



Dalí and the Spanish Baroque: From Still Life to Velázquez

by William Jeffett

Dalí famously turned to baroque modes of representation in the years after World War II, first with *The Madonna of Port Lligat* (1949) and more dramatically with *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951), both of which announced a new style that dominated his work during the 1950s. These paintings were followed by *Eucharistic Still Life* (1952) and *Corpus Hypercubus (Crucifixion)* (1954), which adopted conventional religious subjects as their themes and represented them in a pictorial language distinct from that of Surrealism. Dalí's new strategy notably deployed stylistic characteristics associated with the Baroque art of Spain's Golden Age, especially the works of Alonso Cano, Sánchez Cotán, El Greco, Blas de Ledesma, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Jusepe de Ribera, Diego Velázquez, and Francisco Zurbarán.

In 1958, Dalí's *Velázquez Painting the Infanta Margarita with the Lights and Shadows of His Own Glory* made specific reference not to a religious theme but rather to court painting during the reign of Philip IV and its greatest practitioner of the seventeenth century, Velázquez. Dalí thus cast himself in the role of the greatest living painter of his age, and two years later gave visual representation to this stance in *The Ecumenical Council* (1960), which quotes *Las Meninas* (1656) and substitutes his own figure for that of Velázquez. While this period of Dalí's work is conventionally seen in opposition to his earlier Surrealist period (1929–39), the artist remained rooted in Surrealism and other intellectual strands of modern thought that had reassessed the baroque. For example, Dalí's recuperation of "Modern Style"—by which he meant Catalan Art Nouveau or Modernisme—with its emphasis on an organic form of decoration, derived from biological metaphors proclaimed by the Surrealists. Likewise, his intellectual positions addressing the baroque were identified with writers once associated with the progressive literary avant-gardes in Spain (José Bergamín,

Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, and Ramón Gómez de la Serna) and with parallel philosophical tendencies (Eugenio d'Ors and José Ortega y Gasset).

Dalí's position mirrored that of Surrealism to the extent that his embrace of El Greco, Murillo, Ribera, Velázquez, and Zurbarán represented a fundamentally antimodern critique of modern art and its formalism (through styles such as Cubism and Mondrian's geometric abstraction). While Surrealism, too, was antimodern—André Breton, the movement's leader, was fond of drawing up lists of alternative artistic canons—Dalí's later embrace of Catholicism represented a break with the movement's anticlericalism.

In Spain, central figures of the interwar avant-gardes had similarly looked backward to the Golden Age of the seventeenth century. Famously, the literary figures of the Generation of 1927, which included Dalí's intimate friend Federico García Lorca, embraced the sophisticated verse of Luis de Góngora (1561–1627). Indeed the celebration of the tricentennial anniversary of Góngora's death in 1927 gave the name of Gongorismo to the style of this generation of poets. In 1932 García Lorca stridently argued that the earlier poet's "originality" and "verbal richness" made him the spiritual father of French Symbolist Stéphane Mallarmé, the latter a key figure for the Surrealists.¹ Dalí and Buñuel's film *L'âge d'or* of 1930, like *Un chien andalou* of the previous year, made allusions to such ideas, not the least through a baroque sensibility for death and decay—including the scorpions and skeletons of the Mallorcan Archbishops in *L'âge d'or*, and the ants and rotting donkeys in *Un chien andalou*—though these images were anchored in a fully fledged Surrealism.

In Spain the writers Bergamín, Díaz-Plaja, D'Ors, Gómez de la Serna, and Ortega y Gasset developed a fascination for the baroque and what was termed Barroquismo—as if it were an avant-garde!—and generally for the art of the period and its principal painting genres: still life, religious subjects, history painting, and court portraiture. Even before the Generation of 1927, writers associated with the Generation of 1898, like Miguel de Unamuno, viewed Velázquez's depiction of existential morality in *Christ Crucified* (1632; Museo del Prado, Madrid) in terms of a modernized Spanish Catholicism, while Angel Ganivet had approached the Golden Age as a prescriptive

model for a “regeneration” of Spain in the wake of the Disaster of 1898 (as the Spanish-American War was known there).²

Dalí’s fascination with the baroque predated Surrealism. As an art student at Madrid’s Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in the mid-1920s, he had access not only to the academy’s superb collection of Spanish painting but also that of the nearby Museo del Prado, which he frequently visited. In Madrid, Dalí was steeped in the pictorial language of a baroque sensibility, though he approached it through the lens of modernity, as in *Basket of Bread* (1926)—a work that would bring him his first international recognition when it was exhibited in 1929 at the Carnegie International Exhibition in Pittsburgh. Even before the Madrid years, Dalí was fully conscious of the Spanish Baroque through reproductions in volumes on El Greco and Velázquez that were published in the early twentieth-century series of Gowan Art Books. Moreover, on his frequent visits to Cadaqués, Dalí had seen one of the great regional examples of the high Baroque: the altarpiece of Santa Maria.

Even as a student in Figueres in 1919, Dalí wrote a series of short articles devoted to Old Master painting, published between January and June in the magazine *Studium*. He expressed his admiration for El Greco’s spiritually motivated emotional and expressive power, which explained the dramatic distortion of his figures: “Soul, all soul are the canvases of this great artist. His works are purely spiritual and divine. . . . Those so exaggerated prolongations that characterize his brilliant paintings are of a feeling and spirituality so great that it transfers our imagination beyond that which surrounds us and seems to locate us in a sweet and calm celestial life without contrasts.”³ Dalí underscored the ways in which Velázquez’s paintings revealed and even structured the nature of Spanish court life at the same time that his use of color approached the spontaneity of Impressionism:

Vigor and energy predominate in Velázquez’s pictures; their contours of acute crude lines give in the beginning a deep impression of abruptness that is soon diminished by the deep and calm expression of his semblances. . . . The pictures of people of high lineage, kings, nobles, proud, cynical, self-important, of sparkling eyes with luminous flashes and reflections of hatred; of men stultified by vice or innocent and spoiled princesses; dwarves and jesters full of secret and deep melancholy; all these figures full of force and

life reveal a Spain to us that Velázquez copied—better we would say “created,” taking it from reality. . . . The distribution and positioning of the colors seem in certain cases those of an “impressionist.” One considers Velázquez as one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest Spanish artist, and one of the greatest in the world.⁴

Dalí’s astute commentaries on El Greco and Velázquez reveal an enthusiastic reading of Baroque painting and its social context within Counter-Reformation spirituality, as well within the more secular political life at the Madrid court, and point to two directions that he would be destined to explore as a mature artist.

Dalí’s *Vanitas*: Still Life and Skull Paintings

Dalí’s *Basket of Bread* recalls attempts by seventeenth-century Spanish painters to represent the palpable materiality of ordinary objects not so much through realism but through the evocation of their sensual presence. This tradition began with a concern for humble subjects and represented a reversal from the goals of historical and religious painting. In the early years of the seventeenth century, still-life painting in Spain was characterized by an austere pictorial language, most famously in the work of Zurbarán and Cotán but also exemplified by Ledesma’s *Still Life with Cherries, Lupine, and Iris* (ca. 1610). To this pictorial austerity Dalí brought a consideration of the role of photography in transforming painted representation: that is, the role of a new “objectivity” removed from concern for the artist’s hand.

Basket of Bread was not entirely without spiritual reference, for the bread itself pointed to the body of Christ and the white cloth to the ephemeral nature of worldly existence. In the evolution of still-life painting, spiritual concerns were always a factor, but as the seventeenth century progressed they increasingly came to the fore in what are termed *vanitas* paintings, with reference to Ecclesiastes 1:2: “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” In Spain paintings of this type were also known as *desengaños del mundo* (disillusionments with world), with reference to the ephemeral nature of earthly achievement and material objects in the face of death.⁵

More-elaborate compositions of sumptuous objects in complex compositions typified the evolution of still life and were often accompanied by a skull or a watch as a reminder of an ever present human mortality, or *memento mori*. A *vanitas* painting most likely from the Madrid School of the mid-seventeenth-century represents the high point of this genre, with a book and Spanish harp, elegant textiles, and numerous decorative objects set alongside a skull that looks outward at the spectator. The painting tells us that all human accomplishments are illusory. By contrast, Luis Egidio Meléndez's very late *Still Life with Grapes, Figs, and a Copper Kettle* (ca. 1770–80; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh) seems to return to the almost photographic austerity of early seventeenth-century painting. Despite the fame Meléndez gained for his virtuoso depictions of Spanish produce, he was excluded from the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, just as Dalí would be first in 1923 and definitively in 1926.

Dalí addressed still life in terms of everyday objects often associated with *bodegones*, or kitchens. Works that preceded *Basket of Bread*, like *Still Life (Pulpo y Scorpa)* (1922) and *Still Life (Fish with Bread)* (1923–24), are more painterly and recall prominent still-life elements in Velázquez's early kitchen scenes painted in Seville. Nevertheless, it was the *vanitas* dimension of still life, especially as stated in the symbols of the watch and skull, that informed Dalí's development throughout the Surrealist years. *Basket of Bread* introduced an almost mystical dimension to his objectivity, with the symbolism of the bread and textile suggesting the body of Christ and the ephemeral nature of material reality. Yet in this work *vanitas* is not expressed by a skull, despite the skull-like form of the round crust of bread (recalling the skulls in Antonio de Pereda's *Vanitas* of ca. 1640–50; Museo de Zaragoza); and the suggestion of the bread's hard staleness may be seen to represent the precariousness of life and the proximity of what Dalí called "putrefaction." *Eggs on a Plate without a Plate* (1932), with its hanging eggs, recalls a similar device in Cotán's *Quince, Cabbage, Melon, and Cucumber* (ca. 1602). In both works a watch is used as a marker of the passage of time.

In the early 1930s Dalí brought to the symbols of the watch and the skull the concept of "softness," suggesting transformation and metamorphosis understood as consciousness of the onset of death or putrefaction. In *Catalan Bread* (1932), an image

of bread (again alluding to the eucharistic transubstantiation) is wedded to a soft watch, reminding us of our mortality through its indication of passing moments. Dalí further introduces a Freudian meditation on the relation of sexuality and death, through the phallic form of the bread. In *Fantasies diurnes* (1932), a distended skull is depicted by means of anamorphosis, a Baroque pictorial device consisting of optical distortion, which here suggests the impossibility of representing one's own death. Dalí's inclusion of the anamorphic "great masturbator" on the gem that adorns the elongated skull suggests his psychic identification with the object.

A series of paintings featuring skulls followed: *Average Atmosphercephalic Bureaucrat in the Act of Milking a Cranial Harp* (1933); *Myself at the Age of Ten When I Was the Grasshopper Child* (1933); *Meditation on the Harp* (1933–34); *Skull with Its Lyric Appendage Leaning on a Night Table Which Should Have the Exact Temperature of a Cardinal Bird's Nest* (1934); and *Atmospheric Skull Sodomizing a Grand Piano* (1934), in which a distorted skull is generally contiguous with the world of objects (including a harp and a piano), and the sexuality implied by its phallic form is linked to death. Mortality is also linked to self-portraiture, as in *Myself at the Age of Ten When I Was the Grasshopper Child*, in which the representation of the young Dalí's head is transformed into a skull. In *Telephone in a Dish with Three Grilled Sardines at the End of September* (1939), the ominous scenographic space and dark shadows, together with a black telephone and grilled sardines, are similar harbingers of the proximity of death and destruction, in this case war, though neither a skull nor a watch are present. The awareness of death that suffuses Dalí's painting of the 1930s continued to preoccupy the artist, as he later emphasized in *The Unspeakable Confessions* of 1976: "There is a great struggle going on between nature and me. I have to correct her. The painting of a still life (or as we say in French, *nature morte*: dead nature) is a way of rectifying the real by the creation of an entropy clear to all. I am fascinated by death. It is my subject. And one vein of my work is to make death colloidal, to stretch it, milk it, like the teat of a cow, to get the milk of the resurrection of the flesh from it."⁶

In *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory* (1952–54), Dalí returned to the symbolism of *desengaño* and memento mori with additional soft watches, depicted

alongside the distorted “great masturbator” self-portrait, both refracted through the lens of Werner Karl Heisenberg’s quantum theory and the artist’s own “nuclear mysticism.” *Eucharistic Still Life* (1952) depicts bread and fish in terms of an ideal geometry, thereby rendering them ideal and “mystical.” *Nature Morte Vivante (Still Life—Fast Moving)* (1956) partakes of the geometry of Cotán and Juan van der Hamen y León (as in the former’s *Quince, Cabbage, Melon, and Cucumber* of 1602 and the latter’s *Still Life with Sweets* of 1622, Cleveland Museum of Art), as well as the objectivity of Meléndez (as in *Still Life with Fish, Bread, and Kettle*, ca. 1772, Cleveland Museum of Art). But Dalí inverts the element of stasis—death—and infuses the still life with literal movement by representing a fruit dish, fruit, a knife, a bottle of anise liqueur, a glass of red wine, and a bird, all flying in a spiraling pattern above a table. Here too Dalí evokes Heisenberg’s theories as scientific proof of the allegory of spiritual transformation, the wine and bird representing the transformation of Christ’s body into the Holy Spirit.

The *vanitas* tradition was not limited to the still-life genre, and skulls often accompanied depictions of penitent saints such as Jerome and Onophrius. The origin of the *vanitas* lay in the skull represented at the base of the cross in depictions of the Crucifixion, such as that by Murillo (1660–70; Timken Museum of Art, San Diego), but over time it was isolated from this context and incorporated in the representations of saints and even in portraits. In Ribera’s *Saint Onophrius* (1642), we find the emaciated hermit contemplating a cross that he holds in one hand, while he holds an iron nail in the other; in the foreground a skull draped with a rosary performs the role of memento mori. Another depiction of Saint Onophrius by Ribera (ca. 1642; Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami) emphasizes the saint’s passionate act of prayer as he looks beyond the frame of the painting, evoking an emotional register that recalls El Greco’s theatricality.

Saint Sebastian

While the traditional representation of penitent saints clearly was relevant to Dalí’s early painting, he was also interested in the depiction of martyrdoms, especially

that of Saint Sebastian, the patron saint of Cadaqués, who is represented in one of the lateral elements of the altarpiece of Santa Maria. Despite its provincial location, this “prodigious Baroque”⁷ altarpiece is one of the greatest examples of the style in Catalonia, and one that Dalí knew well.

In the 1920s Dalí and Federico García Lorca identified themselves with Saint Sebastian, a Roman soldier who secretly helped Christians and as punishment was tied to a tree and shot with arrows. It is this moment in the story of his martyrdom that was most popular with Baroque artists, as the subject provided a pretext to paint a male nude. Cotán’s treatment of the subject (c. 1610; San Diego Museum of Art) focuses on his humanity and restrained expression of pain as well as the immediacy of the arrows as instruments of suffering. A depiction of Sebastian by the School of Zurbarán (ca. 1650; Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University) sets the body at a greater distance and dramatically bathes it in shadow to emphasize its serpentine composition.

In a 1927 essay on Saint Sebastian, published in *L’amic de les arts*, Dalí went a long way toward establishing the modernity of the martyr, whose nudity he associated with irony. However, the artist was also attracted by the elegance of the saint’s suffering, rooted in his stoic acceptance of pain: “There is another mode still; a mode between inaction and passion . . . which is a mode of elegance. I am referring to the patience in the exquisite death throes of Saint Sebastian. . . . Saint Sebastian, free of symbolism, was a *fact* in his pain and unique presence.”⁸ Dalí linked the palpable presence of suffering to his own concept of putrefaction, for the pictorial depiction of Saint Sebastian approached the corporeality of the human body: “The other side of Saint Sebastian’s magnifying glass corresponded to putrefaction. Everything seen through it was anguish, obscurity, and tenderness, even; tenderness, even, because of the exquisite absence of spirit and naturalness.”⁹ The essay was dedicated to García Lorca, who treated the subject in drawings dating from 1927–28, and who spent the summer of 1927 with Dalí in Cadaqués, where undoubtedly the two joined in celebrating their self-made cult of Sebastian. In his drawings García Lorca made other specific references to Spanish Baroque art, including his *Virgen de los Dolores* (1924), based on polychrome sculptures by Pedro de Mena (ca. 1675) and José de Mora (ca. 1670), and thus his

interest in Sebastian was not surprising.¹⁰ Dalí's correspondence with García Lorca mentions the saint more than once, first reminding the poet that "Saint Sebastian is the patron of Cadaqués."¹¹ In a subsequent letter he writes, "I invite you to my new type of Saint Sebastian, which consists of a veritable transformation of the Arrow by the Sole. . . . It is the principle of elegance that made Saint Sebastian deliciously agonize. . . . Maybe with a new modification we will find one day the truly cold temperature of the arrow of the old Saint Sebastian."¹² Finally, Dalí identifies himself with both Lorca and Saint Sebastian, asking the poet if he is the artist's Saint Sebastian and signing the letter: "your Saint Sebastian."¹³

Though Dalí only depicted Saint Sebastian in a single painting at the end of his career, in 1982,¹⁴ he did include an illustration of the martyr in *The Secret Life* (published in 1942), which further demonstrates the autobiographical importance that the saint held for him. As the artist constructed a personal mythology, this identification would be extended to other religious, as well as secular, subjects.

Dalí's Religious Painting: The Crucifixion and the Immaculate Conception

With *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* (1951), Dalí announced his adoption of the mode espoused for the pictorial representation of the Crucifixion by the masters of Spain's Golden Age of painting, who stripped away the narrative anecdote of earlier treatments of the subject, removing witnesses from the scene and confronting the viewer with the immediacy of Christ's death. The painted translation of polychrome sculptural treatments of the Crucifixion resulted in a palpable sense of reality derived especially from the employment of dramatic lighting (fig. TK). It was this atmosphere that the traditionalist writer Miguel Unamuno sought to capture in his last poem "El Cristo de Velázquez" (1920):

The body is as white
 as the mirror of the father of light,
 the sun, life-giver; thy body is white
 as is the moon, the dead revolves around
 its mother our tired wandering earth;
 thy body is white as the host of heaven
 of the sovereign night, of that heaven as black

as the veil of thine abundant black hair
of a Nazarite.¹⁵

Unamuno likewise addressed these themes in the philosophical work titled *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (The Tragic Sense of Life; 1912): “The highest artistic expression of Catholicism, or at least of Spanish Catholicism, is in the art that is most material, tangible, and permanent . . . in sculpture and painting, in the Christ of Velázquez, that Christ who is forever dying, yet never finishes dying, in order that he may give us life.”¹⁶

Dalí first sought this effect in his drawing study of 1951 for *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*, and later in *Corpus Hypercubus (Crucifixion)*. His awareness of Velázquez’s Christ in particular lay in his earliest memories of a reproduction of the painting that Dalí’s parents kept in their bedroom. Ian Gibson notes that though such a reproduction probably existed, it is clear that the artist retroactively sought to weave it into the construction of a personal mythology.¹⁷ According to Dalí’s account in *The Unspeakable Confessions*: “In my parents’ bedroom . . . there was a majestic picture of Salvador, my dead brother, next to a reproduction of Christ crucified as painted by Velázquez; and this image of the cadaver of the Savior whom Salvador had without question gone to in his angelic ascension conditioned in me an archetype.”¹⁸ Dalí equated the Crucifixion with a particularly Spanish brand of Catholicism, as he remarked in *The Secret Life*: “What America did not have was precisely the horror of my rotten donkeys from Spain, of the spectral aspect of the Christs of El Greco . . . of Rome, Toledo and Mediterranean Catholicism.”¹⁹ While here Dalí refers to El Greco, in his own paintings he adopted the more austere language to be found in the Crucifixions of Murillo, Velázquez, and Zurbarán, characterized by a dignified stasis distinct from the emotional drama of El Greco’s works, which Dalí described in *Diary of a Genius* as “the unique power to render all flowers orgiastic.”²⁰ El Greco’s *Christ Carrying the Cross* (ca. 1590–95; Lowe Art Museum) emphasizes the movement of Christ walking toward the moment of death and the passion of his suffering as symbolized in the crown of thorns. In contrast to El Greco’s dynamism, Dalí argued: “It is necessary to turn to the silver oxide and olive-green dignity of Velázquez and Zurbarán, to the realism and mysticism that we would

discover to be alike and consubstantial. Transcendent reality had to be integrated into some fortuitous part of pure reality, in the same way that Velázquez's absolute visual imperialism had achieved it. But this already presupposed the uncontested presence of God, Who is the only supreme reality!"²¹ The naturalism of the Baroque Crucifixion, Dalí's argument implies, leads to the consequence of faith, to the Catholicism that he claimed to have embraced.

Without exception Dalí's treatments of Saint Helena (who is said to have discovered the true cross) and the Virgin Mary take Gala as their model. This process began with *The Madonna of Port Lligat* (the first version of which was created in 1949) but was quickly followed by other works, including *Saint Helena of Port Lligat* (1956) and *The Ecumenical Council* (1960), which includes Helena within the composition. Robert Lubar has pointed out that in these works the saint's pose is based on Michelangelo's sculpture of *Moses* in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome.²²

Gala appears as the Virgin in *The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus* (1958–59). The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception was among the most popular subjects of seventeenth-century Spain. Murillo's many treatments (ca. 1680) provide a possible model for understanding Dalí's composition. Dalí himself also appears in the center of the painting, like a penitent saint, as a bowing monk clutching a crucifix, while a transparent Christ of Saint John of the Cross presides over the scene. In *Corpus Hypercubus (Crucifixion)*, the relationship is reversed, with the body of Christ nailed to a three-dimensional crucifix suspended in midair while the Virgin-Gala stands at left with her back to us, gazing at the miracle.

What is the nature of the Catholic spirituality that Dalí proclaimed at this time? If Gala could so readily be transformed into the Virgin, one then wonders whether the artist might be casting himself in the role of Christ. Dalí's claim that he was the savior of art is one basis for this reading. His Christ looks down from above to survey the world, which as represented in *Christ of Saint John of the Cross* is Port Lligat, suggesting that the village where Dalí made his home is the center of the universe (later, however, he would depict the Perpignan train station in similar terms). We take the painter's viewpoint, which is none other than the omniscient perspective of God the

Father. Natalia Shiou-Yun Fang has argued that evidence for such an interpretation can be found in the blank piece of creased paper, with uplifted corner, that rests on the cross in place of the traditional inscription INRI (*Jesus Nazareus, Rex Iudaeorum*). As she observes, this fragment is a quotation from the paper that appears in Velázquez's *Surrender at Breda* (1634–35), and it appears again in Dalí's *The Sistine Madonna* (1958; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).²³

To this intriguing argument we can add that the piece of paper performs as a trompe l'oeil calling card, perhaps a *cartellino* (or *cartouche*) that represents the artist, in this case Dalí. The folded paper in *The Sistine Madonna* is linked to a second signed piece of paper below and to the left, further establishing its function as signature. A similar rectangle of paper is rendered illusionistically at the foot of Zurbarán's *Crucifixion* (1627; Art Institute of Chicago), though this example is more crumpled than creased; again, the paper appears to the lower right in his *Saint Serapion* (1628; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art), this time inscribed with the work's title and the artist's name. Within the immediate artistic context of Dalí's Christ in *Corpus Hypercubus (Crucifixion)*, the use of a trompe l'oeil piece of creased paper as a calling card had recently been exploited (with the artist's name written on it) by Antoni Tàpies in his *Self-Portrait* of 1950 (private collection), on view that year at the artist's first solo exhibition, a year before the production of Dalí's painting.²⁴ The paper's twin association as calling card, with its autobiographical and self-portrait functions, and its association with Christ (as in Antonello da Messina's *Salvator Mundi*),²⁵ further supports the thesis of Dalí's identification with the Savior in his *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*.

The Literary Context

At the end of *The Secret Life*, Dalí announced the rebirth of a new style, using the image of an acanthus leaf as an organic metaphor. For Dalí, the acanthus leaf, which figures in the most ornate of the orders of columns, the Corinthian, was emblematic of the decorative complexity and movement of the baroque, which he read backward and forward in time. For Dalí, the baroque—far from being the period style of the Counter-Reformation—was embodied in the acanthus leaf and therefore cyclical and timeless.

As we shall see these ideas owed much to Eugenio d'Ors. The passage, though lengthy, is worth citing in full.

When, in the beginnings of the history of culture, the men who were to found the eternal bases of Occidental esthetics chose, among the formless multiplicity of existing foliages, the unique and shining outline of the acanthus leaf, they materialized, in so doing, the immortal morphological symbol which was destined to become nothing less than the cosmogonic constant of Greco-Roman civilization . . . the "plant-dream whirl" of the acanthus leaf, hardened into the luminous concisions of the first Corinthian capitals, and since then it has not ceased to be the tradition of esthetic intelligence, the continuous force of Minerva through the vicissitudes of blind and obscure forces of history. The acanthus leaf, become divine through the force of the conception of its first ornamental concretions, was destined not to die.

. . . The end of a war, the crumbling of an empire, and a hundred years of disorder have served only slightly to modify the tilt, the outline, the ornamental figure of the acanthus leaf. . . . The acanthus leaf continues. From the Corinthian capitals, what life of tradition is that of the acanthus leaf, dying under the Christ, born again heavy and fecund with classicism with Palladio, nuptial in Rome, apothecotic in style under Louis XIV, hysterical under Louis XV, orgiastic and aphrodisiac in the Baroque, guillotined by the French Revolution, modest and haughty under the Napoleonic Empire, neurotic and mad in the Modern style, confined to an insane asylum throughout the Post-War, forgotten by all today during the present new war!

But it is not dead! For it lives somewhere, for it is unfurling its new bloom of spiny beauty in the shelter of the barbed wires of daily events, and more precisely within the brain of Salvador Dalí. Yes! I announce its life, I announce the future birth of a Style.²⁶

The baroque, then, like the acanthus leaf, was eternal, recurring throughout time, and alive and well in the work of Salvador Dalí. What then was the literary context in which Dalí took up the challenge of the baroque?

The writer and critic Eugenio d'Ors was famous for his philosophical novel *La ben plantada* (The Well-Planted One), published in 1911 as a kind of manifesto for the neoclassical tendency Noucentisme, in which the rooted tree served as a metaphor for the ideal Mediterranean woman. Later he would associate this figure with a personality close to that of Dalí in his 1954 book *La verdadera historia de Lidia de Cadaqués* (The True Story of of Lydia of Cadaqués).

D'Ors's first important consideration of the baroque appeared as a series of articles in the Madrid-based *Las noticias* and then in 1922 as the book *Tres horas en el Museo del Prado* (Three Hours in the Prado Museum), which was reprinted in numerous editions and revised by the author in 1947 and 1951. D'Ors makes a distinction between the classical and baroque styles: "In art one must call *Classicism* the tendency toward the supremacy of forms that are supported, and *Baroque* the cult of forms that fly."²⁷ For D'Ors baroque art was understood in terms of "expressivity," represented by an atemporal "scale" ranging from Velázquez to El Greco, and a "scale of construction" ranging from Velázquez to Poussin.²⁸ The radical nature of the baroque lay in its rupture with the tradition of style and the "embrace of nature," understood as vitality and passion.

D'Ors offered a systematic interpretation of the baroque in *Lo barroco* (The Baroque) of 1935, in which he challenged an understanding of the baroque as a period style isolated in a determined geographic or cultural setting rather than as a marker of bad taste, the meaning initially and most typically associated with the term. Rather it is a universal category—not confined to the West—and repeated throughout history, like Dalí's acanthus leaf, "an historical constant that returns and is encountered in periods reciprocally distant"²⁹ to oppose the classical. D'Ors gives the example of French Art Nouveau, the very same "Modern Style" Dalí championed against all received taste: "The baroque style can be reborn and translate the same inspiration in new forms. . . . At the end of the century. . . Guimard, the architect of the Paris Métro stations, without plagiarism . . . continued the tradition of vegetal naturalism."³⁰ The baroque was above all "Culture" in its imitation of the "processes of Nature."³¹ Because of this vital naturalism, the baroque is characterized by movement and dynamism, in contrast to the stasis and repose of rationalism; it is therefore not only "beyond the field of reason"³² but antirational, an attitude that "fundamentally desires the humiliation of reason."³³ Characterized by its complexity, and confounding the limits of the different forms typical of classical art, "the baroque, in which the mind imitates the process of nature, [is] far from . . . the classical, in which the mind imitates the processes of the mind."³⁴

The writer Guillermo Díaz-Plaja underscored this antirational reading of the baroque in *El espíritu del barroco. Tres interpretaciones* (The Spirit of the Baroque: Three Interpretations), published in 1940. Díaz-Plaja had once been associated with the avant-garde, but by 1940 he was more a man of the academic establishment. Characterizing the baroque by the qualities of nostalgia, the subversion of reason, and sensuality, Díaz-Plaja challenged d'Ors's idea of "forms that fly" and suggested that the baroque also consisted of "forms that sink."³⁵ In the seventeenth-century, the longing for an earlier, "crude" way of life was born of the sophistication of Madrid court life, in which the intellectual triumphed over the heroic age of the warrior. Díaz-Plaja pointed to the artificiality of historically baroque painting and literature and its syntactical subversiveness, especially in the literary works of Góngora and Baltasar Gracián, who had observed that "there is no beauty without help, nor perfection . . . without the help of artifice."³⁶ As this beauty stretches the frame of reason to the point of undermining its abstract idealism, Díaz-Plaja is led to a consideration of a baroque pictorial sensuality that he describes as atmospheric, in effect a "scenography." Reality is thus no longer idealized, but made hyper-real. In still-life painting the marginal world of the object is isolated as the central subject, moving to the foreground as the privileged plane of action, of appearance. Baroque sensuality also gave materiality to the representation of figures, and in this quality of description resembled Surrealism: "Things and beings have a real corporeality, this precise duality that already is the essential characteristic of the baroque. (In the same way, today's surrealist painters, do they not surprise us describing preposterous sensational themes with the most minute and analytical of observations?)."³⁷ The baroque represented a "rebellion of things" that sought to have a presence in the world.³⁸ It was these presences, perceived as appearances, that gave the baroque a cinematic quality, capturing the vitality of dynamic movement, a quality that for Díaz-Plaja made El Greco the quintessential baroque painter.

The avant-garde poet Ramón Gómez de la Serna was famous for his aphoristic and humorous poems called *Greguerías* (1918), which were undoubtedly indebted to the sophisticated example of Góngora's poetry in their mixture of the metaphorical and

comical to strain to its limits the semantic logic of grammar. These verses were related to what he called *disparates*, or “nonsenses,” in his 1921 book of the same title, in which he wrote that “the world is a nonsense.” It was just such an expression of the universality of a Spanish linguistic nonsense, challenging death and affirming life, that the writer José Bergamín celebrated in his discussion of Spain’s Golden Age writers.³⁹

For Gómez de la Serna the capacity to extend metaphor to outrageous proportions was characteristic of the baroque’s evasions of definitions. The historical baroque in its decadence was explained by the *cursi*, or overly precious, but Gómez de la Serna argued that this element in fact explained everything that was baroque.⁴⁰ In these terms the style struggled against the material constraints of the artistic medium: “There is an exultant and anxious feeling in the baroque that is the drama of its forms, that . . . aspires to put a human frame on it and to decorate it humanly. . . . In the truly baroque is the trace of the grip of the material in order to scale the ideal cornice, the artist’s convolution, the desire to dress oneself in style and to calm spiritual pangs.”⁴¹ Gómez de la Serna noted that Dalí had brilliantly proposed Art Nouveau as a manifestation of the baroque sensibility of the *cursi*,⁴² and quoted directly from the artist’s essay on the “Modern Style” (published in *Minotaure* in 1933), in which Dalí described the new style as “extra-sculptural,” as “ornamental automatism,” and as “the most fantastic and original phenomenon in the history of art.”⁴³

Painting at Court

Dalí looked to Velázquez’s court portraiture as a secular model for synthesizing his preoccupations with the baroque, and in his work established an identification between himself and the earlier painter. Portraits of the king, such as the full-length *Portrait of Philip IV Wearing Armor, with a Lion at his Feet* (ca. 1652–54; Museo del Prado) provided one example. In 1951 Dalí self-consciously cultivated a mustache styled on the one represented in Velázquez’s portrait bust of Philip IV (ca. 1653; Museo del Prado). The relationship between the two artists is underscored in a photograph of Dalí standing alongside the Velázquez painting, reproduced in Miguel Utrillo’s *Salvador Dalí y sus enemigos* (Salvador Dalí and His Enemies)⁴⁴—an account of the controversy

surrounding Dalí's provocative 1951 lecture "Picasso y yo" and his controversial 1952 exhibition in Madrid, which included *Christ of Saint John of the Cross*. Whereas in America Dalí's mustache appeared simply eccentric, in Spain the reference to Velázquez was obvious.

Velázquez's famous group portrait *Las Meninas* as well as *Infanta Margarita* (1653; Museo del Prado) provided Dalí with a model of formal court painting that he reworked in *Velázquez Painting the Infanta Margarita with the Lights and Shadows of His Own Glory* (1958). Emphasizing the analogy with Velázquez, Dalí took this painting to the Prado, where he was photographed in the gallery alongside *Infanta Margarita* while putting the final brushstrokes on his own work; early the following year the photographs were published in the monarchist periodical *Blanco y negro*.⁴⁵ *Velázquez Painting the Infanta Margarita . . .* is an amalgamation of *Infanta Margarita* and *Las Meninas*, with the transparent figure of the young girl superimposed over the picture gallery of Velázquez's studio.⁴⁶ The transparency of her body, like the rays that diagonally cross the composition, point to the importance of light, while the calligraphic application of paint suggests Velázquez's spontaneous mode of applying what Dalí called "the nonchalantly heroic brushstroke."⁴⁷ In Dalí's painting a shadowy and spectral figure, positioned at the center of the painting, represents Velázquez executing in anamorphic perspective the very same Infanta Margarita that is frontally represented in the transparent figure. In a quotation from Jan Brueghel's *The Senses: Sight and Smell* (1618; Museo del Prado), Dalí depicts a picture gallery in the background, as the repository of eternal and presumably transcendental pictorial values. In the immediate foreground a sense of otherworldliness is heightened by a crumpled piece of paper represented in trompe l'oeil illusion, recalling the paper on the cross in Zurbarán's *Crucifixion*.

With his 1958 version of Velázquez's *Infanta*, Dalí was already preparing for the tricentennial of the death of Velázquez in 1960, an event that sparked widespread interest, including an artist's book. The latter paid homage to the earlier artist and included Dalí, who contributed a facsimile of a manuscript text devoted to Velázquez, printed on translucent paper laid down over a reproduction of *Las Meninas*; Dalí's text

began “Velázquez the greatest pictorial genius of all time.”⁴⁸ *The Ecumenical Council*, completed the same year as the celebrations of Velázquez, includes a self-portrait of Dalí holding a palette and brush before a blank canvas on an easel. His head is turned away from the canvas, and he looks out at the viewer. Here the artist is a witness to the apotheosis of Saint Helena and the Trinitarian transformation taking place in the painting’s background, while the canvas is a tabula rasa on which this mystery is being inscribed, announcing Dalí as the author of the painting. Likewise, in *Las Meninas* Velázquez depicts himself with palette and brush in hand. He positions himself behind a canvas, whose surface we do not see, and looks out at us. Presumably he is painting the figures in the foreground of the painting, much as Dalí shows us the model for his painting. Velázquez sports the same fashionable mustache as is found in his portraits of Philip IV, and wears his dark hair long. The king and queen are reflected in the mirror in the background, suggesting that the royal couple are paying a visit to Velázquez in his studio, and thus the painting is arguably concerned with official recognition. We might speculate that, by establishing an identification with Velázquez, Dalí’s self-portrait in *The Ecumenical Council* seeks a similar acknowledgment, and that Dalí stakes his claim as an artist of the same, timeless stature as Velázquez.

From as early as the second decade of the twentieth century, the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset developed a fascination with Velázquez that culminated in a series of four extended and thoughtful essays on the painter that were published as a book in 1963.⁴⁹ Moreover, Ortega’s theoretical ruminations on Velázquez would shape the ideas behind the retrospective exhibition of the artist held in 1960 at the Prado and at the Casón del Buen Retiro, as well as the essay by Enrique Lafuente Ferrari in the accompanying catalogue.⁵⁰ In his earliest essays Ortega noted that Velázquez differed markedly from his contemporaries, and the writer set his art in opposition to El Greco’s representations of dynamic movement, which he considered essentially baroque: “In Velázquez, no one moves; if something can be taken as a gesture, it is always an arrested gesture, frozen, a pose. Velázquez painted the material and power of inertia.”⁵¹ Ortega was interested in what Velázquez’s painting meant for the art of his time, and noted rising literary interest in the baroque, shrewdly observing:

“The Velázquez one speaks about today is not the one seen by the dull eyes of Philip IV, but Manet’s Velázquez, the impressionist Velázquez.”⁵² In a review of *La exposición de artistas Ibéricos*, an important group show of emerging painters held in in 1925 in Madrid, Ortega noted that it was unfair to compare the young painters to the great art of the past, because “past art ‘is’ not art; it ‘was’ art. . . . Velázquez is an archaeological marvel.”⁵³ Significantly, Dalí was one of the young artists included in the exhibition, and later he would set up his painting as a contemporary equivalent to the great art of the past.

Ortega’s later articles on Velázquez sought to understand the artist and his painting within the terms of his specific historical setting. It was “instantaneity” and “arrested movements”—which Ortega likened to the results of photography—that distinguished Velázquez from El Greco and his artistic contemporaries.⁵⁴ Ortega saw Velázquez, along with Cano, Ribera, and Zurbarán, as belonging to the most important generation of Spanish Baroque artists.⁵⁵ At the time, he wrote, there was no conception of Spanish art, and Spain, like France, was on the periphery of Italy and Italian painting.⁵⁶ Though Velázquez visited Italy twice, his experience was overwhelmingly that of the court of Philip IV, where he lived from the time of his appointment in 1623 as painter to the king until his death in 1660.

Velázquez’s principal subjects were the royal family and members of the court, including its buffoons (or jesters) and dwarfs, as depicted in *Portrait of the Buffoon Juan Calabazas, called “Calabacillas”* (ca. 1631–32; Cleveland Museum of of Art). While such figures were part of the standard trapping of European court life, Velázquez made a surprisingly large number of these works, suggesting a particular fondness for or special sympathy with these individuals.⁵⁷ Two dwarfs also appear in *Las Meninas*, and among the most famous of Velázquez’s portraits of dwarfs is *Don Sebastián de Morra* (ca. 1643–44; Museo Nacional del Prado). In Dalí’s three late variations on this same subject (1982; Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí), executed when he was reworking various of Velázquez’s themes, the artist appears to have been meditating on his own artistic mortality.⁵⁸

Ortega tells us that court life gave rise to an emphasis on formalism and style in both literature and painting, but that Velázquez was himself “opposed to the general currents of his time.”⁵⁹ The unfinished nature of his paintings notably went against the taste of the period, which was formed by a new audience for art associated with the court.⁶⁰ Even stranger was his scant production, and tendency to paint only at the king’s request: “He was not a painter, but the servant of his king, whom he served with his brush when he received a command. The result of this internal and external situation was that Velázquez painted very little.”⁶¹ Velázquez painted when he was asked to, and he painted in the manner he wanted to paint: “In his activity as a painter he had craft reduced to a minimum and he could practice painting as a pure artistic operation in that he did not take account of either the public or the taste of the client.”⁶² Exploring the nature of the medium and its artistic and intellectual bases led the artist to a new theme that was none other than the “art of painting” itself.⁶³ Though Velázquez lived at the palace, he remained distant from intrigue and concentrated on “the radical attitude of his artistic conduct.”⁶⁴ The spectral quality of his painting could be attributed to his experimental attempts to render ephemeral immediacy as eternal and, through the repeated execution of portraits, to represent the subject as in the process of appearing as a presence, though the figures “never arrive to be fully established in reality.”⁶⁵

During his long years at the palace, Velázquez’s status gradually increased. An intimate of the king, he was promoted in 1634 to the position of wardrobe assistant, in 1643 to chamber assistant, and in 1646 to official chamber assistant. In 1647, with the title of inspector and administrator, he was given charge of the ambitious redisplay of art and decorations planned for the old Alcazar Palace. Finally in 1659, the year before the artist’s death, the king named Velázquez a Knight of the Order of Santiago.⁶⁶ These biographical facts support Ortega’s innovative conclusion that what Velázquez sought was “to be noble.”⁶⁷ *Las Meninas* was completed in 1656, but in the painting’s self-portrait the artist wears a black costume on which is emblazoned the red cross of Santiago; the cross was only added when the artist was named a knight, and legend has it that it was painted by the hand of the king himself.

Notably, Dalí's frequent declarations about Velázquez, especially during the 1960s, were near paraphrases of Ortega y Gasset's observations. For example, in his interviews with Alain Bosquet in 1966, Dalí emphasized Velázquez's Portuguese origin: "The miraculous thing about Velázquez was his attachment to the Atlantic. His father was Portuguese, and . . . Velázquez brought something that made up for the dryness in Spanish painting, which was condemned to a surplus of rigor. The chief element in Velázquez is a blend of maritime humidity and the disdainful melancholy of Spain. The imperial aspect and the fluid aspect were suddenly joined, forming a distant source for French Impressionism. Without Velázquez and the painters imitating him, and without the Prado Museum, neither Monet nor Manet would have existed."⁶⁸

For Dalí, Velázquez's greatness as a model for modern artists was to be found in this role as an aristocrat among painters. In his *Diary of a Genius*, Dalí proclaimed, "What a force Velázquez represents! He has just emerged after three hundred years as the only truly great painter of history. . . . bigger even than Velázquez is the canvas, his work itself, a giant among kings and princesses. . . . At the tricentennial of his death Picasso, Dalí, the *pompier*s, the abstractionists, the followers of Action Painting, all consider Velázquez the most alive and most modern of painters."⁶⁹ Famously, from around 1948 onward, Dalí espoused the unfashionable position of monarchism. For example, in 1948, Dalí wrote in his treatise *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, "The architecture of the soul of man may be governed only by the absolute monarchy of the solid body of the sphere."⁷⁰ And in 1952 when asked by the Catalan journalist Manuel Del Arco about his ideology, Dalí answered, "Philosophically, the anarchic-monarchy; the symbolic power from up above, protecting the harmony of tendencies that are opposing themselves."⁷¹ Using similarly contradictory language, in 1955 Dalí told the journalist Armand Lanoux that "absolute monarchy guarantees the Dionysian and anarchic tendencies of the individual. For me, the cupola is the symbol of the hereditary principle. It is perfection equally in architecture and in politics."⁷² By the last half of the 1960s, Dalí focused his monarchism in the figure of King Juan Carlos, whom Franco officially designated as heir to the throne in 1969, though he would only be proclaimed king immediately following the death of Franco on November 22, 1975. From the late

1960s onward Dalí would be unwavering in his support of the crown, and in 1982 he painted *"The Prince of Sleep,"* after an official portrait of King Juan Carlos I (1973–79; Palais de la Zarzuela, Madrid). In June 1982 the Spanish State awarded Dalí the Grand Cross of the Order of Charles III, and the following month the king conferred upon him the title of Marqués de Púbol, the culmination of a process initiated in 1975. We can only conclude that if Dalí modeled himself on Velázquez, it was precisely because he, too, wanted to be noble.

Notes

¹ Federico García Lorca, "La imagen poética de don Luis de Góngora," in *Prosa* (Madrid: Alianza, 1969), 110.

² Angel Ganivet, *Idearium Español* (1897), in *Idearium Español; Granada la bella* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1983).

³ "Alma, todo alma son los lienzos de este gran artista. . . . Aquellas prolongaciones tan exageradas que caracterizan sus geniales pinturas, son de un sentimiento y espiritualidad tan grandes que traslada a nuestra imaginación fuera de lo que nos rodea y nos parece hallarnos en una vida celeste sin contrastes pero dulce y tranquila." Salvador Dalí, "Los grandes maestros de la pintura. El Greco," in *Stadium, la revista del jove Dalí* (Figueres: Ediciones Federales, 1989), n.p.

⁴ "El vigor y la energía predominan en los retratos de Velázquez; sus contornos de líneas crudas y agudas dan al principio una impresión honda de brusquedad, que disminuye luego por la profunda y tranquila expresión de sus semblantes. . . . Los retratos de personas de alto linaje, Reyes, nobles, orgullosos, cínico, persuadidos de valor, de ojos centelleantes con ráfagas luminosas y reflejos de odio; de hombres embrutecidos por el vicio o princesas inocentes y mimadas; enanos y bufones llenos de secreta y profunda melancolía; todas estas figuras llenas de fuerza y de vida, nos revelan una España que Velázquez copio—mejor diríamos 'creó,' tomándola de la realidad. . . . La distribución y colocación de los colores, parece en ciertos casos de un 'impresionista'—Velázquez y considerarlo como uno de los grandes, tal vez el mas grande de los artistas españoles y uno de los primeros del mundo." *Ibid.*

⁵ Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death* (London: Penguin, 1987), 327–32; Julián Gállego, *Visión y símbolos en la pintura española del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1996), 201–8; and William Jordan, "TITLE OF ESSAY?," in *Spanish Still Life from Velázquez to Goya*, by Jordan and Peter Cherry, exh. cat. (London: National Gallery Publications, 1995), 21–23.

⁶ Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí, as told to André Parinaud* (New York: Morrow, 1976), 239. "Une grande bataille est engagée entre la nature et moi. Il s'agit de la corriger. La peinture d'une nature morte est une manière de rectifier le réel par la création d'une entropie qui devient évidente à tous. J'éprouve la fascination de la morte. C'est mon sujet. Et une des veines de mon oeuvre est de rendre colloïdal le sentiment de la mort, de l'étirer, de le traire, comme le pis d'une vache, pour en tirer de lait de la résurrection de la chair." Dalí, *Comment on devient Dalí; les aveux inavouables de Salvador Dalí*, ed. André Parinaud (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1973), 294.

⁷ Josep Pla, *Guía de la Costa Brava* (1941; Barcelona: Destino, 1955), 422.

⁸ Salvador Dalí, "Saint Sebastian," trans. Haim Finkelstein, in *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20, 22. "Hi ha una altra manera, encara: una manera entre la inacció i la passió . . . que és una manera d'elegància. Em refereixo a la paciència en l'exquisit agonitzar de sant Sebastià. . . . Sant Sebastià, net de simbolismes, era un fet en la seva única i senzilla presència." Dalí, "Sant Sebastià a F. García Lorca," *L'amic de les arts* (Sitges) 2, no. 16 (July 31, 1927): 52, 53.

⁹ Dalí, "Saint Sebastian" (trans. Finkelstein), 24. "El costat contrari del vidre de multiplicar de Sant Sebastià corresponia a la putrefacció. Tot, a través d'ell, era angoixa, obscuritat i tendresa encara; tendresa, encara, per l'exquisida absència d'esperit i naturalitat." Dalí, "Sant Sebastià a F. García Lorca," 54.

¹⁰ See Eduardo Quesada Dorador and Yolanda Romero Gómez, *Federico García Lorca y Granada*, exh. cat., Centro Cultural Gran Capitán, Granada (Madrid: Fundación Federico García Lorca, 1998), 52–54.

¹¹ Dalí to García Lorca, September, 1926, cited in Rafael Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí escribe a Federico García Lorca, Poesía* (Madrid), nos. 27–28 (1978): 44.

¹² “Te ‘invito’ a mi nuevo tipo de san Sebastián, que consiste en la pura transmutación de La Flecha por el Lenguado. El principio de la elegancia es le que hacía a Sebastián deliciosamente agonizar. . . . Quizá con el nuevo cambio encontraremos otro día la verdadera temperatura fría de las flechas del san Sebastián antiguo.” *Ibid.*, 46. Dalí here engages in wordplay, perhaps suggesting the contrast between a hard arrow (*la flecha*) and the soft fish known as *lenguado*. *Lenguado* also is close in sound to *lengua*, or tongue.

¹³ “¡A ver si resulta que san Sebastián eres tú! Pero por ahora déjame que use su nombre para firmar. Un gran abrazo de tu SAN SEBASTIAN.” *Ibid.*, 48 (original emphasis).

¹⁴ Robert Descharnes and Giles Néret, *Salvador Dalí, 1904–1989: The Paintings* (Cologne: Taschen, 1993), PAGE?, cat. 1589.

¹⁵ Miguel de Unamuno, *The Christ of Velázquez*, trans. Eleanor L. Thurnball (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), 7. First published as *El Cristo de Velázquez. Poema* (Madrid: Calpe, 1920): “Blanco tu cuerpo está como el espejo / del padre de la luz, del sol vivífico; / blanco tu cuerpo al modo de la luna / que muerta ronda en torno de su madre / nuestra cansada vagabunda tierra; / blanco tu cuerpo está como la hostia / del cielo de la noche soberana, / de ese cielo tan negro como el velo / de tu abundosa cabellera negra / de nazareno.”

¹⁶ Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, trans. J. E. Crawford Fritch (1921; New York: Dover, 1954), 70.

¹⁷ Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 22.

¹⁸ Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions*, 241. “Dans la chambre de mes parents . . . se trouvait en majesté la photographie de Salvador, mon frère morte, à côté de la reproduction d’un Christ crucifié peint par Velázquez; et cette image du cadavre du Saveur que Salvador était, sans aucun doute, allé rejoindre dans son ascension angélique conditionnait en moi un archétype.” Dalí, *Comment on devient Dalí*, 296.

¹⁹ Salvador Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942; New York: Dover, 1993), 325–26.

²⁰ Salvador Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 164. “Le Greco possède . . . ce pouvoir unique de rendre orgiaques toutes les saveurs”; Dalí, *Journal d’un génie* (Paris: La Table Rond, 1964), 183.

²¹ Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 19–20. “Il fallut se tourner vers la dignité oxyde d’argent et vert olive de Vélasquez et de Zurbarán, vers le réalisme et le mysticisme que nous découvriions semblables et consubstantiels. Il fallut intégrer la réalité transcendante à un fragment quelconque et fortuit de la réalité pure, tel que l’a réalisé l’impérialisme visuel absolu de Velázquez. Mais cela présuppose déjà la présence incontestée de Dieu que est la seule réalité suprême!” Dalí, *Journal d’un génie*, PAGE?.

²² Robert Lubar, *Dalí: The Salvador Dalí Museum Collection* (Boston: Bullfinch, 2000), 142.

²³ Natalia Shiou-yun Fang, “The Nature of Dalí’s *Le Christ*: Religious or Sacrilegious?” (master’s thesis, Edinburgh University, rev. ca. 2000), 28, 61.

²⁴ As Tàpies later observed, “Certaines oeuvres de Zurbarán m’ont également impressionné, dans le même sens. Le traitement amoureux, avec une lumière ‘métaphysique,’ des aspects les plus simples de la vie. . . . C’est une façon de donner une dimension cosmique à ce qui est petit et quotidien.” Antoni Tàpies, *Mémoire. Autobiographie* (Paris: Galilée, 1981), 252.

²⁵ *Illus.* in Victòria Combalia i Dexeus, ed., *Tàpies. Els anys 80*, exh. cat., Salò del Tinell (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 1988), 24.

²⁶ Dalí, *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 396–97.

²⁷ “Debe llamarse en arte *Clasicismo* la tendencia a la supremacía de las formas que se apoyan, y *Barroquismo*, el culto de las formas que vuelan”; Eugenio d’Ors, *Tres horas en el museo del Prado*, ed. Ángel d’Ors and Alicia García Navarro (Madrid: Tecnos, 2004), 36 (original emphases).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁹ “El barroco es una constante histórica que se vuelve a encontrar en épocas tan recíprocamente lejanas”; *ibid.*, 70.

³⁰ “El estilo barroco puede renacer y traducir la misma inspiración en formas nuevas. . . . En la época del Fin-del-Siglo . . . Guimard, arquitecto de las estaciones del Métro en París, sin plagio . . . continuaba la tradición del naturalismo vegetal.” *Ibid.*, 77.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

³² *Ibid.*, 83.

³³ “La actitud barroca . . . desea fundamentalmente la humillación de la razón”; *ibid.*, 84.

³⁴ “Lo barroco, en que el espíritu imita los procedimientos de la naturaleza, lejos de . . . lo clásico, en que el espíritu imita los procedimientos del espíritu”; *ibid.*, 88.

³⁵ Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, *El espíritu del barroco. Tres interpretaciones* (Barcelona: Apolo, 1940), 11.

- ³⁶ “No hay belleza sin ayuda, ni perfección . . . que no dé en bárbara sin ayuda del artificio”; *ibid.*, 89.
- ³⁷ “Las cosas y los seres tengan una real corporeidad, ya que es precisamente esta dualidad la característica esencial del barroco. (De la misma manera, los pintores superrealistas de hoy ¿no nos sorprenden describiendo sus más descabellados temas soñados con la más minuciosa y analítica de las observaciones?)” *Ibid.*, 121.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.
- ³⁹ José Bergamín, *El disparate en la literatura española*, ed. Nigel Dennis (1936; Seville: Renacimiento, 2005).
- ⁴⁰ Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Una teoría personal del arte. Antología de textos de estética y teoría de arte*, ed. Ana Martínez-Collado (Madrid: Tecnos, 1988), 227–47.
- ⁴¹ “Hay un sentido exultante y ansioso el el barroco, que es el drama de sus formas y que es lo que aspira a poner marco humano y orla a lo humano. . . . En lo verdaderamente barroco está la huella del agarrarse a la materia para escalar la cornisa ideal, el retorcimiento del artista, el deseo de involucrase en el estilo y abrigarse en él y calmar el retortijón espiritual.” *Ibid.*, 227–228.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 229: “Los surrealistas y a su frente el gran pintor español Salvador Dalí, propugnan aquello que se llamó Modern Style en cuyo género alentaba lo cursi.”
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 230–31.
- ⁴⁴ Miguel Utrillo, *Salvador Dalí y sus enemigos* (Barcelona: Maspe, 1952).
- ⁴⁵ Miguel Utrillo, “Dalí en zig.zag,” *Blanco y negro* (Madrid), vol. **LXIX**, no. 2436 (January 10, 1959): n.p.
- ⁴⁶ A. Reynolds Morse, *Salvador Dalí: Catalog of a Collection* (Cleveland: Salvador Dalí Museum, 1972), 190–91.
- ⁴⁷ Dalí, “Excerpt from *Diary of a Genius*,” in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 415.
- ⁴⁸ “Velázquez el genio pictórico mas grande de todos los tiempos”; Salvador Dalí, in *O figura. Homenaje informal a Velázquez* (Barcelona: Sala Gaspar, 1960), PAGE?
- ⁴⁹ José Ortega y Gasset, *Velázquez* (1963; Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1999). Note also that 1963 saw the publication of José López-Rey, *Velázquez: A Catalogue Raisonné of His Oeuvre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963).
- ⁵⁰ *Velázquez y lo Velazqueño. Catalogo de la exposición homenaje a Diego de Silva Velázquez en el III centenario de su muerte, 1660–1960*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Dirección General de Bellas Artes, 1960).
- ⁵¹ “En Velázquez nadie se mueve; si algo puede tomarse por un gesto es siempre un gesto detenido, congelado, una pose. Velázquez pinta la materia y el poder de la inercia”; José Ortega y Gasset, *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos de estetica* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente en Alianza Editorial, 2004), 178.
- ⁵² “El Velázquez de que hoy se habla no es el que veían los ojos sin brío de Felipe IV, sino el Velázquez de Manet, el Velázquez impresionista”; *ibid.*, 148.
- ⁵³ “El arte del pasado no ‘es’ arte; ‘fue’ arte. . . . Velázquez es una maravilla arqueológica.” *Ibid.*, 216–17.
- ⁵⁴ Ortega y Gasset, *Velázquez*, 71.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–41.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.
- ⁵⁸ Descharnes and Néret, *Salvador Dalí*, PAGES?, cats. 1561–64.
- ⁵⁹ “Se oponga a las corrientes generales de su tiempo”; Ortega y Gasset, *Velázquez*, 147.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 87–89, 156–57, 162–63.
- ⁶¹ “Él no es un pintor, sino un servidor de su rey, al cual sirve con su pincel cuando recibe orden de hacerlo”; *ibid.*, 196.
- ⁶² “En su actividad de pintor había quedado reducida al mínimo la parte de oficio y pudo ejercitar la pintura como pura operación de arte en que no se tiene en cuenta al público ni a los gustos del cliente, sino que se atacan siempre nuevos problemas de técnica”; *ibid.* 196–97.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 197.
- ⁶⁴ “La actitud radical de su conducta artística”; *ibid.*, 198.
- ⁶⁵ “Nunca llegan a instalarse plenamente en la realidad”; *ibid.*, 202–3.
- ⁶⁶ Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, and Julián Gallego, *Velázquez*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1990).
- ⁶⁷ “Velázquez lo que quiere es ser noble”; Ortega y Gasset, *Velázquez*, 179.
- ⁶⁸ Salvador Dalí quoted in Alain Bosquet, *Conversations with Dalí*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Dutton, 1969), 49. “Le miracle de Velasquez, c’est son attachement à L’Atlantique. Or son père était Portugais, et il a apporté . . . quelque chose qui compensait la sécheresse de la peinture espagnole, condamnée à trop de rigueur. L’élément capital que révèle Velasquez, c’est cette humidité maritime mêlée à la dédaigneuse mélancolie espagnole. Le côté impérial et le côté fluide se trouvaient soudain conjugués, et servent de source lointaine aux

impressionnistes français. Sans Velasquez, et les peintres qui l'ont imité, comme sans le musée du Prado, ni Monet ni Manet n'auraient existé." Dalí quoted in Bosquet, *Entretiens avec Salvador Dalí* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1966), 73. For a similar observation by Ortega y Gasset see n. 52 above.

⁶⁹ Dalí, "Excerpt from *Diary of a Genius*," in *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 415–17. Note that this text does not appear in the published version of *Diary of a Genius*.

⁷⁰ Salvador Dalí, *50 Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship*, trans. Haakon Chevalier (New York: Dial, 1948), 169.

⁷¹ Manuel Del Arco, *Dalí in the Nude (Dalí al desnudo)*, trans. Antonio Cruz and Jon Berle (St. Petersburg: The Salvador Dalí Museum, 1984), 99. "Filosóficamente, la monarquía anárquica; el poder simbólico arriba, que protege la armonía de las tendencias que resultan contrarias entre sí"; Del Arco, *Dalí al desnudo* (Barcelona: José Janés, 1952), 85.

⁷² Dalí quoted in Armand Lanoux, "Rencontre avec Dalí," *La revue de Paris* (Paris), June 1955, trans. and repr. in Ricard Mas, *La vida pública de Salvador Dalí. A través de sus mejores entrevistas* (Barcelona: Parsifal, 2004), 123: "La monarquía absoluta garantiza las tendencias dionisiacas y anárquicas. Para mí, la cúpula es el símbolo del principio hereditario. Es la perfección tanto en arquitectura como en política."