

Picasso Is Tiresias, Me Too: An Essay on Salvador Dalí's *Portrait of Pablo Picasso in the Twenty-first Century*

A Jean-Pierre Amsallem, très amicalement.

By Vicent Santamaria de Mingo

Dalí once said that the explanation of his paintings had to be either extremely longwinded or totally non-existent. I believe this was no mere *boutade* and that the painter was right to say so, for, unlike Picasso who was much more prolific with palette and brush, each of the Catalan artist's pictures involved a long process of reflection and was the outcome of much aforethought. As Gala was wont to say, in Dalí's canvases each image responds to a concept. This is why we might argue, without fear of being mistaken, that Dalí is first and foremost a conceptual artist and that his deepest motivation is always of a cognitive, and never purely esthetic, kind. This, basically, is what sets him apart from Picasso, as he took it upon himself to point out: "Unlike those of Picasso, my paintings are not esthetic arrangements intended to indulge the gaze. Until recently they have been psychopathological documents. Now I'm entering a new phase which combines the mythology of the individual with esthetic tradition." [1]

These declarations were made in 1941, at a time when Dalí found himself far away from Spain and had broken all ties with the Surrealist Group. The distinction between mythology and esthetics relates to the separation between form and content, which had been propounded by the Catalan on various occasions in the 1930s, and he would later reaffirm this when justifying his "new" artistic ideas, claiming that "I violently advocate tradition—in form, not in content, obviously." [2] As for picture-making procedures, from the publication of *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942) onwards he cultivated the image of a "classical" artist who was defending academic tradition, but in the meantime he went on thinking about the same psychoanalytical themes that had fascinated him during his surrealist phase. Actually, when he refers to a *mythology of the individual* he is merely appealing to psychoanalysis, since as he himself had written, "The difference between ancient painting and painting after Freud mainly consists of the change in subject matter: that is, ancient painting was expressing collective unconscious thinking (pagan and religious myths, etc.) while painting after Freud will express individual unconscious thinking." [3]

Just as Eugenio d'Ors spoke of ideas and forms (*Las ideas y las formas*, 1928), so Dalí wanted to combine psychoanalysis and morphology in order to channel the dualism of the signified and representation. With such dualism he was justifying his "new" wager on a classic Surrealism capable of hiding, beneath the mantle of academic tradition, an individual mythology anchored in the Freudian unconscious. And I've put *new* in inverted commas because it was what he'd in fact been doing during his surrealist phase, which was why he was dismissed for being a "Meissonier of the Unconscious." [4] In the exhibition held at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York between March and April 1939, Dalí showed a work entitled *Psychoanalysis and Morphology Meet*. And in the text which prefaced the exhibition catalog the painter was able to speak at length about this meeting.

On the basis of this dualism, then, we will divide our commentary on the *Portrait of Picasso* into two parts, parts which correspond to two different levels of reading that overlap and complement each other. In the first part we will look at the artistic aspects which orchestrate a duel between opposites featuring our two protagonists, and after that we will deal with their psychoanalytical implications, which in Dalí's case are always deliberate and conscious. Not without reason, the painter himself confessed that he was "a product of conscious Surrealism."^[5]

I

Before getting to the painting under review, we shall begin by making a few prior observations about the early judgments Dalí made of Picasso.

Before 1929 Picasso was a guiding light for Dalí, but as soon as the Catalan painter joined the Surrealist Group at the end of that same year the Malagueño completely disappears as a frame of reference, with Dalí's main focus of attention becoming the *Pittura metafisica* of Giorgio de Chirico. Proof of this is the picture Dalí painted in the style of the Italian in Carry-le-Rouet at the start of 1930, at the same time as he was preparing the texts of *La Femme visible*. With his ascription to Surrealism and the ensuing formulation of a new theory of art expounded in that book, Dalí's pictorial references are to radically change, with De Chirico and *Modern Style*, or Art Nouveau, at the forefront of this change. This is the moment when Dalí begins to champion literary or thematic painting, the anti-modern, retrograde painting of artists like Gustave Moreau, Edward Burne-Jones, Arnold Böcklin, Jean-François Millet and Ernest Meissonier. And it is also the moment that Dalí comes up with his definition of painting as "handmade photography," which differs radically from the opinion of Picasso, according to whom "Photography arrived at just the right moment to liberate painting from literature of all kinds, from anecdote and even from subject matter."^[6] In those first few flashes of surrealist conviction, the vision Dalí has of Picasso is of a counter-model to surrealist painting, since in privileging visual expressivity over the subject of representation Picasso's painting reveals itself to be less suited to the transmission of unconscious thought. This is what the Catalan painter believed and this is what he wrote:

The more intelligent the esthetic system, the less likely the externalization of unconscious thinking—Picasso is the proof of this. The more feeble and negligible the esthetic system, the more likely the expression of unconscious thought—for example, Art Nouveau.^[7]

These words come from "Sur la peinture" [On Painting], an unpublished text which was probably meant to introduce the often-announced book *La Peinture surréaliste à travers les ages* [Surrealist Painting Throughout the Ages], a study that never saw the light of day but which Dalí planned to write in 1932. A year or so later, Dalí's evaluation of Picasso was to undergo a decisive change. While it is true that Dalí had maintained an eloquent silence with regard to his compatriot since 1929, from 1933 onwards this silence is broken and the painter from Málaga is again subject to praise on the part of the Catalan. What sparks off this turnaround is the elevation of a new Picasso, endorsed by Breton in the first number of the magazine *Minotaure*.

This Picasso, with slightly more affinity to Surrealism, perhaps, is basically Picasso the sculptor and in a more general way the extra-pictorial Picasso. And also the draughtsman obsessed by irrational anatomical contortions of an extreme kind. This is the Picasso Dalí will no longer contemplate as an artistic phenomenon but as a biological phenomenon instead: “the most important / biological phenomenon / of the days we are living through / and of days gone by.”^[8] From the novel point of view adopted by Dalí in 1933, Picassian Cubism will progress from a simple picture-making procedure of limited interest to being considered “the first great imaginative cannibalism.”^[9] At this time of great materialist fervor on the part of the Surrealists, Picasso appears as an authentic cannibal willing to take the world by storm—to “eat the world,” as the Spanish say—and this is the way Dalí will portray him in 1947: toothless but with an elongated spoon in whose bowl there rests that quintessential item of Picassian Cubism, the mandolin. In short, Picasso is “the ravenous one,” as Breton had dubbed him in his *Minotaure* article, and also as Picasso reveals himself to be in one of his poems when referring to “the miracle of knowing nothing in this world and of having learnt nothing except loving things and eating them alive.”^[10]

From now on this will be Dalí’s Picasso: a Picasso addicted to the tangible material object, a Picasso clinging tooth and nail to reality, a Picasso partaking of edible beauty, who divests himself of the Kantian attire certain critics had imposed upon him and turns into a “biological phenomenon” comparable to the terrifying, edible architecture of Art Nouveau. No longer do Picasso and Art Nouveau form an antithesis, as in the unpublished text “Sur la peinture” cited above. On this occasion the two extra-artistic phenomena embody the deepest aspirations of hyper-materialist idealism, thereby constituting a common front against pictorial abstraction. This is why in 1936 Dalí will say that Picasso’s painting looks like “a genuine raging bull, colossally putrescent and realist,”^[11] and that this putrescent bull is a symbol of the unconscious. Without doubt he is referring to the biological unconscious of Otto Rank, as described in *The Trauma of Birth* (1924; French edition 1928).

Summarizing what has been said up until now, we will argue that during the 1930s Dalí made use of Picasso in two ways, one being the opposite of the other. First as a counter-model and then as a model, a model from whom he borrows a number of things. At the beginning of the 1940s a new battlefield is instituted in which the Malagueño will once again move across to the opposition and perform the function of being Dalí’s chief opponent. The absolute freedom and continual transgression reflected in Picasso’s most recent output, like the famous portraits of Dora Maar with their extreme anatomical distortions will be the antithesis of the classical beauty the author of *The Secret Life* (1942) now claims, a beauty constrained by academic rules and the models of tradition. The formless stone resting on Picasso’s head is the complete opposite of the balanced, symmetrical forms of “divine proportion,” the new esthetic doctrine of a mathematical sort that Dalí will untiringly broadcast to all and sundry. To grasp the nature of this confrontation all we have to do is accede to one of the drawings Dalí created for his book *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, published in 1948, shortly after completing the artwork we are dealing with. In this drawing will we find reproduced, with slight variations, the same effigy of Picasso with the stone on his head, directly alongside a dodecahedron with which it forms a strong contrast.

For the Renaissance writer Luca Pacioli the noble body of the dodecahedron is the symbol of the universe because the four other regular polyhedrons can be inscribed within it. In his book *De divina proportione* (1509), Pacioli undertakes an analysis of the five polyhedrons Plato had included in *Timaeus* and attributed to the four simple elements of nature, plus the Whole. In the poem forming the epilogue to the first edition of *Oui* published in 1971, Dalí refers to these five regular polyhedrons and counterposes them to liberty, the formless and the romantic—all that for him the image of Picasso capitalizes on as a symbol of permanent revolution:

Infamous, formless freedom,
Romantic, ignorant of the five unique and perfect polyhedrons,
Ignorant of the cages of divine geometry...[\[12\]](#)

But the formless stone we are speaking of is not only a symbol of liberty and romantic anarchy, it is also the stone of madness which instead of remaining hidden within the head is exposed to the eyes of everyone as the “madness” of Picasso, manifested in the disequilibrium of forms and not in the latent content of “realist” representation subject to the norms of traditional mimesis, as in the case of Dalí.

In order to grasp this idea we need to refer to the extractors of so-called folly stones, whose images are plentiful in the Flemish art that Dalí was familiar with. [\[13\]](#) The method was simple and grew out of the popular belief that when an individual had anomalous thoughts it was due to a stone present in his cranium. Specialized physicians, itinerant or sedentary, persisted in extirpating the parasitical mineral. A slight incision in the scalp and a bit of legerdemain which caused the stone to appear in the hand of the surgeon were all that was needed for the patient to believe himself cured of his madness. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Flanders and the Low Countries the extractors of folly stones were much in vogue and were depicted in numerous paintings and engravings by artists as reputable as [Bosch](#) and Breughel the Elder.

Obviously, the hardness of the amorphous stone representing Picasso’s hyper-materialist thinking is not the only defining feature of Picassian art. Dalí always took Picasso for an extremely sentimental painter who was making use of his visual aberrations as a defense mechanism. The soft shapes configuring the breasts and the tongue in the portrait under discussion could represent the excessive emotiveness Dalí always recognized in Picasso’s work. Let us take a look, however, at the evaluations the Malagueño painter received in the comparative tables included at the end of the book *Lettre ouverte à Salvador Dalí* (1966).

Both Dalí Avidadollars and the surrealist Dalí give him the highest score when it comes to sentimentality (fig. 1, 2).

PAR SALVADOR DALI SURREALISTE

	VELAZQUEZ	MEISSONIER	CÉZANNE
Génie	10	8	- 0
Authenticité . .	7	3	+ 10
Technique . . .	+ 10	5	- 0
Originalité . . .	3	10	5
Généralité . . .	8	9	- 0
Noblesse	10 + 3	0	3 1/2
Perversité . . .	7	10 + 3	- 0
Sentimentalité .	2	3	1
Légitimité . . .	2	10 + 10	7
Bâtardise . . .	10	6 1/2	8
Dandyisme . . .	8	5	0
Sens esthétique	5	0	5

	VERMEER	DALÍ	PICASSO	TURNER
8	+++ 10	+++ 10	- 0	
+ 0	9 1/2	7	- 0	
+ 0	2	+ 10	- 0	
9 1/2	1	1 1/2	- 0	
8	10 + 4	10 + 5	- 0	
8	3	8	- 0	
8	10 + 8	10 + 3	- 0	
1	6	10 + 4	- 0	
+ 10	1	0	- 0	
2	10	5	- 0	
- 0	10 + 2	1 1/2	1	
8 1/2	3 1/2	10 + 5	3 1/2	

	MONDRIAN	LE CORBUSIER	FULLER
Génie	0	0	Inconnu
Authenticité . .	10 + 3	10	
Technique . . .	0	10	
Originalité . . .	8	10	
Généralité . . .	0	- 0	
Noblesse	2	3	
Perversité . . .	0	- 0	
Sentimentalité .	11/2	- 0	
Légitimité . . .	9	8 1/2	
Bâtardise . . .	5	5 1/2	
Dandyisme . . .	- 0	0	
Sens esthétique	10	10	

	RAFAËL	POLLOCK	LINDENSTEIN
+ 10		Inconnu	Inconnu
+ 10			
+ 10			
+ 10			
+ 10			
+ 10			
+ 10			
1 1/2			
+++ 10			
- 0			
5			
+++++ 10			

PAR AVIDADOLLARS

	VELAZQUEZ	MEISSONIER	CÉZANNE
Génie	10	0	0
Authenticité . .	10	10	10
Technique . . .	10	+ 10	- 0
Originalité . . .	9 1/2	9	4
Généralité . . .	10	0	0
Noblesse	+ 10	2 1/2	6
Perversité . . .	0	8	0
Sentimentalité .	0	0	0
Légitimité . . .	+ 10	10	5
Bâtardise . . .	- 0	7	7
Dandyisme . . .	3	3	0
Sens esthétique	9 1/2	4	8

	VERMEER	DALÍ	PICASSO	TURNER
6	9	10	- 0	
+ 10	9	10	+ 10	
+ 10	5	3	- 0	
+ 10	8	5	- 0	
3	+ 10	+ 10	- 0	
9 1/2	7	4	- 0	
5	+ 10	2	- 0	
0	- 0	+ 10	+ 10	
+ 10	5	3	- 0	
0	3	7	+ 10	
2 1/2	9 1/2	3	5	
+ 10	5 1/2	8	0	

	MONDRIAN	LE CORBUSIER	FULLER
Génie	- 0	- 0	+ 10
Authenticité . .	9 1/2	- 0	+ 10
Technique . . .	- 0	- 0	+ 10
Originalité . . .	- 0	3	+ 10
Généralité . . .	- 0	- 0	+ 10
Noblesse	- 0	1	1
Perversité . . .	- 0	- 0	- 0
Sentimentalité .	1	6	- 0
Légitimité . . .	8	- 0	+ 10
Bâtardise . . .	7	8	- 0
Dandyisme . . .	- 0	- 0	0
Sens esthétique	8	6	5

	RAFAËL	POLLOCK	LINDENSTEIN
+ 10		0	- 0
+ 10		+ 10	+ 10
+ 10		3	0
+ 10		5	3
+ 10		- 0	0
+ 10		- 0	5
3		- 0	7
- 0		10	+ 10
+ 10		5	7
- 0		3	8
7 1/2		1 1/2	1
+++++ 10		3 1/4	5

As it is, we could say that the portrait of Picasso, with its combination of flesh and stone, reproduces the dialectic of the hard and the soft Eugenio d'Ors had already spoken of in a brief note on Benedetto Croce in his book *Poussin y el Greco* (1921), which is referred to in *The Secret Life*. Thus, we read:

Do you know what the French mean by a *bourru bienfaisant* [a rough diamond] when defining a character? Outwardly, all toughness; inwardly, all tenderness. Like the crustaceans. On the surface, the skeleton; on the inside, the soft meat. There are thinkers who have a rigid system inside, although what's outside is bland literature; the meat covers the skeleton. Hence, Schopenhauer. With others, vice versa. Outwardly they seem solidly systematic. But the procession of literature is within. Benedetto Croce is like that. [14]

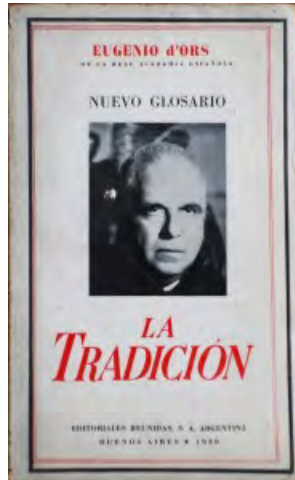
Dalí made use in his own way of that same culinary metaphor when presenting his personal ideas about the artistic phenomenon in his response to a survey of modern art published in *Minotaure* at the end of 1933. [15] Indeed, d'Ors' thinking was always present in a more or less decisive way in Dalí's theoretical lucubrations. And it was so in a very influential fashion during the 1920s, up until the painter became caught in the nets of Surrealism, and would be so again when he managed to escape from those same nets and throw himself into the arms of Tradition, Classicism and the Catholic religion. As Ángel Zúñiga observed in one of the first reviews of *The Secret Life* published in Spain, everything Dalí announces amid a lot of hype in the pages of his autobiography, namely "the return to the monarchy, the academy, hierarchy, architecture, Catholicism, angels—all this," argues Zúñiga, "sounds like pure d'Ors." [16] And so it was, for at that point all Dalí does is to follow in the footsteps of the Catalan philosopher. In the final chapter of *La ben plantada* (1911) d'Ors had written, "I don't want to bring you revolution but continuation," and Dalí ends his book by making the same proclamation: "Instead of Reaction or Revolution, RENAISSANCE!"

The long shadow of Don Eugenio hangs over much of this book, which Dalí wrote between 1939 and 1941, and makes itself felt clearly at certain moments, as when the painter lavishes extravagant praise on old age and presents himself as "the living incarnation of the Anti-Faust." [17] In June 1927 d'Ors had published a reply to Rubén Darío, author of the well-known poem "Juventud, divino tesoro," in *La Gaceta Literaria*, which began thus:

Maturity, divine treasure
you draw near to stay.
From you will emerge my statue,
like a reef at sea.

The great aversion d'Ors felt for the disorders of youth and anything that smacked of the effluvia of Romanticism was taken on board by Dalí at a time when he was constructing a new image for himself as an anti-modern, reactionary painter. The Dalinian wager on tradition is clearly of d'Orsian origin. We ought not to forget that three years before *The*

Secret Life came out in 1942, two books appeared in Buenos Aires that were crucial for the new ideological and artistic parameters set out by Dalí in his autobiography: *Introducción a la vida angélica* [An Introduction to the Angelic Life] and *La tradición* (fig. 3).



And published a year before there was *Gnómica* [Gnomic Say-ings], a selection of aphorisms that managed to synthesize the most essential aspects of d’Ors’ crusade against the formless via notions like this one: “If you really think about it, in all this there’s but one thing: giving a shape to the amorphous.” [18] The ideas of Eugenio d’Ors seem to condition Dalí’s new artistic ambitions and as a result many of the Catalan painter’s opinions about Picasso are an echo of d’Ors’ concerns, as expressed over the years. An example would be when Dalí tells us that Picasso has dealt the final blow to modern art or when he denies the Malagueño the talent to produce a genuine masterwork and dubs him an abortive Raphael. Likewise, the famous epigram by d’Ors, “Everything that is not tradition is plagiarism,” is picked up on by Dalí in *The Secret Life* in order to counterpose Rafael to Picasso, the first as the maximum exponent of tradition and the second as a wretched plagiarist who “instead of leaning upon the immediate past which is their source, upon the ‘blood of reality’ which is tradition, [...] must lean upon the ‘memory’ of all that he has seen—plagiarism of the Etruscan vase, plagiarism of Toulouse-Lautrec, plagiarism of Africa, plagiarism of Ingres.” [19]

This partial and reductive vision of Picasso has no other function than to situate the Malagueño as the obverse of the new Dalí within a system of dichotomies pertaining to the philosophy of d’Ors. The struggle of contraries which Dalí seeks to promote between himself and Picasso is a clear reflection of d’Ors’ radical and irreducible Manichaeism, of which tradition and plagiarism, form and amorphousness, classical and romantic, continuity and revolution, order and anarchy, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, and, ultimately, angel and demon, form a part.

Time and again Dalí called Picasso’s oeuvre “demoniac” and in 1958 openly declared that “The painter from Málaga is a victim of demonology. He has chosen the Devil, the Prince of Darkness. He is obsessed by sexuality.” [20] And two years later he returned to

the charge: “Picasso is the Antichrist. He has diabolically entombed the great Western pictorial tradition, but he’s proposed nothing definite in its place.” [21] This would explain the presence of the ram’s horns, which give us a Picasso as a billy-goat, an animal associated with the Devil and which represents impurity and lust in Christian symbolism and in classical mythology is identified with Dionysus, an infernal deity in whom delirium and the liberation of desire are combined. Held in honor of this god, also known as Bacchus, were the Bacchanalia, festivities in which the celebrants drank to excess and whose name is forever associated with the Roman orgy. The women priests responsible for organizing these ceremonies of chaos were called Bacchantes. In the mid-nineteenth century the *pompier* Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904) [22] painted one of these mythological figures with the horns of a ram, like those of Dalí’s Picasso.

In the Dalí ballet entitled *Bacchanal*, the Bacchantes occupy center stage, alongside Satyrs, Fauns and Youth. Conceived at the start of the 1940s, this ballet forms the first part of a trilogy that is completed by a further two stage productions called *Labyrinth* and *Sacrifice*, without the latter ever being premièred. According to Dalí, in the complete trilogy *Bacchanal* represents Romantic chaos, whilst *Labyrinth* describes the resurrection of tradition. [23] Making its appearance in this second ballet is the myth of Theseus and Ariadne, used to dramatize the victory of Classicism over Romanticism, a victory achieved after the death of the Minotaur, which symbolizes Revolution. Thus, all Dalí does is stage his own ideological transformation, which consists in supplanting a romantic Surrealism with another of a classical bent; two Surrealisms that would be represented, respectively, by the Minotaur and Theseus. If, as Marcel Jean suggests, [24] we identify Theseus with the conscious mind and the Minotaur with the unconscious, the surrealist meaning of the myth becomes all the more clear. And we shall be able to recognize Picasso and Dalí in one or the other. Let us not forget that once he’d moved away from Breton’s group the Catalan considered himself “a product of conscious Surrealism.”

We have already said that Picasso’s consolidation as a Surrealist artist occurs in the first number of the magazine *Minotaure* (1933). This first number also entailed the official presentation of the painter as the Minotaur. Henceforth, this hybrid beast would be his animal alter ego: the zoomorphic visualization of his more hidden personality, we might say. As Rafael Jackson observes in his book *Picasso y las poéticas surrealistas*, in the Malagueño painter’s work the Minotaur attains its true dimension around this time in the etchings of the *Vollard Suite*. According to this author, the monster irrupts irrevocably on 17 May 1933 and in the first etchings yields to a languid Dionysian orgy and to an innocent sporting with its lovers. [25] On the evidence of these engravings the identification of the Minotaur with Dionysus seems quite obvious.

In another series of etchings from the *Vollard Suite*, Picasso presents us with a sightless Minotaur: this is the series known as *Blind Minotaur Led by a Girl*. In light of this, Jackson establishes a relationship between the blind Minotaur and a photograph Dora Maar took of Picasso in Golfe-Juan during the summer of 1937 in which he appears with his eyes closed. [26] This photo would have slotted perfectly into the photomontage which was published in the final number of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1929) in which all the Surrealists are presented with the same facial expression, including Dalí who had just joined the group and who a few months earlier had published in a poem in *La Gaceta*

Literaria entitled “No veo nada, nada en torno del paisaje” [I See Nothing, Nothing in the Landscape], a phrase usurped from Magritte, [27] the creator of the painting occupying the center of the photomontage on which we can also read something similar: “Je ne vois pas [la femme] caché dans la forêt” [I do not see (the woman) hidden in the forest.]. In the end, it was a matter of closing one’s eyes in order to “see” what is visible in the imagination. Exactly as Dalí was doing when painting his first surrealist pictures: “Thus I spent the whole day seated before my easel, my eyes staring fixedly, trying to ‘see,’ like a medium (very much so indeed), the images that would spring up in my imagination.” [28] Picasso could be referring to this kind of mediumistic or paranormal vision when in 1932 he declared in an interview with Tériade that “They ought to put out the eyes of painters as they do goldfinches, so that they sing better.” [29]

Apparently, Dalí took these words literally, and that’s what he did when portraying his master and now opponent with the eye sockets empty, as he’d already done six years before when painting his *Soft Self-Portrait with Grilled Bacon*. In this aspect, then, the flagrant opposition between Dalí and Picasso disappears. In the depiction the Catalan painter creates of both himself and his artistic rival the deprivation of sight appears as a common point between the two. In both instances visionary blindness is an exceptional quality that permits us to relate painting with the gift of clairvoyance. Throughout *The Secret Life* Dalí alludes to his prophetic abilities. And in a text from the end of 1949 that was never published, he began by recalling that “The great French writer Guillaume Apollinaire said that painters are always seers and very often prophets.” [30]

As the Catalan painter knew all too well, Apollinaire himself was the subject of a premonitory portrait realized by Giorgio de Chirico in 1914. In this painting, which originally bore the title *L’Homme-cible*, [The Human Target], the poet’s silhouette appears in the background with a semicircle drawn at the height of his temple, two years before he was wounded in the head whilst fighting at the front. In the lower part of the canvas, in the foreground, we see a bust wearing dark glasses like those of a blind man, which has duly been related to Tiresias, [31] the blind soothsayer from Greek mythology and the main character in the “surrealist drama” Apollinaire finished in 1916, *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* [The Breasts of Tiresias]. The play opened two years later, shortly after the poet’s death; we shall return to it below.

For now it suffices to underline the link between sightlessness and the gift of clairvoyance and between Dalí with Picasso and the prophet of Thebes. When all is said and done, by giving his painting the title *Portrait of Pablo Picasso in the Twenty-first Century* Dalí is indicating that his picture is also premonitory, like the one De Chirico created in honor of his friend Apollinaire. And why would Dalí paint a prophetic portrait of Picasso? Well, so as to identify with him, with the man the whole world considered a seer, prophet, soothsayer, an omnipotent magus. [32] It is as if he were telling us, “Picasso is a prophet, me too.”

Whence the artistic vision emanating from the portrait of Picasso, which we might sum up thus: when at the beginning of the 1940s Dalí considers his experimental surrealist phase to be over and manifests in public a wish to convert himself into a classical painter he will find in Picasso's "ignominious beauty" the necessary counterpoint for lending meaning to his new sublimatory enterprise and for duly justifying his new image as painting's "salvador" or savior. Is it not always with regard to the other than one situates and defines oneself? In a way as inexact as it was self-serving, Dalí had written in a draft of *The Secret Life* that of Surrealism only he and Picasso remained [33] and therefore the battle had to be fought exclusively between those two: the defender of divine proportion and the champion of the misshapen.

We ought not to forget that in the shadow of the great political crisis that is hovering over Europe in the 1930s, and during the Second World War, the demoniac and convulsive beauty of Picasso, that beauty capable of defying good taste head on via an ugliness that was as overwhelming as it was disturbing, will become further accentuated, reaching its highest point in the portraits of Dora Maar. Those *adefesios esperpentos* [ridiculous monstrosities], as Picasso (and Dalí too) calls them, would subsequently be brought together in the book by Harriet and Sidney Janis, *Picasso: The Recent Years, 1939-1946*, published in New York one year before the Figueres artist exhibited, in that same town, the Picasso portrait, which at the end of the day is but one more *adefesios esperpentos*, with the typical Picassian combination of frontal and profile representation, since the strange circular prolongation that grows from the nose would form a second empty socket, thereby configuring the second eye of a face seen from the front. As we've seen, in the *Portrait of Pablo Picasso* two sorts of dialectic crop up. The first is the one established between hard and soft, between flesh and stone, which corresponds to the contrast Dalí recognizes between Picasso's astounding plastic expressivity, of great consistency and solidity, and the sentimental component that subtends it. To wit, the hard expression of ugliness and the soft tenderness of sentiment. And the second has to do with Picasso's attitude in the face of external reality. On the one hand we have a "realistic" creator who with his incisive spoon insatiably devours the material objects of the world that surrounds him and, on the other, we have an eyeless visionary who remains faithful to the febrile representations of the interior model.

In his essay in *Minotaure*, [34] Breton stressed that the dialectical movement between object and subject was the essential feature of Picasso's work as a whole. This dialectic had been alluded to by other writers prior to this. Christopher Green reminds us that in his first text on Picasso, from 1905, Apollinaire already saw in him a "mystic" and a "realist": on the one hand he felt the need to imagine and invent, and on the other, the inexorable urge to take the sensual presence of things into consideration. At the end of the 1920s, Professor Green goes on to tell us, the German critic Carl Einstein argued that Picasso was an artist preoccupied with both the interior and the exterior. At the time, Einstein firmly believed that Picasso was capable of fusing his "hallucinatory forms" with his mastery of manipulating the materials of the external world: as Apollinaire might have put it, he was capable of practicing mysticism and realism at the same time. [35] This twin facet of the Malagueño painter is the one Dalí also wanted to reflect in his portrait, which, to my eyes, does not harbor a satirical intention, as has been said at times.

II

Now we shall attempt a second level of reading, with a view to grappling with the psychoanalytic aspects of the Picasso portrait. We will begin by recalling that notwithstanding the opposition between the artistic concepts of Dalí and Picasso, the former always considered the latter to be an object of identification, due to an inordinate admiration that remained intact over the years. As we've said before, the painting of a premonitory portrait permitted Dalí to equate his prophetic gifts with those of his rival. "Me too, I am a prophet like you."

In that sense, all the "me too" and the "me neither" (with which Dalí began his famous 1951 lecture at the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid) do is verbalize the ambivalent affect that Picasso inspired in Dalí. Ambivalence governs every relationship with the father, in which the desire to be like him converges with the struggle against him, a pronounced tendency towards identification and an acrimonious rivalry. On more than one occasion Dalí spoke of Picasso as a father substitute. In his interviews with Alain Bosquet he unequivocally declared that he felt tremendous admiration for his compatriot and that his feelings towards him were ambivalent, that Picasso had turned into his father and that his unconscious ambition was to kill him. [36] Elsewhere, he tells us that his father took the form of monumental projections like Picasso and later on Stalin. [37] And in his last book of memoirs he once again insists on the same idea and on the same names. [38]

Thus, the imaginary contest between Picasso and Dalí, which the Catalan tirelessly fomented from the 1940s on, would be nothing other than the staging of the conflict between father and son, in which, as we've already seen, the father appears as a demoniac figure, an Antichrist or fallen angel. Freud analyzes the idea of the Devil as a substitute for the father in his essay on "A Seventeenth-century Demonological Neurosis" (1923), [39] in which he examines the history of the Bavarian painter Christoph Haizmann, to whom the Devil appeared naked, deformed and provided with two pairs of female breasts; that is, in a way very similar to how Dalí presents Picasso. But before taking this bisexual representation of Picasso into account, I would like to touch on the Freudian explanation of the idea of the Devil as a father-substitute.

Freud tells us that the demon is taken to be an antithesis of God the Father and yet for all that is very similar in nature to him. The demon of Christian religion, the Devil of the Middle Ages, was, according to that same Christian mythology, a fallen angel and of equally divine nature. Hence, it does not require much analytical acumen to deduce that to begin with God the Father and the Devil were one and the same, a single figure that was disassociated later on into two opposite qualities. Involved here, Freud tells us, is the process, well known to psychoanalysis, of the disassociation of a single representation of contradictory content into two contrasting, fiercely opposed, elements. It is exactly the same process that Dalí develops in his book *Lettre ouverte à Salvador Dalí* (1966), in which we encounter an Apollonian and a Dionysian Dalí, an angelic and a demoniac Dalí; or if you prefer, a Dalinian and a Picassian Dalí.

The Dalinian Dalí, the Apollonian, is the one who follows the path of Classicism, Tradition and Form; it is the Dalí who kills the Minotaur, symbol of revolution, and submits to the rigid demands of the super-ego. Let us recall that as Freud argues, the super-ego is nothing but "the representative of *tradition*." [40] Given the encounter of morphology and psychoanalysis solicited by Dalí, when the latter tells us on page two of *The Secret Life* that according to the principles of morphology "form is always the product of an inquisitorial process of matter," we cannot help but think of the restrictive, tyrannical effects of this super-ego; or help but recall, at the same time, the "essential truth" that was revealed to our man one day, namely "that an inquisition was necessary to give a 'form' to the *bacchic* multiplicity and promiscuity of my desires." [41]

On the other hand we have the Dionysian Dalí, the Picassian Dalí who kills the Minotaur and occupies its place because he wishes to be like it. In the first instance the death of the Minotaur would come about in the name of the father and in the second in the name of the son. And so, while the Apollonian Dalí would be a product of the super-ego, which

stands in for and prolongs paternal authority, the Dionysian Dalí would be the result of what Freud called the ego ideal. That other intra-psychic instance also derived from the paternal imago, which in Freud's writings is not always distinguishable from the super-ego but which ended up imposing itself as a different instance. In his essay on the family, Lacan speaks of two clearly unequal instances: "the one which represses is called the super-ego; the one which sublimates, the ego ideal."[\[42\]](#) Years later, in his first seminar, Lacan will insist once again on this distinction and tell us that "the super-ego is coercive and the ego ideal exultant."[\[43\]](#)

In my opinion, it is crucial to take this distinction between the super-ego and the ego ideal into account in order to correctly understand Picasso's function as a father-substitute. The super-ego would coalesce upon the image of the feared father and the ego ideal upon the image of the loved father. Broadly speaking, for psychoanalysis the ego ideal is an instance of the personality resulting from the convergence of narcissism and the identification with the father or the substitutes for him. When, years later, Dalí ordered the portrait of Picasso to be placed in the Fishmongers' Room of his Theater-Museum, directly opposite his *Soft Self-portrait* of 1941, he was enacting the involved play of mirrors on which all narcissism is based.

Dense and complicated as all this is, it is what the narcissus emerging from between Picasso's drooping breasts would come to symbolize; this flower that now represents, as a substitute Gala, a new Narcissus: "*Picasso mon narcissus*." In actual fact, in the Dalinian imagination Gala and Picasso are interchangeable as substitutes for the parental figure and Dalí himself makes the link between them on more than one occasion. In that sense, we might recall that when referring to the identification with the father that is hidden behind the ego ideal, Freud indicates that "Perhaps it would be safer to say 'with the parents'; for before a child has arrived at definite knowledge of the difference between the sexes, the lack of a penis, it does not distinguish in value between its father and its mother."[\[44\]](#) By virtue of this lack of gender distinction, the portrait of Picasso condenses the masculine and the feminine, as had already been done by that other imaginary father, William Tell, who we can see displaying a pair of maternal breasts in *The Old Age of William Tell* (1931) or in *Memory of the Child-Woman* (1932), after the fashion of the hermaphrodite Devil of the Bavarian painter Christoph Haizmann. As in the case of William Tell, and as in the latter instance of the feminized devil, the bisexuality of Picasso would be the result of a double identification with the father and with the mother, which I cannot go into right now.[\[45\]](#)

In *The Portrait of Picasso* the femininity is seemingly overdetermined; the attributes of a feminine kind are various. If we take a look, first, at the limp tongue which hangs from his mouth we will immediately see that it is identical to the tongue of the Minotaur that Dalí depicted on the cover of number 8 (June 1936) of the magazine of the same name. It would appear that Dalí retained this detail in order to subtly indicate the identification of the Malagueño with his feminized *Minotaur*; that is to say, with the androgynous image that he bestowed upon this *mannequin* of 1926.

Another example of femininity is the carnation, the flower that commentators on the painting usually associate with Spanish folklore. Through it Dalí would be expressing the Spanishness of his colleague, but the truth is that this is also a female adornment that subsequently appears in some of the postcards Dalí was sending to Picasso each summer (fig. 4, 5)



and on which he was habituated to writing, “*pel juliol ni dona ni cargol*” [*In July, neither women nor snails*; that is, at the height of summer, no sex or strong food].

This Catalan saying undoubtedly fascinated Dalí, who was aware that the snail can stand in for the woman in the language of dreams, in which it functions as a female symbol. [46] With respect to the morphology of this mollusk, it is opportune to observe that Dalí showed a lot of interest in the curves of spirals and volutes, to which he devoted the penultimate of his *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*. In the explanation of Secret Number 49, the painter refers to the logarithmic spiral which in nature can be admired in many mollusks, as we can ascertain in the famous study by Édouard Monod-Herzen, *Principes de morphologie générale* (1927), which was one of Dalí’s favorite bedside books. Morphology and psychoanalysis meet once again in this realm of curves which, however decorative they may seem, “would be worthless were they to cease being biological” (Dalí *dixit*). [47] A few years earlier, the painter had evoked “the volute of flesh that crowns the dorsal curvature of the embryo,” in harmony with “the vegetal volute of the fern and the volutes of stone of different columns.” [48] And before him Breton had alluded to “the endless curve like that of the nascent fern, the ammonite or the coiled-up embryo.” [49] It goes without saying that the ram’s horn which adorns Picasso’s cranium is exactly the same as the surface of an ammonite. Monod-Herzen shows us a few specimens of this fossil as examples of particularly clear logarithmic spirals (fig. 6, 7), like those of the nautilus.



Moreover, this Picassian horn occupies the place of the ear, of whose genital symbolism Dalí made use on various occasions: in his photomontage *The Phenomenon of Ecstasy* (1933) and in the painting *The Sistine Madonna* (1958), in which an ear also appears, referring us to the Rabelaisian idea of birth through the ear, as Dalí himself pointed out.[\[50\]](#)

We ought, therefore, to consider this embryonic horn as an intra-uterine symbol. But if there is something which more explicitly confers the status of a maternal object on the portrait of Picasso, it is those drooping breasts, which rhyme visually with the flaccid tongue we've already referred to—breasts which help to form a sexually ambivalent ego ideal, as, too, were other figures like Napoleon and Hitler. To both of these Dalí attributed a feminine role, assigning them a maternal meaning. And we can see the two of them associated with Picasso. The French Emperor may be glimpsed in another pencil portrait Dalí did in 1970, an extremely Napoleonic drawing in which the Catalan wrote, "I, too, have met the Emperor."[\[51\]](#) As for the Führer, we can detect his face can be glimpsed in the excrescence at the nape of the neck in the Picasso portrait (fig. 8, 9),



© Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, VEGAP, Barcelona, 2015



a hidden face akin to a paranoiac double image of the Leonardo's vulture type. It would be worth remembering, here, that in the unpublished text on painting cited above Dalí drew attention to "the presence in the world of painting of many a vulture of the same sort psychoanalysis has discovered in Leonardo's picture." Lacking the space to go deeper into these matters, we will say in conclusion that the sexual ambiguity Dalí always ascribed to William Tell has been displaced onto the paternal figure of Picasso, [52] which is why we may see the latter as a representation of the aged Tiresias, the celebrated blind soothsayer of Greek mythology. Along with his prophetic and visionary gifts Tiresias enjoyed a dual sexual identity, since he underwent a change of sex and became a woman for seven years, according to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a book of utmost interest for both portrayer and portrayed, who illustrated it in 1931. Lastly, we may state that the dugs of Picasso are also *The Breasts of Tiresias*.

In the play Apollinaire wrote under this title androgyny assumes great importance, given that not only does it effect Thérèse, the female protagonist, who turns into a man (Tiresias), but also her husband, who becomes a woman. We hear the latter say:

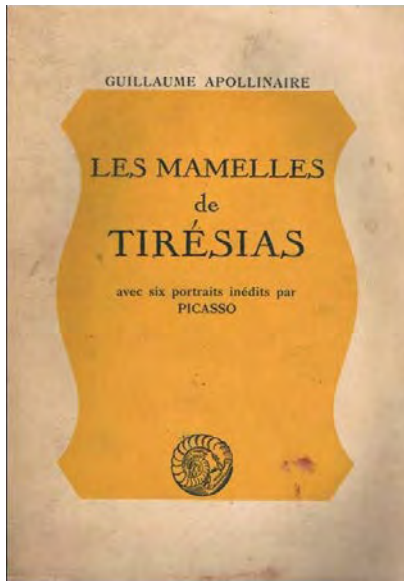
Since my wife is a man
It's right for me to be a
woman I am a decent
woman-mister My wife
is a man-lady [53]

In his final book of memoirs Dalí refers to himself and to Gala in similar terms: "woman-man-Dalí; man-woman-Gala," [54] and in the opera-poem *Être Dieu* (1985), Androgynous Dalí (Female) and Androgynous Dalí (Male) appear as characters. Dalí's interest in Apollinaire's play must have been motivated by this question, to which it would be necessary to add Picasso's presence in Act II, Scene 4:

We hear from
Montrouge That
Mister Picasso's
New picture can
move
As this cradle does
...
Bravo bravo
For the brush of Picasso [55]

At precisely the same instant Dalí is painting his portrait of Picasso, in the summer of 1947, *The Breasts of Tiresias* become highly topical again. That same summer witnessed the première in Paris of the opera composer Francis Poulenc based on Apollinaire's surrealist drama and a year prior to this a new edition of the play had appeared with six drawings by Picasso.

The book was published by Éditions du Béliet, (fig. 10) whose logo was a ram's horn akin to the one sported by the portrayed painter. Pure coincidence?



Pure paranoia, I would say—for, as Dalí wrote, “chance is nothing but the result of systematic irrational (paranoiac) activity.” [56] In the end *Portrait of Pablo Picasso in the Twenty-first Century* is nothing but the result of paranoiac-critical activity, an operation Dalí defined as the “productive organizing force of objective chance.” [57]

Translated (from Spanish) by Paul Hammond

[1] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. VII. Barcelona: Destino, p. 78

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 127.

[3] Salvador Dalí, “Sur la peinture”. Ms. 193. Centre d’Estudis Dalinians (CED), Figueres.

[4] Jean Frois-Wittmann, “L’art moderne et le principe du plaisir”. *Minotaure*, 3-4, December 1933, p. 80.

[5] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. VII, p. 1177.

[6] Brassai, *Conversations avec Picasso*. Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p. 60.

[7] Salvador Dalí, “Sur la peinture”. Ms. 193 (CED). Dalí’s typically chaotic spelling has been corrected here.

[8] Salvador Dalí, “Ge mange Gala – poeme d’amour”. Ms. 173, c. 1933 (CED).

[9] Salvador Dalí, *La Conquête de l’irrationnel*. Paris: Éditions Surréalistes, 1935.

Translated (anonymously) as *The Conquest of the Irrational* and published in an edition of 1,000 copies by Julien Levy, New York, 1935, and reprinted as an appendix in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, London: Vision Press, 1948, here p. 438. The 1948 British edition was a reprint of the 1942 Dial Press (New York) edition with three added appendices.

[10] Pablo Picasso, *Écrits*. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux / Éditions Gallimard, 1989, p. 9.

- [11] Salvador Dalí, “Salvador Dalí té el gust...”. *Cahiers d’Art*, 7-10, October 1935.
- [12] Salvador Dalí, “Oui à la repression des libertés”. *Oui 2. L’Archangélisme scientifique*. Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1974, p. 187.
- [13] Henry Meige, “Les Guérisseurs de phantaisies”, *Nouvelle Iconographie de la Salpêtrière*, vol. 28, 1916-1918, pp. 439-456.
- [14] Eugenio d’Ors, *Poussin y el Greco*, Madrid: Caro Raggio, 1922, pp. 65-66.
- [15] E. Tériade, “Émancipation de la peinture”, *Minotaure*, 3-4, December 1933, pp. 18, 19.
- [16] Ángel Zúñiga, “Al margen”, *La Vanguardia*, 24 January 1946, p. 9.
- [17] Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. London: Vision Press, 1948, p. 67.
- [18] Eugenio d’Ors, *Gnómica*. Madrid: Talleres Gráficos Agustín Núñez, 1941, p. 15.
- [19] Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life*, p. 171, n. 1.
- [20] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. VII, p. 633.
- [21] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. VII, p. 754.
- [22] Dalí cites Gérôme in his text “Hommage à Meissonier” in the catalog of the exhibition of the painting *Tuna Fishing* at the Hôtel Meurice, in Paris. Paris: Draeger, 1967.
- [23] Manuscript in English dated ca. 1941 and published in Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. III, p. 980.
- [24] Marcel Jean, *Histoire de la peinture surréaliste*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1959, p. 231.
- [25] Rafael Jackson, *Picasso y las poéticas surrealistas*. Madrid: Alianza, 2003, pp. 211-212.
- [26] Rafael Jackson, *Picasso y las poéticas surrealistas*, pp. 218-219.
- [27] Cf. Vicent Santamaria de Mingo, “El encuentro de Foix y Dalí en las avenidas subterráneas del pre-sueño”, *Escritura e Imagen*, vol. 3, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007: <http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ESIM/article/view/ESIM0707110113A>
- [28] Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life*, p. 220.
- [29] E. Tériade, “En causant avec Picasso”, *L’Intransigeant*, 15 June 1932.
- [30] Salvador Dalí, *Obra completa*, vol. IV, p. 598.
- [31] Rafael Jackson, *Picasso y las poéticas surrealistas*, p. 113.
- [32] The testimonies in that regard are innumerable and we will cite but a few examples here: “Among other things, it is this faculty of prophecy that Picasso is especially gifted at” (Maurice Raynal, *Picasso*, Paris: Éditions de l’Effort Modern, 1920, p. 5). “Although there are strong reasons (in appearance, at least) for considering him a kind of visionary or black magician, proposing to replace the world of perceptions with a world of superior essence...” (Michel Leiris, “Toiles récentes de Picasso”, *Documents*, Second Year, no. 2, 1930, pp. 62, 64). “For him it was a question of liberating vision, of reaching a state of clairvoyance. And he has managed this” (Paul Éluard, *Oeuvres complètes I*, Paris: Gallimard, p. 944). Christopher Green claims that around 1930 it was routine to call Picasso a magus (*Picasso y Miró, 1930. El mago, el niño y el artista*, Valenica: IVAM, 1991, p. 21).
- [33] “surrealisme – resten 2 individus Dali et Picasso” (Salvador Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí. Suis-je un génie?* Critical edition compiled by Frédérique Joseph-Lowery. Lausanne: L’Âge d’Homme, 2006, p. 514.
- [34] André Breton, “Picasso dans son élément”, *Minotaure*, 1, June 1933, pp. 8-29.
- [35] Christopher Green, *Objectes vius. Figura i natura morta en Picasso*. Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2008, p. 89.
- [36] Alain Bosquet, *Entretien avec Salvador Dalí*. Mónaco: Éditions du Rocher, pp.

133-134.

[37] Salvador Dalí and Louis Pauwels, *Les Passions selon Dalí*. Paris: Denoël, 1968, pp. 44-45.

[38] Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí. As told to André Parinaud*. London: W.H. Allen, 1976, p. 31.

[39] Sigmund Freud, "A Seventeenth-century Demonological Neurosis" (1923). Harmondsworth: *The Penguin Freud Library, vol. 14: Art and Literature*, 1985, pp. 383-423.

[40] Sigmund Freud, "New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" (1933). The italics are mine. I quote from the French translation: *Nouvelles Conférences sur la psychanalyse*. Paris: Gallimard 1936, p. 95.

[41] Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life*, p. 80. The italics are mine.

[42] Jacques Lacan, *La familia* (1938). Barcelona / Buenos Aires: Argonauta, 1978, p. 64.

[43] Jacques Lacan, *El seminario 1: los escritos técnicos de Freud*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2004, p. 160.

[44] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923). New York: W.W. Norton, 1962, p. 21, n. 1.

[45] Cf. Vicent Santamaria de Mingo, "De l'hystérie et ses rapports avec la bisexualité ('Rêverie')", in Frédérique Joseph-Lowery and Isabelle Roussel-Gillet (eds.) *Salvador Dalí: sur les traces d'éros*. Geneva: Notari, 2010, pp. 95-108.

[46] Haim Finkelstein, *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing, 1927-1942*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 290, n. 9.

[47] Salvador Dalí, *50 secretos mágicos para pintar*. Barcelona: Luis de Caralt, 1985, p. 176.

[48] Salvador Dalí, "Le Sommeil", *Minotaure*, 10, Winter 1937, p. 26.

[49] André Breton, "Le Message automatique", *Minotaure*, 3-4, December 1933, p. 60.

[50] Robert Descharnes, *Dalí de Gala*. Lausanne: Edita, 1962, p. 192

[51] Coincidentally, or not so coincidentally, in "Napoleón-Picasso" (1929) Gómez de la Serna had already associated Napoleon with Picasso. Cf. Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Completa y verídica historia de Picasso y el cubismo*, a text first published in *La Revista de Occidente* and later included in the book *Ismos* (1931).

[52] "Picasso is the man of whom I have thought most often, after my father. Both are, more or less, the William Tells of my life." Salvador Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*. London: Hutchinson & Co, 1966, p. 157.

[53] Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Breasts of Tiresias* (1917). In Michael Benedikt and George E. Wellwarth, *Modern French Plays: An Anthology from Jarry to Ionesco*. London: Faber & Faber, 1964, pp. 55-91, here p. 76.

[54] Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, p. 243.

[55] Guillaume Apollinaire, *The Breasts of Tiresias*, p. 86.

[56] E. Tériade, "Émancipation de la peinture", p. 20.

[57] Salvador Dalí, *The Conquest of the Irrational*, p. 436.