



**Dalí does not write what he paints:  
Reading with a magnifying glass.**

*By Frédérique Joseph-Lowery*

*Palabra secreta* in New York. New York is a meaningful city for Salvador Dalí. Living and writing in New York was the beginning of a new life : a life without André Breton who in Dalí's French past corrected his texts. I am not sure it is a secret, but it is a fact that is insufficiently known. Breton's copy of *Le temps passé's* manuscript (1933) (legible on the website of the Atelier d'André Breton<sup>1</sup>) gives an idea of Breton's heavy hand on Dalí. The comments presented by the Scientific Committee of the Atelier are revealing of the denial of authorship for Salvador Dalí:

Dalí knows his classics. In this 1933 text, which could be signed by André Breton, one recognizes Breton's style and writing. It is without doubt the result of a collaborative writing that recalls the text that Trotsky wrote with Breton some years later, but which he did not sign, leaving this authorship to Rivera. The Hegelian notion of « *hasard objectif* », a leit-motif of Breton's writings at the time, proves the important part that the poet Breton played in the writing of « *Le Temps passé* ». *Only the list of painters at the end of the text is a sure sign of Dalí's input and culture: Boecklin, Millet, Vermeer et Meissonier are not artists favored by Breton. Likewise, the revival of the anecdote, a clear Dalinian provocation, did not come naturally to Breton's pen* ». [My translation. My emphasis]

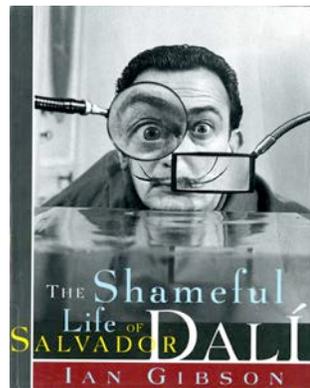
The examination of the manuscript for the article *Premières lois morphologiques sur les poils dans les structures molles*<sup>2</sup>, published in *Minotaure* in 1936, contains long blanks which Dalí left the founder of surrealism to fill in, as well as edit the text<sup>3</sup>. Dalí wrote to his publisher A. Skira:

*Cher Eskira voala l'article que Edward me demande de votre part, tres tres court et sensationel avec des illustrations des fames a BARBE  
Doner le a bien corrige a Breton  
Ne le perdez pas sa sere dramatique  
Ge conserve pas de copie uniquement de notes* [My emphasis]

Dalí did not even keep a copy of this text.

In New York, things changed: Gala took over. And then after her death, myself, when I decided, with the assistance of the Gala-Salvador Dalí Foundation to break the secret that had been kept for more than sixty years. My way of breaking the secret was to classify and transcribe, without any corrections, the 1700 pages of *The Secret life of Salvador Dalí* originally written by Dalí, drafts included.

The unknown subtitle of the text is *Am I a genius? His spelling suis-je un jeni?* reveals that if he is, he is one who cannot spell, which is precisely what I propose to consider. I shall read three known motifs by Dalí (the grasshopper, the crutch and the



wax mannequin) with a critical magnifying glass [ill.1]

focusing on the so-called “spelling mistakes”. In doing so, my intention is double. Not only do I want to break the secret that has obscured Dalí’s text but I also want to break the habit of art historians who usually assume there is a natural redundancy between what the artist writes and what he paints. I will take the approach of the art historian to the point of excess, in order to show which critical gesture is indispensable if one wants to develop a reflection on both Dalí’s written and painted work.

### 1. The grasshopper/the mouth

The grasshopper is commonly read as an evidence of Dalí’s phobia, which I interpret in the light of the surrealist desire to mimic hysteria and other symptoms that Freud conceptualized. In his text (chapter 6<sup>4</sup>) Dalí is able to clearly explain the fear

caused by the insect, in a way that recalls the figure of the praying mantis, because of the suspended time that precedes its attack, « leur longue attente contenue ».

*elles s'auten dispares de toute l'inconscience explosive de leur longue atente contenu, ~~et ce geten n'inporte au, sur vous!~~ come si tout a coub le resort de leur capacite de soufrance venait de ce ~~cassai~~ /rompre/ elles se getait /s'autan/ n'inporte ou ! Sur vous ! [ms. 766, p.311]*

The unbearable feeling of expectation dramatizes the jump of the *sauterelle* which in French is purely one that *hops* (*sauter*). The English adds the ground (grass) from which the insect hops. The French focuses on the action only, completed in the text by a sense of temporal suspension. Furthermore, in his manuscript Dalí systematically truncates the word *sauterelle* and writes *sautere* instead. His term sounds as the preterit of the verb *sauter* (*sautèrent*), and puts further emphasis on the act and the instant of its performance. This is particularly important because it characterizes the experience of trauma, in which a subject is thrown out of himself and is temporarily absent (hence without a memory of the very experience).

The characteristic motion at stake is exemplified in other passages that show the young Dalí making high dangerous jumps. Not only does the grasshopper have a precedent in *The Mythe tragique de l'Angelus de Millet*, it is also active with roles of opposite genders in the painter's autobiography. Dali (the man) responds to Gala's desire to be murdered by her lover (instead of the female devouring her male) by asking him to push her in the void, a fantasy that Dali had rehearsed with his Dullita. He wanted to throw she who bears almost his name as a child (Dullita/Dalito) by pushing her from the top of the Moulin de la Tour in a mortal jump. Dalí's Gradiva "who goes forward", does so until she falls in emptiness<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, the springing trait of the grasshopper belongs to an economy of jumps, to a chain of jumps which gives to the book (the plot and the personality of its characters) its structure. Because the « sauteres » is part of a system, (whose chain of jumps recalls Saussure's chain of signifiers), the grasshopper has the ability to make the text jump. The textual linearity is indeed broken by an onomatopoeic sequence that ruptures the sentence: hi hi iiiii! The oral quality of the text is very perceptible in the

handwriting (Ms 766, p.310), and it echoes for us Dalí's voice (very noticeable in many of his interviews). His way of speaking, often declamatory, especially when he closes his interviews with the lyrical declaration of his « genetic code », recalls a certain Artaud. The French writer also created by drawing upon his madness and had worked on his breath in order to find a voice for his *théâtre de la cruauté*. Dalí has written without any ambiguity that the grasshoppers which were thrown at him by his schoolmates were an example of *cruelty* exerted against him. In Bataillon terms he spoke of sacrifice and also pointed out the “*martiriologie lent ~~au quels le soumetten~~ et acharne/ des enfants*”:

*ge fuis vigtime de la cruete la plus rafinaï de tous mes camarades, qui ne pensai qu'a ~~trouve~~ pouvoir atrape une sauterelle pour me faire courir et come ge courrai !, come un fou, /veritable posede par tous les demons/ me jachape rarement au sacrifice, la sauterelle venai /a/ tombe sur moi a demi morte, ideusse ! parfoi cete en obrant mon libre que ge la trouve la ! ecrase ! beigne dans un joe jAune sa l'ourde tete de cheval separe du corps, les pates encore remuantes iiiiii ! elle etai encore capable de saute, sur moi dans cet etala !, [ms 765]*

Another jumping element of this passage is that Dalí hops from one species (insect) to another: the horse. In other words, his text is mimicking the horse, is literally neighing. Dalí's voice is molded after the animal's sound. It's how the affect makes an imprint on him, in the very telling of the experience in a way that is also visible in the syntax, not only on a phonetic level. The anxiety caused by the experience puts him in a state that he writes: *etala*, instead of *cet etat-là* (“that state”). By doing so he reconstructs in language the beheaded insect through a textual apparition: not only a grasshopper reconnected to its head as a horse, but a word that, when naming the state of the chimera, sounds like one strong horse among all: an *étalon*. *Un étalon qui s'étale sur lui*, one strong clearly sexual stallion which jumps and lays on him. The *etalon*, used for the reproduction of the race, overcomes its beheading in language in the band-aid word: *etala*. On the opposite, in exact symmetry with this mending, the French *sauterelle*, in Dalí's spelling, is deprived of her textual femininity, the feminine suffix *-elle*. Dalí also writes the ambiguous *sauteur-elle* (*sauteur* is the masculine, opposed to *sauteuse*). The sacrifice that is taking place in the text itself has to do with gender, as can be seen later in the passage.

The remedy that Dalí found as a little boy for preventing his classmates from torturing him and throwing grasshoppers at him was a simulacra of the phobic object: a *sautere* made of white folded paper that he called *un gran coc blanc* (a white rooster) [ms. 769]. Gala, his wife, and all adaptators and translators, have “corrected” Dalí’s choice of word and reestablished what he was purposely avoiding to say: a *cocotte blanche*. In the American edition of the book, one will even find that Dalí went so far in his simulation as to include a little dictionary *vignette* of a *cocotte*<sup>6</sup>. In reality, he had reasons to avoid this term: in the French vocabulary of the nineteenth century *cocotte* is the designation of a prostitute. An alternate term is: *une poule* (a hen). By his choice, Dalí was instead pointing to an animal that is a strong male figure, an image of a man bragging of his masculinity, as well as an animal that is known to be able to run, even after its head is cut.

Taking at bay the prostitute and all that Dalí feared (venereal diseases attached to her, according to the biographical legend or the *roman familial*), the author was identifying what was jumping at him as masculine in nature, and deeply sexual. Not only because all phobias are sexual, according to Freud, but because the verb on which Dalí puts so much emphasis, *sauter*, is the most French common word to say: *to fuck*. One can wonder if he had the word *cock* in mind, as a connoisseur of erotica.

What is crucial in this analysis is not so much the sexual orientation of the writer which can easily be interpreted, but the importance of the idiom for the significance of the *sautere*. It plays the same role in painting as the pictorial medium. It is where the comparison between painting and writing is fruitful, beyond elaboration of iconographic motifs.

One could always argue against my interpretation (based on a series of Dalí’s spelling mistakes that are semantically in agreement) that his writings are accidental, that there was no willingness on his part to speak of a rooster, for example. I don’t even need to call attention to the argument of the unconscious which inhabits Dalí’s language and imaginary (as conceptualized by Lacan). The ending of the passage speaks for itself. The grasshopper sucks Dalí’s neck as would a vampire, who, we all know, fears the sunrise which the rooster announces. In this logic, the *coq* (and not a *cocotte*) is the best shield

against a “*sautere*”. That image also expresses the core of Dalí’s fear: to be *sucked* (as expressed in many pages of his autobiography). Sucked by a male, in this page, by all of the classmates, or elsewhere by Butchaques, the little boyfriend of *Dalí’s secret life*, long before Garcia Lorca entered into Dalí’s libidinal field. Here again, my point is not biographical: similarly as the text jumps<sup>7</sup>, some words are sucked up: the *sauteres* is a *sauterelle* whose final syllable is swallowed up, as the *coq* is a *coc(otte)* who lost her semantic tail...

Dalí’s writing process relies on constant erasures of disturbing erotic component. The deconstruction that is always at work in the medium of language is not abstract nor intellectual. The sucking of a caramel, or the exchange of an ice cub (depending on which draft is read) between Dali and his little girlfriend is one of the strongest scenes of the *Secret Life*. The sucking/suck mouth in many canvasses is the mouth of Dalí as a writer.

## 2. The crutch/the hand

I have established a connection between the Dalinian *sauteres* and the body part of the mouth. The second element I propose to trace, the crutch, is explicitly connected to Dalí’s hand. In the paintings, the crutches are often supportive of elongated members and soft structures and are almost always referred to by critics in relation to the castration complex. Is it probably to destroy this interpretation that Dalí connected the motif of the crutch with that of a lizard which does not lack for tails, since it had too many for a reptile<sup>8</sup>. The lizard of the *Secret Life* has indeed two tails which brought to Dalí’s mind the shape of the crutch, also called “the myth of bifurcation”. The common point with the paintings is that Dalí insists that the shape of the crutch occurs in the soft flesh of a reptile:

*le monstre de mon jardin ceologique [zoologique ← Gala] etai constitue par un lezard qui avai deux queux, lune tres longue et normale, et l’autre plus petite, ~~cete~~ /se mite de la/ vifurcation me paraisait tres /baucub plus/ enigmatique, ~~mai jamais d~~ ayant lieu sur un etre vivant et mou [...]*<sup>9</sup>

The puzzling aspect of the crutch is that a soft unformed body can have a shape, a structure. At the same time however, that which in the canvasses is shown as supportive cannot be intellectually grasped: it resists any attempt to be seized. Here is the immediate passage that follows<sup>10</sup>:

*car la forme vifurque, m'avait déjà obsédé bien auparavant, en effet chaque fois que l'azard me ~~pe~~ place en présence d'un beau exemplaire de bifurcation généralement offert par la tige d'un ~~arbre~~ ~~ar~~ ou les branches d'un arbre, mon esprit reste en suspens,*

One notices the same experience of suspension as with the confrontation of the *sautere*. The suspended mind of Dalí is presented as failing:

*mon esprit reste en suspens, ~~et~~ et comme paralysé par une suite d'idées difices de lier ensemble et les quelles ~~me~~ n'arrivait jamais à pouvoir cristalliser d'ans aucune sorte de solution même poétiquement provisoire, qui voulais bien dire ce problème de la ligne vifurcail et surtout de l'objet bifurcail, il y avait dans ce problème quelque chose de très pratique et que je ne pouvais pas saisir quelque chose qui servirait en somme ~~comme~~ pour la vie et au même temps pour la mort, pour pousser et pour appuyer : arme et défense entreinte et caressée, seu qui tien ~~et~~ et tenu au même temps par le contenu ! Qui sait, qui sait ! [my emphasis]*

The repetition that ends the paragraph explicitly shows that Dalí's capacity to think is put into question. It is through a tactile experience that Dalí temporarily solves the enigma, namely in caressing that which he cannot intellectually seize:

*et je caresse méditatif, ~~le~~ de mon doigt, là au milieu ~~la~~ ~~u~~ ~~les~~ ~~deux~~ ~~queux~~ ~~du~~ la queue du lézard se vifurqu'ait en deux directions différentes l'esant entre elles se vide que seule la folie /propre/ à mon /imagination/ ~~ser~~ ~~devai~~ serai capable, peut-être un jour de ~~conblai~~ venir conblai*

The imagination (versus intellectual thinking) that Dalí brings to the rescue is immediately put into practice in the text, since Dalí doubles the already abnormal doubled tail of the lizard by now focusing on his open hand.

*je regardai ma main avec les doigts ouverts et les quatre bifurcations de ceux-ci se perdait dans la prolongation /imaginaire et/ infini de mes doigts qui partant vers la mort, ils ne pourrai jamais plus se rencontrer, mais qui sait ? et la résurrection de la chère ? /tout à coup je constate que/ ~~le~~ ~~soleil~~ ~~était~~ ~~déjà~~ /que l'après-midi toiche à sa fin/ [My emphasis]*

In fact the imaginary operation consists not only of replacing a lizard by a hand, it magnifies the operation of multiplication that the lizard embodies and which also takes place in the changing spelling of the word which articulates an internal rhyme: *lesar* rhymes in his text with *l'asar* and *Lazare*<sup>11</sup>. Once again it is not so much the nature of the visual motif that matters, as it is the process that is being performed. At the origin of the abnormality that propels a kind of linguistic anamorphosis, is a duplicity that goes beyond control, since the very gesture which his failing thought was delegating to the hand (by a caress) precisely shows a hand that, being open, does not grasp anything but instead throws the painter in an abyss of void.

One can also wonder if the multiplying versions of the *Secret Life*, through adaptation (French text of Michel Déon), translation (American text by h. Chevalier), translation of translation (Spanish text) are a result of that process.

It is at the twilight, when perception become dubious ( *crepuscule* conveys the meaning of doubt, based on the Latin *crepus*) - that Dalí finally communicates the feeling of a successful grasp. He is very Cartesian in this respect. The only tangible element is temporal: "*l'après-midi touchait a sa fin*", which means: the afternoon was ending, but ending in a way, literally, in which it was touching its own end, as Dali was touching his finitude in his effort to grasp and make sense of the enigma offered to his eyes by his hand<sup>12</sup>. The closing of the paragraph is thus gathering the text in a way that neither the mind nor the mortal hand could. At that moment only, in the timing of this sentence and what this sentence means in the way it is written, is Dalí's creative hand manifest.

This sentence, as banal as the famous prosaic "*La marquise sortit à cinq heures*" gives an idea of Dalí's literary talent. The spelling of his sentence can be wrong, his syntax can be simple, but it does not matter. Dalí writes at a time that has recognized that a painter does not have to draw perfectly to be a great artist. One who can suggest such a deep philosophical meaning in such an apparently simple way is incontestably a writer. The power of his sentence also relies in its resonance with the rest of the text, and more particularly through its structure, capital in Dalí's aesthetics: the ending of the paragraph is subjected to the process of duplication. The common expression

“*toucher à sa fin*”, which Dalí so beautifully and intelligently revived, is repeated in a variation in which Dalí uses one of his long lyrical metaphors, rhetorically written as a period:

*~~pret a se couche~~ : /dans l'apoteosse des lueurs saginolentes/ ces genres de meditations filosofiques avait en efet comme vertu prencipalle, celle de devore le temps tout en l'aisant d'ans ~~L'ame~~ le fond de la bouteille vide de celui ci se ~~depot tan lit~~ lie rojatre, epais et odorant du vin rouge /et/ apre du soleill couchan, cuche de soleill, heure de courir au potage !*

In other words, the syntax of “*l'après-midi touchait à sa fin*” mirrors the little tail, whereas the long lyrical paragraph lets us comprehend the long tail. Dalí is of course aware of his stylistic gesture. Why would he otherwise compare the sun to a drunkard, one who sees double? Or make fun of a French literary tradition which from Rabelais to Rimbaud and Baudelaire has related creation to intoxication? Rabelais spoke of his book as a divine bottle, as did Dalí at the beginning of his autobiography.

Contrary to what takes place in the text, none of Dalí's painted crutches go *in hand* with double images. What the crutches are usually pointing out in his canvasses are excrescences, excesses in size but not in number. Furthermore, crutches are supportive, whereas in the text this very function fails entirely.

If one would persist in comparing Dalí's painting and writings in order to find a common ground of interests or of representation, it is not the crutches for which one should look, but the representation of the hand in his paintings, or more exactly for a scene in which, like in the text, a hand is looked at. This leads to the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* which precedes by four years the passage of the *Secret life*. In this work the hand acts as a metonymic representation of the ego. This painting stages a scene in which a hand was subjected to a reflection; both visual and psychological, given the status of the double image. The duplicity at work with the crutch is obviously present. The Dalinian typical double image, also called paranoiac-critic is explained in a much simpler way when Dalí speaks of the “myth of bifurcation”<sup>13</sup>.

The meditation on the closed hand (versus the opened one) also conveys a philosophical dimension since the configuration of our hand is an index of our

reflexivity. Freud reminded us that our hand is (along with our standing position) a trait of our humanity. Thanks to our opposing thumb all of our fingers can touch each other and join, which is precisely what the hand presented in the text cannot accomplish since Dalí focuses on the space that separates the fingers. When in his painting Dalí turns himself to his hand again, he focuses on his vanity, and the impossibility to grasp oneself (narcissism) more than on his finitude. On a structural level, what the page and the canvas show in common is that the subject is confronted to an internal division that produces a series of replicas (a hand and a body in the case of the canvas) and that is represented in the canvas by a crack. The hand of the canvas shows a fissure which in French is reminiscent of the lizard through the feminine *lézarde* (a crack). *Une main lézardée* is literally the cracked hand that we see in Dalí's canvas, and that in the text was a set of fingers dividing themselves in infinity.

The topic of resurrection that then follows in the text on the opened hand puts emphasis more on metaphysical issues than narcissistic preoccupations. However traditionally, the question of death inhabits both meditations. Critics have hastened to apply the theory of the mirror stage to interpret the painting by naively thinking that the sole mirror was the represented lake. That lake functions for the critic as a "miroir aux alouettes", a lure that hides the powerful mirror effect which is taking place between the text and the painting; and it is why the opposing closed/opened hand is meaningful of the negative/positive representation of one same issue. Part of the difficulty of identifying the mirror is that the text and the painting do not function in a confrontation, face to face. One who has visited the French Dalí museum in Paris, in Montmartre, knows that the anamorphosis that Dalí favors are those which use a cylindrical mirror to produce a straight image. In other words, the text, which in my "point of view" is the equivalent of the distorted image, wraps the mirror and "makes sense" in a way once we see the painting with its illusionary mirror scene of Narcissus. The real subject however is the lezard, the crack of the hand, the internal division that not only splits the double image but also the subject who speaks in his writings.

The text also functions independently of the image and is close to an oblique anamorphosis, the kind of images called *vexierbild* that deliver their *secret* image if

viewed from the side. One can pretend as many readers who have seen Dalí's manuscripts that his writings do not make sense, that their spelling is so confused that they are illegible. My contention is that one has to look and read *de travers* (which also means against the grain), but close to the text, as one would with a painting of this sort. A new latent meaning then appears that links together (through irregular spelling) the *lezar, l'asar, lazare*<sup>14</sup>. This again might seem pure fantasy and delirium on my part, except if I mention that I am not the only to have seen this chain in Jensen. Hélène Cixous, in her *Third Body*<sup>15</sup>, chose exactly the same path as Dalí in her oniric-critical essay. It is not by chance that Dalí's text meets a deconstructive reading, since his writing process is precisely of this nature.

The numerous fissures that Dalí inflicts on language are those of a tremendous earthquake which affects spelling on a radical level, and more than Cixous did in a few pages when the z of her lizard deformed many words of her page. Dalí's violence goes beyond simple puns (or linguistic incompetence). It is a *Poiesis*.

### 3. The wax mannequin/ the body.

The third "motif" of my analysis is that of the mannequin. At the exact center of his autobiography, Dalí placed a passage *charnière* called *The wax mannequin tale* (chapter 9), a Catalan story allegedly told by his nurse. At first sight it seems that there is a correlation between Dalí as a writer and Dalí as the surrealist artist who placed a mannequin wearing a manuscript for a cape in the 1938 *Rue Surréaliste*, and another two in the *Taxi pluvieux*. Even in the sense that the passage of the text conveys a certain idea of artificiality. This seems to have been written before 1941, and belongs to the kind of theoretical texts in which Dalí would demonstrate his notion of "*Objet à fonctionnement symbolique*"<sup>16</sup>. Dalí's wax mannequin in the book seems indeed to show how by putting the mannequin in motion (namely decapitating it), one (the king who is the hero of the tale) would be healed of his necrophagic and murderous compulsion. A

slight difference distinguishes the text from the articles of the surrealist period. Dalí insists on saying that the interpretation that he proposes will not be scientific (psychoanalytical) but “poetic”. The effort of a theoretical reflection fails, and necessitates more than nine drafts which are very challenging to decipher. No other text has needed so many rewritings in the autobiography. One could argue that it is quite logical since Breton was no longer there.

In the poetic aspect lies the success. That the text seems to be added to the autobiography, in a kind of *collage*, is deliberate<sup>17</sup>: it makes it performative. By noticing the artificiality of the passage, we repeat as a reader the gesture of the king whose healing occurs at the exact moment that the nose of the mannequin, made in a different medium (as we shall learn afterwards), *jumps* and enters into the mouth of the king. The mechanism of the object, its incidental *dé-collage* (loose nose so often painted as deliquescent) accomplishes a psychic operation of enlightenment equivalent to our own discovery of the text. The “breaking news” of the broken nose for the reader is that it was made of sugar, not of wax, a medium favored by surrealists<sup>18</sup> and on which Dalí insists when writing the word *siren* (to whom the female mannequin is compared) as *ciren* (*cire* is *wax* in French). Dalí had kept that part secret. He deprived his reader of this information in the beginning of his text. As a result, the jumping of the nose of the *out-come* (*dé-collage*) becomes a grotesque *mise-en-scène* of the delivery of a secret, a dramatic *coup de théâtre* (theatrical blow) that redirects the blow of the sword against the woman onto the king himself. The jumping nose informs us in the same way a *lapsus* does by surprisingly *jumping* out of our mouth; (and is also attached to therapeutic effects in analysis).

At the moment that the *lapsus* is revealed in the text, the king is notified that the woman he thought he had killed had a better taste (sweet) than that of the corpse so much anticipated with desire, the man becomes aware that it is a simulacra with whom he spent the night, not a “real woman”. In other words, in Dalí’s philosophy, a simulacra is the vehicle of truth.

The morale of the tale is that men should not put wax in their ears and, contrary to Ulysses and his companions, should be able to listen to the songs of the *cirens*, the

real women of reality (as we should be able to read Dalí's original text without looking for muffled versions). It goes without saying that in this statement Dali is severing himself from Surrealism and the notion of *Amour fou*, legible in his *Secret life* when Gradiva-Dullita becomes a real woman: Gala.

On a more general level one could argue that mourning surrealism as a whole is Dalí's theoretical attempt throughout the *Secret Life*; speaking of surrealism he wrote: "*fini fini fini fini fini ce qui est fini*". One could assume that it could be the function of this passage. If it were indeed an example of a "*objet symbolique*", would not the passage itself function as such for the economy of the whole book?

In my critical apparatus of the *Secret life*, I suggested that the sugar nose of the *ciren* is very comparable to the Lacanian *objet petit a*, with which a child acquires a sense of self and autonomy, and learns to sever himself from his mother. In order to be able to be attached to her, instead of in osmosis with her, he needs to practice his detachment from her (embodied in the nose<sup>19</sup>, a strategic place of many soft self-portraits) in a playful rehearsal. Winnicott has demonstrated how essential this phase is in the understanding of the artistic practice. My contention is that the mannequin (a doll) acts in Dali's relation to Breton as the famous spool described by Freud (fort-da game)<sup>20</sup> and that the mourning of surrealism has less to do with the death of a symbolic father than with the weaning process.

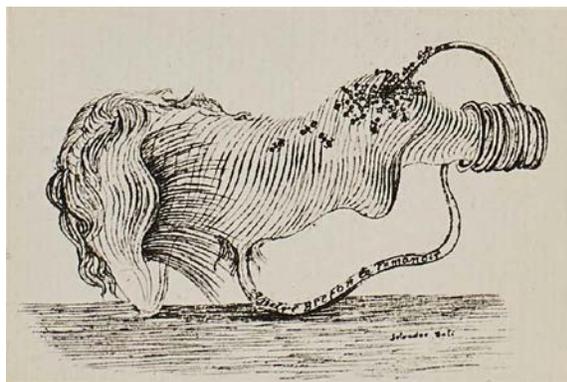
In this light, it is perfectly logical that Dali would try to solve his conflict by turning himself towards Gala who copied and corrected each text he wrote before passing it to another male authoritarian figure: Michel Déon, a French academician. Under her advice, and her very maternal presence, Dalí would find the way to sever the ties with his artistic youth<sup>21</sup>. It is indeed on her advice that he would attempt to render surrealism « classic » as he said, and that he would pass, in a way, from the « mauvais goût » (bad taste) of surrealism, often described as a *bric-à-brac*, to the *bon goût* (sweet?) of Renaissance, and classic rebirth<sup>22</sup>.

This would also explain why the mannequin of the *Rue Surréaliste* would have its body covered with little spoons [ill. 2]. Not so much to invite a sexual *spoonering*

gesture, than acknowledging the weaning stage that was failing at this period: the little spoons are indeed directed towards the viewer.

In the *Secret life* the weaning is dramatically *mise-en-scène* in a lengthy passage with the simulacra of putrefying watermelons seen as dark deadly symbolic breasts in the shadow they cast on the walls. It is repeated when the king of Dalí's tale severs himself from his coprophagic desire. At that moment, Dalí writes: *il se detesta de son crime*. Dalí's French neologism is based on a Catalan word for weaning. In other words Dalí can only name the positive result by drawing upon his native heritage (Catalan tale, Catalan word) on the condition it is displaced by the language of his education: French<sup>23</sup>. Dalí then explains his neologism, illegible to a French reader, by comparing the sugar nose to the breast that a nurse would rub with a bitter substance in order to dissuade a child from sucking her.

The point I am leading to is that the exclusion of surrealism was not effective as long as Dalí did not *elaborate* it in his psyche, through language. Referring to this historical event, Dalí always spoke of *explusion* (not *exclusion*). On one hand, the choice of the word assimilates surrealism to a matrix and on the other hand, the *explusion* as a gain, a plus, (*ex-plus-tion*), not a loss. Contrary to the common critical belief, the metaphor of the matrix entices us to see Breton as such a personification, even if this authoritarian author embodied in Dalí's earlier texts a clear imprint of the *law* of surrealism that is disobeyed in our passage (the choice of a poetical interpretation versus a scientific one). This is strongly evidenced in the drawing that accompanies the manuscript of the wax mannequin [Ms: 1164]. Dalí drew a *tamanoir*, which we all know



was Breton's frontispiece<sup>24</sup>

[ill.3]. In all the

drawings of the manuscripts (Ms 322a and Ms 323a, p.147-8), the little anteater that

Dalí spreads in the margins is always represented with its recognizable elongated nose dipping in a glass of milk.

Breton's archives reveal that the French theoretician kept in an envelope a clipping that contains a photograph of an anteater drinking milk [ill.4]. Furthermore, it is through this animal that Breton related to Dalí when in his foreword of the first painter's exhibition in Paris (1929) he compared the effects of Dalí's canvases on the viewer to that of the beloved insect being touched by the tongue of the animal (*mammal?*), a few seconds before being swallowed up. "*La vie est donnée à l'homme avec des séductions comparables à celles que doit offrir aux fourmis la langue du fourmilier.*"<sup>25</sup>

Again, the fantasy of being eaten, sucked up, comes forth and is also manifest on Dalí's part when the writer drew in his manuscript the motif of an anteater in the context of anthropophagic devouring [Ms 322a], out of which only a successfully weaned child can free himself.

How is this symbolical accomplishment important for a writer? Because without overcoming this challenge, one can not access to language, and cannot speak in his own name.

Was Dalí ever weaned? It's one of the aims of *The Secret life* in which he said he lost the extra milk tooth which he had kept in his palate until forty. He then hung it above his head in an identification to the Madonna painted by Della Francesca (who used an egg). At that height the milk is no longer accessible, and becomes symbolic, which his Gala-Dalí signature confirms. The milk that crowns the name has no contact with it. As for Gala (milk in Greek), she became officially *attached* to him, he soon married her. With her, it was no longer the fusioned collaboration with Breton. Gala could say no, and even ask Michel Déon: "Write this better ! And don't hesitate to cut!" Dalí did not protest: he authorized the simulacra of his text.

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## Illustrations

1. Front cover of *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dali*, Ian Gibson; photo by Willy Rizzo
2. Mannequin « Explosion » de Salvador Dali, Exposition internationale du Surréalisme, Yann le Mouel, Paris. Photo: Man Ray. Retrieved from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/454511787370071080/>

3. *Le Tamanoir* (Ex Libris of André Breton) [c.1930], Salvador Dalí, Collection of The Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, FL.

4. Retrieved from

[http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100607340?back\\_rql=Any%20X%20ORDERBY%20FTIRANK%28X%29%20DESC%20WHERE%20X%20has\\_text%20%22animaux%22&back\\_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.andrebretton.fr%2Fview%3F\\_fsb%3D1%26rql%3Danimaux%26subvid%3Dtsearch](http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100607340?back_rql=Any%20X%20ORDERBY%20FTIRANK%28X%29%20DESC%20WHERE%20X%20has_text%20%22animaux%22&back_url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.andrebretton.fr%2Fview%3F_fsb%3D1%26rql%3Danimaux%26subvid%3Dtsearch)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>[www.atelierandrebretton.com](http://www.atelierandrebretton.com) (Virtual museum founded in 2002 before Breton's collection was spread out in the auction of 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Gala-Salvador Dalí collection, Ms 39.

<sup>3</sup> One of the blanks is a key term of the article : the adjective *géodésique*.

<sup>4</sup> S. Dalí, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí, Suis-je un génie ?*, L'âge d'homme p. 309-313.

<sup>5</sup> I limited my list of jumps to the context of the *Secret life*, but other significant jumps occur in Dalí's work : the recurrent girl jumping the rope from one canvas to the other, which I studied in my article *Destino : Dalíto destiné aux enfants*, in my article *Dalí's Medienspielen*, edited by Isabel Maurer Queipo and N. Rissler-Pipka, Transcript, Bielefeld, 2007. I show how *Destino* is the consequence of Dalí's work for choreographers such as the Marquis de Cuevas, Massine and Béjart in my book *Dalí et Béjart : danser Gala*, ed. Notari, July 2007. Finally Dalí showed himself jumping the rope in the Parc Güell, or among cats in a famous picture by P. Halsman.

<sup>6</sup> *The Secret life of Salvador Dalí*, by Salvador Dalí, translated by Haakon Chevalier, Dover publication, 1993, p. 131.

<sup>7</sup> Dalí has also said in the introduction of his autobiography that all his secrets should *explode* like bombs. Secrets are not confessed or delivered.

<sup>8</sup> Besides the particularity of Dalí's lizard, we all know that the specificity of the lizard's tail is to grow back after it has been cut. Therefore I disagree entirely with E. Legge's interpretation of the lizard in Ernst and Dalí's work based on castration (*Max Ernst. The psychoanalytical sources*, UMI press, 1989, p. 105-13). I develop a different interpretation in "Il y a un lézard", *Dalí. Sur les traces d'éros*, éd. Notari, 2007.

<sup>9</sup> The only way to effectively break the secret is to quote Dalí's text in French, which I will do along my article quoting my critical edition of Dalí and Gala original manuscripts : *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí. Suis-je un génie ?*, L'Age d'Homme, 2006. The passage (of chapter 5) can be found on p. 215 [Ms 558]. To break a secret was a rhetorical gesture, which Dalí had at heart, as can be seen in many of his titles : *Les 50 secret magiques* for example, or later : *Les 10 recettes de l'immortalité*. What is known as *Le journal d'un génie*, whose title was given by Michel Déon (who admitted this to me) was originally entitled : *Ma vie re-secrete*, as can be read in the manuscript. Finally, Dalí's favorite literary genre, the diary and autobiography, are also exemplary of this gesture. To confide one's secret life to millions of readers expresses less a desire of confession than the willingness to destroy secrecy. I have already examined this aspect in an article published in *Littérature* (1997, n.108): "*Le creux du secret*" in which I demonstrated that *secretion* is a term more appropriate to capture Dalí's priority in writing than *secret*. Dalí's notion of secret is hollow. Many of his works can be read as a compendium of body secretions, in a manner that recalls Pontormo's diary. I gave an example of this interpretation in my first article on Dalí *Il peint, il bave* (he paints, he drools) – *Littérature*, 1991, n. 81), which was further developed in *Dalí. Le livre Infini* (*La Revue des Sciences Humaines*, 2002, n. 266-7) . I also analyzed how Dalí pretended to have broken the « secret code » of DNA in "*Le Code Pseudo-génétique de S. Dalí*", *Dalí à la croisée des savoirs*, ed. Desjonquères, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> The whole passage can be read p. 215-6 of my critical edition of Dalí's autobiography.

<sup>11</sup> I do not have the time in this paper to develop the narrative component of this rhyme which is a retaking in Dalí's autobiography of the recurrence of the lizard as it takes place in Jensen's text of *Gradiva*. This point is developed in my article : "*il y a un lézard*". It is the topic of resurrection and rebirth that calls the

lizard to be transformed into Lazarus, based on the shedding of the artist, to which Dalí identifies himself as a writer. His manuscripts, he says, are scraps of his shroud.

<sup>12</sup> In his translation of the autobiography, H. Chevalier failed to render Dalí's style and meaning :

"Suddenly I became aware that the afternoon was vanishing in the ritualistic apotheosis of a bloody glow" (Dover publication, 1993, p. 87).

<sup>13</sup> The paranoiac-critical method to which Dalí returns in his autobiographical writing is more efficiently and beautifully explained, with a philosophical depth, in a prosaic text. The theoretical "method" is more the sign and the result of Breton's input (of which Dalí will free himself as a writer). Jean-Louis Gaillemain has traced the "invention" of the term "méthode Paranoïaque critique" in « L'Invention de la méthode paranoïaque critique, » in *Dalí sur les traces d'éros*, *ibid*, pp.22-35.

<sup>14</sup> See note 10.

<sup>15</sup> Hélène Cixous, *Le troisième corps*, Grasset, 1970. In the English translation by Keith Cohen (Northwestern University Press, 1999), see pages 18-9, 41-2, 75-7, 95-8, 102-8, 113-115. The spelling alterations with the letter Z are gathered in pages 113-6. Her text lisps. Here is an example: "We acknowledge that things have been full of Zs theZe past few dayZ, as though the liZard [*lézarde*, in French] had laid eggZ all over the place". The absent figure of the mother in Jensen's text is restored by Cixous by her own mother (Eva that rhymes with Gradiva) but also by the feminine gender that she gives to the lizard. Dalí's text also notices the crucial lack of the mother in the German text and calls for Gala's consoling hand during one of the apparitions of the lizard. One can notice of course that in his logic, the egg does not appear in his text *per se*, but is displaced in the painting of Narcissus. And in his accompanying poem it is from the egg that the maternal Gala (rhetorical flower by Dalí) is given birth.

<sup>16</sup> It is indeed to this notion that Dalí refers in the footnote of Ms 1171.

<sup>17</sup> This passage also seems to repeat the text of the *Mythe tragique de l'Angelus de Millet*, in which a text is presented with its interpretation, a gesture masterfully enacted in French literature by Francis Ponge. See *La pratique du pré*, for example.

<sup>18</sup> Dalí evokes a wax object made by Eluard, but his tale is closer to a movie by Buñuel that will follow his book : *Essayo de un crimen* (1950) in which the heroine is modeling for fashion wax mannequins, and one of the women whom the hero thinks he wants to kill.

<sup>19</sup> In the behavioral development of the child, the nose is always what an infant grasps at first when managing to reach his mother's face.

<sup>20</sup> S. Freud, "Au delà du principe de plaisir" , in *Essais de psychanalyse*, Payot, 1948, p. 13-16.

<sup>21</sup> Which is why I do not pretend that the text I transcribed is the "real" text. The originality of Dalí's text is that its meaning belongs to (and engenders) a net of simulacra which gives to Dalí a postmodern quality.

<sup>22</sup> I demonstrate what is at stake in this classical alleged "rebirth" in my article "Dalí : the apory of birth", to be published by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I demonstrated what is at stake in this classical alleged "rebirth" in my talk "Dalí : the apory of birth", presented at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2004.

<sup>23</sup> The father played an important role in giving to his son the opportunity to free himself from the mother. He had at heart, as did his brother, to provide to his son a French education. Dalí began to acquire autonomy in language when he was enrolled in a French school at the age of five, that it when one learns to write and read. This also explains why the Dalinian singular spelling of French can not be explained as that of a non native speaker.

<sup>24</sup> Breton gave some explanation on the choice of the anteater in his interview with A. Parinaud (1952) in which he referred to a poem translated by R. Browning in 1920 : *Sludge le médium* (which focuses on the "long expectation" of the animal before voraciously seizing its prey).

<sup>25</sup> *Point du jour*, O.C., Gallimard, 1970, p. 68. "Life is given to man with seductions comparable to what an ant must experience from the tongue of an anteater." [my translation]