

## Picasso and Dalí, double portrait in the bullring of art

By PILAR PARCERISAS

Dalí's relationship with Picasso is ambivalent and complex. On one hand, it is rooted in the admiration of Dalí towards the master, which starts after his visit to Picasso's Parisian atelier in 1926. From that moment onwards, and up until 1970, when their relationship has completely dissolved, Dalí writes him letters and postcards, to which he never replies. However, Picasso did help Dalí pay for the costs of his trip to New York in 1934, for which Dalí always showed his gratitude publicly.

But after the Spanish Civil War and the tragic ending of the Second World War with the nuclear bomb in 1945, Dalí wants to take a new artistic course. He starts measuring himself against Picasso: he sets out on an ideological confrontation, as well as an aesthetic rivalry with him, which is aimed at finally becoming the master's successor in the History of Art. In his lectures of the time, Dalí delivers diatribes against him, while he asks for a return to Raphael's classicism in the nuclear age. This opens a new period in Dalí's work, a sort of 'nuclear mysticism', where the atomic age and Spanish Catholicism merge into the significant work *Mystical Manifesto* (1951).

The political context has changed. The Cold War determines the relations between Europe, United States and the Soviet Union. The aesthetic of abstraction rules in the US while, in Europe, it's all about informalism; so, on both sides of the Atlantic, the aesthetics are hegemonic.

But Dalí, who wants to leave the aesthetics of surrealism behind (he was expelled from the group in 1934), needs to kill, more than ever, all the William Tells of his life, namely: his own father, the 'father-Picasso' and the 'father-Breton'. It was in fact Breton who, in 1939, called him '*Avida Dollars*' using all the letters of his full name and who, eventually, turned the entire surrealist group against him. Breton did this with the complicity of the American critics, from Clement Greenberg to James Johnson Sweeney. In 1941, Sweeney co-curated with James Thrall Soby a retrospective on both Dalí and Miró at the MoMA. In the exhibition, Miró was presented as a modern master, while Dalí was shown as a reactionary artist close to Nazism. In order to visually convey this approach, a gothic typeface was used to illustrate an ideological closeness to the Nazi cause in Dalí's work. Conversely, a rationalist typeface, more typical of the avant-garde, was used to present Miró.<sup>[1]</sup>

The destruction and loss of Europe's and Spain's cultural traditions caused by the wars urges Dalí to change his personality. He needs to shift from the aesthetics of surrealism towards a return to the classics, as well as to an enduring technique, with his eye fixed on the Renaissance. Dalí is now concerned about immortality. Against the death and putrefaction that presided over his surrealist period, Dalí now delves into the forever-fresh rosy flesh of Raphael's Sistine Madonna. He wants to go back to tradition. As his admired Eugenio d'Ors said: "Everything that is not in the tradition is plagiarism". Meanwhile, Picasso represents that

plagiarism – he has the attitude of those who go after the History of Art in order to kill it. But Dalí wants to connect to tradition. The originality here lays not in Picasso's destruction, but in the classical tradition promoted by Dalí.

There are several steps that lead Dalí to finally voice his desire, "I want to be a classic", in the exhibition catalogue at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1941. In his autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, written after his arrival in the US (1940-41 where he'll stay until he returns to Portlligat in 1948), he expresses his need for change, for transformation. In order to do so, he uses the Catalan saying "changing skin like snakes". This might be the origin of his 1941 self-portrait *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon*, in which he is represented as a ghostly face, an empty mask of skin supported by several crutches.

All of Dalí's arguments to force Picasso to go back to classicism are served between 1947/48 and the mid-1950s by means of several texts. One of these arguments uses ugliness as a method to kill academicism. The subject is first presented at a 1950 lecture at the Ateneu Barcelonès *¿Por qué fui sacrilego, por qué fui místico?* (Why was I sacrilegious, why was I a mystic)<sup>[2]</sup>. This is mainly a text against critics, but it is also the prelude of more important texts to come, such as *Manifiesto místico* (Mystical Manifesto, 1951), *Picasso y yo* (Picasso and I, 1951) or the most polemic, *The Cuckolds of Antiquated Modern Art* (1956). In his lecture at the Ateneu Barcelonés he quotes himself:

*"Last year, I wrote him a postcard: 'Dear Pablo: I'm delighted with your work, because you've not only just killed academicism, you've also killed modern art as a whole. Because an ugliness as ugly as that of Dora Maar's portraits is impossible to surpass'. If Picasso hadn't existed, we would have had a hundred years of ugly painting. French painters, with their restraint and good taste, would have produced paintings a little more ugly everyday, until they reached the level of ugliness Picasso has now reached [...] In only one week, Picasso has produced something called 'adefesio' [frumpiness and ugliness], which is also very Spanish, and which possesses some gruesomeness and belongs to the same category as beauty".<sup>[3]</sup>*

Picasso embodies that which is Hispanic, Spanish, Iberian, as well as ugliness in art, monstrosity and anti-beauty. In Dalí's opinion, there are two Spanish geniuses standing at opposite extremes of modern art: *"There are two extremes in modern art. The extremes are represented by two Spanish artists. One is Picasso. The other is Dalí. Picasso is one genius. Myself, Dalí, is the other genius".<sup>[4]</sup>*

Picasso becoming a member of the French Communist Party in 1944 only makes them grow apart even more; theirs is a relationship that was ambiguous from the beginning. Picasso's move is the consequence of his solidarity with and support of the French resistance. He even continues to support the party after it is expelled from the French coalition government in May 1947. Given that Picasso's work was censored by Communism in the 1930s, Dalí doesn't understand his compatriot's actions. Michael R. Taylor describes this episode very well in his text *On the Road with Salvador Dalí: The 1952 Nuclear Mysticism Lecture Tour*.<sup>[5]</sup>

In 1950, Picasso invites Dalí to be part of the US peace delegation of a group called "World Peace Congress of Paris", which intends to meet with President Truman in order to put an end to the Cold War, reduce the military expenditure and avoid the use of nuclear weapons. Dalí refuses to participate, alleging that such matters had to be discussed in the context of the United Nations, instead of by a group of Marxist intellectuals. This not only prevents Picasso from using Dalí's influence in the American circles, but also causes Dalí to begin a series of critic statements against such an initiative and against Picasso himself.<sup>[6]</sup>

That same year, Dalí publishes the following images in *Dalí News II* (November 25, 1947): the *Portrait of Pablo Picasso in the Twenty-first Century* (1947), the *Soft Self-Portrait with Fried Bacon* (1941), and photographs of Truman and Marshall among these paintings. Dalí expresses clearly his intention to set himself up as the saviour of modern art: Picasso's pedestal reads "The Anarchist" and Dalí's, "Dalí, the Saviour?". Below Truman's portrait, there is an inscription that reads "Eggs Thrown on Canvas" and below Marshall's, "Modern Art and Tax Payers". In this newspaper, Dalí rails against abstraction: "*President Truman said: 'I don't like paintings that look like eggs thrown against a canvas'*"<sup>[7]</sup>. And he goes on: "*This year 1947, the art crisis has reached its peak. Who is right: Picasso or Truman? None of them. Dalí!*"<sup>[8]</sup>

For Dalí, abstraction is a decorative art that despises technical knowledge and, thus, it is essential to go back to the classics. Picasso is also regarded as a destructor of "any vestige of expansion in the pictorial technique"<sup>[9]</sup>, as well as a destructor of Salon art, represented by Bouguereau – a kind of bourgeois art, of the worst taste, that appeared with the French Revolution. Moreover, Picasso also "*has assassinated abstract art, which had emerged from his cubism through the frenetic biology of his instincts*"<sup>[10]</sup>. For Dalí, modern painting "*wants to be saved from the anonymity of that which is pseudo decorative*"<sup>[11]</sup> and, therefore, continues with the tradition of the great masters. He also notes: "*Impressionism started as a movement opposed to the taste of the bourgeoisie, and it succeeded. Though, eventually, the bourgeoisie got used to it*"<sup>[12]</sup>

Dalí's *Portrait of Pablo Picasso in the Twenty-first Century* – painted in 1947, while he was still in the US, and showed for the first time at the Bignou Gallery in New York<sup>[13]</sup> – is more than just a caricature. If we observe it carefully, we can see it's a portrait consisting of three parts, which could be interpreted as three strata of the History of Art. The portrait itself, Picasso's effigy, rests on a solid pedestal of a classic, Hispanic style. On this pedestal, and by means of his 'double-image method', Dalí represents the solidified imprint of Velázquez's face, as he did in his painting *Metamorphosis of a Man's Bust into a Scene Inspired by Vermeer* (1939), inspired in *The image disappears* (1938) – a gesture that acknowledged Velázquez as Picasso's classic pedestal; both are Spanish, like the typical Spanish carnation that is worn in the buttonhole. In Picasso's portrait, we can identify the eye socket, the nose (the column) and the mouth (the support). And, on top of the academic pedestal, Picasso's face stands in profile: a monstrous, ugly frump, an *adefesio* in Spanish, as Dalí calls Picasso's paintings of Dora Maar. An '*adefesio*' (meaning someone frumpy and hideous) is used in Spanish to refer to the worst possible ugliness, to something that is inappropriate or extremely extravagant. Picasso's face is rocky, his spine is that of a dinosaur attached to the 'velazquean' pedestal; and the white

flocks of hair on his skull reveal his old age. He also has spiralling goat's horns, which represent the Spanish mountain goat, the wild, indomitable and satanic billy goat. A Louis XIV spoon emerges from his long forked tongue, and in the spoon's bowl rests a mandolin, a recurrent subject in Picasso's iconography, especially in his Cubist work. However, this spoon resembles Dalí's spoon in the painting *Agnostic Symbol* (1932), which has a clock resting on the spoon's bowl. Does this allude to Picasso's agnosticism as opposed to Dalí's Catholicism?

Back to Picasso's grotesque portrait. His torso slides down and dissolves into breasts, alluding to an ambiguous feminine figure, a soft character, with a daffodil – Narcissus's flower – hanging between them, as is typical in Dalí's iconography. The flabby torso is Picasso's decadence, he is melting in front of a burgeoning Dalí. Finally, Picasso's head is crowned with a rock, a crag from Cap de Creus, which represents Dalí's takeoff period under Picasso's influence. The crag seems to belong to *Woman by the Cliffs*, painted by Dalí in 1926, the same year he visited Picasso's atelier in Paris for the first time. Hence, Picasso's portrait conveys three periods from the History of Art, with a Spanish perspective: Velázquez, a museum classic, is at its base; in the middle there's a monstrous, old and decaying Picasso; and at the top, at the crowning position, Salvador Dalí appears as his heir, he who continues the legacy and saves modern art. In front of Picasso's ugliness and his *Massacre in Korea* (1951), Dalí wields the beauty of Portlligat Bay and his *Madonna of Portlligat* (1950). Dalí's return to classicism compels him to write the art treatise *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship* (1948).

Dalí's biggest offensive takes place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1951 at the Maria Guerrero Theater of Madrid, with the occasion of the I Biennial of Latin American Art. Dalí was widely represented at the show, and Picasso had protested openly against it. The text *Picasso and I* has become a milestone in the criticism of Picasso; though, at the same time, it was an invitation for the artist to return to Spain, as Dalí himself had done in 1948. The most explicit and most quoted paragraph of this lecture is #2: "*Picasso is Spanish, me too, Picasso is a genius, me too. Picasso is around 72 years old, I am around 48. Picasso is famous worldwide, me too. Picasso is a communist, me neither*".<sup>[14]</sup>

The French Communist Party disapproved of Picasso's *Massacre in Korea* (1951) – presented at the May Salon in Paris that same year – because the party's aesthetic approach, close to socialist realism, could not accept an antiheroic painting portraying the weakness of pregnant women and children. Dalí, for his part, loathed the painting, condemning its ugliness and, as he expresses during a lecture in Kansas<sup>[15]</sup>, he considered merely communist propaganda.

Spanish or Iberian motifs always appear in Dalí's idea of Picasso. Dalí's postcards and letters to Picasso are full of images of bulls and bullfighters, *manolas* (characters of the popular classes) wearing lace shawls, flamenco-dancing couples, and many other bullfighting-related themes, because Picasso was a big fan of bullfighting. After Dalí's return to Spain in the 1940s, these images appear even more frequently.

During a radio program called *Salvador Dalí has the pleasure to...*, Dalí comments on a Picasso exhibition at the Sala Esteve of Barcelona in 1936. Dalí uses the image of a de-

composing bull to describe Picasso and he compares himself to a decomposing donkey of Cap de Creus – a classic nevertheless:

*“Picasso’s sensational painting work looks like an enraged and authentic bull; colossally realist and decomposed; a symbol, an essence and a substance of all the darkest and most troubled parts of the finest and deepest roots of the human spirit, that is, ‘the subconscious thinking’; and, believe me, in this case, Cubism is nothing other than the very bone of the decomposed bull, the very white bone, the bone that can be seen at the tip of his big toe! [...] There’s also a decomposing donkey at the Cap de Creus! But that one has a different look and shape. The rotten donkey of Cap de Creus looks like a huge ancient automobile made of pink marble, sculpted out of a rock and suspended above an abyss, as if it were a Victory of Samothrace. [...] Listen to the music, sweeter than honey, of Picasso’s machine gun fantasy...”*<sup>[16]</sup>

Dalí’s post-war writings often contain metaphors about *adefesios* (as we said, someone frumpy and extremely hideous) and ugliness, as well as references to bullfighting, both of which allude to Picasso’s work. For example, we find them in *Dalí News II* (1947), but especially during the 1950s, as in the *Mystical Manifesto* (1951), in the aforementioned lecture *Picasso and I* (1951) and in *Les cocus du vieil art moderne* (1956). For instance, the *Mystical Manifesto* ends with the following text: *“With one single and categorical lance, you’ve kill the bull of ignominy and also, above all, the blackest bull of materialism as a whole. Now, with me, begins a new period of mystical painting.”*<sup>[17]</sup>

After this text, Dalí writes in *Credo* that *“not a day goes by when I don’t pray to heaven for Pablo to abandon communism and embrace Spanish mysticism; it can be legitimately assumed that, given his atavism, he’s at least tempted by it”*<sup>[18]</sup>. In the text *Authenticity and Lie*, written right after *Credo*, Dalí rails against the lie of social realism and ends with the following comment: *“It’s all about being at the service of a particular political system and state in the most flatteringly bureaucratic manner, at the expense of any other state – or anything else! Good morning Picasso!”*. This greeting used at the end the text rephrases the title of a work by Courbet.<sup>[19]</sup>

All the while, Dalí also intends also to revive the Spanish and Iberian tradition, as well as the baroque and the mystique; that is, Spanish irrationalism as opposed to the French tradition of rationalism. There are a number of arguments that compel him to go back to the Iberian anarchism, which has a catholic tradition. In the text *Les cocus du vieil art moderne* (1956) he exposes the contrast between Picasso and Bouguereau’s *pompier* art:

*Solely because Picasso is an anarchist, after half-stabbing Bouguereau, he went to give modern art the final blow, and finished it off for good. In only one day, Picasso left it more ugly than everyone else put together managed to do in many years.*<sup>[20]</sup>

Dalí also quotes a telegram he sent to Picasso in Paris:

*Pablo, thank you! Your last ignominious paintings have killed modern art. If it wasn’t for you, and given the good taste and restraint that characterizes French prudence, we would have had a hundred years of painting a little more ugly everyday until finally reaching the level of your sublime **adefesios esperpentos** [ugly and frump mon-*



*strosities]. With the violence of your Iberian anarchism, you have reached, in only a few weeks, the limits and the ultimate consequences of that which is abominable. And you've marked it all with your own blood, just like Nietzsche would have liked. Now, turning our gaze back to Raphael is all what is left to do. God bless you!*<sup>[21]</sup>

Picasso is often shown as a bull (dead, as a metaphor of modern art), as a bullfighter (in the act of stabbing), as a 'picador' (a bullfighter's assistant who tortures and tires the bull by administering thrusts with a lance or 'banderilla'), or stabbing the bull with a short dagger, which is called "*dar la puntilla al toro*" (the bull being modern art). "*Dar la puntilla al toro*" is when the bull is given *de coup the grace*, the final blow, by stabbing him directly on the cervical area with a small knife to finally kill him, after having weakened and tired him. In a figurative sense, it means "to finish off, to provoke the final failure of something or someone", which in English would be something like "to put the last nail in the coffin" (also "an event which causes the failure of something that had already started to fall").

The notion of the bull as a metaphor for universal art also appears in Dalí's writings on Velázquez, such as *Genio y figura de la pintura española* (Genius and Figure of Spanish Painting, 1951):

*Leave him alone... And so they did. And with an the accurate and lucid stroke of Velázquez's brush, the bull of the universal aesthetic fell dead. From this sacrifice emerged nothing less than Spanish realism, with its physical, bloody, viscous, cosmic and bull-fighting equivalent to the energy of the brush, as well as of the word's reality vision by this genius and figure of Spanish painting.*

In this same text, aimed at presenting universal aesthetics as the heritage of Spanish painting, Juan Gris is called the "*mystical painter of cold structures*", Picasso is called the iconoclast who invented the cubism of the polychromatic geometry of the Alhambra de Granada and, Dalí adds, "*Zurbarán will seem more modern to us everyday*".<sup>[22]</sup>

After painting Picasso's portrait of 'ugliness' in 1947, Dalí clearly begins to measure himself against Picasso, not only in his writings, but also in his iconography, as the photograph commissioned in 1948 from Philippe Halsman proves. As he told the photographer, the image is meant to merge Picasso's two faces into one: "*Could you please make a portrait of me in which half of my face merges into a resemblance of half of Picasso's face?*"<sup>[23]</sup>. The result is an image that merges their two half faces in one, particularly because it shows "one of each of their eyes". As a matter of fact, Dalí had often portrayed himself in his youth with only one eye. Also, Picasso has several portraits, one of them by Pablo Gargallo, where he appears with only one eye, because his fringe covers the other one. This particular portrait can easily be related to another of Halsman's portraits of Dalí, which shows the compressed face of the painter, again with just one eye. The portrait was used for the cover of the book *Dali's Moustache* (1954) and alludes directly to another project that reunited Picasso and Dalí in the bullring of art: a three-dimensional project using, not the cover image of *Dali's Mustache*, but Dalí and Picasso's double portrait taken by Halsman in 1948.

The project we are talking about is the design of a '*falla*' for the Valencian festival of Saint Joseph in 1954. '*Fallas*' are big *paper mâché* figures made especially for this festival. Dalí's project for a *falla* was called la '*Falla del foc*' (The *falla* of the fire). He re-enacted the so-called '*national fiesta*' – the name given to bullfighting during Francoism – in a scene that was set in Valencia's Caudillo Square ('caudillo' means 'commander', the name given to Franco). Every year, during Saint Joseph's night, these popular and satirical sculptural monuments inspired by current affairs are burned in the streets of the Spanish city of Valencia. Dalí's *falla* took the form of a bullring, in which he staged his duel with Picasso and his fight over the universal aesthetic.

It seems that the Valencian journalist, Salvador Chanza<sup>[24]</sup>, born in Cadaqués, interceded in this commission. Dalí did the drawings and the official sculptors of the *fallas* workshops made the original model, which got lost and was later reconstructed. The *falla* was finally built by the sculptor Octavio Vicent, whose merit was in being able to interpret Dalí's drafts, in spite of disagreeing with the idea.<sup>[25]</sup>

At the top of the *falla*'s programme, there's a drawing of a raised hand, with bony fingers that turn into flames. The hand rests on a snail shell, which at the same time represents a gazing eye, just like the eye of Halsman's portrait for *Dalí's Mustache* of that same year. Witten on the palm of this hand, it reads 'FOC', the Catalan word for 'fire'. The hand is described in the programme as the "classical Spanish hand of the great *faenas* (a '*faena*' means a job or a performance of some kind; in bullfighting it describes a great performance on the ring, when the bull is killed, but it can also mean a great pictorial performance). The snail moves forward along discontinuous blue lines, probably the stream of the Valencian river (or the water streams of art). Dalí's signature and the year appear between these lines. Thus, a Valencian portrait made of water and fire.

According to the programme and to Miguel Cid de Diego's interpretation of the *falla* in his text *La Fiesta Nacional. Explicación simbólico-alegórica de la 'Falla del Foc'* (The National Fiesta. A Symbolical and Allegorical Explanation of the 'Falla del Foc' 1954), Dalí's *falla* enacts the end of a *corrida* (bullfight) at an old-style bullring, such as the one in Ronda and the Maestranza of Seville:

*The bullfighter stands triumphantly in the middle of the ring dressed in his traditional costume, his ephemeral and mutable character represented by the butterflies' wings. At the lower part of the ring, the 'picador' tires and weakens the bull by stabbing him with 'banderillas'.*

This time, Dalí represents the *picador* with the image of a "phantasmagorical fish" that evokes the Ictíneo, the submarine created by Monturiol, who was born in Figueres like Dalí. The bullfighter hands over the heroism to the bull, who is the true protagonist of the *fiesta* and symbolizes Spanish blood. The bull cannot be denigrated by dragging him across the ring once he's dead; but, on the contrary, he has to be mystically elevated to heaven, like the saints and virgins of religious iconography. Dalí devises a system to take the bull to Olympus with an helicopter that is half-eagle and half-machine. The auto rotatory system of this aircraft was invented in 1923 by De La Cierva, who was also Spanish. Finally, Greta Garbo appears as the pilot, giving it a 'Hollywood touch'. The whole

setup travels from water to fire, from Monturiol's submarine as the *picador*, to De La Cierva's auto rotatory system. For Dalí, "*Spanish vertical mysticism raised from the submarine to the sky of the autorotation. [...] All my life has been determined by these two antagonist ideas: the peak and the depths*".<sup>[26]</sup>

At the end of each bullfight, the ears and the tail of the dead animal become the trophy. In this case, the bull that is being taken to Olympus will be offered to the Virgin, supposedly the Virgin of Montserrat, whose craggy mountains surround the ring. The ravens and vultures await the trophy's fresh flesh.

Going back to the *falla*, Cid de Diego tells us that the blood of the bull can still be seen gushing from the sacrificed hero (the bull), flowing down a mountain grotto, and transformed into Spanish wine. The mountains of Montserrat display Dalí's and Picasso's double face from Philippe Halsman's photograph. Apparently, it should have been the image of the gazing eye of *Dali's Mustache*, but that was technically impossible. The double portrait emerging from the rocks observes the show doubly. Standing face to face at both sides of the ring, there are two typical *vestas* (pointy-hatted figures of the *Semana Santa* [Holy Week] processions), who will only get rid of their masks right before the burning of the *falla* begins. One of them represents the 'dalinians' in the ring, those who – according to Cid de Diego – love the glory of the *fiesta* and of art; the other figure represents the 'antidalinians', an allusion to those who stirred polemics around Dalí's *falla* in Valencia. These characters, though, can also have a different meaning: the 'antidalinians' are represented headless, with only a few organs, arms and legs, are trying to enter into the bullring and "destroy the walls of the ring in their eagerness to demolish art". Near the door, the figure of the Aga Khan can be seen trying to get there in time. Cid de Diego notes the posters announcing the bullfight hanging on the walls. On one side, there's an old-style poster displaying the prices of the time, with daggers pictured at the corners of the image, which stab the *fiesta*, making it bleed.

The merged faces of Dalí and Picasso sculpted on the mountains of Montserrat, which have a phallic resemblance, seem to be inspired by Mount Rushmore's faces of the United States presidents, in Keystone, South Dakota. The highest figures of universal art against the highest representatives of the world's political power (Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt and Lincoln).

The sculpted profile of Mount Rushmore appears in the final scenes of Alfred Hitchcock's *North by Northwest* (1959), a director with whom Dalí worked in 1945 on the film *Spellbound*, and with whom he might have exchanged remarks on the impressiveness of the rocks and the presidential effigies.

Back to the *falla*, the most enigmatic figure is still the bullfighter with the butterfly wings. He's fully dressed in a bullfighters costume, he's thin like a worm and he appears to be transforming himself into a butterfly who's about to take off after killing the bull. At the beginning of the 1950s, butterflies are one of Dalí's obsessions; he paints owl-women in the shape of butterflies and even writes about them in *Salvador Dalí's Mimicry in Nature*<sup>[27]</sup>. Earlier, in *Un chien andalou*, the butterfly appeared linked to the image of a skull<sup>[28]</sup>. In that particular case the butterfly is linked to the idea of death as a metamorphosis, a kind of camouflage that acts as a mimicry of nature: "*Mimicry among in-*



*sects arises from a drive, a universal wish of self-annihilation, a mystical suicide from that which is specific to that which is general, a process of de-personification, of 'total integration within the cosmos unity'.*<sup>[29]</sup>

In the *falla*, the bullfighter is camouflaged with the feminine and spectral butterfly wings; but he's a dead bullfighter: the job, la *faena*, is done and he has metamorphosed into a butterfly. While the bull goes to heaven, the bullfighter with the appearance of a butterfly is ready to fly away and become one with the cosmos.

The dead bullfighter is Manolete (Córdoba, 1917- Linares, 1947), Dalí's spectral bullfighter, a popular figure with a meteoric career who was killed by a bull on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 at the bullring of Linares. He also inspired *The Hallucinogenic Toreador* (1968-1970), the final series in Dalí's fight over the leadership of the universal aesthetic against Picasso.

While the *falla* took place in Valencia, later in 1958 Dalí was still obsessed with the idea of lifting a bull over a ring with a helicopter. It seems that he suggested carrying out this project to Picasso, as well as to Luis Miguel Dominguín, a bullfighter friend of the latter, who was close to Franco's regime. According to the *Diary of a Genius*, they planned a surrealist bullfight that included this idea:

*Barcelona. Dalí and Luis Miguel Dominguín have decided to celebrate a surrealist bullfight. At the end of it, an auto rotatory device, dressed as an infant with a costume designed by Balenciaga, will lift the sacrificed bullfight towards the sky. It will be taken immediately to the mountain of Montserrat, where it will be devoured by vultures. In the meantime, in an improvised Parnassus, Dominguín will crown Gala, dressed as Leda, while Dalí emerges naked from an egg at her feet.*<sup>[30]</sup>

The same subject still appears during the bullfight homage to Dalí held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1961 in Figueres. The bull was planned to be flown to Montserrat by helicopter, but the tramontana – a very strong and unforeseeable wind typical of the Figueres and High Ampurdán areas – made it impossible.

That same year, the Catalan writer Carles Fages de Climent published an *auca* (a popular poetry composition with drawings) illustrated by Salvador Dalí, with the title *El triomf i el rodolí de la Gala i el Dalí* (The triumph and the *rodolí* – a popular, short, verse – of Gala and Dalí). It included a few vignettes of the bullfight, the bull lifted by a helicopter, and of Picasso. The vignette number 11 shows a ship at sea, made with the letters of Picasso's name, and a G (for Gala) on the bow. The text goes as follows: "*Quan Gala dugui el timó, ni els gegants li faran por*" (When Gala is at the helm, she won't even be scared of giants). Picasso is depicted as a giant being dragged by Gala, who is the one steering the boat. The vignette 28 shows a cloud of flies around something unidentifiable, and it reads: "*Com volàtil coleòpter, capta el toro un helicòpter*" (As if it were a volatile coleopteran, the helicopter takes the bull). And the vignette 33 shows a bull in a frame and a text: "*Tindrà un Museu Colossal al Teatre Principal*" (He'll have a colossal museum at the Teatre Principal) in allusion to the future Dalí Museum in Figueres.

Throughout the 1960s, Picasso grows older and Dalí feels bolder towards the former, more powerful and resolute in his aesthetical reasoning. This becomes clear during his interviews with Alain Bosquet. Dalí brags about his *La cena* (1955) being better than all Picasso's works put together. He argues that he can paint better than him, because Picasso wouldn't even know what colours to use. Finally, his statement seems to suggest that, in spite of his great admiration towards him, he finally managed to kill Picasso: "[...] the feelings between the two of us are indeed ambivalent. In regard to myself, Picasso is dead: he became my father, and my subconscious ambition was to be unfaithful to him, to kill him."<sup>[31]</sup>

In *The Hallucinogenic Toreador* (1969-1970), Dalí puts an end to the fight against Picasso. In 1970, he sends him a last postcard, trying to visit him, his master, one last time. But Picasso dismisses him and they never meet. The *Toreador* painting is extremely complex. Dalí erects himself as the winner of the History of Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century against Picasso, by means of a compelling bullfighting metaphor that had made a huge impact on him: the death of the bullfighter Manolete, killed by a bull in 1947. The image represents precisely, under the form of a hallucinogenic dream, that which he wishes to convey. Let's note again that Manolete's death occurred in the same year that Dalí painted Picasso's portrait with a carnation at the base of the pedestal. The carnation is the same flower that adorns the deceased fighter's costume. In 1958, Dalí published some sketches on the same subject in his book *The Death of Manolete* (1958).

Dalí explains that, a few years earlier in New York, he had discovered a brand of pencils called Venus. And it is in the shadows of the Venus of Milos where he discovers the face of Manolete, as shown in *The Face* (sketch for *The Hallucinogenic Toreador*, 1968-70). The bullfighter appears as a specter, hidden behind a real Venus, which is repeated as she reappears, crowned by phosphenes – also called after-images – which become visible when we press our eyes closed, or in the first stages of sleep. It is, without doubt, a dead bullfighter. Death is the true protagonist of the painting, a *vanitas* of History of Art told as a dream. The bullfighter wears a white shirt and a costume that blends into the dead bull's head; he also wears a green tie, maybe a homage to the also-deceased Federico García Lorca, and his famous poem *Verde que te quiero verde* (Green, I like you green, 1928)<sup>[32]</sup>; the Venus' red robes provide a contrast to Manolete's face and possibly allude to the *capote* (cape) that bullfighters wear on the shoulder before they start the fight.

In spite of being a canonical beauty, Dalí says: "I never liked the Venus of Milos"<sup>[33]</sup>. He finds her face unintelligent; also, her robes rest around her buttocks, which is the part he's most interested in. To Dalí, she is a model of ugliness, more than a model of beauty and, in 1963, he psychoanalyses her by opening some drawers in her figure. The smaller Venuses of the painting show the feminine figure of the Angelus of Millet embedded on them; their robes hide Gradiva's roses and Voltaire's bust. The figure appears repeated in the context of this ambiguous scenario, a sort of metaphysical architecture, as huge as a stadium, a Roman circus, a bullring or a huge evocative dream of the Teatro Principal of Figueres (where Dalí is going to build his museum, a new bullring where the debate around the History of Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – and maybe also the 21<sup>st</sup> – is going to be held).

Picasso is the main character, represented as the ‘dead bull’, with the lances still stuck in his body. He’s the same character Dalí described in his first critique of Picasso’s work, in 1936, on the occasion of his exhibition at the Sala Esteva in Barcelona. The decomposing bull’s head sinking into the sand of the beach in Portlligat (it isn’t the ring’s sand, but Dalí’s landscapes sand, where the craggy rocks seem to merge into the mountains of Montserrat – on the right corner of the painting – with a flower that resembles a carnation). The bull is surrounded by flies, who are attracted by the putrefaction, and are similar to those often depicted by Velázquez and Zurbarán in their mystical still lives; though, in this case they are stereoscopic cherries. These flies also evoke Saint Narcissus’ miraculous flies, which drove Louis XIV’s French troops away from Girona in 1653. In this case, however, the flies resemble helicopters, or auto rotatory devices, such as De La Cierva’s, something also noted by Descharnes.

There’s a Cubist scene, opposite the bull’s snout, in the left corner, almost outside the painting. It shows the same image of the Venus again, declaring the death of Cubism – including Dalí’s own Cubists works. The child is Dalí, dressed as a little sailor, as in his work *The Sex-Appeal Spectral* (1934), and he regards the scene, impassive, as if it was a childhood dream.

In the left half, the Venuses, with their backs to the observer, show open windows in their torsos, like those in the painting *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition* (1934). In the middle of this sequence, an athlete – maybe Dalí, as the winner – offers the ears and tail of the dead bull to Gala, who is wrapped in a mystical aura.

Picasso has finally been defeated by Dalí on the arena of art. Picasso, the inventor (together with Juan Gris) of Cubism and of the ugliness of modern art, is defeated by the classic “beauty” of the Venus of Milos. Or perhaps he is defeated by his own ugliness, used against him by Dalí. Dalí’s mysticism is the winner of the fight against aesthetic ugliness in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. From now on, the fight will take place on the new arena of the Teatro-Museo Dalí of Figueres, where Gala will be at the helm of the new vessel of universal aesthetics.

-- PILAR PARCERISAS, January 2015

[1] Michael R. Taylor, “The Dalí Renaissance”, in *The Dalí Renaissance. New Perspectives on His Life and Art after 1940*. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2005, p. 11.

[2] Lecture at the Ateneu Barcelonès (30-10-1950)

[3] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa* (Complete Works), Vol. IV, Essays 1, p. 635

[4] Michael R. Taylor, op. cit. p. 59. Note 25. "Artist Turns Mystic: Salvador Dalí Describes His Switch from Surrealism, *Kansas City Star*, Kansas City, Missouri (8-2-1952), p. 3.

[5] Michael R. Taylor, op. cit. pp. 53-70.

[6] *Idem*.

[7] Salvador Dalí, *Dalí News[II]*, Complete works, op. cit. p. 572

[8] *Idem*.

[9] Comment by Miguel Utrillo, op. cit, note 634, p. 1160

- [10] Salvador Dalí, *op. cit.* note 8 p. 573
- [11] *Idem*, p. 573
- [12] *Idem*, pp. 590-591
- [13] The exhibition was presented under the title *New Paintings by Salvador Dalí*, at the Bignou Gallery of New York, (25<sup>th</sup> November 1947 – 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1948).
- [14] Salvador Dalí, *op. cit.*, p. 634
- [15] Michael R. Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 63
- [16] Salvador Dalí, *Salvador Dalí tiene el gusto de...*, *op. cit.*, p. 429. Radio program in the occasion of Picasso's exhibition at the Sala Esteve of Barcelona. Organized by ADLAN, opened 13<sup>th</sup> January 1936. Published in Catalan in *Cahiers d'Art*, n. 7-10, Paris, October 1935, p. 244
- [17] Salvador Dalí, *Op.cit*, p.641
- [18] Salvador Dalí, "Credo", published in *Liturgical Arts*, XX, n. 3., New York, May 1952, p. 75, *op. cit.* p. 650
- [19] Salvador Dalí, "Authenticity and Lie!", published in *Arts* n. 357, Paris, 1-5-1952, *op. cit.*, p. 654
- [20] Salvador Dalí, *Le cocus du vieil art moderne*, Paris: Les Cahiers rouges, Grasset, 1956, p. 27
- [21] *Idem.*, p. 29
- [22] Extract from *Salvador Dalí Complete writings*, vol. VIII, *Album*, Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 2004, pp. 199-200. The text was published in *El alma de España*, in 1951. It also illustrates *On the Verge*, by Maurice Sandoz.
- [23] Quoted by Laia Rosa Armengol, in *Dalí, icono y personaje* (Daly, an Icon and a Character) Madrid: Ensayos Arte Cátedra, 2003, p. 194.
- [24] Jacques Leonard, "La falla de Dalí", *La Revista*, Año III, núm. 100, Barcelona, 11-17.3.1954.
- [25] *Idem.*
- [26] Robert Descharnes and Gilles Néret *Dalí*, Taschen, 2007, p. 609
- [27] Salvador Dalí, *Salvador Dalí's Mimicry in Nature, Fair Annual*, 1953, pp. 200-206, *op. cit.*, p. 661
- [28] *Idem.*, note 647
- [29] *Idem.*, p. 662.
- [30] Salvador Dalí. *Obra completa* (Complete Works), *Vol I, Textos autobiográficos*, I, *Diary of a Genius*, September, Portlligat, pp. 1128-1129
- [31] Alain Bosquet. *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí*. Editions du Rocher, 2000, Paris: Belfond, 1966, p. 130.
- [32] Ian Gibson notes that this 'green' could be related to the poem *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* by Federico Garcia Lorca, but I personally find it more connected to this popular poem due to its content.
- [33] In a drawing by Dalí published in Luis Romero's book *Todo Dalí en un rostro*, Barcelona: Polígrafa, 2003, p. 226.