



## Introduction

*Dalí as Writer*

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A symposium focused on Dalí's literary creations as literature—that is, writing as writing and not more narrowly as linguistic entry into the biography or the plastic work—had not been held previously. Participants were encouraged to explore individual writings of Dalí or the body as a whole, and to consider formal and stylistic elements, literary antecedents, the historical cultural context, and the place of the writing in Dalí's oeuvre.

If it were productive to approach Dalí's writing as literature, then what kind of literary production did he create? And further, what did Dalí intend his writing to be? His remark that he would be better remembered as a writer than a painter is provocative. Yet contrary to his own prediction, he remains better known as a painter. One asks, how did writing function in relation to his other work? The essays published in this journal address these and other topics critical to a fundamental understanding of his literary work.

Dalí created a great volume of writing – the Planeta collected writings consists of over five thousand pages. He wrote in multiple languages: Spanish, Catalan, and French. Enric Bou calls him “a writer without a language,” meaning his writing is not rooted in a single linguistic system. Further, he wrote in multiple genres: letters, reveries, reviews, treatises, essays, manifestos, opera librettos, poems, poetic titles to works of art, screenplays, a novel, and an autobiography. Dawn Adès notes that although Dalí was fascinated with writing for its visual appearance, spoken quality, malleability, yet no medium was essential to him. Rather his ideas were essential and the project to advance an idea was allowed to inhabit whatever medium Dalí chose.

## Declarations

In his early years, Dalí wrote about the writing he admired. His correspondence with Garcia Lorca provides evolving declarations about his esthetic literary goals. In his essay, Christopher Maurer cites Dalí's epistolary praise of Lorca for getting beyond “mere sensation,” and achieving “comprehension, abstraction and anti- putrefaction.” Dalí embraced what Lorca called the “poetic fact.” Lorca's embrace of the seventeenth century writer Luis de Gongora provides a triangulating point in establishing for Dalí a relation to the Baroque as literary model, according to Jeffett. Dalí's encomium to the

acanthus leaf, “the tradition of esthetic intelligence,” toward the conclusion of *The Secret Life* proceeds grammatically as a cascading of appositives celebrating the “eternal baroque.”

The letters between Lorca and Dalí are mined by Maurer for further indications of Dalí’s approach to an arithmetic, mechanical truth, and how that search for a writing free of impression and sentiment lead to a stylistic deployment of “lo que hay”, that which is, an enumeration of objects and images uncoupled from a binding syntax or sentiment. In this quest the montage of film provided an exemplary model. Maurer points to the similarity of Dalí’s objective to animation, an art that fascinated Dalí, a cinematic appearance and disappearance of image.

### Literary Structure and New Meanings

That there is a performative aspect to Dalí’s writing is observed by several scholars in this symposium. Bou writes that Dalí’s is a kind of literature in which the oral aspects dominate: “one has to read it out loud in order to understand it.” Beyond the clarifying aspect of the recitation of the writing, its vocalization reveals a poetic structure that operates through rhyme and onomatopoeic qualities.

The handwritten manuscripts for the two versions of his text on Millet’s *Angelus* in the Centre d’Estudis Dalínians are examined by Adès. She finds they embody dissimilar methods: one rewritten multiple times and the other written out without revision. Yet they are both distinct from the automatism espoused by Breton and they constitute a rejection of that method. Adès observes that the term “critical” in his “paranoiac-critical method” separates it from dream and delirium which are hermetic.

Questions of the relation of Dalí’s written text to the published text abound. Depending on the language a published text may be a translation of a translation. Further, the intimate artistic relations in Dalí’s life with Gala and the Surrealists are reflected in the adaptation and editing of his texts. Gala, André Breton, his French adaptor Michel Déon, and his translator Haakon Chevalier, each had a hand in finalizing his texts. Chevalier characterizes his manuscripts as illegible, without punctuation, and his spelling deliriously fanciful. Frédérique Joseph-Lowery observes that given the distance between manuscript and published texts, the latter are a simulacra of his original. She offers that the texts in Dalí’s hand, an orthography that mixes genders and swallows syllables, if regarded from the side in the manner of observing an anamorphic image, indeed construct multiple meanings. Double entendres add to the lack of textual fixity. To Joseph-Lowery this plurality of sense constitutes a poesis, a theory of writing.

In her consideration of Dalí’s *The Tragic Myth of Millet’s ‘Angelus,’* a work Adès considers an autonomous creation of the scale of major surrealist creations, addresses Dalí’s literary figures, as well. She traces the logic of Dalí’s rejection of metaphor, which suppresses the links that simile makes manifest, yet which privileges one item

over another. Links, be they lexical, poetic, psychological, situational, are everywhere. Theoretically, Dalí found the suppression of metaphor to allow those links to emerge, and like collage, to create new meanings. Adès cites structural similarities in the *Tragic Myth* to Freud's psychological case histories. Breton and Éluard's *Immaculate Conception*, as well as other works probing extraordinary states of mind, provide possible formal references for this work.

The problem of meaning is posed by both the suppression of syntactical order and by the rejection of metaphor. Without declaration or analogy, how is meaning created?

Juan Jose Lahuerta provides a minute tracing of the parallel narratives in Dalí's *Reverie* that was published in *Le Surrealisme au Service de la Revolution* in 1931. He notes that the reverie is understood by Dalí as a kind of guided dream, as opposed to the dream narratives of other Surrealists. Dalí's commitment to objective facts, a tenet of other Surrealist writing, as well, prompt him to account in detail the writing's time and place. The time of reverie and of writing converge. Dalí's physical activities, minute and intimate, guide the activities staged in the reverie in an expanding architectural space. The association of the imagination and the body can perhaps be read as a kind of allegory.

Lahuerta refers to Dalí's use of the descriptive term "project" to describe his undertaking. In the case of *Reverie*, Dalí notes that the project was the initial concept and the reverie the form it took. Lahuerta suggests that Dalí's *Reverie* is a treatise on painting, and an ekphrasis of his own work. As source, Lahuerta cites the libertine novels of the eighteenth-century school of love genre combining architectural or artistic treatises with sexual initiation in a conflation of space and desire. Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* shares similarities of narrational persona. . Lahuerta finds that *Reverie*, in part a treatise on painting, embodies some of the intention of Dalí's "Surrealistic Painting through the Years," a project he mentioned frequently but never completed. These structural resonances suggest that his writing served as an important component of Dalí's projects, addressing his own painting and sensibilities, and placing him in relation to a historical practice that, if not classical, was at least inchoate.

### Writing and The Greater Project

The absorption in the myth of the Angelus brought about by the completion of the book, *The Tragic Myth of Millet's Angelus*, inspired the paintings *Portrait of My Dead Brother* 1963, and *Perpignan Station* 1965, Adès writes. In addition, Fèlix Fanés describes *The Secret Life* as an autonomous text, one not related to a work of plastic art, and further a work that may be thought to provide a way forward for Dalí at a time of crisis. He explores the impact of the abject tragedy of the age, the reshaping of narrative through autobiography, and the inversion of autobiography from the depiction of great actions into reverie and intimate detail. Enric Bou describes Dalí's writing as a weapon of confession in which he locates himself.

The view that writing provided Dalí a tool to reposition his theoretical stance and set a new course for action is shared by Joseph-Lowery, Fanés, and Bou. In “God and the Atom,” Michael R. Taylor recounts the publication and theoretical position of Dalí’s nuclear mysticism. He describes the conceptual terms of the “Mystical Manifesto” (1951) and the manner in which it positioned Dalí to break from qualities of modernism he distrusted while it positioned his painting as a wholly new approach to the mysteries of life.

This publication is meant to instigate further discussion and scholarship. Much work remains to be done in order to more precisely locate Dalí’s writing in his realm and in our own evolving literary and artistic landscape. Yet these authors establish Dalí’s writing as an autonomous creation, whole in itself. This self-sufficiency of text allows us see Dalí’s art as a project apart from any one genre or medium. That project, the generative Dalí, looms above all its parts.