rural workers and many of the educated middle class. On right of the political spectrum were much of the established Roman Catholic Church in Spain, high-ranking military personnel, much of the business class and most landowners. The extremes of the two sides included, to the right, the Fascist-oriented Falange, and to the left the militant anarchists. Between these poles were a number of factions, defined by monarchism and conservatism through liberalism to Socialism, and including a small Communist

movement itself divided between Stalinites and Trotskyites. Assassinations were not uncommon, and one of the most prominent victims of Franco's regime was the great friend of Dalí's youth, the Andalusian poet Federico García Lorca.

A succession of governmental crises resulted in an election held on the sixteenth of February, 1936, which was won by a Popular Front government which was supported by most of the parties of the left, and opposed by what remained of the centre and the parties of the right. In response to this, a carefully-planned military uprising was commenced on the seventeenth of July of that same year, throughout various Spanish garrison towns. Four days later, the rebels had achieved control in Spanish Morocco, the Canary Islands, and most of the Balearic Islands, as well as a large part of Spain north of the Guadarrama Mountains and the Ebro River. The Republicans succeeded in putting down the uprising in other areas, except for some of the larger Andalusian cities such as Seville, Granada and Córdoba. Both sides proceeded to organize their respective territories, and opposition, suspected or real, was repressed.

Beginning in September 1936, the Republican government was headed by the Socialist leader Francisco Largo Caballero. Caballero was followed in May 1937 by fellow Socialist Juan Negrín, who remained prime minister throughout the rest of the war and until 1945 served his post in exile. The president of the Spanish Republic until nearly the end of the war was the anticlerical liberal Manuel Azaña. Leading forces he had brought from Morocco, the captaincy of the Nationalists was gradually assumed by General Franco who was named head of state on October 1, 1936, and proceeded to set up a government in the city of Burgos in northern Spain. By November the Nationalists had advanced to the outskirts of Madrid, to which they laid siege, although they were

unable to proceed beyond the University City area. They captured the Basque northern provinces in the summer of 1937, followed by the Asturias, holding the entire northern coast by October. A war of attrition began, and in April 1938 the Nationalists broke through Republican lines eastward at Teruel, advancing as far as the Mediterranean. This manoeuvre split the Republican forces into two groups. By December of that year the Nationalist forces entered Catalonia, which pushed the Republican armies northward toward and eventually into France, whence the Republican government also fled on March 5. Two days later, further fighting in Madrid erupted between Communist and anti-Communist factions. Within three weeks, all of the Republican armies had begun to disband, surrender, and Nationalist forces entered Madrid triumphant on March 28, 1939.¹⁷

Thus began almost four decades of dictatorship in Spain that were characterized by often brutal political repression, censorship, extreme conservatism, an emphasis on the conventional family unit, tradition and an official and militant endorsement of the Catholic Church. In the western cultural sector, nothing could be farther from the ethos of the avant-garde, and the Surréalists took a keen interest in the Spanish republic. They had celebrated the election of the Spanish Republican government on April 14, 1931, which put an end to the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, and were staunchly opposed to the Spanish Nationalist cause.¹⁸ By July 18, 1936, when the Spanish Civil War commenced, the Surrealists leapt to publish a number of impassioned tracts calling upon the French people to support the Spanish Republican government in its fight against Franco's forces.¹⁹

While the Surrealists had much to say about the Spanish Civil War, Dalí remained remarkably reticent on the subject in his memoir, although he did offer a dramatic first-hand account of a significant pre-war event of 1934, when he and Gala were in Barcelona during an incident known as the October Insurrection. This was the result of a series of general strikes in Valencia and Zaragoza, and a bloody uprising by miners in Asturias that was suppressed by Franco-led troops. The Insurrection included armed combat in Madrid and Barcelona, and was a dangerous time for the couple to have found themselves in the capital among bombs being set off by the radical Federación Anarquista Ibérica. In *The Secret Life*, Dalí describes how he and Gala tried desperately to find a driver who would take them to the frontier, while watching in horror as more and more civilians armed themselves, including, the author notes, clerks at the Ministerio de la Gobernación, who left their typewriters to set up machine guns at the windows as they anticipated a Catalan republic to be declared. Dalí pointedly notes that he was able to find an anarchist chauffeur “who was willing to compromise himself, for a rather considerable sum.” Tragically, after succeeding in delivering the couple to the Spanish-French frontier, Dalí reports that, returning through the suburbs of Barcelona the unfortunate man was killed by a spray of machine-gun bullets (354-57).

Having offered this detailed first-hand description, Dalí pays little attention to the Spanish Civil War itself. The artist learns of the outbreak of the war, he reports, while dining at the Savoy in London, and upon hearing the news, claims that he immediately decided that “A period of ascetic rigor and of a quintessential violence of style was going to dominate my thinking and my tormented life, illuminated solely by the fires of faith of the Spanish Civil War and the aesthetic fires of the Renaissance—in which intelligence

was one day to be reborn” (358). While this statement might well point to Dalí’s affinities, especially in his mention of faith, which will be discussed below, he then undertakes a long-winded jeremiad in which he expounds upon the “ping-pong of politics” between the Spanish anarchists, and the other (Nationalists), “with the flag of tradition, red and gold, of immemorial Spain bearing that other inscription which needed only two letters, FE (faith)” (358). Having already portrayed, in the person of the venal anarchist chauffeur, the hypocrisy and futility of the leftist factions, who “lived their dream in which they never wholly believed,” Dalí continues with his panegyric cited earlier, in which he claims no affinity other than being “Dalinian and only Dalinian!” Nevertheless, after claiming his new period of “rigor,” he finishes his observation with the exuberant declaration that, privileging Roman Catholicism and tradition, position him squarely in the Spanish Nationalist camp. “And through the revolution of the Spanish Civil war” he writes, “there was going to be rediscovered nothing less than the authentic Catholic tradition peculiar to Spain.” He adds that “In the Spanish Civil War the Spanish people, the aristocracy of the peoples, even while they were devouring one another, were obscurely and unknowingly fighting unanimously for one thing, for that thing which is Spain—ardent tradition” (360).

In Dalí’s discussion of the Spanish Civil War in *The Secret Life*, the artist claimed that thanks to the war, “From all parts of martyred Spain rose a smell of incense, of chasubles, of burned curate’s fat and of quartered spiritual flesh ...,” a rumination that points to the desecration by the left of the institutions and symbols of the Catholic Church, which ascended “toward heaven like the very odour of ecstasy of the orgasm of revolution” (360). Here Dalí references one of the most tragic outcomes of the excesses

of the war, which resulted in hundreds of villages and towns, churches, convents and other religious buildings being sacked and then set afire by those with Republican alliances. “[T]he vicious assault on the Catholic Church,” write historians of Spain George Esenwein and Adrian Shubert, included “a grizzly onslaught that resulted in the destruction of countless religious buildings and the deaths of over 6,800 members of the clergy (including some 280 nuns),” and resulted in “the greatest clerical bloodletting in the modern history of the Christian Church.”²⁰ The extreme left’s hatred of the Church was so intense that they also targeted an untold number of lay persons, who were killed because of their known religious affiliations or for publicly professing their beliefs. In order to comprehend why the church had become the chief target of those on the Republican side, Esenwein and Shubert write, “one must remember that the clergy was regarded by the extreme left as a pillar of social oppression. As one anarchist trade union newspaper put it, the church was the symbol of obscurantism, the avid backers of ‘God, Country and King.’”²¹

As virulent as anti-Catholic sentiments were on the Republican side, Franco likewise introduced a militant pro-Church campaign, and once the dictator had stepped into power in 1939, the Church was relegated a prominent position in building the new order. Spain was to be ethically and spiritually rehabilitated, and the state designated the Catholic Church to lead this program.²² Indeed, Franco sought political support from the Roman Catholic Church, and put great emphasis on the institution of family. Civil marriages were declared invalid and had to be reconfirmed by the church, precisely as Dalí and Gala were to do in 1958. Homosexuality, pedophilia and prostitution were anathema, and were made criminal offences in 1954. In keeping with the emphasis on

tradition, Franco also championed the concept of monarchy, perhaps in part because his own mother was twice a descendant from a sister of King Manuel I. In fact, Franco proclaimed Spain a monarchy in 1947, although he did not designate a particular ruler, becoming the *de facto* regent as a result.²³

Dalí's claim, then, in his memoir of the early 1940s, that "the unity of Europe will be made, and can only be made, under the sign of the triumph of Catholicism," that his "metamorphosis is tradition," and that he wants to re-marry his wife, which was "this time ... to be affirmed and made sacred by the Catholic Church," all point to Dalí's toeing the Francoist line. To a certain degree, even the political subtext in *The Secret Life* itself can be considered as a tangible contribution to Nationalist cause. Esenwein and Shubert note that "Nationalist authors saw their writings as a collective enterprise. They spoke with one voice about the need for hierarchical order, national unity and the preservation of the Catholic Church"—a project in which Dalí evidently participated with his apparent enthusiasm in the finale of *The Secret Life* for these precise entities. Spanish poster art, it should also be noted, such as the work of Spanish illustrator Carlos Sáenz de Tejada, and other visual aspects of Nationalist propaganda also attempted to rouse sentiment and inspire allegiance for the regime by linking images signalling Catholic spirituality with those of war.²⁴ Dalí also seemed keen to participate in this collective propagandistic enterprise with the promotional poster used at the time for *The Secret Life*, repeated in the introductory page of Part Three of the book, which depicts a Christ-like figure holding up a cross (which invariably represents the Catholic Church in Dalí's "cosmogony") against two distressed warplanes falling from the sky (Figure 1-3).

While Dalí's conversion to Roman Catholicism, as announced in *The Secret Life*, may read to a contemporary audience as a purely self-referential gesture and private choice, this act in fact had profound implications in terms of Dalí's political leanings that would not have escaped those familiar with the vagaries of Spanish politics of the period in which the book was published. As has been discussed, Dalí was aware of, and participated in the contentious discourse encompassing religion in Spain from a very early age. Regarding Dalí's virulent atheism, Fanés writes that "among the Catalan intelligentsia of the 1920s, to declare oneself an atheist was something that had implications well beyond the merely personal, and was an act of defiance of the status quo and intelligentsia, as all the writers, critics and journalists affiliated with Catalan culture were themselves ardent Catholics" (175).

Dalí's atheism was, then, closely aligned with the leftist stance of his youth, much as his embrace of Catholicism circa 1939, at the commencement of Franco's dictatorship, duly aligned him with the right. That Dalí's conversion was one primarily of expedience, rather than unproblematic faith and spiritual awakening, is perhaps articulated by Dalí himself at the end of his autobiography. After a long and exuberant tirade at the finale of the text in which Dalí hails the grandeur, beauty and longevity of the Catholic Church, he concludes the book with one feeble italicized passage that calls the authenticity of all this fervour very much into question. "*At this moment I do not yet have faith,*" Dalí writes, "*and I fear I shall die without heaven*" (400).

Despite Dalí's coded language and talking "around" his affinities by focussing upon religion and his love of tradition rather than lauding Franco's regime directly, Dalí's new direction was loud and clear to many members of the Surrealist movement and the

American avant-garde in the early 1940s. And while Dalí does not state outright where his affiliations lie in *The Secret Life*, there is abundant evidence to support a corresponding Spanish Nationalist fealty. Indeed, at the time Dalí was beginning to write his autobiography, he was at the same juncture becoming very interested in the Falange in particular, the far-right national syndicalist Spanish political party founded in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera in opposition to the Second Spanish Republic. The Falange, meaning phalanx, was subsequently fused by Franco with the Carlist monarchist parties (“Carlist” referring to one of the traditional royal lines), which the dictator harnessed for his own purposes, the result being loosely categorized as fascist. The Falangistas, as they were known, were staunchly Roman Catholic, maintained a strong nationalist pride in the history of the Spanish empire, and were vociferously anti-communist and anti-anarchist.²⁵

In a letter that Dalí sent to Buñuel in 1939, the year the Spanish Civil War ended, and WWII began, the artist reviles communism, advises the filmmaker to “disinfect himself of Marxism,” states his enthusiasm for the Falange and elucidates his new right-wing position and subsequent life direction. Not surprisingly, the letter reads, for all intents and purposes, like a manifesto:

Negrín was leading us in the direction of a nauseating Socialist mediocrity that has been totally surpassed by the “Falanges,” by Spanish biological reality²⁶ ... To recapitulate—my life must now be *orientated towards Spain* and *The Family*. *Systematic destruction* of the *infantile* past represented by my Madrid friends, images which have no *real consistence* ... Long live the *individuality* of the sharks (Marquis de Sade) who eat the weak—NIETSCHE [sic]—and the Empordà, realist-surrealist.

What shit Marxism is, the last survival of Christian shit—Catholicism I respect *a lot*, it’s SOLID.

... SPAIN IS *SERIOUS*, DESTINED FOR “*WORLD HEGEMONY*.” A SURREALIST “ARRIBA ESPAÑA!”²⁷

Dalí's final words, "Arriba Espana!" ("Long Live Spain!"), comprised the slogan of the Falange as much as the hubristic assertion that Spain was destined for "world hegemony."²⁸ Likewise, in late July of 1940, just prior to embarking for America, Dalí wrote to Caresse Crosby that "The young group surrounding the Falange is surely one of the most intelligent, the most inspired, and the most original of our times, among the desolate mediocrity that shadows the world." Further, he prophesied that the "spirit of this world will be saved by Spain, which believes only in realism ..."²⁹

For twenty days in the summer of 1940, while Gala was in Lisbon obtaining the necessary papers for the couple to flee to America, Dalí went to Spain to visit his family and various acquaintances, an episode depicted in great detail and tenderness in *The Secret Life*. After Figueres, Cadaqués and Port Lligat, the artist then rushed to Madrid where he encountered some leading Falangists, including the poet and essayist Dionisio Ridruejo and two of his old friends, the writer Eugenio Montes and Rafael Sánchez Mazas, an authority on the Italian Renaissance. These men apparently had quite an effect on Dalí, and were likely the "illustrious members" of the Falange whom Dalí was later to reveal had invited him to join the party; an invitation Dalí was to decline.³⁰

Dalí's biographers, for the most part, see the artist's Francoism purely as a matter of expedience. After the Spanish Civil War had ended with a victory for Franco, according to Gibson, "Dalí had decided that his sympathies lay fair and square with the Caudillo."³¹ As far as Etherington-Smith is concerned, Dalí's meeting with the intellectuals of his youth, now turned Falange, "gave Dalí reason to hope that, if the war in Europe ever finished, there might be a place in Franco's Spain for him, if his politics

were correct.”³² Undeniably, there are numerous reasons why collusion with Franco’s fascist directives would serve Dalí’s purposes: to provoke the avant-garde, and especially Breton, who detested Franco and continued to accuse Dalí of “Hitlerism”; to ingratiate himself with the Spanish regime, seeing as victory was by no means impossible, and was eventually obtained; and finally, perhaps to give in to what seems in retrospect like right-wing and religious tendencies Dalí had perhaps harboured beneath a revolutionary and atheist self-presentation—inclinations that Breton had suspected for a long time.

Like a few other notable intellectuals of the period, including Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, Dalí grew very quickly to admire Franco, and by 1951 was stating that “Before Franco, every politician and every new Government did nothing else except augment the confusion, the lies and the disorder in Spain.” In Dalí’s view of that time, “Franco breaks away violently from this false tradition, re-establishing clarity, truth and order in the country—and that in the most anarchic moments of the world. This seems most original to me.”³³ *The Secret Life* is a crucial document for tracing the trajectory of Dalí’s Spanish Nationalist leanings as, aside from his private letters, it is his first public forum to hint at his new, profoundly opportunistic direction.

Opportune in terms of his career in America, indeed, was a public face not overtly in admiration of Franco, but very much in accordance with Franco’s directives; directives from which Dalí was to benefit greatly in later years. However, what can be described as the artist’s Spanish Nationalist leanings must be placed in context of his personal experiences of WWII and especially that of the Spanish Civil War in which Dalí lost much to left causes. In *The Secret Life* Dalí notes of the latter war that he had received tragic news from Cadaqués. “The anarchists had shot about thirty people, all of them

friends of mine, and among them three fishermen of Port Lligat to whom we were very close” (365). Dalí’s sister Ana María had been tortured at the hands of the Communist-run SIM (Military Intelligence Service), Dalí’s family was displaced, and Dalí’s beloved house in Port Lligat had been pillaged and vandalized. Dalí’s father, once a virulent atheist and Republican, as a result of having suffered at the hands of various leftist factions, had very quickly become a great admirer of Franco and a devout Catholic. Writing to Buñuel in 1939, Dalí explains that, “The Reds imprisoned my sister in Barcelona for twenty days!” Worse still, “They tortured her, she went mad, she’s in Cadaqués, they have to force-feed her, she shits in her bed, imagine the tragedy of my father from whom they stole everything, he has to live in a boarding house in Figueres, naturally I’m sending him dollars ...”³⁴

In light of such horrors, it is perhaps less surprising that Dalí’s father, and Dalí himself, traumatized by events such as these, might turn their leftist fealties to those of Spanish Nationalism. “Franco is the only intelligent man today in politics,” Dalí was to say in later interviews, and he grew progressively unambiguous about his admiration for the dictator.³⁵ Naturally, this made it necessary to overlook conveniently the atrocities of Franco’s rule or, as Dalí did, to justify brutality and glorify “sharks” in order to view the dictator as someone who brought order and reinstated what must have seemed, by contrast, a comforting return to tradition in Spain. This was perhaps easier to do seeing as the artist’s father had “turned into a fanatical worshipper of Franco,” as Dalí writes to Buñuel, stating that “he considers him a demi-god, the ‘glorious Caudillo’ as he calls him in each of his delirious letters ...” “The revolutionary effort was such a disaster,” Dalí continues, “that everyone prefers Franco ... Life-long Catalanists, federal Republicans,

bitter anti-clericals—they're all writing to me enthusiastically about the new regime."³⁶

Dalí increasingly followed suit, which, it seemed, worked in accordance with what he states in his autobiography were his natural tendencies towards tradition, social hierarchy and, as he avers through several stated acts of cruelty in *The Secret Life*, a belief in Machiavellian brutality for the furthering of his own causes.

In Chapter Eleven of his autobiography, Dalí documents the conversion of staunch revolutionaries to Spanish Nationalism as reflected in the views of a childhood friend. This "encounter" is likely a conceit through which Dalí expresses his own beliefs, safely couched in the remove of the voice of another. Consequently, the following observations articulated by an acquaintance from Dalí's youth very much echo the sentiments of Dalí's letter to Buñuel. "I met a childhood friend, who had been a revolutionary all his life," Dalí writes.

For years he had bitterly struggled as a fervent terrorist to establish the Spanish Republic. During the Civil War he fought like a lion without respite up to the last moment among the anti-fascist militias. A refugee in Paris, without money, hovering on the edge of ill-health, he was relinquishing his non-conformist canon. He had not yet lost hope for Spain. He said to me, lowering his voice confidentially as if under the painful constraint of a confession that cost him dearly and that he had paid for with blood which did not belong to him,

"What our country needs is to do away with Franco and become a constitutional monarchy again!—a king!" exclaimed this man who had been a sincere revolutionary during his whole life (386-87).

Although "doing away with Franco" would seem antithetical to the dictator's interests, a reverence for, and a generalized call for the reinstatement of monarchy are voiced throughout *The Secret Life*, and indeed, Franco himself was a supporter of the monarchy. Whether incidental or not, in this light it should be repeated that both the king

motif and ruminations on the nature of royalty and the aristocracy are highly present in the text of Dalí's memoir, beginning with the author's desire to dress up in his king's costume as a boy, and the stating of the "violent royal feelings" of his youth, including his "ambitious autocratic desires of 'absolute monarchy' ... which constituted the continuous desire of [his] whole early childhood" (173).

History Revised

As he grew older, Dalí explains that "The Child-King became an anarchist," although it was, he is careful to assert, "an anarchy of my own, quite special and anti-sentimental, an anarchy in which I could have reigned as the supreme and capricious disorganizer—an anarchic monarchy, with myself at the head as an absolute king" (125). Dalí's idea of "anarchic monarchy" is a quite ingenious form of revisionism, in which the artist claims that his once virulent anarchism was actually a "personal" version, mixed in with his supreme love of hierarchy and monarchy—that is, the exact thing that cancels out the very foundation of anarchist anti-authoritarianism. "I developed this idea of an anarchic monarchy," Dalí explains in *The Secret Life*, "mingling the most caustic humour with a whole series of anti-social and a-political paradoxes which at least had the virtue of being a convincing polemic weapon by which I could amuse myself, scattering seeds of doubt and ruining my friends' political convictions" (125 fn.).

While Dalí lays claim to the seemingly incongruous conceit of two opposing elements, a friend and colleague of Dalí's from his school days, Juame Miravittles, takes Dalí's formulation more seriously. "To label him a Francoist, a Monarchist or a Republican would be meaningless," claims Miravittles. From his point of view, "Dalí has a keen and all-embracing perception of the problem of Spanish history and politics and

has given the most original definition of the sort of Regime Spain needs that I have ever heard.” This is, of course, Dalí’s idea of a monarchist anarchy, in which, as Miravittles interprets it, “Spain must live under a system of local liberties based on the municipalities, under the uniting and cohesive force of the historical and mystical prestige of the Crown.” Further, Dalí’s friend challenges, “If anyone thinks Dalí is merely joking, let him remember the example of the British Commonwealth.”³⁷

That Dalí is intent on presenting himself as reverential and admiring of the Spanish monarchy becomes evident in an absurdly revisionist narration of his own encounter with a Spanish monarch during his student days: Dalí’s account in Chapter Nine of the visit of King Alfonso XIII, in March of 1923, to the Escuela Especial de Pintura in Madrid, where he had come to inspect the school. According to the artist, he feels a great respect for the Spanish king at that time, and is mortified that the art school’s administration has gone to great lengths to deceive the monarch into thinking the student enrolment was much higher than it was, and the institution much more academically rigorous and the facilities better kept.

In recounting the story, Dalí claims to have felt an innate affinity with the king. “There can be no doubt that we recognized each other!” he asserts. “The King’s presence revived in my mind the King I bore within my skin! During the entire visit to the school I had this impression, which did not leave me a single moment, that the two of us were uniquely and continually isolated from all the rest” (173). Allegedly consumed with shame and contempt over the school’s deception, Dalí concludes that “My emotion and repressed tension remained unable to find any outlet; and with my feeling of discomfort

further augmented, after the King had left, by the regret at not having denounced the whole farce to him” (165).

While Dalí presents himself in *The Secret Life* as a great monarchist and friend to King Alfonso, according to Dalí’s contemporary diaries, at the time the artist felt “intense scorn” for the king. By the account of a fellow student, Josep Rigol, he and Dalí had in fact plotted to plant a “protest bomb” in a stone urn along the stairwell where the king was to promenade. The plan fizzled thanks to a faulty fuse, but according to Rigol, “If the bomb had been discovered, he and I, ‘the Catalans,’ would immediately have been accused, because we were the ones who organized all the protests.” If this is not proof enough of Dalí’s rewriting his political history, Rigol remembers that “In the assembly room Dalí ended up fighting a monarchist student, who criticized him for mocking the king.” According to another student, Cristino Mallo, for the King’s visit, as a form of protest Rigol and Dalí both wore the red ribbons in their buttonholes, denoting Marxist affiliation, and spoke loudly to each other in the forbidden language of Catalan; two deliberately provocative gestures.³⁸ That Dalí completely re-writes his personal history in recounting this episode, from a plotted bombing of King Alfonso to his stated “natural affinity” with the monarch, should be considered in the light of Dalí’s newfound allegiance to the Francoist regime. As it was, Franco was on such excellent terms with King Alfonso XIII that the king acted as best man at the dictator’s wedding in 1923, the very year of Dalí’s encounter.³⁹

Dalí’s ability to speak to multiple audiences in *The Secret Life* is at its peak here, it should be noted, as should the fact that the artist was extremely adept at “fence-sitting,” never openly, or at least publicly, admitting to any particular political position. As Dalí

well knew, while politically-minded Europeans might well be able to glean Dalí's right-wing stance from the evident "clues" in the text and assess the implications of his new direction, "average" Americans, it seems, predominantly unfamiliar with or lacking a detailed interest in European politics beyond the implications of the war for America, and a growing horror of communism, easily glossed over this seemingly benign and "daffy" Spanish artist's partisanship.

While for the most part the American public may not have been attuned to the vagaries and implications of European, or specifically Iberian politics, the Spanish Civil war had strong implications for U.S. politicians, where "Hatred of the Spanish Republic permeated U.S. politics and crystallized debate in big cities like New York."⁴⁰ While Roosevelt may have held a certain amount of sympathy for the Republican cause, his Democratic majority strongly opposed support for the Spanish Loyalists, and America's Catholic community for the most part, staunchly supported Franco. "Powerful forces" in Congress and throughout the nation thwarted American intervention in Spain, and in 1937, neutrality laws were extended to include the Spanish conflict. This did not, however, prevent Washington from permitting Texaco and other American corporations to sell goods to Franco on credit.⁴¹

American reaction to the Spanish Civil war was as strong as it was elsewhere among those with left-leaning sympathies, especially among the vanguard, intellectuals, socialists, communists, anarchists, unionists and workers' groups. Many among these ranks rallied to show their support for the Republican side with mass demonstrations, fund-raising and relief activities, lectures and speaking tours. A newspaper, entitled *Spanish Revolution* was even published and made available for those interested in the

unfolding events in Spain. Most significantly, American coalitions of the International Brigades, called the Washington and Lincoln Brigades, were set up, and well over 3,000 Americans went to fight in Spain for the Loyalist cause. These campaigns helped to sway public opinion in Western countries, not the least because “the largely liberal-democratic audiences of Great Britain and the United States wanted to believe that the civil war was not about revolution or communism but was rather a contest between democracy and fascism.”⁴²

Although there was much fervent reaction in the political sphere and more radical and activist elements of the American demographic regarding the Spanish Civil war, this conflict was far from foremost in the consciousness of the general American public in the late 1930s or early 40s. Judging from the almost complete lack of political commentary in the voluminous “mainstream” press in the United States concerning Dalí’s autobiography, American audiences of the period simply did not twig, for the most part, to the political implications of the book. In her 1959 biography of Dalí, Fleur Cowles observes that “During the Second World War, Dalí’s political viewpoint might have been under some scrutiny, but an avalanche of publicity so covered his movements that it was forgotten.”⁴³ The American audience seems in fact, for the most part, to have taken at face value Dalí’s claim to be completely apolitical, a situation adumbrated by Reynolds Morse, Dalí’s great patron in the United States, in a 1945 article in *Art in America*, where he writes ingenuously that “The fact that Dalí has never come out with any clear-cut statement as to his political leanings means that he and his art are both probably suspected by the party in ascendancy as well as by the party being submerged.”⁴⁴ Indeed, considering Dalí’s light-hearted, Barnumesque public persona of the 1930s and early ‘40s

in the U.S., few Americans would have believed that Dalí had leanings toward fascist-oriented politics any more than they could have believed, a decade later, that the comedian Lucille Ball had been a member of the Communist party.⁴⁵

As with Dalí's supposed "Hitlerism," there were, however, notable rumblings regarding the artist's Spanish Nationalist sympathies among the émigré and avant-garde community in the U.S., gathered through reading between the lines of his writings such as *The Secret Life*, and via word of mouth through people like Buñuel who, thanks in part to Dalí's letters, was privy to Dalí's "secret politics." Dalí augmented, and evidently invited this speculation by choosing to paint the portrait, likely begun in 1941 and finished in 1943, of the Spanish ambassador Juan Francisco de Cardenás, Franco's official representative in the U.S.—a by no means neutral gesture. Dalí's dealings with Cardenas, described as a "great friend," demonstrate the extent to which Dalí had attempted to ingratiate himself with Franco's regime, and how close he was to the ear of the dictator himself.⁴⁶ In response, a small, and clearly ineffectual campaign to expose Dalí's reactionary politics was launched by some of the exiled Surrealists and their circle circa 1941. The American painter Walter Quirt wrote an article that year entitled "Wake Over Surrealism" in the *Pinacotheca*, suggesting Dalí's politics were suspect, a piece that *Art Digest* reviewed incredulously that same year, in a short summary entitled "Dalí a Fascist?"⁴⁷ In the June 1941 issue of *View*, Nicolas Calas' piece "Anti-Surrealist Dalí" unleashes a scathing assessment of what he saw as Dalí's new position after seeing his 1941 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery which displayed preliminary drawings of the Cardenás portrait. Describing the artist as "the painter of Franco's ambassador" and a "stinking Don Quixote," he writes, "How easy to protest in the name of Pure Art: 'You

attack Dalí, after having praised him, because he no longer believes in revolutionary values! He has rediscovered Spain, penitence, Catholicism ...” Poignantly referring to Dalí’s ubiquitous crutch motif in his painting, he adds that “Those who would like to see crutches in such abundance can go to Europe after the war.”⁴⁸

Likewise the first, June 1942 issue of Breton’s American journal *VVV* featured a declaration entitled “Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not,” in which, among other things, Breton refers to “the Neo-Falangist bedside table, Avida Dollars.”⁴⁹ Equally as scathing is Breton’s *Situation of Surrealism Between the Two Wars*, originally an address to Yale students, then published in *VVV* in 1943. As the title suggests, Breton’s focus is political, and speaks of Surrealism as a reaction to, and a possible remedy for, the impulses of military conflict. “I insist on the fact that Surrealism can be understood historically only in relation to the war” Breton posits. To him, “Freedom is at once madly desirable and quite fragile, which gives her the right to be jealous. To find oneself in disgrace before her,” he rails, “there is no need to go as far as ... Avida Dollars who ... recently, with obsequious academicism, gilded the portrait of the Spanish ambassador, that is to say, of the representative of Franco.”⁵⁰

A number of Surrealists and other interested parties were quick to point out what looked very much like Dalí’s opportunistic pandering to the Caudillo, and intended to pave the way back to the beloved country of his birth. Dalí seems to have been instrumental in creating this impression when it came to presenting himself to an audience with Spanish Nationalist interests, as he does when interviewed for *Spain* magazine, in the May 1941 issue. After describing a “teaser” that appeared inside the back cover of the Julien Levy catalogue for Dalí’s upcoming autobiography, the

magazine provides an update of the artist's work and life in America. In the *Editor's Note*, the editor writes that "Contrary to report, Dalí was never in jail in Spain. He is on excellent terms with the Spanish Nationalist Government and with General Franco himself. However, he has plenty on his mind without worrying about politics ..." ⁵¹

Whatever convenient truths Dalí may have conveyed to *Spain* magazine, which was published in English in the United States, Dalí had in fact been in jail in Spain, which he duly, yet evasively writes about in *The Secret Life*. He claims that after having been suspended from the Academy of Fine Arts for "accidentally" instigating an uprising at his school by leaving the auditorium in the middle of the president's speech, he was suspended for a year. Upon returning to Figueres, he was arrested because

a very determined revolutionary upsurge had just been energetically repressed by general Primo de Rivera, who was the father of José Antonio, the future founder of the Spanish Falange. Elections had just taken place, and an effervescent political agitation absorbed all activities. My best childhood friends of Figueres had all become revolutionaries, and my father, accomplishing his strict notarial functions, had had to testify to abuses committed by certain elements of the right during the elections. I had just arrived, and this was remarked even more than formerly. I was always talking about anarchy and monarchy, deliberately linking them together (198).

Like Dalí's fabrication about his encounter with King Alfonso XIII, Dalí also tries to bury his revolutionary past by glossing over this episode, an episode that played out very differently in "real" life. According to Gibson, on May 15, 1924, King Alfonso XIII had paid an official visit to Girona and, after his luncheon, spontaneously decided that an inspection of the large garrison at nearby Figueres was in order. Apparently the announcement of the King's visit threw the Figueres authorities into a state of alarm and, fearing disturbances, they immediately began to round-up and take into custody potential

trouble-makers, among whom was, to be sure, known agitator Salvador Dalí. Dalí was placed in solitary confinement in Figueres on 21 May, with two of his close friends, Martí Vilanova and Juame Miravittles, both militant Communists. He was then transferred to the jail in nearby Gerona where he remained between May 30 and June 11 when the military judge finally released him without preferring charges.⁵²

While these are presumably the “facts” of the event, Dalí once again downplays his own revolutionary leanings. “I had been home but a short time when I was taken into custody by the Civil Guard and locked up in the prison of Figueres,” he recounts. At the end of a month I was transported to the prison of Gerona, and was finally set free when no adequate charges could be found on which to try me.” By way of explanation, Dalí points out that he had arrived in Catalonia at a bad moment, in the wake of a “revolutionary upsurge” which had been repressed by General Primo de Rivera, and in light of a recent election “an effervescent Figueres had all become revolutionaries” (198). While Dalí’s friends are virulent communists, Dalí claims that he, on the other hand “was always talking about anarchy and monarchy, deliberately linking them together,” and that an “amalgam of circumstances,” rather than his political stance led to the “arbitrary imprisonment.” Having owned up to an episode Dalí was either inclined to add for its colour, or felt he could not avoid discussing (and thereby taking the opportunity to exonerate himself), he then leads the discussion away from possible causes and instead expounds upon how the period of imprisonment pleased him “immensely,” as he relates how he was showered with gifts by relatives, drank champagne, attended to his writing, and “let his mind relax” (198).

Surely in light of American aversion to “bolshevism,” Dalí refuses to even utter the word “Communist” in relation to himself in his autobiography, and regarding his youthful anarchist leanings he further downplays his own revolutionary proclivities, portraying them as idle chatter among over-privileged, dabbling schoolmates. No doubt this is what he meant in his letter to Buñuel regarding the “*Systematic destruction of the infantile* past represented by my Madrid friends.”⁵³ While at the Residence, Dalí records one of the nights out he had with fellow students, most likely among them being Lorca, Buñuel, Pepin Bello, Pedro Garfias, Eugenio Montes and Rafael Pérez Barradas (175). The evening is described in terms of notorious markers of privilege intended to nullify the credibility of the topic of conversation. Dalí and his friends, then, dine upon gourmet fare, fine wines and—like a smattering of spice on the jellied madrilène—revolutionary banter. “At one o’clock I met my group in the bar of an Italian restaurant called ‘Los Italianos,’” Dalí recounts,

where I had two vermouths and some clams, after which we went over to occupy a table which was reserved for us ... I remember perfectly the menu that I selected on that first day at the restaurant—assorted hors-d’oeuvres, jellied madrilène, macaroni au gratin and a squab, all this sprinkled with authentic red Chianti. The coffee and the cognac served as a further stimulant to the continuance of the principal theme of our conversations, which was not other than the initial theme of the vermouth developed in the course of the meal and which, naturally, was “anarchy” (184-5).

Considering the documented discrepancies between Dalí’s stated current “apolitical” position, his accounts in *The Secret Life* of his mere dabbling or accidental implication in political acts or movements, and the recorded facts and reports from early contemporaries, readers are prudent to remain sceptical concerning the veracity of Dalí’s

claims of neutrality or innocence regarding his revolutionary actions and politics of earlier years. According to his biographers, and evinced in period documents, Dalí was an outspoken activist and participated in a number of minor revolutionary acts, many of which he had instigated himself. Consequently, one might question Dalí's account, in Chapter Six, of having been inadvertently implicated in a revolutionary flag-burning incident. In this episode, duly lifted from a similar scene in Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, a young Dalí encounters an excited group of students in Madrid, and approaches to find they are burning a Spanish flag, influenced by the nebulously-defined "separatist movement connected with certain contemporary political events" (124).⁵⁴ Dalí's arrival is immediately followed by a group of soldiers, who scatter the crowd and for unexplained reasons mistake Dalí as the group's leader. "I declared repeatedly that my presence here was purely accidental," Dalí entreats, "but no one paid the slightest attention to my protest of innocence; on the contrary, the picture that everyone had formed of me required that I become the principal hero of this demonstration in which I had not even participated" (124).

Another omission of note in *The Secret Life* is a visual image that evidently defined Dalí's sympathies during and after the Spanish Civil War period too clearly. It consists of a drawing of what appears to be a Renaissance-era figure, and presumably signals "tradition," over whose breast is inscribed the word FE, surrounded by the characteristic "swords of light" Dalí uses elsewhere to imply the holy or spectacular.⁵⁵ *Faith*, indeed, as Frédérique Joseph-Lowery points out, is a crucial word for Dalí in *The Secret Life*, especially toward the end of the text, where he speaks of his own faith as a Catholic, and it is notably the final word of the entire book, not counting the postscript.⁵⁶

As the motto and acronym of the Falange Española (FE), as well as the metaphysical grounding of the Catholic Church, this word holds a complex and doubly-coded meaning in Dalí's text. The final decision to omit the image from the book, presumably made by Dalí or his publisher, points to its sensitive nature, as it would certainly be understood by anyone apprised of Spanish politics of the period as an indicator of Dalí's support of the Falange and of Franco's regime.

Family and Former Friends

While Dalí makes it absolutely clear in his memoir that he has embraced Catholicism, he also expends considerable effort to efface traces of his former atheism, and in particular, in one notoriously contentious project, the decidedly anti-Catholic film he produced in 1930 with Luis Buñuel, *L'Age d'or*. This work, according to Gibson, was seen by the establishment as nothing less than “a ‘bolshevist’ film” that not only “attacked religion, Family and Fatherland but was revolting and pornographic to boot.”⁵⁷ In fact *L'Age d'or* is perhaps most famous for the scandal it ignited when first screened in 1930 at Studio 28 in Paris, where it caused the right-wing League of Patriots and the Anti-Semitic League to riot, throwing ink, setting off smoke bombs and causing 80,000 francs worth of damage.⁵⁸ Thus it behooves the artist to renounce the “anticlericalism” of *L'Age d'or*, a good portion of which is taken up with imagery ridiculing Catholic clerics and portraying Jesus Christ in an unseemly manner, not to mention a number of other images that are considered shocking and blasphemous even by today's standards. Notably, in his abstruse description of his contribution to the film in *The Secret Life*, Dalí would have his readers believe that his anticlericalism of the period was somehow pious. “Even at this period I was wonderstruck and dazzled and obsessed by the grandeur and

the sumptuousness of Catholicism” (252), Dalí claims, although by all accounts in the late 1920s and early 1930s the artist was staunchly atheist and his attitudes “revolutionary” in accordance with left-leaning Catalan and French politics of the period.

Luis Buñuel, Dalí’s former good friend from the Residencia des Estudiantes in Madrid, and collaborator on the seminal Surrealist films *Un Chien Andalou* of 1929 and *L’Age d’or* of 1930, it seems, was to bear the brunt for the atheistic aspects of the notorious film. This was to Buñuel’s misfortune, as according to the filmmaker, Dalí’s brief discussion of the creative direction behind *L’Age d’or* in *The Secret Life* was to associate Buñuel with beliefs that made him highly suspect in America and, he claimed, besmirched his reputation in exile to such an extent that it cost him his job. In discussing *L’Age d’or*, Dalí squarely places the blame for contentious religious imagery on Buñuel’s shoulders: indeed, Buñuel is fashioned by Dalí’s pen as the naïve and ham-fisted director of an essay on anti-Catholic values, while Dalí looks on with a distasteful tolerance. “I said to Buñuel,” Dalí writes, “For this film I want a lot of archbishops, bones and monstrosities. I want especially archbishops with their embroidered tiaras bathing amid the rocky cataclysms of Cape Creus.” Buñuel, however, with his “naïveté and his Aragonese stubbornness,” had gone awry and “deflected all this toward an elementary anti-clericalism.” Dalí writes that he always had to stop him and say “No, no! No comedy. I like all this business of the archbishops; in fact I like it enormously. Let’s have a few blasphematory scenes, if you will, but it must be done with the utmost fanaticism to achieve the grandeur of a true and authentic sacrilege!” (252).

When Buñuel had finished *L’Age d’or*, Dalí explains that he was “terribly disappointed,” for “it was but a caricature of my ideas.” The “Catholic” side of the film

had become “crudely anticlerical, and without the biological poetry that I had desired ...” Further, the Catalan writes that the scandal of *L’Age d’or* thus remained “suspended over my head like a sword of Damocles, and also, like this sword, prevented me later from stammering, ‘I’ll never collaborate with anyone again!’” Martyred to the cause, the once wildly provocative Dalí claims that at the time he had no ambitions to cause outrage, but, unselfishly, he “accepted the responsibility for the sacrilegious scandal, though I had had no such ambition.” Nevertheless, Dalí explains, he never denounced the film at the time, because he realized that in spite of everything *L’Age d’or* “possessed an undeniable evocative strength, and that my disavowal of the film would have been understood by no one” (283).

In a footnote, Dalí mentions what was to be a bone of contention between himself and his former colleague for the rest of their lives, writing “... when Buñuel abandoned surrealism, he expurgated *L’Age d’or* of its frenzied passages and made a number of other alterations without asking me my opinion. This altered version,” Dalí notes, “I have never seen” (284 fn). What Dalí does not mention is why Buñuel altered the work, which was because Buñuel, who, despite what film scholar Paul Hammond describes on behalf of the director as “decades of disavowal and obfuscation,”⁵⁹ had begun formal membership in the Spanish Communist Party in 1932. As a result, Hammond documents, Buñuel took up the defence of recent Soviet sound films, “springing from the industry’s draconian Stalinization.”⁶⁰ In response to Buñuel’s newly directed energies, Dalí sent him a letter some time in March of 1932 in which Dalí berates Buñuel for “trading Surrealism for the obscurantist discipline of the Stalinists,” to use Hammond’s description. Clearly disgusted with the propagandistic elements, Dalí writes,

As far as the (Soviet) films are concerned ... the films, the proletarian literature shit, etc., etc., reveal the state of mind and morality aspired to, 'cos essentially they're works of propaganda, not only allowed ... but made by the government, that state of pure moral caca, of dirt, mysticism, full of underhand saintliness, etc., etc.⁶¹

According to Hammond, demonstrating "just how far Buñuel was prepared to go to defend his re-visioning of the moral-poetic imperative," Buñuel was soon to bowdlerize and distort the long-banned *L'Age d'or* into a worker-friendly, agit-prop short. There are no known extant versions of the revised film, which had apparently been renamed *In the Icy Waters of Egoist Calculation*, a "director's cut" that "would have been legible to a proletarian audience, given that it more or less didactically represented the class struggle against the aristocracy, police and clergy."⁶²

Without suggesting that it may have been whisperings of Buñuel's communist leanings that caused trouble for him while in America in the 1940s, according to Buñuel, Dalí's citing in *The Secret Life* of the filmmaker's "iconoclastic" tendencies were to blame for political troubles he was to experience during this fractious period of history. While exiled in New York in 1941, Buñuel had found work in Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs, in the film documentary department of the Museum of Modern Art where his job involved the selection, production and dissemination of pro-Republican civil-war movies and anti-Nazi propaganda films, which were distributed to various interests in North and South America.⁶³ After the publication of *The Secret Life*, Buñuel was investigated by Catholic, and quite possibly pro-Franco, interests via Washington, and this apparently led, among other things, to Buñuel having to vacate his post. Buñuel gives his version of the story in his own memoir, published in 1983.

In his book *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, I was described as an atheist, an accusation that at the time was worse than being called a Communist. Ironically, at the same moment that Dalí's book appeared, a man named Prendergast who was part of the Catholic lobby in Washington began using his influence with government officials to get me fired ... I felt as if I'd suddenly been sentenced to the electric chair ... the year before, when Dalí's book had appeared, Prendergast had lodged several protests with the State Department, which in turn began to pressure the museum to fire me. They'd managed to keep things quiet for a year; but ... the scandal had gone public ...

Although Alfred Barr, the Director of the MoMA, had reportedly advised Buñuel not to give in to the pressure, the filmmaker eventually found it necessary to resign.

Subsequently, in June of 1943, Buñuel reports that he found himself "once again out on the street, forty-three and jobless."⁶⁴

Gibson is clearly unimpressed with Dalí's version of the story, and sides with Buñuel, writing that the filmmaker "could well have done without Dalí's twisted account of the making of *L'Age d'or*, presumably designed to ensure that Dalí at least had no trouble in the States."⁶⁵ However, as Vilaseca notes, the actual text referring to Buñuel in *The Secret Life* is remarkably tame, and therefore it seems questionable that Dalí's discussion could have resulted in such grave consequences.⁶⁶ In fact, considering that Buñuel was determined, even when writing his autobiography in the 1980s, to deny his membership in the Spanish Communist Party, and for very good reason in the early 1940s in the U.S., it seems Dalí—acknowledging his animus toward Buñuel—might well have mentioned Buñuel's political leanings, or more precisely, the reasons why Buñuel had altered *L'Age d'or*. In fact, considering the Spanish filmmaker's rather befuddled description of his "defamation" which was already underway "in Washington" when Dalí's autobiography was published, Buñuel's accusation of his former colleague costing

him a job might be taken with a grain of salt, as much as Dalí might be given some credit for carefully sidestepping an issue which would have had much more dire consequences for Buñuel in the long run. Either way, extant literature that circulated between the two demonstrates a contentious and acerbic relationship that is heavily marked with mutual revisionism and recrimination.

In this light, it might be noted that Dalí's cautious mention and blithe re-writing of his own history regarding politics or religion in his public writings index an extremely volatile cultural climate in an America that was to enter World War II just four months after Dalí had completed the writing of his memoir. It also sheds light on Dalí's sudden insistence on his newfound conversion from atheism to devout Catholicism upon his arrival in 1940 in an America where, as Buñuel puts it, being labelled an atheist was an accusation worse than being called a Communist. From this perspective, Dalí's sudden embrace of the Catholic Church is not only suspiciously opportune, but possibly the result of an understandable instinct toward social survival.

While Dalí found it necessary to obscure blatant evidence of atheist and anti-Catholic leanings in *L'Age d'or*, he is much more successful concerning another one of the "secrets" of *The Secret Life*, alluded to in Chapter Nine of his text. Here Dalí writes of a letter he received in 1929 from his father, "notifying me of my irrevocable banishment from the bosom of my family," thanks to "the secret which was at the root of such a decision," and which was to make Dalí and his father "suffer so greatly." This "secret" came about after Dalí senior had discovered that his son had exhibited an ink drawing featuring the outline of Jesus Christ, over which he had superimposed the words "parfois je crache par Plaisir sur le portrait de ma mère." Dalí senior was already uneasy

about Dalí's taking up with the Surrealists, and in particular, with Gala, a Russian woman ten years his senior; libertine, married and smacking of Parisian decadence. When he caught wind of this particular work, however, entitled *The Sacred Heart*, he was incensed at the insult this afforded his departed wife, Dalí's biological mother. As a result, in November of 1929, Dalí père banished his son from the family, and the two were not to reconcile until the mid-1930s. While this painful episode is omitted from his life narrative, readers are privy to an account of the artist's return home during the twenty days he spent in Spain on the way from Paris to Lisbon before his exile, with Gala, in America. Dalí's homecoming, and his tender account of the familiarity of his house and the contents of the room of his childhood, is surely the most touching passage in *The Secret Life*.

The treatment Dalí yields his family in his autobiography is also worth noting in terms of strategic omissions and revisionism, in that Dalí refuses to round out any of their characters, to portray them in any negative light whatsoever, or to recount any episodes that might reopen old wounds. With blood being sweeter than honey, to use Dalí's expression for the primacy of family over non-relations (183), the draw of his own relatives at this point in his life cannot be discounted as an influence on Dalí's "flight to the right" any more than his own experiences with the Republican and anarchist factions during the Spanish Civil War. Despite his earlier, highly characteristic attempts to distance himself from his father by unacceptable or highly offensive statements or acts, Dalí was now avid for reconciliation with Dalí senior, and this should well be considered by way of contextualizing the artist's newfound Catholicism and evident admiration for the Franco regime. As the artist noted to Buñuel, his father had "turned into a fanatical

worshipper of Franco,” and Ades states that in Dalí’s 1952 essay, *The Myth of William Tell*, “Dalí compares his own father with a Sophoclean tragic hero, and describes him as ‘the man whom I not only most admired, but also most imitated ...’”⁶⁷

In his first letter to his family in Figueres after Dalí arrived in America in 1940, Dalí was to tell Ana María that he was working assiduously on his autobiography, and requests that she send him some photographs from his early years. He makes clear that he wishes to amend any disputes with his family and is determined to please them, echoing his resolution in his letter to Buñuel that “my life must now be orientated *towards Spain and The Family*.” “You know as well as I do that my scandalously anarchic period is behind me,” Dalí reassures his sister. “In my book what I want to do is write about my family precisely in such a way as to eradicate once and for all any mistakes and misunderstandings there may have been between us.”⁶⁸

In addition to the “eradication” and kid gloves with which Dalí treats his family, one of the most significant omissions in the work, much like that of the “disappearing” of Breton, was that of another immensely important figure in Dalí’s early life, that of the great Andalusian poet, Federico García Lorca, fellow resident, with Buñuel and Dalí, at the Residencia des Estudiantes. Lorca was one of the most important and formative figures of Dalí’s early adulthood, and dozens of his paintings, drawings and many of his writings of the later 1920s refer to Lorca. Indeed, their correspondence of the period was recently published under the title of *Sebastian’s Arrows*, the mutual interest in St. Sebastian being not only as the patron saint of Cadaqués, but also as the adopted patron saint of homosexuals, and pointing to the much speculated likelihood of the two having been lovers in the 1920s.⁶⁹

One of Lorca's most famous poems is his *Ode to Salvador Dalí*, published in 1926, a work that can only be described as a love poem. Lorca, one of Spain's most important literary figures, is a celebrated gay artist, and while Dalí was later loudly to proclaim that he forbade the poet access to the "Divine Dalí's asshole,"⁷⁰ there is much to suggest their relationship was beyond platonic.⁷¹ Nevertheless, despite what Orwell describes as the "pansified drawings of youths" among the illustrations of *The Secret Life*, his desire to be "like a beautiful woman," and the fact of his first "disappointed love for Butchaques," the Spanish boyfriend of Dalí's youth with whom he describes sharing long mouth-to-mouth parting kisses, the artist is sure to state that "I have continued to feel a complete sexual indifference toward men." "No!" he proclaims in parentheses. "Let there be no misunderstanding on this point—I am not a homosexual" (170).

While Dalí's near omission of Breton in his autobiography may be explained as a strategic move to inflate his own importance in the Surrealist movement, the scant mention of Lorca might be understood as a re-writing of Dalí's own sexual history, and a tactical distancing of himself from a figure who, having been executed at the hands of the Falange militia on August 19, 1936, was, needless to say, contentious among the current Spanish regime. As Vilaseca notes, "the presence of Federico García Lorca in Dalí's autobiographical writings is suspiciously minimal." He rightly observes that "when, in an autobiography, a writer so blatantly ignores a whole episode of his life, especially one which ... impinged so much on him and on his work for such a long period, this cannot be a slip, but constitutes in itself a 'confession' we have to analyze and account for."⁷²

Certainly, Dalí's persistent iteration of his love for Gala throughout *The Secret Life*, and his insistence on fidelity to her and his determination to love her

“as the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church demands” (399), leaves no doubt that Dalí was determined to establish himself as staunchly heterosexual and completely, conservatively faithful to his wife. The convenient circumnavigation of the discussion of any close relationship with Lorca in the book certainly makes this task easier, although the language Dalí uses when Lorca is fleetingly mentioned is undeniably passionate and erotic. “[T]he personality of Federico García Lorca produced an immense impression upon me,” Dalí writes. “The poetic phenomenon in its entirety and ‘in the raw’ presented itself before me suddenly in flesh and bone, confused, blood-red, viscous and sublime, quivering with a thousand fires of darkness and of subterranean biology, like all matter endowed with the originality of its own form” (176).

Later, employing the gustatory metaphors saved most frequently for Gala,⁷³ in one of the most evocative and enticing passages in the book, Dalí suggests that he would take the best that Lorca had to offer, and use it for his own “divine” purposes:

... when I felt the incendiary and communicative fire of the poetry of the great Federico rise in wild, dishevelled flames I tried to beat them down with the olive branch of my premature anti-Faustian old age, while already preparing the grill of my transcendental prosaism on which, when the day came, when only glowing embers remained of Lorca’s initial fire, I would come and fry the mushrooms, the chops and the sardines of my thought ... in order to appease for some hundred years the spiritual, imaginative, moral and ideological hunger of our epoch (176).

Elsewhere Dalí writes tantalizingly that “The shadow ... of Federico García Lorca, came and darkened the virginal originality of my spirit and of my flesh ...” He further intimates a secret of the period of their intense friendship, writing that

Sometimes we would be walking, the whole group of us, along El Paseo de la Castellana and on our way to the café where we held our usual literary meetings and where I knew Lorca would shine like a mad and fiery diamond. Suddenly I would set off at a run, and no one would see me for three days ... No one has ever been able to tear from me the secret of these flights, and I don't intend to unveil it now—at least not yet ... (203).

Whatever Dalí's secret may have been, and one might naturally assume it had to do with romantic or erotic feelings toward or an intimate relationship with Lorca, Dalí clearly decided only to intimate it, with the result being near-omission in the narration of his life to date, of a formative relationship of immense importance during his early adulthood. Such an omission is naturally conceivable, especially in light of Dalí's attempt to ingratiate himself with Franco's conservative regime, and with audiences in America, where, especially between the 1930s and the 1950s, particularly in England and America, the police were engaged in what can nearly be described as a witch-hunt of homosexuals, or those who engaged in homoerotic activity.⁷⁴ Many people lived under a very real fear of exposure, blackmail or imprisonment, and judging from his treatment of both Gala and Lorca in *The Secret Life*, Dalí, the "lace-pantied" Surrealist who frequently was, and continues to be viewed in the public eye as a closeted homosexual, may have been one of them.

Dalí's attitude towards Lorca's death perhaps requires less conjecture than toward his living being. As he was in accord with the current Spanish regime, Dalí would hardly be inclined to protest or query the circumstances of Lorca's murder, carried out as it was under Francoist auspices. In fact, Dalí's description of his former friend's demise in *The Secret Life* comes as close as possible to exonerating the perpetrators: "At the very outbreak of the revolution my great friend, the poet of *la mala muerte*, Federico García

Lorca, died before a firing squad in Granada, occupied by the fascists,” writes Dalí. “His death,” he explains, “was exploited for propaganda purposes. This was ignoble, for they knew as well as I that Lorca was by essence the most apolitical person on earth.” Lorca did not die “as a symbol of one or another political ideology,” Dalí claims, but

he died as the propitiatory victim of that total and integral phenomenon that was the revolutionary confusion in which the Civil War unfolded. For that matter, in the civil war people killed each other not even for ideas, but for “personal reasons,” for reasons of personality; and like myself, Lorca had personality and to spare, and with it a better right than most Spaniards to be shot by Spaniards. Lorca’s tragic sense of life was marked by the same tragic constant as that of the destiny of the whole Spanish people (361).

As Dalí well knew, Lorca was by no means “the most apolitical person on earth,” and his work, including plays and poems with political subtexts, was deeply associated with proletariat and revolutionary causes. Lorca’s homosexuality was also, as the artist well knew, likely the most prominent of “personal reasons” for his having been shot. “The assassination in Granada of the renowned homosexual poet and playwright Federico García Lorca served no meaningful political purpose,” write Esenwien and Shubert, “but it did send an unequivocal message to the left and others who wanted to pursue lifestyles that did not conform to the traditionalist beliefs and values of the right.”⁷⁵

While Lorca was to become a veritable martyr for the Spanish Republican causes, Dalí’s obfuscation of the political facts, citing Lorca’s death as a result, not of fascist brutality, but of his being a “propitiatory victim” of “revolutionary confusion” and for “personal reasons,” clearly point to where the artist’s allegiances lie. In his *Situation of Surrealism between the Two Wars*, disgusted with Dalí having painted the portrait of Franco’s ambassador, Breton also finds his admiration of Franco unconscionable, not the

least in the light of Lorca's death. "Franco!" He expostulates, "That monster to whom the author of the portrait precisely owes the oppression of his country, not to mention the death of the great poet García Lorca, the best friend of his youth."⁷⁶

Perhaps the closest statement in Dalí's autobiography of his "official" current political positioning, as he would like to make it known to an American audience, is in Chapter Eight, where the artist recounts a meeting with his group from the Residence in the later 1920s. Although intended as a recap of his youthful ideological leanings, comparing this statement to Dalí's earlier writings and accounts of his revolutionary period, which are highly discrepant with those he relates here, it is evident that the following has more to do with Dalí's current position than with his past. Here Dalí touches upon many of the major themes of his memoir: the importance of religion, "form," hierarchies, and "anarchist monarchy." "There were about half a dozen of us at that dinner," Dalí recounts, "all members of the group, but already it was apparent that a large majority tended vaguely toward the kind of liberal socialism which would some day become a fertile pasture for the extreme left." "My position," Dalí states,

was that happiness or unhappiness is an ultra-individual matter having nothing to do with the structure of society, the standard of living or the political rights of the people ... If happiness was anyone's concern it was that of religion! Rulers should limit themselves to exercising their power with the maximum of authority; and the people should either overthrow these rulers or submit to them. From this action and reaction can arise a spiritual form or structure—and not a rational, mechanical and bureaucratic organization. The latter will lead directly to depersonalization and to mediocrity. But also, I added, there is a utopian but tempting possibility—an anarchistic absolute king. Ludwig II of Bavaria is after all not so bad! (185)

While Dalí manages in *The Secret Life* to hint at as well as skirt around his political, sexual and ideological leanings of the period, by couching them in the rhetoric of marital fidelity, “anarchist monarchy,” and the “faith” of his newfound religion, he is very clear on one thing, and that is his love of Spain, the country which, embodied in the recurring image of the Empordà region and especially Cadaqués and Port Lligat, appears over and over in Dalí’s painting and writing. According to Dalí, all the fractious factions in Spain were fighting for the same thing that was synonymous with his country, that of “ardent tradition.” “All atheists, believers, saints, criminals, grave-openers and grave-diggers, executioners and martyrs,” Dalí cites,

—all fought with the unique courage and pride of the crusaders of faith. For all were Spaniards, and even the most ferocious sacrileges and manifestations of atheism abounded in faith, illuminating the dark dementia of unleashed and omnipotent passion with flashes of heaven (360).

Finally, as an ultimate declaration of his allegiance, Dalí states that “... Spain that knew me and that knows me knows it: were I to die, and no matter how I died ... I should always die for her, for her glory. For ... each bit of earth on which I set my feet is a field of honor” (368).

Spain is, indeed, never far from Dalí’s thoughts in *The Secret Life*, and as the book approaches its finale, the Catalan evidently never loses sight of the fact that his autobiography could be the very document that would serve to bar his re-entry, or to act as his passport back to Spain. Buñuel’s assertion of the negative impact a few contentious references in Dalí’s memoir might have had on his reputation and career at the time points to the extremely delicate and potentially volatile nature of the material that Dalí

was imparting in his book in America. While Franco's regime might not have paid the book such close attention, Dalí's was certainly making gestures toward approaching Franco's ear, by painting the portrait of Franco's American ambassador, Juan Francisco de Cardenás. Ironically, despite what can be read as an ingratiating attitude toward the Spanish Nationalist regime, most likely because of the sexual content of the book, *The Secret Life* was ultimately banned in Franco's Spain, and the first edition of *The Secret Life* to appear legitimately in the artist's native country was in 1981, six years after the dictator's death, and thirty-nine years after the book was first published.⁷⁷

Conclusion

As Dalí concludes *The Secret Life* with his fervent embrace of the Catholic Church, it is fitting that this dissertation also considers Dalí's interest in religion in the text as its final subject. This is particularly important considering that, despite the fervour of Dalí's conversion at the end of his autobiography, and his insistence upon the importance of Catholicism as the "redeemer" of or remedy for the horrors of war, this aspect of the text is, for the most part, overlooked in critical writing about *The Secret Life*. This is regrettable, as so much of the book is geared toward this final destination; a destination that is sufficiently grandiose and all-encompassing to allow Dalí to establish the monumental nature of his life and "cosmogony." That the artist chose as the promotional image for the book that of the Christ/Dalí figure, holding a cross up to "ward off" two fighter planes, makes it abundantly clear that this was Dalí's final, and most important "message" in his text (Figure 1-3).

After years of experimentation and intellectual exploration, Dalí asserts, all roads led him to religion. “Since 1929 I have ceaselessly studied the processes, the discoveries of the special sciences of the last hundred years,” he writes in the Epilogue.

If it has not been possible for me to explore all corners of these because of their monstrous specialization, I have understood their meaning as well as the best! One thing is certain: nothing, absolutely nothing, in the philosophic, aesthetic, morphological, biological or moral discoveries of our epoch denies religion. On the contrary, the architecture of the temple of the special sciences has all its windows open to heaven (400).

By concluding his autobiography with a blissful embrace of the Catholic Church, or, as Orwell was to write, “in a blaze of respectability,” Dalí completes the cycle of the narrative of redemption that he sets up at the beginning of the book, and carries throughout.⁷⁸ This is his transition from *informe* to form, from decadence to rectitude, from leftist to right-wing, and Dalí’s transition from a psychoanalytic paradigm, associated with the Surrealists, and his “former life,” to a metaphysical, mythological and religious one.

Dalí’s stated conversion to Catholicism in the final pages of *The Secret Life* can be construed in a number of ways as deeply strategic in terms of the shaping of his life narrative and the furthering of his career and social standing, and many possible motives have been discussed in the course of this thesis. Dalí’s references and conversion to religion have been considered, for instance, as a narrative device, with parallels to St. Augustine’s confessions, and the entire genre of religious conversions in western literature. Also considered is Dalí’s conversion in terms of its efficacy in pandering to, and to a certain degree assimilating with a deeply Christian America, as well as being a means for Dalí to differentiate himself from and provoke Breton, the Surrealists and the

avant-garde who were, generally speaking, religious sceptics, if not, like Breton, outspoken atheists. Equally under consideration was the impact of the conversion of Dalí's father—once a staunch atheist himself—to the Catholic Church, and most significantly, the political implications of the official Catholic position of the Spanish Nationalists, of whom Dalí had recently become an avid supporter.

Nevertheless, while Dalí's conversion arrives in perfect sequence with Franco's rise to power and subsequent privileging of Catholicism as a national religion, simply to assume a purely venal or expedient conversion to the religion Dalí saw as natural and indigenous to his beloved country of birth is to ignore the possibility that the artist had genuinely, for whatever reason, and quite possibly including any or all of the above reasons, embraced the Catholic Church and sought to find the faith he openly espouses in the finale of *The Secret Life*. In an effort to explain one of the foundations of Dalí's writing, Haakon Chevalier attempts to summarize Dalí's newly stated religious position from 1941 onward. "Dalí has always envisaged the world, his art and himself in cosmic terms," Chevalier explains, "with God ever-present, whether as myth or as reality. It is a tormented world, with apocalyptic overtones, in which passions, elemental and perverse, strain the human psyche to the limit".⁷⁹

If Dalí had, indeed, always seen God as "ever-present," as Chevalier claims, it was something he kept well hidden during the first half of his career. Gibson refers to Dalí's faith as a form of "kitsch religiosity" and judging by the artist's later grandiose, hyperbolic and at least partially parodic or ironic religious paintings, this seems an apt epithet.⁸⁰ That is not to say Dalí was not "serious" in his beliefs, and Eleanor Morse, who

with her husband Reynolds was a patron of Dalí's and knew the artist well, believes that he was "really religious" at least "toward the end of his life."⁸¹

While acknowledging this, it is clear that for Dalí, Catholicism and nationalism went hand in hand. The way in which he conflates his own imminent transformation with that of Europe in general, as a remedy for or redemption of the war period, also makes abundantly clear that "the unity of Europe will be made, and can only be made, under the sign of the triumph of Catholicism,"

And if I am asked again today where the real force of Europe is to be found, I shall answer again that in spite of all immediate appearances it resides more than ever in the indivisibility of its spirit, in that indivisibility which is materialized in Bernini's two rows of columns, the open arms of the occident, the arms of St. Peter's in Rome, the cupola of man, the Vatican (396).

"I am the most representative incarnation of post-war Europe;" Dalí claims in the epilogue of his autobiography. "I have lived all its adventures, all its experiments, all its dramas." With this assertion the artist indicates that he sees himself as someone in a very privileged position to make proclamations on the state of the Western world, and posits his claim to his inalienable right to such grandiose pronouncements as deeming the Catholic Church the inevitable redeemer of Europe. "As a protagonist of the surrealist revolution," he continues, "I have known from day to day the slightest intellectual incidents and repercussions in the practical evolution of dialectical materialism and the pseudo-philosophical doctrines based on the myths of blood and race of National Socialism; I have long studied theology." Stating his credentials, Dalí continues to position himself as someone with the authority to make sufficiently commanding

assertions and predictions about the state of the world as it stood on the final day of his completing these very words which, he tells us, is July 30th, 1941 (399).

The fruits of Dalí's labours, completed on this day, and resulting in his by now notorious autobiography is, as has been established in this thesis, an immensely rich and complex text; an "anecdotic self-portrait" in which Dalí has intricately and strategically configured the events of his life to form a highly entertaining, often perplexing and infinitely rich and nuanced work of literature, to be read on a number of different registers by several presumed audiences. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* fulfilled many functions in its writer's life and career, allowing him to "rewrite" his own past to serve the needs of the present; serving as a public relations document, a manifesto, a testament to his own skill as a writer, to showcase his erudition, to *épater* his rivals and foes, and to ingratiate himself with those people and powers with whom he wished to associate. Dalí's autobiography, with its intense focus on the structure and structuration of his past life, also afforded the artist the opportunity to map out the planned directive for his future, the second half of his career which, at that time, he announced would be as a painter "for the masses" and a champion of "classic" art, working within a decidedly Catholic "cosmogony."

"I have just finished writing this long book of the secrets of my life," Dalí announces toward the end of his memoir, "for this life that I have lived, this alone, gives me the authority to be heard." That Dalí afforded his readers the "authoritative" version of the "secret" life of his immensely energetic, erudite and enigmatic person, was and continues to be a boon for the Dalí enthusiast or those interested in the art of the twentieth century. As has been argued in the present study, however, Dalí had far too

much at stake to divulge any of his “real” secrets, or to bring the reader anywhere near close to what exactly it was that made the painter of the famous soft watch “tick.” For whatever reasons Dalí chose to write his autobiography, it was, it seems, a psychic, and perhaps cathartic necessity for this complex and gifted artist.

“To live!” he writes at the end of *The Secret Life*. “To liquidate half of life in order to live the other half enriched by experience, freed from the chains of the past.” According to Salvador Dalí, it was necessary at all cost that he “change skins,” that he “trade this worn epidermis with which I have dressed, hidden, shown myself, struggled, fought and triumphed, for that other new skin, the flesh of my desire, of my imminent renaissance ...” The importance of Dalí’s text as a public relations document, a manifesto and a surreptitious declaration of his allegiance to Franco’s Spain, addressing the American public, the avant-garde and the new regime of his native country, heralds what Dalí believed was a new phase of his life, which was to “be dated from the very morrow of the day this book appears” (393).

¹ Cowles, 140.

² Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 12.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁶ Salvador Dalí, quoted by J.V. Foix, “Les enquêtes a la joventut,” *La Pulicitat*, 12, 12 December, 1928, quoted in Fanés, *Salvador Dalí: The Construction of the Image, 1925-1930*, 175.

⁷ Gibson 286-88.

⁸ Salvador Dalí, “Conquest of the Irrational,” 416.

⁹ Cowles 145.

¹⁰ Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, 369.

¹¹ Dr. Robert Ley (1890-1945) was a German Nazi and leader of the German Labour Front.

¹² Dalí is most likely referring to the fifteenth-century painter Jean Fouquet (1420-1481), known for his manuscript illumination and portraiture.

¹³ Georges Bidault (1899-1983), French politician and twice Prime Minister of France.

¹⁴ Salvador Dalí et al. *Dalí News* (New York), Tues. November 20, 1945, 2, as reproduced in Fanés, *Dalí: Mass Culture*, 200.

- ¹⁵ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 401.
- ¹⁶ Etherington-Smith, 258-59.
- ¹⁷ Synopsis of the Spanish Civil War was compiled from Sheelagh M. Ellwood, *The Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge Mass., 1991); George Esenwein and Adrian Shubert, *Spain at War: The Spanish Civil War in Context, 1931-1939* (London and New York: Longman, 1995); George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (London: Penguin Books, 1989); *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, "The Spanish Civil War" (Chicago, Auckland, London, etc.: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.), Vol. 11, 15th edition, 1995, 68-69.
- ¹⁸ Robin Adèle Greeley, *Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 1.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Esenwein and Shubert, 131.
- ²¹ Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT); Madrid, 5 August 1936, in Esenwein and Shubert, 132.
- ²² Esenwein and Shubert, 266.
- ²³ J.W.D. Trythall, *Franco: A Biography* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1970), 205.
- ²⁴ Esenwein and Shubert, 250.
- ²⁵ Ellwood, 18.
- ²⁶ Juan Negrín was the Prime Minister of Spain between 1937 and 1939.
- ²⁷ Luis Buñuel Archive, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, as quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 451.
- ²⁸ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 452.
- ²⁹ Etherington-Smith, 258-59.
- ³⁰ Alain Bosquet, *Dalí desnudado* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967), 13; in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 457.
- ³¹ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 448.
- ³² Etherington-Smith, 258.
- ³³ Cowles, 142, from Dalí's "Picasso and I" speech delivered in Madrid in 1952, uncited.
- ³⁴ Letter from Salvador Dalí to Luis Buñuel, 1939. Archive, Ministry of Culture, Madrid, as quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 450. Precise date not given.
- ³⁵ Dibb and Gibson, *The Fame and Shame of Salvador Dalí*.
- ³⁶ Letter from Salvador Dalí to Luis Buñuel, 1939, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 450.
- ³⁷ Cowles, 144, uncited.
- ³⁸ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 144-45.
- ³⁹ Trythall, 44-45.
- ⁴⁰ Peter N. Carroll, "Introduction," in *Facing Fascism: New York and the Spanish Civil War*, eds. Peter N. Carroll and James D. Fernandez (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 13.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Esenwein and Shubert, 252.
- ⁴³ Cowles, 144.
- ⁴⁴ Morse, 120.
- ⁴⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Lucille Ball," <http://foia.fbi.gov/foiaindex/ball.htm>. Although Lucille Ball registered to vote as a communist in 1936, it was apparently due to the insistence of her grandfather rather than her own political allegiances. She subsequently appeared on McCarthy's blacklist, and was required to appear before the 1953 House Committee on Un-American Activities. With difficulty, she was able to disprove the allegation.
- ⁴⁶ Cowles, 226.
- ⁴⁷ Anon, "Dalí a Fascist?," *Art Digest* (Dec. 1, 1941): 6, 14.
- ⁴⁸ Calas, 1.
- ⁴⁹ André Breton, *Prolegomena to a Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not*, in *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 282.
- ⁵⁰ André Breton, "Situation of Surrealism between the Two Wars," in *What is Surrealism?*, 243.
- ⁵¹ Anon., Editor's Note to Salvador Dalí, "New York Salutes Me," *Spain*, May 1941, 10.
- ⁵² Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 113-114. According to Gibson, "The prison records do not state the reason for Dalí's arrest. It appears that it was mainly intended to intimidate his father, who in April 1923, a few months before the Primo de Rivera coup, had initiated legal proceedings in connection with an electoral fraud perpetrated by the Right in Figueres ... That the Right had decided to punish the father through the son seems beyond doubt, therefore, although Dalí's Marxist and anti-monarchist history were well known

to the local authorities, who may have remember that, while at the Instituto, he had been accused of participating in the burning of a Spanish flag ...”

⁵³ Letter from Salvador Dalí to Luis Buñuel, 1939, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 451.

⁵⁴ See Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times* (United Artists, 1936), when the unemployed protagonist picks up a red flag that has fallen off a construction truck as it passes by. Waving it about to notify the driver, he is mistaken as the rally leader of a demonstration being held by Communist agitators, who are marching behind him on the street. The police arrest him and take him off to jail as a result.

⁵⁵ Salvador Dalí, “FE.” Original drawing for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (not used). Ink on paper, c. 1941. Present whereabouts unknown. See reproduction in Kropf and Morse, p. 41.

⁵⁶ Joseph-Lowery, 36. She writes, “... *fai*, mot clef de la prétendue renaissance spirituelle, mot de la foi en terre *natale*, espagnol. Un semblant de vignette de dictionnaire montre en fin de livre que ce mot épelle aussi le nom du parti de la Phalange que soutint Franco et avec lequel Dalí entre en contact à l’époque de la rédaction de son autobiographie.

⁵⁷ Gibson, 271-2.

⁵⁸ Ades, *Dalí*, 194.

⁵⁹ Paul Hammond, “Buñuel Bows Out,” *Rouge*, 3, 2004, <http://www.rouge.com.au/3/Buñuel.html>.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶¹ As quoted in Hammond, 6, with the following citation: “A rough draft of this letter, which I would date between 10 and 16 March 1932, is preserved in The Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation in Figueres, Spain. I’ve tidied up Dalí’s chaotic syntax.”

⁶² Hammond, 6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3; Etherington-Smith, 259.

⁶⁴ Luis Buñuel, *My Last Sigh: The Autobiography of Luis Buñuel* (New York: Knopf, 1983), 182-3.

⁶⁵ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 474.

⁶⁶ Vilaseca, 76, endnote 25.

⁶⁷ Ades and Bradley, 39.

⁶⁸ Unpublished letter in Don Pere Vehí collection, Cadaqués, in Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 460.

⁶⁹ Dalí and Lorca, *Sebastian’s Arrows*, 2004.

⁷⁰ According to Dalí, “He was a homosexual, as everyone knows, and madly in love with me. He tired to screw me twice ... I was extremely annoyed, because I wasn’t homosexual, and I wasn’t interested in giving in. Besides, it hurts. So nothing came of it. But I felt awfully flattered *vis-à-vis* the prestige. Deep down, I felt that he was a great poet and that I did owe him a tiny bit of Divine Dalí’s asshole” (Secrest, 76).

⁷¹ Gibson, *The Shameful Life*, 28, 669.

⁷² Vilaseca, 67.

⁷³ On this matter, Dalí writes, “The need to swallow ... corresponds less to a nutritional need than to a compulsive necessity of an affective and moral order. We swallow in order to identify ourselves as absolutely as possible with the loved one (Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 44).

⁷⁴ Shaun Cole, “*Don We Now Our Gay Apparel*”: *Gay Men’s Dress in the Twentieth Century* (New York and Oxford: Berg Publishers), 2000, 59.

⁷⁵ Esenwien and Shubert, 180.

⁷⁶ Breton, *What is Surrealism ?*, 243.

⁷⁷ Joan Kropf and A. Reynolds Morse, *Salvador Dalí: The Secret Life Drawings* (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Salvador Dalí Foundation, Inc., 1982), iii-iv. The reason for *The Secret Life* being banned in Spain, for its sexual content, was suggested by Montse Aguer Teixidor, in the previously-cited interview in 2007.

⁷⁸ Orwell, “Benefit of Clergy,” 173.

⁷⁹ Haakon Chevalier, “Translator’s Foreword,” in Dalí, *Hidden Faces*, vi.

⁸⁰ Dibb and Gibson, *The Fame and Shame of Salvador Dalí*.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

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Popular Press

N.B.: Many of the popular articles cited in this dissertation are from a period scrapbook held in the archives at the Centre for Dalinian Studies in Figueres, Spain, likely compiled by Dalí's wife Gala, his family or a close friend. Most of these articles do not indicate page numbers, and as such are tagged with the acronym CDSS, for Centre for Dalinian Studies Scrapbook. This is also the case for two articles cited from the archives at the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, which are similarly tagged with the acronym DMLF for Dalí Museum Library File

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