



Dalí as writer: construction of memory

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To Montse Monné

When I was a teenager I learned about Dalí's existence through NO-DO, newsreels inspired in the initial sequence of Citizen Kane, which were projected before movies, like some sort of mental toll that had to be paid in order to see movies in Franco's Spain. In these newsreels, they only talked of inaugurations of swamps and the soccer victories of the club in the capital. When, sometimes Dalí's appeared in the screen, he relieved the terrible uninformative torment that usually lingered. For my peers and me, Dalí was a revelation: a great actor, very amusing because he dared to play with the Franco regime, saying outrageous remarks to undermine the government's power and authority. Years later, with great surprise, I discovered that he was also a painter, and even a prestigious writer. But that first indelible image has always accompanied me. In fact when I read Dalí his diction and gesticulation always accompanies me, which I find inseparable from his condition as writer and painter.

Salvador Dalí never grew tired of repeating that he was a better writer than painter. But, is this affirmation true? Frankly, I do not think so. I question this, not because his written works are not of great quality, but because we need to consider them in their specific value. A response to an interview of 1928 helps us situate the problem. They asked him who and what were his favorite authors and books in universal literature, he responded:

Of literature I have never been interested of anything vividly. The reading that mainly interests me is scientific and documentary, comprised of pure objective data. Of newspapers, especially diversity of events. Regarding poetry, I enjoy poems that are popular and anonymous in the different

countries, especially those derived from totemism. All this probably because all these things are away from the artistic fact, better put, of the aesthetic fact.¹

This response makes us think of two important matters: first of all, the rejection of cultural tradition, Dalí throughout his life, in all different eras, from different perspectives, always questioned the difference between cult and popular art. According to Carter Rattclif, Dalí is important because he makes us question the existence of a dividing line between high and low culture.² In fact, Dalí suggests a doubt of the distinction between high and low culture and also between centers and margins. As a writer he mixed registers and got interested in marginal genres that thanks to his intervention, returned to the center of aesthetic debate.

What is literature for Salvador Dalí? An advertising company in the Internet defines it in a very precise terminology which is very useful for my purpose: "Written works of fiction and nonfiction in which compositional excellence and advancement in the art of writing are higher priorities than are considerations of profit or commercial appeal."³ Dalí, as we have seen, declares himself immune to a "traditional" conception of literature, but it is true that his writings do not leave anybody indifferent: they almost have a commercial purpose and with difficulty we can relate them to any known literary genre. Dalí invented a language and a literature, a form of expression and a form of writing.

A quick glance to his production and the capacities of Salvador Dalí as a writer do not stop surprising even the most innocent (or ill-thought) of his readers. Like it is known his vital and artistic trajectory are developed in various scopes of expressions, giving particular importance to painting and writing. Developing ideas and obsessions that are parallel and complementary, because written word serves to say what he cannot say with a paintbrush and vice-versa. Author from a very young age of intimate diaries, prose poems, offensive manifestos, provocative conferences, surrealist propaganda articles, novels, opera librettos, a large number of interviews, movie scripts, etc., his contribution to literature is not minor. Beyond the *boutade* that he repeated (and we have imitated) that he was always a better writer than painter, his

literary practice doesn't leave the sensible reader indifferent. There is an unmistakable taste of the originality of Dalí's world, a genius aware of his condition, and who spared no effort so that the whole world would also know this.

In fact writing was always for him a weapon of confession and compromise and this occurs in a similar way and even more intense, than in the famous Sartre's declaration, in favor of compromised literature in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature??* (1947), where the French philosopher exposed the idea that marked the rest of his work: "La parole est action" (the word is action). Since the beginnings, in the diary of 1919-1920, we find a young voice, but it foreshadows with all its force, the one we will meet in the middle years. When in April 16, 1920 he outlines a life program, to study like a painter, in Madrid and Roma, he thinks of his return to Catalonia and predicts what will occur: "coming from Rome I will be a genius, a great genius, because I am sure of it." ⁴ In another annotation, of May 20th, he expresses the joy of concluding the class, the scholarly obligations, even drawing, and when summer arrives, be able to paint again:

As soon as I was ready, I opened the drawer of my room, I carefully took out some boxes, I opened them. It was the paint tubes. Those bright and clean tubes, and I watched them and caressed them with my shaking hands filled with emotion, like lovers would behave. My thoughts were flying far away. A new whole future full of hope and adventure glimpsed through those colors. I seemed to be painting and enjoying, I enjoyed myself thinking in the blessed day, that after a year of trial, of emotions and lies, I could start my work consciously, the sacred job of one who creates. And I saw my tubes spill their purest colors on the palette, pickup my brushes lovingly. I saw how my work progressed. Suffering in the creation. Entranced myself and got lost in it, that is mysterious of the light, color, and life. Fused my soul with that of nature... Always seeking for more, always more... more light, more blue...more sun...abstract myself in nature be a faithful disciple of her. Oh, I would become crazy! How blissful I will be the day that I can externalize everything that I had imagined, everything I had felt and thought in a whole year of thinking, seeing and having to safe and repress my creative urges. Ah! How I will enjoy it, how I will work, how I will live what I was not able to live in a year full of math and stupidities! And I don't mean to say that stupidities and math are not something picturesque. ⁵

Dalí utilizes writing with a testimonial desire, as the chronicle of his painting. He uses it as a witness to the growth of his vocation, passion, obsession, and as an instrument of imposition or diffusion of some ideas. It is in writing where Dalí finds himself, and this has a double paradoxical effect, of maximum intimacy and maximum public efficiency. And this is without palliative, one of the problems of Dalí as a writer, the private yet public character of his texts.

His writing was effective in the diffusion of his artistic ideas as it is proven by the multiple reactions of hostility that he awakened. The artistic and literary intervention of Salvador Dalí did not leave any of his peers indifferent. One person that shared exiled in US, Pedro Salinas, aired his contempt in stark remarks:

If a certain artistic style offers marketable overtones, the smiling commercial flocks that bring in the peak on the provident contract will fall over on the author. This is what occurred in the case of Salvador Dalí, renowned tamer among circus most significant glories, because he introduced himself in the surrealist jungle, he seized the fierce lion of surrealism by the hair, and brought him to surrender meekly, as a puppy stands, at the foot of the field of perfumery, cosmetics, tailoring ladies, men's ties and several other of the mercurial leafy trees.⁶

But like Julio Cortázar said with wit, many of these attitudes of denial and rejection towards this artist, don't cease to have a cynical point:

Dalí, needless to say, has as much of Arimán as of Leonardo da Vinci or any of these artists that he pretends to reincarnate and of course leaves them behind by many bodies. Assimilate him to Evil is paying him tribute that will provoke and immediate enthusiastic telegram of his part. The historical and social function of Dalí is fundamentally Socratic, but like a negative Socrates, not preoccupied of any progress on any field. It is the monster, in other words it is an apparent exception that with a blow can leave the monstrosity of normal beings that had been hidden uncovered. If Dalí could be blamed of ignoble actions (I do not know them directly, and the ones I have heard are not that scandalous), none of them accumulate the universal outrage that allows the appearance of the virtuous chorus of protests and insults that always accompanied them. There is against Dalí a horror very similar to that sadistic hypocrisy that disguises itself of horror towards the executioner. Dalí calmly climbs the staircase, passes the rope through the neck of Andre Breton or Pablo Picasso and hangs them without remorse. But among the indignant crowd that assists the executions many have spent years hanging Breton or Picasso privately,

they have butchered and burned them to a simmer in countless coffee tables, in gatherings in Valencia, Paris or in Buenos Aires, but they would hide themselves if someone asked them to sign their opinions.⁷

The “negative” popularity of Dalí was dispersed throughout his writing, especially in *The Secret Life*, an important document of vital reorientation and proof of the lucid utilization of mass-media.

A second problem is related to the material condition of this writing. Dalí, like some of his peers (Ors, being the most noteworthy) writes often in non-specialized publications, journals and newspapers. Dalí is a writer a discursive voice and who pays little attention to the materiality of the text. He writes, frequently, in a rushed manner, some texts in an incomprehensible dialect that cannot be published and that he only is able to understand and for that reason he always needs the help of a translator or intermediary so that it reaches the press and the reader. He is primarily a writer without a language. A writer that interchangeably used, Catalan, Spanish, French and when years passed English, a writer that utilized multiple forms of writings (memories, poetry, fiction, etc.) re-inventing the genres. The proof of this is that all his editors have manifested enormous difficulties of comprehension demonstrated in his texts. We could say that Dalí did not know how to write, in the sense that he wrote in a different form, very personal. For this reason his texts have always needed a “translator” or intermediary to make them comprehensible.

In *The Secret Life*, for example, the translator was Haakon M. Chevalier. When we reached page 74 (there are more than 400 pages in the book), he couldn't bare it any more and he wrote a desperate note:

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 the 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 is the only one who does not get lost in the labyrinthian chaos of this manuscript.⁸

A biographer that has seen the manuscript offers a description in similar terms: “The pages show many crossings-out and amendments. Far from being a spontaneous account of his life, and pouring out directly from his subconscious, these drafts show that the work was a literary exercise. He was putting his final touches to his monstrous re-invention of his past”.⁹ When Félix Fanés edited the diary 1919-1920 or the Catalan literary texts he also had to explain the difficulty of the manuscripts. In one hand, he recognized the possible dyslexia of the writer. “The painter writes phonetically, that is to say, disregarding conventional orthography” and in all languages he writes with many grammatical errors.¹⁰ Fanés also justifies his “intervention” in the original text: “intervening in the text until I converted the rudimentary and coloristic, but also frequently very brilliant, Catalan of Dalí in a language that was more accessible, without renouncing, to everything that was more characteristic.”¹¹ In the edition of Dalí’s literary texts, he states “the edition of the written work of the painter is never an easy task. In between the manuscript and the final published work there tends to be a considerable distance, it is as much determined by the peculiarity of the language of the author as by the criteria of the corrector, which had dealt with the text.”¹² What Ian Gibson noted in his biography about the intervention in the original text by Chevalier could be applicable to other texts: “it reads well, but the prose is so well fixed from the original that the authentic taste of the book will only be appreciated when it is published in its original French (grammatical errors and of punctuation bizarrely included)”.¹³ Dalí himself recognized the problem in *The Secret Life* as he explained how he published his first book, *La femme visible*: “Gala had reunited the disorganized and intangible scribbles that I had made during the summer in Cadaqués, and with her unbreakable conscientiousness he had achieved to give them a ‘synthetic form’ that was little or very communicable”.¹⁴ Here another not minor factor can be introduced regarding the consideration of Dalí as a writer, his multilingualism, beyond the fact that these texts are incomprehensible in any language and that are in need of a mediator. *The Secret Life* is a book he wrote in made-up French. Chevalier translated it from the French language.¹⁵ In an ideal world, we would need to be multilingual in order to capture Dalí as a writer in all his richness and variety of resources. And at the same

time, with access to some of the most important originals, in order to capture the difference in his language and the common. The recent critical edition of the original in French of *The Secret Life* is a very stimulating first step.¹⁶

A third unmistakably element of Dalí's writing has to do with its technical or literary condition. This affects the possible classification and relationship with a literary and cultural context of his writings. Dalí writes imitating or rejecting certain models. Even though he doesn't like it he relates, through affinity or rejection, with a literary system that is Catalan, French and American. He doesn't write a writing that could be said to be "creative", artistic or of consumption. If we have to believe a declaration by young Dalí, he writes in a manner that is "anti-artistic". In fact, we realize quite fast that Dalí was an excellent communicator that took advantage like few have taken before and after him of the possibilities presented by the mass media.¹⁷ He writes to communicate innovative ideas about art, to exert his opinion about art and other painters and to publicize his own work. He writes to say what he cannot paint. He writes to explain his own painting, the project that needs of translation and publicity. For example he explains the "Sainly Objectivity" concept in the prose "Sant Sebastià". In other cases he poses a defense of photography: "photography as a pure spirit's creation". Or in another text he explains the process of relations with the exterior world: "Knowing how to look is a totally a new system of spiritual surveying. Knowing how to look is a type of inventing."¹⁸ In the prose "'Els meus quadros del saló de tardor" this operation was converted in "Looking is Inventing".¹⁹

From a formal point of view it is very evident that his writing is characterized by the fragmentation (like his painting). Some of his annotations could be read like first versions of the poems in prose that were published *L'Amic de les Arts*. Two examples: the "impressions" of "Les Fires i les Festes de S. Creu" of the month of May 1920²⁰ or of the visit to Barcelona in the month of June that same year.²¹ We are in the intellectual geography that he had intended to define with his friend Luis Buñuel. An article of his, "*Découpage* o segmentación cinegráfica", proposes some reflections about montage that draw us near to multiple images, to Dalí's paranoiac associations:

The intuition of film, the photogenic embryo, already palpates in that operation called *découpage*. Segmentation. Creation. Split from one thing to be converted into another. What before wasn't, now is. The easiest, the most complicated way to reproduce, to create. From amoeba to symphony. Authentic moment in the film of creation by segmentation. That scenery, to be recreated by the cinema, would need to be segmented into fifty, one hundred or more pieces. All this will occur in a vermicular form, organizing itself in colony, to compose this way film's entity, a snake of silence, formed with of material segments (montage) and of ideal segments (*découpage*) segmentation of segmentation.²²

When one reads these words by Buñuel, one has the impression of reading the description of the system at the background of the organization of the surrealist paintings of Dalí, in which the (seemingly) irrational apparition and combination, limit with the cinematographic montage, the segmentation of segmentation. But also these are some words that help us read the poetic proses of *L'Amic de les Arts*.

On the other hand, we are facing a kind literature in which the oral aspect dominates. When reading Dalí's texts a curious phenomenon takes place, because we hear more the voice and we do not read as much the words. Maybe this is the reason why interviews are one of the jewels of the whole ensemble of his literary production. Dalí was an extraordinary writer. He knew how to manipulate the press and in one of his first visits to New York, he presented himself as the inventor of surrealism, with a picture of Man Ray in the cover of *Times* magazine. All this allows us to see that his literature is dominated by oral components, of the word as is said. Finkelstein refers to a "speaking voice", and explains that it is "the voice that we can almost hear with all its idiosyncrasy diction, and strange inflections, and exaggerated pronunciation".²³ Dalí's writing has the character of acting, has a performing constituent. We can relate his writings with "perlocutionary acts," in other words, those that produce a effect, wanted or not in the receptor, due to the form in which it is expressed by the transmitter.²⁴ This use of writing by Dalí, seems to invert one of the principles that Derrida saw in the writing, that of "supplementarity". Writing is the supplement by excellence, because it works like a supplement, the sign of a sign, taking the place of spoken discourse. Dalí

inverts the terms. It is the spoken discourse that is converted into a supplement of a written discourse.²⁵

Taking a little bit further this definition of Dalí's literary constituents, his Poetics declarations from his youth offer to us useful hints. In a key text, "Nous límits de la pintura", when he still tries to defend politely the new surrealist ideas, the article is adorned with words in a form of false acrostics that express the most essential aspects of the Dalinian ideology of the moment: DINÀMICA / LLEUGERESA/ ONIRISME/ SUPERREALISME, etc. These words can be read in two manners: like false acrostics, or words in freedom, in the form of futurist writing or Dada and Surrealist manifestoes; or like screams of the writer, putting again emphasis in the oral aspect of his writing. The text also finishes with a series of striking images, based on the surprise that is provoked by the oxymoron, the opposition of the contraries:

Why does it matter that the artist of today despises the worries that during a brief moment appeared fundamental by a process of miniaturized physical worries? Or that, far from the cold and the hot, one finds the real fire and ice proving that by leaving the ember freeze in the pupil of the rotting donkey and the plume, dyed with blood red, becomes, by a dexterous, in the ball of fire that moves slowly inside the night of our simplifications of love?²⁶

We recognize here a version of the concept of the image that fits perfectly with the arguments of Pierre Reverdy adapted by the surrealist.²⁷ We can verify it in yet another example:

Oh, wonderful industrial mechanic world! Small metallic apparatus where the slowest osmosis with the meat, the vegetables, the sea, the constellations occurs. If poetry is a love entanglement of what is furthest and most different, never had the moon more lyrically mated with water, as with the mechanical physiology of a plated phonographic record.²⁸

Here we should forget the appraisal of the industrial mechanical world that will soon stop interesting Dalí and will be substituted by the assertion of Modernism and of an unreal world, not visible, dreamlike, for those who in the medium of expression are hypnagogic images.²⁹ Dalí's writing, as I have indicated before, has a lot of action. "Writing" for him means "doing", it is understood like an intervention. For that reason in

his interest for literature dangerous and combative writing are highlighted. Proof of this is his lecture at “Ateneu Barcelonès”, “Moral position of Surrealism”, in which his voice resounds strongly and the reader can only imagine how it sounds in his own ears and those of the scandalized assistants (Guerau de Liost, López-Picó, and others). Or like in the case of drawing exhibited in Paris in 1929. The text that he inscribed in the drawing was very costly to him: he was expelled from his family. In an Sacred Heart’s image he writes: “Parfois je crache par plaisir sur le portrait de ma mère”. The writing, in that occasion was inscribed in the pictorial work.

What type of text does Dalí write? I have said before that he is not a writer. What I meant to say is that he is not a writer in the sense that he doesn’t conform to stereotypical, traditional genres, but he creates a whole literature and style of writing. There are three aspects that stand out in the materiality of Dalí’s writing: the oxymoron: the rupture of the rational order of discourse, similar to a collage, the fragmentation, or the *découpage* or “cinematographic segmentation”, the discursive tone, of instruction from an imposing view, in the sense that somebody wants to “teach” and that wants to convince, and for that reason repeats time and time again the same melody.

He succeeds to concentrate these three aspects in a certain type of text that at the end of the 1920s seems the most useful, what he defines as “documental”.

According to *Gran Diccionari de la Llengua Catalana*, a documentary is a “Gènere cinematogràfic deslligat del cinema de ficció que presenta la realitat amb una finalitat bàsicament informativa.” [A cinematographic genre not tied to fictional cinema that presents reality with the purpose to basically inform.] Dalí in March 1929 in *L’amic de les Arts* defined the “documentary” in broader terms:

A tendency that is violently anti-artistic stays defined in the exacerbated impulse towards the documentary – (the existence and the investigation at the same time need the text or the surrealist production) and the thorough documentary, demonstrates once again, the constant osmosis between reality and super reality.

(...)

We hope that the first irrational tries, absent of all esthetic sense, parallel to the strictly scientific intents, offer us the documentary of long life of the hairs of an ear or the documentary of a rock, or of the slowed down life of the air current.³⁰

A month later, in *La Publicitat*, when he initiated the series “Documental-Paris-1929”, he presents a kind of programmatic statement and writes:

The documentary annotates in an anti-literary way the things said about an objective world. It transcribes parallel to the surrealist text, with the same rigor and very anti-literary like the documentary, the functioning of the liberated REAL of thought, the stories that occur in actuality in our spirit through the physic automatism and other passive states (inspiration).³¹

rejects specifically the “poetic image, the metaphor, the description”, that is to say the most elementary rhetorical resources of traditional literature. This is confirmed when he writes: “My documentary, nevertheless, I guarantee that it would move inside an anti-style, the most anti-literary possible. Don’t hope, then, my readers, poetic images, descriptions, etc. that are very usual in literary texts. The most perfect and exact metaphors that are offered to us are made by and objectivized by the actual industry.”³²

In another text he adds other nuances to the definition:

I consider the documentary, far from believing it to be antagonistic to surrealism, like another proof of the delicate and constant osmosis that is established between the “upper-reality” and actual reality. This reality of the objective world every day more controlled, more docile and obedient in a blurry manner to the violent reality of our spirit.³³

Maybe it is necessary to clarify that Dalí will continue utilizing this surprising style to write texts and essays, autobiographic, etc. But when he writes a novel like *Hidden Faces*, he gets inspiration from nineteenth century models.

When he explained the film *An Andalusian Dog*, in the month of October of 1929, he insists in a determined vision of reality that is, seems to me, the one that is being incorporated in the paintings, movies, and (anti) literary texts of this moment. In the film he affirms “it is about the simple annotation of *facts*. The abyssal difference with other films is explained because *those facts*, instead of being conventional, fabricated, arbitrary, gratuitous, they are real, or *similar to real facts*, and for that reason enigmatic, incoherent, irrational, absurd, without explanation.”³⁴ When he installed himself in Paris, Dalí had a battery of writing resources that allowed him to confront

and collaborate with the surrealist group. This will be his weapon of choice in his everyday practice of surrealism, of elaboration and diffusion of ideas, in the group magazines, and a few years later, installed in the USA, it will be a decisive element for the “construction” of memory.

The secret life: words in action

When he arrived to the USA in the beginning of the 1940s, Dalí had made a big change: the conversion to Classicism. His writing, in part, notes the bump. It loses the tension and passion characteristic of the Catalan and French periods. The writing helps him “document” in a Dalinian sense of the term, the construction of the personal myth. Reconstructs or (re-invents) the past taking into consideration the present needs (and even maybe those of the future). The writing is part of the myth and the cement that holds it. This is the Dalinian writing: words in action, words in diffusion. In effect, *The Secret Life* reunites a whole series (false) memories manipulated or not, that are a series of fragmented notes of life, but that are written, that we have to read, from this perspective “documentary”: “They are real facts, or similar to real, and for that reason enigmatic, incoherent, irrational, absurd, without explanation.”

From the first page a voice that is impertinent and arrogant “bothers”: he presumes to be a child sullen and spoiled, is unspeakably pretentious:

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 honor to live.³⁵

Of course he fixes this with small winks of complicity: “the ever-perspicacious reader will already have discovered without difficulty that modesty is not my specialty.”³⁶ A possible reference for this type of arrogant voice we can recognize in the autobiography of Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (1889), which writes chapters like “Why I am so smart?” or “Why do I write such good books”.³⁷

The second detail that draws attention from the first pages is the devotion for Gala. He is visible in the margins of the book: in the two portraits and the signature

(Gala Salvador Dalí), or in the dedication: "A Gala-Gradiva, celle qui avance". The book had a very negative reception in the USA.³⁸ *The Secret Life* is the confession of a painter. Illustration plays a central role. They are often written in English, that is to say for the North American edition and that have never been translated. There are also some written in French. There are also reproductions of engravings or objects that are related to the text, for example, the coin of Alfonso XII, or various animals. The book is very well organized from a purely literary perspective. It has symmetry in the disposition of the chapters. In the extremes the "prologue" and the "epilogue" that brings us back to the present of the writing. Between two sections there are three parts of fourteen chapters. The first part and the third, built a sort of sandwich to the central part, that in which he narrates his adolescence until the expulsion from the family.³⁹

The text reads like a novel,⁴⁰ fixing the old dilemma between reality and fiction that is characteristic of the autobiographic genre. The autobiography of Dalí is a novel. It contains the narration of long episodes of his life, from the intrauterine memories until the moment of the writing, moved to the USA, in the midst of a world war. The disfigured narration of the most important episodes of his life are interrupted sometimes by brief complementary moments, *ex-cursus* that allows us to capture the roots of the Dalinian world, in a style that without doubt is close to the articles and poems in prose of the surrealist period. Thus, for example, he can explain in three pages aspects that we know are key in his life: the passage by the Madrid "Residencia de Estudiantes," the preparation of *Un perro andaluz* the intervention in, and his relation with, the surrealist group. The memories are manipulated. This detail is significant, because if we confront the Dalinian memories with the perspective of other peer witnesses, in a collective memory exercise in the way that was defended by Paul Ricoeur based on Maurice Halbwachs, the differences are spectacular.⁴¹ An excellent example of this would come out from a parallel reading of fragments of the memories of Buñuel and Dalí.

One of the problems we face when reading any autobiographical text, is that of truthfulness of the information that is presented to us, which is fixed with the autobiographical pact. In the case of a book like *The Secret Life* the preventions are

much more urgent, because of the public condition of the author and the constant manipulation of his image. Once we initiate the reading we realize that it is a total betrayal to that pact. Dalí himself points to doubt about this possibility: "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".⁴² This opens the possibility of thinking of some reorganized memories based on the necessity of the person that remembers them: the apparition of a Russian girl when he was seven or eight years, that appears to him like a premonition of Gala.⁴³ He also thinks it is possible to relate his childhood the beginnings of the paranoiac association.⁴⁴

Some of the first critics indicated, ironically this condition of the text, retired in excess of the canonical autobiography. Thus *Time* magazine, in an anonymous note announcing the book, in which they publish some fragments, it reads: "The question has always been: is Dalí crazy? The book indicates that Dalí is as crazy as a fox".⁴⁵ On the other hand a note in *Newsweek* of January 1943 warned the reader in more objective terms: "The 'Dalinian' confessions, in short, will alternately amaze, shock, disgust, and amuse the reader. Humor however is never intentional."⁴⁶ The publication of the book had a devastating effect in his friendship with Buñuel. He accused him of being an atheist and Buñuel lost his precarious job in the MOMA at New York. For this reason Buñuel wrote in his memories: "despite of all our teenage memories, despite of the admiration that his work still inspires, it is impossible for me to forgive his fierce egocentric exhibitionism, his cynical adhesion to Franco and above all his declared hatred towards their friendship."⁴⁷

The final pages of *The Secret Life* are in great measure, terrifying. They confirm a possible reading according that the book is a great maneuver of justification of recent facts. It of course ends with his arrival to North America. Precisely on the moment that he is finishing the drafting of the book. After chapter 13 where he explains the rejection of the communist and Nazi ideologies:

The hyena of public opinion slid around me asking me with threat drooling of his expecting fangs that I had to decide finally, that I had to be Stalinist or pro Hitler. No, no, no, no, and thousand times no! I will continue being like me always until I die, Dalinian and only Dalinian!⁴⁸

Dalí felt obligated to justify, at the end of his book, that it was normal to write the memories before living them. And here is where we clearly encounter with the idea of *The Secret Life* like re-invention, like a great process of manipulation of the autobiographical “truth”:

With my vice of make everything very different of the rest, to do the contrary of what everybody else does, I thought it was smarter to write my memories and then live them. Living! Liquidate half a life in order to live the other half enriched with experience, free from the chains of the past. For this it was necessary that I killed my past without compassion nor scruples, I had to get rid of my own skin, that initial skin of my amorphous life and revolutionize it to the post-war period.⁴⁹

He proposed with a very precise image, the one of the snake shedding its skin, the start of a new life: “New skin, new land!”⁵⁰ In the French version it might be even bolder this sense of the start of a new stage from the suppression of the previous experience that has stayed sublimated with the reduction of memories:

J'ai tué mon passé pour m'en débarrasser, comme un serpent se débarrasse de sa vieille peau, ma vieille peau étant, en l'occurrence, ma vie informe et révolutionnaire de l'après-guerre. Ces dernières lignes représentent les dernières convulsions qui vont me permettre de rejeter dans l'oubli les derniers lambeaux du neuve!⁵¹

This passage is, on the other hand, a good example of the level of intervention that was produced between the manuscript and the printed version.

pour cela il faillet que ~~me~~-ge me tue /et que ge me décroche/ le peu de vie /huisse/ de la post guerre avec la quelle jusqu'a pressent ge me susi habille, trene, lutte, debatru trionfai d'autre de ces penes elle etai trop vielle: et mes aspirations d'anti faust etai elles d'en viellir encore/ il faillet que ge tue la peau de ma vie, et que ge m'en debarrasse come ~~du~~ il fons les serpents avec leur propre peu, et come il font aussi certains pianos flexibles, les quel ~~qu~~ l'aisent des l'an bots de leurs peaux mortes, le long des plages m'elancoliques de dubut d'octobres.⁵²

We also note, the necessity of reading the original out loud in order to understand something.

Another distinguishable element is that in those moments that there could be true confidence, he excuses himself from narrating the complete episode. When

narrating how he received the letter from his father, where he was expelled from the family, he writes: "I don't want to reveal here the secret that lingered in that decision, because this secret is between my father and I, and I don't have the intention to open again the wound that had us separated for six interminable years and that made both of us suffer a lot."⁵³ The fact of limiting information, alluding to it partially, only augments the mystery, and demonstrates up to what point it is a controlled confession, "constructed".

The more extensive narration, of episodes of Dalí's life are combined with other interventions in which Dalí extracts suggestive conclusions more related to the "documentary" technique, which can be applied to other aspects of his life and work. When he arrives to Paris and he visits the brothel "Chabanais" he deduces:

The staircase of "Chabanais" is for me the most mysterious and ugly "erotic" place; the Palladio theater, in Vicenza, the most mysterious and divine "esthetic" place and the entrance of the graves of El Escorial, the most mysterious and beautiful mortuary place in the planet. It is so real that for me that eroticism for me always has to be ugly, the esthetic divine, and death beautiful.⁵⁴

Other ex-cursus fragments provide annotations about some objects or fundamental obsessions of the artist. That is the case of the crutches when he arrives to Paris, at the beginning of the third part of *The Secret Life*. Later, we find out, that Dalí related his paranoiac writing with the example of Lidia de Cadaqués, a woman who interpreted Eugeni d'Ors' articles like coded messages that were directed towards her: "one could not be fascinated by the disconcerting imaginative violence with which her paranoiac spirit could project the image of our internal world in the exterior world, it doesn't matter where, nor in what matter, nor with which pretext." And confessed "The most incredible coincidences occurred in the course of this correspondence [between Lidia and Ors], that I have utilized in various occasions as a model of my own writings."⁵⁵ It includes the negation of the ideas of 1927 "Manifest Antiartistic" (Manifest groc) with the title "My struggle", echoing Hitler's title⁵⁶. Or definitions "in progress" like that of the surrealist object: "it is absolutely a useless object from the practical and rational point of view, only created with the means of materializing in a fetishist manner, with

maximum tangible reality, ideas and fantasies of delirious character.”⁵⁷ In another famous episode he explains the origin of his soft watches. He also writes a description of New York in terms related with his version of *Angelus* of Millet:

Every night the skyscrapers of New York take the anthropomorphic forms of multiple and gigantic *Angelus* de Millet of the tertiary period, immobile and ready to execute their sexual act of devouring themselves, such swarms of scorpions before intercourse. It is the bloodthirsty desire that illuminates them and makes all their central calefaction circulate and poetry osamenta ferruginosa de diplodocus vegetal.⁵⁸

Here he adds an image that he confesses he stole from Raymond Roussel, (“ the greatest of French imaginative writers”): “The poetry of New York is not esthetically serene, it is boiling biology. The poetry of New York is not of nickel, it is a calf’s lung. And the subways of New York do not run through iron lane; they run through calf’s lung lanes.” The connection Dalí-Roussel can be understood because a similar system they use to make up images, as one can read in *Comment j’ai écrit certains de mes livres* (1935), a process which Roussel relates to rime, and that he summarizes with these words: “création imprevue due à des combinaisons phoniques.”⁵⁹ Nobody has satisfactorily explained the association Dalí-Roussel, but this quotation brings us back to the phonic and oral aspect of the Dalinian writing.

The Secret Life is a book of public explanation and of reorganization, of looking back thinking of the future, like a work in progress. Dalí’s writing confirms the great central project of his life: “Salvador Dalí”, confirming that in his case there is no separation between life and work. *The Secret Life* cannot be read like a reconstruction of the memory like is the case of other texts of remembrance. It is a hinged text that is used to move away from the past and prepare the future. Doesn’t matter with what perspective you look at it, it disguises, it “constructs”, it uses the third person to talk about himself. He constructs a work, a “documentary” that has to be remembered one more time “There are real events, or similar to real events, therefore enigmatic, incoherents, irrational, absurd, without explanation.” Salvador Dalí is the prime material and the world of the cement that ensembles everything.

In the prose “Les pantoufles de Picasso” this —as recounted by Dalí—asked him: “Why do you hide your face from me, its not like I recognize it”⁶⁰. We recognize in these words and eco of Nietzsche idea in *On the Genealogy of Morality* when he discusses the masks (against the bourgeois morality), because behind them there is no truth but only a mask. The mask is the mask, in the same manner that writing hides behind the voice. Maybe now some of the titles of some books make more sense: life *is* secret, faces *are* hidden. The writing of the construction of memory brings us closer to some of the nuclei of this work and the complex and contradictory life. The double mask (voice and written word) suggests the impersonation of the word written by the voice. It is the mask behind in which he hides in a movement of impersonations that leads him to infinity. When we read Dalí, we don’t notice only the text, but we “hear” his voice. His writing is phonetic, because one has to read it out loud in order to understand it. It does not materialized in the page but in the act of saying it, of acting in it. It is in a diction maneuver, of creation of hypnagogic images through phonetic associations, when many of his texts make sense.

But if we extend a bit this reflection, we realize in the proximity of Dalí’s game with the key concept in Nietzsche’s artistic approach.⁶¹ For Nietzsche, art is not only an expression of significance, but that it also means the act of inventing, sign of the creativity itself. The meaning in the artistic operation is the necessity of renouncing of comprehension, and capturing the unexplainable like a sign. In art, the form is the content; the art is the mask that in reality is what is underneath the mask in reality. We can see his portrait, the one that is offered by his memories in *The Secret Life* like a great maneuver of impersonation: an autobiography-mask, pure invention, where the total impersonation of himself is produced.

Notes

¹ Dalí, Salvador. *La vida pública de Salvador Dalí*. Ricard Mas, Ed. Barcelona: Ara Llibres, 2002: 24.

² Quoted by N. S. Finkelstein. *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 1.

³ <http://www.brochure-design.com/brochure-design-publishing-terms.html>

⁴ Salvador Dalí, *Un diari: 1919-1920. Les meves impressions i records íntims*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1994: 85.

⁵ *ibidem*: 105-106.

- ⁶Pedro Salinas, Reflexiones sobre la cultura [A propósito de la encuesta a los intelectuales] *Revista de las Indias* (Bogotá), segunda época XXIV, núm. 76 (abril 1945): 5-18. *Obras completas II*, Ed. Enric Bou. [Madrid: Cátedra, 2007: 1335-1343].
- ⁷ Julio Cortázar, *Último Round*. Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1969: 35.
- ⁸ Dalí, Salvador. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York, 1942: 74.
- ⁹ Etherington-Smith, Meredith. *Dalí. A Biography*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992: 300.
- ¹⁰ Dalí, *Un diari...*, op. cit.: 9.
- ¹¹ Dalí, *Un diari...*, op. cit.: 14-19.
- ¹² Dalí, Salvador. *L'alliberament dels dits. Obra catalana completa*. Ed. Presentació i edició de Fèlix Fanés. Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1995: XII.
- ¹³ Gibson, Ian. *La vida desafortunada de Salvador Dalí*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1998: 514.
- ¹⁴ Dalí, Salvador. *La vida secreta de Salvador Dalí per Salvador Dalí*. Trans. Bartomeu Bardagí. Palafrugell: DASA Edicions, 1981: 264.
- ¹⁵ Dalí started writing *The Secret Life* in France. According to Etherington-Smith, in Arcachon "he occupied his afternoons by laboriously drafting his autobiography, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, in execrable and unreadable French." Op. cit, 300. And she adds, that "Haakon Chevalier was entrusted with the Sisyphean task of trying to decipher Dalí's appalling handwriting and almost impenetrable spelling ['book' became 'buc' 'Freud' became 'Froid'] " Op. cit,309. Apparently, Caresse Crosby wanted to install printing press in one of the buildings of the compound, but this did never happen.
- ¹⁶ Dalí, Salvador. *La vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: suis-je un génie?* Ed. Frédérique Joseph-Lowery. Lausanne: L'Âge d'homme, 2006.
- ¹⁷ Dalí, Salvador, et al. *Dalí, cultura de masses La vida secreta de les imatges*. Barcelona: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía : Fundació "La Caixa" : Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, 2004.
- ¹⁸ Dalí, *Obra Completa Catalana*, op. cit.: 34.
- ¹⁹ *ibidem*: 40.
- ²⁰ Dalí, *Un diari...*: 96-98.
- ²¹ Dalí, *Un diari...*: 96-98.
- ²² Talens, Jenaro. *El ojo tachado. Lectura de "Un chien andalou" de Luis Buñuel*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1986: 81.
- ²³ Filkenstein, op. cit: 11.
- ²⁴ As it is known, it was Noam Chomsky who emphasized the distinction between "competence" and "performance", that is what a speaker knows about the grammar of a language and how it applies it. Austin distinguished three types of verbal actions: locutional, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. Vid. Carlson, Marvin. *Performance: a Critical Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 1996): 56-75.
- ²⁵ "if supplementarity is a necessarily indefinite process, writing is the supplement par excellence since it proposes itself as the supplement of the supplement, sign of a sign, taking the place of a speech already significant" [Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1976: 28].
- ²⁶ Dalí, *Obra catalana completa*, op. cit.: 87
- ²⁷ Pierre Réverdy wrote a definition that was quoted in the Surrealist Manifesto of 1924: "L'image est une pure création de l'esprit. Elle ne peut naître d'une comparaison mais du rapprochement de deux réalités plus ou moins éloignées. Plus les rapports des deux réalités rapprochées seront lointains et justes, plus l'image sera forte - plus elle aura de puissance émotive et de la réalité poétique" Breton, André. *Manifestes du Surréalisme*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973: 31.
- ²⁸ Dalí, *Obra catalana completa*, op. cit.: 96.
- ²⁹ Vid. Santamaria, Vicent. "Foix, Dalí i les imatges hipnagògiques." *Els Marges*.63 (1999): 7-19. A quotation from the book by Eugène Bernard Leroy *Les visions du demi-sommeil* (1926), which might serve to describe Dalinian paintings from the period 1927-29, is particularly illuminating: "On voit plutôt une tête, un meuble, un objet quelconque, ne reposant sur rien, suspendu dans le vide. Ces images ne sont point vagues et n'ont point besoin que l'on fasse, pour les reconnaître, le moindre effort d'imagination; elles sont ordinairement nettes, plus nettes parfois que des objets réels, d'une précision de contours parfaite et d'un coloris très franc." Or what he says referring to human figures: "Les personnages, surtout s'ils sont mobiles animés, ont souvent quelque chose de fantastique, d'artificiel, étrange, leurs proportions sont parfois réduites, leurs visages grimacent, etc. 'Lorsque je vois des images hypnagògiques, dit Are..., elles sont toujours très petites, d'un dessin très fouillé (comme un miniature) et d'un coloris très vif.'" [Santamaria 15].
- ³⁰ Dalí, *Obra catalana completa*, op. cit.: 176.
- ³¹ *ibidem*: 193.
- ³² *ibidem*: 196.
- ³³ *ibidem*: 196-197.
- ³⁴ *ibidem*: 217.
- ³⁵ Dalí, Salvador. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Trans. Haakon Chevalier. New York, 1942: 4.
- ³⁶ *ibidem*: 4.
- ³⁷ Vid. García de la Rasilla, Carmen. *Salvador Dalí's Literary Self-Portrait (Approaches to a Surrealist Autobiography)*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2009.
- ³⁸ Bou, Enric. *Pintura en el aire. Arte y literatura en la Modernidad*. Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2001: 342-343.
- ³⁹ Alsina, Jean. "Salvador Dalí autobiographe dans *La vida secreta de Salvador Dalí por Salvador Dalí*." *Écriture sur soi en Espagne. Modèles & Écarts*. Ed. Guy Mercadier. Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1988. 257-71.
- ⁴⁰ Fanés, Fèlix. "Mig secret, mig ocult. Salvado Dalí, escriptor." *Els Marges*.42 (1990): 3-17. See also, Pas, Annemieke van de. *Salvador Dalí, l'obra literària: una visió de conjunt*. Barcelona: Fundació Mediterrània, 1989.
- ⁴¹ Ricoeur, Paul. *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000.
- ⁴² Dalí, *The Secret Life*, op. cit.: 38
- ⁴³ *ibidem*: 41.

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- ⁴⁴ *ibidem*: 41.
- ⁴⁵ *Time* (28 December 1942).
- ⁴⁶ *Newsweek* (gener 1943).
- ⁴⁷ Buñuel, Luis. *Mi último suspiro*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1982: 218.
- ⁴⁸ Dalí, *La vida secreta* op. cit.: 384.
- ⁴⁹ *ibidem*: 418.
- ⁵⁰ *ibidem*: 418.
- ⁵¹ Dalí, Salvador. *La vie secrète de Salvador Dalí*. Trans. Michel Déon. Paris: La Table Ronde, 1952: 30.
- ⁵² S. Dalí *La vie secreta...* (2006), op. cit.: 724.
- ⁵³ Dalí, *La vida secreta* op. cit.: 268-269.
- ⁵⁴ *ibidem*: 220.
- ⁵⁵ *ibidem*: 284.
- ⁵⁶ *ibidem*: 308.
- ⁵⁷ *ibidem*: 335.
- ⁵⁸ *ibidem*: 356.
- ⁵⁹ Raymond Roussel, *Comment j'ai écrit certains de mes livres*, Paris: J. J. Pauvert, 1963: 23. When Dalí died, he had two books on his bedside table. One was an old edition of *Impressions d'Afrique*. *La Vanguardia* (Feb 23, 1989).
- ⁶⁰ Dalí, Salvador. *¿Por qué se ataca a la Gioconda?* Ed. María J. Vera. Madrid: Ediciones Siruela, 1994: 189.
- ⁶¹ Barker, Stephen. "The Mirror and the Dagger. Nietzsche and the Danger of Art". En *Maps and Mirrors : topologies of art and politics* edited by Steve Martinot. Northwestern University Press, 2001: 83-87I am grateful to Heike Scharm for Nietzsche's references (and translations) and an email exchange about this issue. For the discussion of this problem in Dalí, *vid.* In particular this fragment: "The 'within-ness' of art, and of the aesthetic criteria for it, are very problematic in Nietzsche. The incision of art, painful as it may be, requires a simultaneous objectification, a 'point of view'. This is one of the most significant aspects of the index of art. In providing an index, a gauge or measure of the difficulty of becoming human through creativity, art - by virtue of its status as index -remains apart, aloof, reveals itself as an incision into life. This is precisely the way in which Derrida refers to writing in calling it a 'dangerous supplement', and, from a different perspective, it is what Adorno means, historically, when he says that 'works of art become what they are by negating their origin': art is étrangeté, a disjunctive principle" (87).