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Dalí and the Mechanics of Scandal **Carmen García De La Rasilla**

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DALÍ AND THE MECHANICS OF SCANDAL

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INTRODUCTION

Educated in the turn-of-the-century Catalan bourgeoisie, where he learnt from very early on the traditional rules of proper public and private behavior, Dalí also learnt how to defy those norms and how to turn his defiance into a hallmark of his personality and a means of obtaining the attention of others that he so badly craved.¹ By connecting certain major aspects of the phenomenon of scandal with some crucial Freudian tenets on trauma,² this article will examine public response to Salvador Dalí, explore some of the ways in which the artist used deliberate outrage in the creation and promotion of his public persona, and explain how he integrated its dynamics into the workings of his Surrealist oeuvre.

Dalí's attempt to be shocking must first be placed within the specific cultural context of fin-de-siècle Catalonia³ and its strict official bourgeois mores. As Robert Hughes points out in *The Shock of the New*, if Dalí's "images are to be rightly seen they must be set, in retrospect, into the context of a less sexually frank time. Today, the art world is less easily alarmed by images of sex, blood, excrement, and putrefaction, but fifty years ago it was still quite shockable" (238). Furthermore, as Joaquim Molas explains, Dalí was linked to the journal *L'Amic de les Arts* and to a group of young avant-garde artists, including the Surrealists, who were engaged in a campaign of subversion against official bourgeois culture and who hoped to introduce new forms of aesthetic expression (69). In their *Manifest groc* o *Manifest antiartistic català* (1929) for example, Salvador Dalí, Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch made clear their rejection of official culture and their desire to act aggressively against it: "ENS LIMITEM a assenyalar el grotesc i tristíssim espectacle de la intel·lectualitat catalana d'avui, tancada en un ambient resclosit i putrefacte"

1. Within this context, the term scandal refers to its current dictionary definition of an "offence to moral feeling or sense of decency" ("Scandal," def. 4).

2. "The response to a totally unexpected experience, for which one has not been prepared by vigilance or anxiety, and which compels one to re-orientate oneself. Unpleasant shocks of sufficient severity to cause symptoms or, if occurring in childhood, to disturb development are known as traumata" ("Shock," def. 2).

3. Dalí's first public successful coquetry with scandal as a means to provoke artistic shock, has to be understood within the context of the Catalan avant-garde which turned Barcelona into the leading artistic center of Spain at that time (Resina 35).

(*"Manifest antiartístic català"*). Not surprisingly, they regarded scandalous poets, such as the Surrealist Benjamin Péret (Molas 75), as exemplary figures, and they upheld scandal as a hygienic measure to flush out the old and supposedly putrid cultural conditions that stood in the way of innovative art.⁴

Although scandal, as an act against public morals and costumes, normally brings disgrace, ostracism, or at least strong social disapproval to the transgressor, Salvador Dalí knew how to turn it into an instrument of seduction and success. In fact, he made scandal an essential component of his art throughout his life and career. It could even be said that the attraction of his paintings is based in part on the strong hold that scandal has over a public mesmerized by simultaneous impulses of repulsion, admiration and complicity. In Dalí's oeuvre scandal becomes a paradoxical instrument that attempts to turn the spectator –when scandalized– into an active participant provoking his/her "traumatic" reaction while at the same time turning him/her into a voyeuristic accomplice of the paintings' transgressive meaning. Furthermore, the public's shocked reaction is represented in some of Dalí's pictographic and written texts as a device to trap the viewer into a carefully planned narcissistic game and labyrinth of pathological projections and reflections. In his use or deployment of scandal, Dalí not only plays with some well-known psychological concepts but also expands and popularizes the impact and enjoyment of the work of art by providing the public with an irrational and direct contact with the aesthetic experience, thus bypassing critics, mediums, or even the supposedly necessary cultural preparation or education to enjoy or understand artistic expression. In an early article written in Catalan, "Els meus quadros del Saló de Tardor," and published in 1927 in *L'Amic de les Arts*, the painter himself corroborates the direct and unmediated message of his works:

My painting is wholly and marvelously understood by children as well as by the fishermen of Cadaqués; it is equally well understood by a good friend –a famous motorist– who has had no artistic education at all. All of them understand it and are moved by it. The art critics, on the contrary, do not understand it at all and say that it does not move them [...] My own works [...] are direct, moving and instantly comprehensible without the least technical preparation (artistic training is precisely what prevents them from being understood). There

4. "Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca [...] would make much of rotting, stinking cadavers, of putrefaction, linking putrefaction to immobile, antiquated, regressive modes of being, or rather, of death. In this, Dalí and Lorca are the ironically faithful heirs to a tradition that understands death and putrefaction as the antithesis of experimentation, originality, progress, and indeed, of anything and everything *authentically* artistic" (Epps 43).

is no need [...] for preliminary explications, for preliminary ideas, for prejudgments. It is enough merely to look at them with pure eyes. (Finkelstein 51-52)

The profound and complex relation between Dalí and scandal, worthy of a monograph, would of course necessitate a much more extensive study, but my intention in this essay is only to highlight the importance of this phenomenon in Dalí's creative production, and explain some of the major aspects of its functioning. Unfortunately scandal as a major cultural manifestation is a subject that has received surprisingly little attention on the part of professional critics, both art historians and literary scholars. As a start, the pages that follow will explore some of the most salient aspects such as the connections between the psychoanalytic concept of trauma and paranoia and Dalí's art of the scandal, the expression of scandal in the written and pictorial work of the Surrealists as well as in his own histrionic life, and his instrumental use of scandal as both a vehicle for humor and a means to deter critics and defend his authorial control.⁵

SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL: PSYCHOANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES IN DALÍ'S TRAUMATIC ART

Dalí and the Surrealists neither invented nor monopolized scandal as a means of artistic expression. Self-conscious and deliberate outrage was a favorite device of the Marquis de Sade, one of the saints of the Surrealist pantheon, and a figure who would play a prominent role in one of Dalí's films, *L'Âge d'or*. As Hughes explains, Sade, "a blasphemer, an atheist, a traitor to his class, the aristocracy, [appealed] to the Surrealists, who were also atheists, blasphemers, and traitors to their class, the bourgeoisie" (249). In a more systematic way, scandal has been a tool of artists since at least the early days of the Romantic Movement. The classic bohemian brand of this culturally conditioned act focused very sharply on its spontaneous and emotional efforts to "*épater le bourgeois*," that is, to elevate the creator above the spectator and the autonomous and classless artist over the philistine and conventional middle class. Although in their cultivation of scandal the Surrealists did not abandon these goals, they also adopted other more ambitious aesthetic, social and political objectives and procedures, in great part derived from the Dadaists, their immediate predecessors. As

5. "It must be said that art critics and historians have generally reacted to Dalí with the visceral disgust that it would seem [...] that he both invited and fully anticipated. One would be hard pressed to think of another major, avant-garde artist for whom there is such a striking correlation between their level of popular acclaim and critical disdain" (Lomas 145-46).

a result of its involvement with psychoanalysis, and profiting from the experience of more than a century of Romantic and post-Romantic defiance, the Surrealist brand of deviant and antisocial artistic shock became a great deal more methodical and deliberate as the case of Salvador Dalí will patently suggest.

Familiarized since very early in life with Freudian theories about the mechanisms of the human mind (Gibson, *Lorca-Dalí* 114-15), (he probably read psychoanalysis for the first time in 1922 at the age of 18, when the writings of Sigmund Freud began to be published in Spain),⁶ Dalí gradually became acquainted with the psychoanalytic techniques that would allow him to impress and manipulate his public during his professional career. Such readings may have given the artist some important clues as to the mechanics of the scandalous work of art. In his *Secret Life*, Dalí reveals how he became interested in Freudian psychoanalysis when he was a student at the School of Fine Arts in Madrid.⁷

Within the parameters of psychoanalysis we may consider scandal as a kind of trauma on the psyche, an event with a transforming impact upon the individual. According to Freud, trauma is an experience that submits the mind within a very short time to a series of negative psychological stimuli too intense to be dealt with or processed, thus provoking an alteration in the functioning of the mind. Locked within the unconscious, the traumatic experience manifests itself only through symptoms that reveal the presence of the neurosis that the trauma has provoked. By making conscious the hidden content and workings of a trauma, psychoanalysts claimed they could gain the capacity to cure the patient and vanish the neurotic symptoms.⁸ But this attempt on the part of the psychoanalyst to help the patient recover his memory of the traumatic event will meet, according to the

6. "In the spring of 1922, some four months before Dalí's arrival in Madrid, the publishing house Biblioteca Nueva had started to bring out *The Complete Works of Freud* in Spanish translation [...] Freud himself expressed surprise that a Madrid publisher should be the first in the world to embark on the difficult enterprise of producing his complete works in another language" (Gibson, *The Shameful Life* 155).

7. "At this period I had just begun to read Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of dreams*. This book presented itself to me as one of the capital discoveries in my life, and I was seized with a real vice of self-interpretation, not only of my dreams but of everything that happened to me, however accidental it might seem at first glance" (Dalí, *Secret Life* 167, n 1).

8. "Some particular mental processes should normally have developed to a point at which consciousness received information of them. This, however, did not take place, and instead – out of the interrupted processes, which had been somehow disturbed and were obliged to remain unconscious – the symptom emerged. Thus something in the nature of an exchange has taken place; if this can be reversed the therapy of the neurotic symptoms will have achieved its task." (Freud, "Fixation to Traumas – The Unconscious" 280)

Freudian theoretical formulation, with the neurotic's violent resistance (known as repression) to the entry into consciousness of the mental process that had accompanied the trauma. However, despite these similarities, the ultimate objectives of the psychologist and the Surrealist artist are quite different. The former intends to cure the neurotic by making conscious the unconscious, while the latter engages in an enterprise which is almost its opposite: to provoke neurosis and its symptoms by driving the reader, viewer or spectator into the world of the unconscious, where consciousness and memory are suspended, as well as logic or rational thought. This attempt was quite consistent with one of the major goals and intentions of the Surrealists, which was to highlight the supposedly dark, hidden and unconscious forces at the heart of society, in other words, the obverse of civilization. Through such a revelation, scandalous from a conventional and bourgeois perspective, they wished to promote and instigate a revolution against the allegedly hypocritical social, political and religious norms of the world, and denounce its repression of imaginative freedom and human desire. As the *Dictionnaire Général du Surrealisme* proclaims in its entry "Scandales," "Surrealism has wanted to be a permanent scandal" in the service of social and political revolution. Even behind closed doors, the diverse forms of scandal preserved a spectacular character with some of the features of a happening. In Surrealism, they take their proper place and have become inseparable from the movement itself.⁹ Direct testimony from Surrealist artists and writers confirms the importance of scandal as a source of creativity as well as a crucial revolutionary tool,¹⁰ capable of revealing the allegedly horrendous secrets of the system they wanted to debunk. Not surprisingly, André Breton's *Second Manifesto* insisted upon the need to confuse the public that "must be held exasperated [...] by a system of taunts and provocations" (95).

In their attempt to produce images that would reveal the dark and hidden side of reality, social and otherwise, the Surrealists exposed the public through their artistic representation of images to a "direct" or

9. "Ces diverses formes de scandales conservaient un caractère spectaculaire qui en apparente certaines à ce qu'on appellera le 'happening' [...] Au fil des années, l'histoire 'scandaleuse' du mouvement y a gagné une dimension mythologique [...] [Les scandales] occupent dans le Surréalisme leur juste place, et ils en sont devenus légitimement inséparables." (Biro 374-75)

10. "Los Surrealistas que no se consideraban terroristas, activistas armados, luchaban contra una sociedad que detestaban utilizando el escándalo como arma principal. Contra las desigualdades sociales, la explotación del hombre por el hombre, la influencia embrutecedora de la religión, el militarismo grosero y colonialista, el escándalo les pareció durante mucho tiempo el revelador todopoderoso, capaz de hacer aparecer los resortes secretos y aborrecibles del sistema que era necesario derribar." (Quoted from Buñuel, 1982). (Pariente 134)

raw contact with the subconscious content of the mind and with a number of arcane and sinister subjects and themes that civilization had relegated and/or classified as taboo, and which for thousands of years had only been represented and/or sublimated in the realm of the symbolic. Freud himself certified this perspective when he met Dalí in London in 1938: "In classic paintings –he said–, I look for the subconscious, in a Surrealist painting, for the conscious" (Dalí, *Secret Life* 397). In this sense, spectators and readers, in most cases ignoring the conscious translation of those unconscious processes and topics represented in Surrealist art, were presumably exposed and directly introduced to the unconscious experience,¹¹ thereby becoming, at least during their moment as spectators or official "public," neurotic individuals, simultaneously attracted and repelled by the traumatizing spectacle of the images or messages they were being forced to absorb. Dalí expressed this unconscious reaction on the part of the public before his pictures: "The truth is that people remain hooked to my canvases like flies to the Tanglefoot paper, however ridiculous and stupid they find what they cannot turn their eyes from. Why? Because they are held by the poetic fact, because unconsciously they feel moved, despite the most spirited protests raised by their culture and their intellect ("Els meus quadros" 52-53).

As will be shown below, in some cases, Surrealist works and acts provoked hysterical reactions that can be interpreted, following once again Freudian psychoanalytical theory, as a sign of the "patient's" deep-seated reluctance to remember the cause of his or her psychological illness, the same resistance that breeds the neurotic symptoms and their hysterical manifestation as the ego refuses "to allow certain libidinal strivings into awareness because of their forbidden (unconscious-fantasy) meaning" (Kalsched 79). As Patrick Waldberg states, Surrealist aesthetics demanded that poets and painters enchant their audiences like magicians and in so doing establish a current of shock between the work of art and the spectator (27). Salvador Dalí's artistic utilization of shock relies on a psychological mechanism rather similar to the one involved in some "deviant" acts such as exhibitionism, that is, to provoke disgust and outrage while forcing complicity upon the viewer by the simple fact of having been involved in the act of watching or witnessing what is patently

11. "As early as the 1920s the presence of enigmatic images, capable of provoking in our vision as spectators new and hidden meanings, were characteristic of Dalí's work.[...] Using various methods and systems including double images, stereoscopy, holography or the search for a fourth dimension, and always informed by scientific advances, Dalí simultaneously represents external reality and an internal reality. These may or may not coincide with those of the viewer, in whom a series of psychic associations are provoked that end in total immersion in the painter's world." (Pitxot & Aguer 62)

forbidden. Almost by its very nature, this manipulative and even abusive technique often attempts to puzzle the spectators and involve the public in the work of art through the provocation of violent psychological or emotional reactions. While André Breton claimed the need for convulsive beauty, Dalí put theory into practice by creating authentically convulsive art. In the execution of this design, he may have grasped one of the essential aspects of Breton's concept of "the marvelous," which according to Hal Foster functions as the Freudian uncanny or the return of the repressed for disruptive purposes, suggesting "that the marvelous also involves traumatic experience, that it may even be an attempt to work through 'hysterical' experience" (21).

Dalí's artistic search for "convulsive" effects led him to include in many of his most famous paintings a mimetic invitation or command to the spectator to experience the shock and effects of scandal.¹² In works such as *The Lugubrious Game* (1929), *William Tell* (1930), *Spider of the Evening... Hope* (1940), *Resurrection of the Flesh* (1940-45) and others, the embarrassed and scandalized reaction of the viewer is represented as a figure who, horrified by the scene taking place before him, defends himself against it by hiding his face with one hand, while directly pointing with the other to the scandalous act or vision. Such a figure represents and embodies the effect of the scandal, that is, the horror of the spectator, who tries desperately to distance himself from the scene through the adoption of a stereotypical accusatorial gesture, with a finger pointing towards the rejected content of the painting, while recognizing his own embarrassed guilt at having watched and thus unwittingly participated in the forbidden scene.¹³ In other works, such as the *Imperial Monument of the Child Woman* (1929) (Descharnes, plate 331), or in *Les Vins de Gala et du Divin* (1977) (Descharnes, plate 1440), three disembodied faces regard the action of the painting

12. The insertion of the viewer's reaction in the picture hearkens back to a device in classical European painting, which attempted to generate a specific response and attitude towards a picture. This device was specially used by Spanish painters in their religious works, as an invitation to contemplate the image or scene with appropriate faith and piety. However, perhaps the most famous example in the canon of old Spanish painting occurs in Velázquez's *The Surrender of Breda* (1634-35), in which one of the characters, spectator and participant in the historical event depicted, points out with his finger to the important scene that is taking place, and in doing so, invites the viewer to contemplate and weigh the solemnity of the moment, and to show proper respect and admiration for its moral and political message.

13. In Descharnes' catalogue, I have found this scandalized figure in at least eleven of Dalí's pictures: *The Lugubrious Game* (plate 312); *Imperial Monument to the Child-Woman* (pl. 331); *The Font* (pl. 334); *Vertigo-Tower of Pleasure* (pl. 352); *The Dream* (pl. 365); *Remorse, or, Sunken Sphinx* (pl. 366); *William Tell* (pl. 386); *The Old Age of William Tell* (pl. 393); *The Birth of Liquid Desires* (pl. 399); *Spider of the Evening... Hope!* (pl. 746); *Resurrection of the Flesh* (pl. 871).

with lustful expectation, reflecting the public's guilty pleasure in the shocking scene, while in *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* (1946) (Descharnes, plate 906), the figure of the saint, like the spectator himself, although tempted by the fantasies and deliriums that the canvas offers, will try to reject or exorcise them with a cross that could serve as a powerful instrument to deter the complicit evils of the imagination and the phantoms provoked by the unconscious of the artist and the public. These examples, which have led Dalí's biographer Ian Gibson to search for (and find) a deep personal sense of shame, sexual and otherwise, in the painter (*The Shameful Life*), can actually be best understood within the parameters of the "scandalous" manipulation of the spectator that lies at the core of Dalí's art and of much of Surrealism.

In addition to this mimetic invitation and manipulation, one of the elements that most decisively contributed to the success of the intentional scandal envisioned by Dalí and the Surrealists is the sensation of the uncanny that Surrealist works very often exude. This is one of the key factors in the attempt to generate a traumatic impact and thus a collective neurotic and/or hysterical reaction. If the uncanny, as Freud defined it, is basically a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it (*Studies in Parapsychology* 51), the uncanny content of the Surrealist production comes from all those repressed or forbidden thoughts or ideas crawling at the bottom of our collective unconscious which are brought up and made disquietingly graphic in powerful visual images. It is precisely the recurrent appearance of repressed content that irresistibly provokes the anxious reaction of the spectators. Furthermore, the Freudian uncanny, or "*unheimlich*," is the name for everything that although familiar, ought to have remained hidden and secret but has become visible. Not surprisingly, the artistic scandal holds in itself the necessary and "convulsive" reaction of the public who will resist the attempt to turn them into witnesses and passive participants of a monumental violation of taboo. However, in exercising its resistance, the public (or a large segment of it) tends to fall into the "other" Surrealist trap¹⁴ by either developing symptoms of hysteria and guilt at having experienced the forbidden, or else by running away or verbally and physically attacking the artist and his work in a futile attempt to deny their complicity and demonstrate in proportionately vivid terms their rejection or estrangement from the Surrealist experience. As a result, a direct and powerful channel of communication between the work of art and the spectator is established.

14. Curiously, the word scandal derives from the Greek "skandalon", which means among other things a trap ("skandalon").

As a device to capture the public's attraction, Dalí's art of scandal was and remains a "raging" success, to judge by the huge crowds that are a staple of his exhibits, both in the United States and in other countries. A major source of the allure might be what the painter called his "paranoiac-critical" method and its reliance on the association of images and objects to provoke apparitions of hidden scenes and figures of the uncanny in his pictures,¹⁵ as well as parodic readings of consecrated materials and taboo topics, causing in the viewers and readers a disturbing uneasiness that in some cases may lead to a scandalized, traumatic and/or hysterical reaction, in others to a puzzled and passive though vaguely uncomfortable fascination, disguised perhaps by a veneer of ironic detachment.¹⁶ Josep Miquel Sobrer has eloquently alluded to the disquieting latent content in Dalí's pictures:

Los objetos pintados por Dalí [...] son objetos familiarísimos que se convierten en insólitos o mágicos, alucinantes o inquietantes —en una palabra: sobre-
reales— con poquísimas transformaciones [...] detrás de sus cuadros tenemos siempre la presencia angustiante de un conjurador que ha franqueado las puertas del sueño y que nos conmina a zambullirnos en la balsa oscura de nuestro subconsciente. (135)

Some of the crucial techniques Dalí used to create the effects of anxious ambiguity and the pull and tug between fascination and disgust consist in the blurring of the limits between the real and the imagined, the confusion between the animate and the inanimate, and the substitution of the referent by the sign, or of physical reality by psychic reality (Foster 7). In addition, Dalí engaged in the representation of repressed unconscious pornographic material, such as severed limbs, sexual organs and sexualized bodies to express psychological complexes, delusions, and illnesses. In other occasions, he deployed his paranoiac-critical method to underline the shocking delusional and latent content

15. "Paranoiac-Critical Activity: spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the interpretative-critical association of delirious phenomena [...] The presence of active and systematic elements does not imply the notion of voluntarily directed thought, nor any intellectual compromise, for, as we know, the active and systematic structure in paranoia is con-substantial with the delirious phenomenon itself [...].

Paranoiac-Critical Activity organizes and objectifies in an exclusivist manner the unlimited and unknown possibilities of systematic associations of subjective and objective phenomena appearing to us as irrational solicitations, solely by means of the obsessive idea. Paranoiac-Critical Activity reveals by this method new and objective 'meanings' of the irrational, and it makes the very world of delirium pass tangibly to the level of reality" (Dalí, "The Conquest" 267-68).

16. Although this essay focuses on the visceral reaction of scandal, responses to art are, of course, difficult to predict and quite diverse. Obviously indifference and/or "objective" distancing are also likely outcomes, and even more so in today's social and intellectual context.

of his work and that of other artists past and present. A clear example of his scandalous use of these techniques in the field of artistic exegesis is his commentary on Millet's painting *The Angelus* (1858-59), a very popular nineteenth century representation of the Catholic prayer about the miraculous conception of Christ, where two peasants in a clear religious and reverent stance, pray surrounded by a mystical landscape. Dalí submits the picture to his critical paranoiac method, resulting in the discovery of a disquieting and terrible image that can only shock and anger anyone accustomed to regard Millet's famous picture as a pious icon of religious devotion. Instead, Dalí perceived the delirious scene of a praying mantis devouring and killing her husband-son at the moment of the sexual act (Dalí, *El mito trágico*), an image that carried with it a terrible castration fear and, in autobiographical terms, the identification of his own conception with a moment of death.¹⁷ In his paranoiac critical interpretation of *The Angelus*, Dalí finds the cause of the popularity of Millet's picture (a huge number of Christian homes in Europe had a reproduction of this image hung on their walls) precisely in its dreadful and scandalous latent content, powerful enough to fascinate and produce an irrational devotion. It was a success that, in a much more provocative manner, he would try to recreate.

"SUCCÈS DE SCANDALE": SELF-ADVERTISEMENT AND PROMOTION THROUGH PROVOCATION

A detailed account of Dalí's deployment of scandal as a publicity device would, of course, be almost endless. My purpose here is simply to underline with a few examples his practical use of calculated shock to impress certain artistic circles, propagate his creative production, and bolster his particular aesthetic theories and ideas.

As is obvious from the artist's own statements and memoirs, scandal was also a means of self-advertisement and promotion. In fact, he openly proclaimed himself a Surrealist for the first time as a result of a highly controversial exhibition that took place at the Barcelona Saló de Tardor of 1928 (Torroella). The cause of the polemic was *Dialogue on the Beach*, a painting that contained a disquieting image with patently obscene connotations: a hermaphrodite hand with a penis-finger and a vulva-lips. The prospect of a social uproar and its potentially ruinous consequences moved the dealer Joan Maragall¹⁸ to reject the picture

17. In his *Secret Life*, Dalí suggests that his parents conceived him in order to give life to his older brother, also called Salvador, who had died some years earlier (2-4).

18. The art dealer Joan Maragall, director of the Saló de Tardor when Dalí's scandalous exhibition took place in 1928, should not be confused with the great Catalan poet of the same name, who had died in 1911.

respectfully but firmly, but not without Dalí's complaints and response. As Gibson explains, "he told the dealer that in fact he was delighted by Maragall's objections, since they proved that painting could still possess 'the subversive value of horrifying and traumatizing the public'" (*The Shameful Life* 237). The fledgling Surrealist turned the whole event into a publicity bonanza, receiving not only the attention of Barcelona's artistic world, but also of the Madrid press.¹⁹ His iconoclastic fame, already secured in Spain, would next be nurtured in Paris, this time at the expense of the Surrealists themselves.

In the French capital, Dalí's scandal took the form of a rebellion and a series of attacks not only on bourgeois values, but also on Surrealism itself, once it became a quasi-religion and all-encompassing way of life. Dalí focused his efforts on the movement's progenitor and guru, André Breton. In his *Diary of a Genius* (1964), the painter summarizes how he submitted the members of the group to a series of scandalizing experiences, testing the limits of their proclaimed Surrealist freedom:

A mere week spent with the Surrealists was enough to show me that Gala was right. They tolerated to a certain extent my scatological elements. On the other hand, a number of other things were declared 'taboo.' Here I recognized the same prohibitions I had encountered in my family circle. Blood they allowed me. I could add a bit of shit. But shit on its own was not allowed. I was authorized to represent the sexual organs, but not anal fantasies. Any anus was taken in very bad part. They rather liked lesbians, but not pederasts. In dreams, one could use sadism, umbrellas and sewing machines at will but, except for obscenities, any religious element was banned, even of a mystical nature. If one simply dreamed of a Raphael Madonna without any apparent blasphemies, one was not allowed to mention it (23).

As Dalí discovered, the Surrealists worked under rather strict rules. Within the movement, scatological and anal representations were not tolerated, and any deviation from the group's political orthodoxy, including their rejection of traditional religion, immediately triggered the angriest complaints. Dalí's provocations and challenges to Breton and his followers would gradually increase until his ultimate expulsion from the Surrealist movement. As Marc LaFountain puts it, "it was Dalí who exacerbated and amplified the scandal already at work in Surrealism's cretinization of consciousness and reality. [Dalí's discourse was] dangerous in that it freed the force(s) of change, [and] endlessly surpassed the dream of identity" (50). This

19. "One of the most prestigious magazines of the capital, *Estampa*, published an interview with the artist who, in his habitually provocative language, denigrated Spanish painters by giving them the appellation of 'putrescent,' (with the exception of Picasso and Miró)" (Gibson, *The Shameful Life* 239).

outcome seems to have been in the cards from the very beginning. After Dalí's first exhibition of paintings and the release of *Un Chien andalou*, Breton welcomed the Spaniard as an authentic Surrealist whom he believed had opened wide the eyes of the mind. However, he also suggested prophetically that Dalí could pose a threat to Surrealism. Breton should have probably realized that someone who liked to introduce himself as a madman with coprophagic inclinations—see for example the explicitly disturbing subject and theme of *The Lugubrious Game* (1929)—would not abide by too many rules, aesthetic, political or moral.

In his autobiography, *The Secret Life*, Dalí shows how he used scandal as a letter of social introduction and even of psychological confession and declaration of love. The episode where he narrates his first meeting with Gala and a few other members of the Surrealist group in 1929 in Cadaqués, is in this sense a good example (*Secret Life* 225–34). At that time, he had just finished one of his most controversial autobiographical canvasses, *The Lugubrious Game* (1929), whose provocative power shook even the supposedly hardened members of the Surrealist band. In the canvas, Freudian guilt and the castration complex are represented in a grotesque scene, crowded with enigmatic symbols. To achieve the desired effect of shock and revulsion, Dalí used—according to his own testimony in *The Secret Life*—the Surrealist technique “par excellence,” psychic automatism, in which thought is liberated from any rational, ethical or aesthetic criteria or control, in accordance with Breton's first *Surrealist Manifesto*, a technique that Dalí would later reject in favor of his own paranoiac-critical method. Dalí explained that the images he depicted in *The Lugubrious Game* had entered his mind in a dream-like state, akin to a medium's in which he became a vehicle of subconscious revelations:

I finally decided to undertake a picture in which I would limit myself exclusively to reproducing each of these images as scrupulously as it was possible for me to do according to the order and intensity of their impact, and following as a criterion and norm of their arrangement only the most automatic feelings that their sentimental proximity and linking would dictate. And, it goes without saying, there would be no intervention of my own personal taste. I would follow only my pleasure, my most uncontrollably biological desire. This work was one of the most authentic and fundamental to which Surrealism could rightly lay claim (*Secret Life* 33).

In an interesting article published in *Documents* (1929), George Bataille gave a reading of the Freudian symbolism of the painting. Aside from the two main subjects of this picture, guilty onanism in the form of a giant hand, and the castration anxiety, explicitly represented by a man holding in his hand a bloody penis, the image that shocked

Surrealists the most was that of the pants soiled with excrement, which to them seemed a clear sign and symptom of Dalí's scatological aberration. In order to clarify their suspicions about Dalí's probable coprophilic inclinations as reflected in the painting, several Surrealists (among them René Magritte, Paul Eluard and his wife Gala), went to Dalí's hometown of Cadaqués in the northeast coast of Spain. However, when his future wife Gala questioned him point blank about his sexual proclivities, Dalí "came clean" so to speak, rejected the alleged paraphilia, and clarified his motives for the use of scatological images: "I swear to you that I am not 'coprophagic.' I consciously loathe that type of aberration as much as you can possibly loathe it. But I consider scatology as a terrorizing element, just as I do blood, or my phobia for grasshoppers" (Dalí, *Secret Life* 231). In other words, the painting was quite true to its title and despite its deviant qualities, it was part of a "game" designed to scandalize.

A few years later, in order to mock the Surrealists' political flirtation with Marxism-Leninism, Dalí painted a grotesque and deformed (though iconographic and identifiable) image of Lenin, represented with one long and rather penile buttock propped up on a crutch. It would appear that the iconoclastic painter had targeted the prudish and bourgeois nature of Communism, its methodical seriousness and dogmatic pose or that he directed his mockery at the well-known sexual Puritanism of the Bolshevik leader. Regardless of its ultimate meaning, the picture proposed an inescapably ironic reading of the hero-worshipping totalitarian ideology that was then gaining support among the members of Breton's group. *The Enigma of William Tell* (1933), (Descharnes, plate 449), was exhibited in Paris in February of 1934, scandalizing the idealized Marxism of the Surrealists to the point that Breton and some of his outraged acolytes tried to destroy the canvas. Fortunately the picture was hanging very high, and they could not reach it. After this outrage, Breton and his cadre sent out a general resolution to all members of the movement to formally eject Dalí from their midst, and on February 5 held a "trial" to judge his "heretical" behavior, art and ideas.²⁰

20. "As for Dalí himself, he received a curt letter from Breton, who upbraided him for not having attended the meetings held on 2 and 3 February, explained about the resolution and warned him to make sure that he was present on 5 February. When half of the letter was written, Breton received a pneumatic (express communication transmitted by pneumatic tube) from Dalí in which the latter apparently pleaded his cause with eloquence. But Breton was not to be moved, saying that, while he felt genuine admiration and affection for the painter, it was his most elementary duty to forgo his personal feelings at this moment in the interests of maintaining the revolutionary purity of the Surrealist movement. If Dalí did not act decisively to clarify his position to the satisfaction of the group, he would be regarded henceforth as the representative of a particularly dangerous deviation" (Gibson, *The Shameful Life* 379).

Not the least daunted, Dalí proceeded to produce another of his Surrealist objects, a "thinking machine," consisting of a rocking chair adorned with goblets of hot milk, a work that led Louis Aragon to abandon all pretense to calm and subtle criticism and exclaim in partisan disgust: "Enough of Dalí's eccentricities! From now on, milk will be for the children of the unemployed" (Dalí, *Secret Life* 25). As far as the Surrealists were concerned, the last straw was Dalí's artistic infatuation with Adolf Hitler, subject of some of his most enigmatic pictures. The group felt it could no longer tolerate such blatant political and aesthetic provocations. However, the painter felt or feigned surprise at the outcome since he considered himself the most coherent member of the movement, an artist whose work and actions were "based upon the original idea of Surrealism as an expression of art without moral or aesthetic considerations" (Marcel 220). But despite his protestations, it is difficult to accept his "surprise," since he had obviously done everything in his power to bring out the surrealist repulsion.

In his approach to the general public, Dalí used similar techniques. In his book *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí* (1973), he describes how he "conquered" Paris in 1929 through the careful cultivation of shock and provocation. At that time, Dalí and the Spanish director Luis Buñuel were cooperating in the making of *Un Chien Andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*), a film suffused with oneiric images, presumably emerging from the most profound subconscious life, where all physical, social or moral norms are suspended and distorted. Dalí's avowed aim was clear:

I had thought up a film that I expected to revolt, provoke, upset the ways of thinking and seeing [...] A film that would carry each member of the audience back to the secret depths of adolescence, to the sources of dreams, destiny and the secret of life and death [...] The film was intended as a pyrotechnic display to write Dalí's signature in letters of fire and allow me to cross the stages of celebrity by giant steps. All histories of films [...] are forced to recognize that it was a date in film history, a scandalous act, the expression of a will to shock, and conceived in such a way as to create the greatest possible visual malaise at the spectator level (Parinaud 76-77).

In one of the first scenes, a barber's razor slits a woman's pupil, in a brutal attempt to horrify and traumatize the spectator and prompt him or her to watch the rest of the film with the inner eye of irrational and subconscious nature. In accordance with Dalí's strategy of shock, *Un Chien Andalou* moves forward through an accumulation of imagery right out of Dalí's paintings: ants emerging from a perforated hand; rotting donkeys, with empty eye sockets and chopped lips upon a piano; an amputated hand crawling on the pavement of a busy

boulevard, and so on. Dalí spoke of the film with the professional pride of a successful impresario and described it as "an admirable sadistic realization appealing to everyone's latent masochism. *Un Chien andalou*, that succès de scandale, marked my first Parisian recognition [...] My Parisian debut was a masterstroke" (Parinaud 77). However, the audiences seemed to enjoy the film, perhaps –wrote Dalí–, "demonstrating their snobbery, their pathetic worship of the new for the sake of the new. The public haven't grasped the moral point of the film, which is directed at them with total cruelty and violence" ("Un Chien andalou"). The note of contempt and aggression towards his audience would remain a major element in his use of scandal.

Dalí's approach to American artistic circles in the mid to late 1930's followed closely upon the pattern he had already used so effectively in Spain and France. By now, however, the public had become somewhat jaded and actually had come to expect Dalí's provocative performances. Nevertheless, the painter continued to demonstrate a remarkable and brazen creativity. For instance, to mark the end of their first visit to the United States in 1935, Gala and Dalí decided to organize a Surrealist party for their American friends. It was a "Dream Ball" (or *Bal onirique*) in which everyone had to come disguised as their most recurrent dream. Gala's costume, topped by a baby doll with a gash or wound in its forehead was particularly disturbing in the context of the recent and highly publicized murder of Charles Lindbergh's infant son. Despite Dalí's (probably insincere) explanations and excuses, the scandal acquired serious proportions and expanded throughout Europe (Etherington-Smith 187). From then on, the American public recognized Dalí as the incarnation of iconoclastic Surrealism, an ironic status given his increasingly troubled relationship with the leaders of the movement.

Among the most important provocative episodes of his American debut, which included the publication of his autobiography *The Secret Life* (1942), perhaps the most striking was his montage of the shop windows of the Bonwit-Teller in Fifth Avenue in March 1939. Dalí prepared a bizarre nightmarish decoration display that did not fail to shock and fascinate the casual spectator with its ample display of Surrealist paraphernalia: "frightful wax manikins of the 1900 period with long natural dead women's hair [...] covered with several years' dust and cobwebs" (Dalí, *Secret Life* 372); a hairy bathtub lined with astrakhan, filled with water; wax arms holding up a mirror symbolizing Narcissus; "a bed with a canopy composed of the black and sleepy head of a buffalo carrying a bloody pigeon in its mouth," etc. (372). Dalí's intention to scandalize was clear: "This manifesto [he wrote in his autobiography] of elementary Surrealist poetry right out

in the street would inevitably arrest the anguished attention of passers-by with stupor when the morrow, amid so much Surrealist decorativism, lifted the curtain on an authentic Dalinian vision" (372). However, the managers of Bonwit-Teller did not see it that way and decided to cut down on the massive congregation at its windows by altering and toning down the montage. When the artist discovered the alterations he burst into a fury, broke the glass, tried to change back the display and was arrested right then and there (373-74). The beneficial effects of this uproar came soon, for, as Gibson tell us, "the Bonwit Teller incident was a magnificent curtain-raiser to Dalí's exhibition at Julien Levy's, which opened two days later and ran until 18 April."²¹ The entire affair and other similar incidents soon reached scandalous proportions, a turn of events that Dalí welcomed not only because it satisfied his insatiable desire for publicity but also because it was an opportunity to produce a manifesto, his provocatively-titled *Declaration of Independence of the Imagination and of the Rights of Man to His Own Madness* (New York 1939) in defense of the artist's right to create without restraints of any kind.

THE SCANDAL AT THE SERVICE OF THE REVOLUTION AND AGAINST REVOLUTIONARIES

As Patrick Waldberg has pointed out, the Surrealists proposed to change life by altering the mechanics of human logic and perception. In order to transform the world socially and morally, rational thought was to be dismissed in favor of the aesthetic expression of the subconscious (18). During his first years as a full-fledged member of the movement, Dalí supported these principles in his writings and paintings but focused more sharply on the techniques of shock and scandal. It was primarily as *agent provocateur* that Dalí made his most public contributions to the Surrealist revolution, as he demonstrated in the Fall of 1929, in his one-man exhibit at the Goemans Gallery in Paris, labeled by some of his fellow Catalans as an art of bad taste (Gasch).

On this occasion what triggered the tumult was a canvas with an outline of Jesus Christ, the right hand in a clear blessing position, with

21. "The episode made a dramatic story and the painter was delighted with the vast amount of free press coverage it spawned in both the States and Europe, coverage which included photographs of the broken window and of the arrest. Dalí was also delighted with the few hours he had spent in a genuine New York cell, which must have reminded him of his term of imprisonment in Figueres and Girona in 1924. He exploited the incident to the utmost, and later deemed it 'the most magical and effective action' of his entire life, alleging that he had received hundreds of letters from American artists praising his energetic gesture" (Gibson, *The Shameful Life* 444-45).

a heart surrounded by a thorny crown, flames and a cross, in other words, the classical representation of the Sacred Heart. Over that image a calligraphic sign read: "Sometimes, I spit for pleasure on my mother's picture." The provocation was stentorian from both a religious and a personal point of view, but Dalí tried to diffuse the ensuing controversy alleging that the inscription over the image of the Sacred Heart meant that Christ had victimized his mother the Virgin Mary. This "explanation," clearly, satisfied no one. The most prominent Catalan intellectual and writer of his day, Eugeni d'Ors, described the picture as "an antisocial obscenity" ("El juego lúgubre"). In an attempt to limit the damage, Dalí rejected his earlier blasphemous meaning and declared that the mother was no other than his own, who had died some years before. According to the painter, it was not an insult but the expression of a moral conflict, "similar to that set forth for us by a dream, in which we murder someone we love, and such dreams are quite common" ("Posició moral"). The scandal now shifted from the public to the private arena and led to the break-up of relations with his father who banned him from the paternal home and put an end to Dalí's relations with his entire family. What makes this event particularly revealing of the painter's deliberate and tactical use of scandal is his willingness to be flexible and step away, at least momentarily, from the commotion he had provoked by acting as his own critic and providing a variety of interpretations, some more orthodox than others, to a work that was obviously designed to disturb and had succeeded only too well.

In what was to become his *modus operandi*, Dalí's brush with controversy and disgrace, despite extracting a substantial personal price, seems only to have egged him on to further transgressions. The image of the Sacred Heart appeared again in 1930 in the film *L'Âge d'or* (*The Golden Age*), where Jesus Christ was identified with the terrible sadist Count of Blangis, the main character of the Marquis de Sade's *One Hundred and Twenty One Days of Sodom*. The work provoked a tremendous commotion.²² Buñuel and Dalí declared that they had planned the film to weaken "the capacity of resistance of a society in an advanced state of decomposition that clings to priests and policemen as the only means of sustenance" (Fanés 199). The movie was in fact an attack on bourgeois society and its traditional instruments of support: the army, religion, morals, the family and the state. Of course the reaction was in proportion to the magnitude of the

22. "Over the next days and weeks there was not a newspaper or periodical in Paris that failed to review, comment on, attack or praise *L'Âge d'or* which, if *Un Chien andalou* had first brought the names of Buñuel and Dalí to the attention of the French capital, now catapulted them to fame. News of the scandal also reached Spain, Britain and The United States" (Gibson, *The Shameful Life* 327).

scandal, and after a movie house was trashed by enraged right-wing protestors, the film was banned from the screens for decades and was not exhibited publicly again until 1980.

"The scandal of *L'Âge d'or* [commented Dalí] "thus remained suspended over my head like a sword of Damocles, and also, like this sword, prevented me later from stammering [...] I accepted the responsibility for the sacrilegious scandal, though I had had no such ambition. I should have been willing to cause a scandal a hundred times greater" (*Secret Life* 283).

As we have pointed out, such aspirations to "*épater le bourgeois*" were quite widespread and had been a staple of the life, image, and productions of the Western artist and intellectual going back to the Romantic Era. What makes the case of Salvador Dalí remarkable and perhaps even unique, is his extension of this campaign of shock and outrage to groups and parties who normally considered themselves free from the sensitivities of the middle class, such as bohemian artists, socialists, and even anarchists. We have already seen his successful efforts vis-à-vis the Surrealists. In his native Spain, speaking before a group of anarchists, Dalí returned to his provocations first by dressing up with exquisite traditional elegance and then by peppering his speech with the most graphic obscenities. Warned to clean up his act, the painter replied that he was not in a church, and ended the proceedings by calling on his aides to strap to his head a large loaf of bread. This seemingly innocuous act, coupled with his previous remarks, generated such a riotous reaction that some members of the audience had no choice but to restrain physically some of the most outraged partisans of freedom who sought to vent their fury on the speaker. The restrainers and the restrained all became unwitting pawns in Dalí's tactics of scandal as well as, rather ironically for the anarchists, guardians of public morality and order.²³

The incident of the anarchist lecture, described in great detail by Dalí in his memoirs, allows us to come closer to his process of

23. "I now judged that the moment was psychologically ripe [...] While the bread was finally secured on my head I suddenly felt myself infected by the general hysteria, and with all the strength of my lungs I began to shout my famous poem on the "Rotten Donkey." At this moment an anarchist doctor with a face as red as if it had been boiled, and a white beard [...] was seized with a real fit of madness. I was told later that this man, who besides being mad was also an alcoholic, frequently had such fits, though nothing like the one he had that evening. Everyone tried, unsuccessfully, to control him [...] With a supreme convulsion, and the indomitable strength of his delirium, he would always manage to free one of his legs and with a fantastic kick knock over a whole group of those black and sweating anarchists struggling to reestablish order. After the tirade of my obscenities, which still rang in everyone's ears, the apparition of the loaf of bread on my head, and the fit of delirium tremens of the old doctor, the evening ended in an unimaginable general confusion" (Dalí, *The Secret Life* 322-23).

scandalous production and provides us with an opportunity to observe the planning, execution, and dynamics of the phenomenon. First of all, we notice Dalí's previous gauging of expectations: in considering his prospective audience, the artist came to the conclusion that his words would not fall on virgin ears, that his audience would place his appearance within the context of entertainment and socio-intellectual predictability, in other words, that he would not be taken seriously but instead would become a depersonalized exhibit of bourgeois perspectives for a self-assured, detached and adversarial public. This necessarily entailed what for Dalí was akin to annihilation and death, that is, an objectification that must comprise a loss of individuality, as he would turn into a sort of automaton before his audience. An even greater danger, from his point of view, was the possibility of a misunderstanding in which his public would come to the simplistic conclusion that they had met the real Dalí, a fate that he studiously avoided throughout his life. The second phase of the production of scandal inexorably derives from these premises and expectations. In order to avoid a predictable fate, the painter decided to turn the tables on his audience and launch a pre-emptive strike by objectifying and automatizing the public first. The third and final phase involved the histrionic performance of the scandal which proceeds in three parts: First, an initial confirmation of the audience's mistaken expectations of social automatism upon seeing Dalí's bourgeois elegance, which naturally lowers their guard and makes them vulnerable to the second step, the gradual but brutal undermining and overturning of such prospects by the introduction of obscenities, and lastly the ultimate mockery of the public's anarchist ideology by the ludic use of a loaf of bread, an act shocking to an anarchist audience raised on texts such as Prince Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread* (of which Dalí had been aware since childhood and which first appears in his autobiography in connection with his aggressive rejection of automatism). Obviously, the "abuse" of bread contains allusions to the sacred host which would have been clear to a Spanish audience, but which function as vehicles of ridicule since they suggest a parallel between the anarchist preoccupation with bread and the sacramentalization of the same item by the Catholic Church, a classic Spanish anarchist target of resentment. Dalí's black anarchist mass or *mise-en-scène* served not only to protect him from the real or imagined dangers of self-presentation but also, as in the case of the Surrealists, to confront his audience with a number of unpleasant perspectives of themselves and their beliefs. Whether the audience's realization was conscious or not, it certainly worked as a device for triggering outrage in which all pretense to detached and amused spectating was eventually drowned by a coldly calculated performance of histrionic scandal.

THE PERSISTENCE OF SCANDAL

In the 1940's, Dalí extended his inflammatory use of scandal to the field of literature. In his most prominent literary production, his autobiography *The Secret Life*, he toys with his readers and makes them participants of his obsessions and deliriums, transforming them into characters of a grotesque comedy. We can perhaps better approach this phenomenon by learning to regard this autobiographical text as a Surrealist object,²⁴ in which its customary function (in this case the narration of a life), has been altered, while the traditional principle of artistic mimesis has been put into question, because in fact it is nearly impossible to grasp the chronological or eventual structure of a life in the text.

As a Surrealist object, Dalí's *Secret Life* retains considerable shock value, even in the supposedly more jaded present. One of its most immediate yet most neglected readings, the interpretation of the work as a parody and act of histrionic scandal, serves to question the function of autobiography itself and its mimetic premises. Furthermore, the alteration of the form and function of the genre seems designed to disappoint the expectations of the average reader in order to generate anxiety in a manner similar to that of the Surrealist object, by overwhelming the spectator with a torrent of grotesque provocative drawings and observations. In this case, its scandalous effect is directly related to its parodic nature. The reader who fails to perceive or chooses to ignore the parodic dimensions of Dalí's autobiographical text quite often becomes the "victim" of its display of neurosis. Thus the parodic reading establishes the perspective necessary to empower the reader vis-à-vis the relentless scandalizing current running through the work.

When his autobiography was published in 1942, critics, perhaps taken in by its subjects and tone, chose or were induced into the naïve approach of trying to interpret it as a psychoanalytical narrative or outright confession. Not surprisingly, such readers fell into the trap of scandal and rejected the book as an intolerable act of exhibitionism in

24. One of the most curious or striking characteristics of this autobiography is its visual dimension, so that we have in our hands a book not only to be read, but also designed as a surrealist art object, to be exhibited and contemplated. *The Secret life* shares some of the characteristics of these artifacts, such as the alteration of the function of the object, the attack on the principle of artistic mimesis, or the shock value against the public. As a Surrealist, Dalí disagreed with the Aristotelian principle of "artistic mimesis," for any work of art does not imitate life or reality, but transforms it in the creative process itself. The autobiographical pretension to reproduce the life of the writer is then a forgery because, within the structures of Surrealism, memory and representation imply deformation and alteration of the object. Dalí questions in his narrative the objectives of autobiography, deconstructing with his techniques of grotesque humor and deformation, the mimetic principle of the genre.

which Dalí paraded what he wished the public to regard as his most intimate desires and obsessions. The book soon became a source of intense disgust to its most prominent reviewers. For instance, Sol A. Davidson in *The Art Digest* in 1943 affirmed:

"Immeasurable ego and sheer insanity are the only two phrases to describe completely the self-announced master of surrealist painting, and now author of a book- Salvador Dalí [...] This book which divulges all that occurs behind the closed curtain of life with no holds barred exposes an inconceivable life fit for a mental institution" (21).

In his review of 1944, George Orwell could hardly conceal his moral outrage and focused on what he regarded as the sick and repulsive character of its narrative, drawings and photographs:

It is a book that stinks. If it were possible for a book to give a physical stink off its pages, this one would – a thought that might please Dalí, who before wooing his future wife for the first time, rubbed himself all over with an ointment made of goat's dung boiled up in fish glue [...] The point is that you have here a direct unmistakable assault on sanity and decency; and even – since some of Dalí's pictures would tend to poison the imagination like a pornographic postcard – on life itself. What Dalí has done and what he has imagined is debatable, but in his outlook, his character, the bedrock decency of a human being does not exist. He is as antisocial as a flea. Clearly such people are undesirable, and a society in which they can flourish has something wrong with it. (141)

This type of reaction, though in better disguised and more attenuated form, is still present today among prominent scholars such as Ian Gibson whose recent biography, entitled *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (1997), deploys a highly charged term – "shameful" – usually associated with the phenomenon of scandal. Gibson engages in a sort of double entendre that reveals not only his misunderstanding of Dalí's tactics of outrage but also his strong disapproval, both aesthetic and moral, of the artist and his work. For instance, in the After-word, Gibson describes Dalí as having "prostituted his talent" as "being a party to fraud," and as "ruthlessly insensitive to the demands of common decency and honesty" (686). Gibson's unwillingness or inability to approach his subject from a morally neutral position leads him to a new scandalized reading of Dalí and his autobiography. Orwell and Gibson are perhaps the sort of earnest ethical readers who lend themselves to a naïve kind of collaboration or conspiracy with a devious master of histrionic scandal such as Dalí. Perhaps, after decades of identifying Dalí with the scandal there now exists in many who come to his work an unconscious and exciting expectation or

desire to experiment an ethical jolt that delivers satisfaction by turning them into witnesses and judges of their own outrage, even as they enjoy the experience at a more secret and visceral level. A major factor in the persistence of scandal in Dalí could be the inherent reluctance of such interpreters (and of the public at large) to disengage from the game and adopt a parodic reading because doing so would of course cancel the scandalized and scandalizing reading in which the critic has already so heavily invested and from which he has possibly derived such (guilty?) pleasures.

One might consider the persistence of scandal in the interpretation of Salvador Dalí as evidence of his success in thwarting a more detached critical approach to his oeuvre, especially to his *Secret Life*. As a craftsman, Dalí obviously understood the importance of artistic perspective to control his work and his public; as a writer, he produced a text that exhibits the paralyzing effects of scandal and perhaps unwittingly made a case for a more detached or nuanced reading as a means to penetrate his ostensibly wild or "lawless" text. In other words, Dalí used scandal not merely as a tool of fame, but, above all, as a technique integrated in his mechanism of creation, indispensable for the Surrealist enterprise of aesthetic revolution, and as a means to manipulate critics and detractors in order to expand the limits of the work of art.

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