

*Anti-Surrealist Cross-Word Puzzles
Breton, Dalí and Print in Wartime America*

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The affiliation between the eccentric Catalan painter Salvador Dalí and the French poet and founder of the Surrealist movement André Breton had been, for the most part, fruitful and amicable since Dalí joined the Surrealist movement in 1929. By the early 1940s however, when both had relocated to America as exiles from the war in Europe, relations between the two had become decidedly acrimonious. This state of affairs was to punctuate the duration of their exile, graphically revealed in the textual record the two left behind in the form of treatises, memoirs, popular articles, transcribed lectures and exegeses. These documents map Breton's efforts, in the form of a campaign of defamation, to differentiate the Surrealist movement as defined by his own directive from that of the "popular" variety of Surrealism associated almost exclusively with Dalí in the United States. Likewise, they trace Dalí's *riposte*, manifest in an attempt to minimize Breton's profile in and contribution to Surrealism before an American audience—and therefore aggrandize his own—via a program of negation: that is, by effectively writing Breton out of the Surrealist record as it was predominantly defined in the United States by Dalí's own art, persona, and largely influential, widely advertised personal "mythology."

The documents in question illuminate Breton's expulsion of Dalí from the Surrealist movement in 1939, the final result of Breton's and many other Surrealists' increasing concern over some of Dalí's "obsessions" or interests. Highly unpalatable to the avant-garde of the period, these included the proliferation of Dalí's

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commercial activities, a disturbing interest in the figure of Adolph Hitler, and what some suspected was an ever more reactionary stance verging on the approbation of fascism. According to Dalí scholar Fèlix Fanés, Dalí's discharge from Breton's circle threw him into a crisis—although, in typical Dalínian manner, the artist attempted to turn things to his advantage.¹ Indeed, Dalí quickly and very publicly adopted the stance of being “anti-Surrealist,” part of his larger project of embracing a traditional, anti-revolutionary position endorsing the virtues of family, fidelity, and despite the artist's life-long atheism, Catholicism. It also included becoming what Dalí called “classical,” which involved, in part, rejecting expressionist tendencies, abstraction, automatism, and lauding academic techniques as well as the values and spiritual aura of Renaissance art.

Breton's and Dalí's reactions toward each other in wartime America form as intriguing a study in contrasts as they do a strand of the history of European Surrealism in exile. As such, this survey traces what might be posited as a vicarious “conversation” between Dalí and Breton between 1939 and 1944, when the two increasingly employed various text media to situate themselves and each other in terms of Surrealism in the New World. While not addressing each other directly *per se*, the “paper trail” in question registers the other's presence either by direct reference or conspicuous absence and creates a dialectic that underscores the differences between “orthodox” Surrealism as defined by Breton and his followers in Paris between the wars, and what might be termed “Dalínian” or “commercial” Surrealism—not necessarily endorsed by Dalí, but certainly useful to him, and primarily associated with the artist and his work in North America.

The artistic climate that the Surrealists and other members of the European avant-garde encountered as they filtered into the United States in the late 1930s and early 1940s was of a completely different genus from that of Paris and other European centers of creative activity. After the First World War, the United States had entered a period of relative isolationism that lasted until 1941 with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In the 1930s increasing emphasis was placed on art by and for Americans and discourses circulating around the “national spirit” had gained considerable currency with artists and writers. Much of this had to do with President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, which involved programs and initiatives established and run throughout the later 1930s and 1940s to aid the unemployed and to revitalize the U.S. economy, including the Public Works of Art Project and The Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration. These ventures employed thousands of artists, and resulted in the generation of vast amounts of artwork, much of which was located or exhibited in public spaces and therefore accessible to

a wide American demographic. As such, American artists, and those in New York in particular, began to develop a sense of collectivism. The long-term effects would prove crucial to the artists later known as the Abstract Expressionists, who, post-war, were to witness New York City transform into the world's new art capital.²

Despite the isolationism of the interwar years, and the emphasis on cultural nationalism, many American artists and intellectuals had a reasonable awareness of contemporary cultural events in Europe, and were frequently exposed to the influential European modernists through publications, exhibitions, travel and word of mouth. Nevertheless, according to Sam Hunter the new generation of the 1930s “still labored under the heavy yoke of American provincialism,” and the general public, as well as the majority of culturally-minded Americans, continued to favor and champion the Midwest Regionalists and, particularly in Eastern urban centers, still very much preferred the Social Realists.³ As such, when Dalí, Breton and others began to arrive as exiles from Europe in the late 1930s, contemporary American art for the most part veered between the Social Realism favored by the public and various formalist derivations of European abstraction, although a certain faction of younger artists were also exploring various techniques, processes, styles, and subjects, including collage, automatism, and various filmic and photographic techniques.⁴

Dalí fled the occupation of Paris to the United States with his wife Gala in late August of 1940, and the couple was to remain in America until 1948. Unlike most of the other Surrealist exiles who experienced a number of obstacles, hardships and hostilities in the New World, there was much to make Dalí feel welcome in America. As something of side-show to the dominant American models of art practice, he had already enjoyed celebrity as an artist and as a public figure for several years. Indeed, Dalí had made a tremendous impact on the American side of the Atlantic throughout the 1930s through exhibitions, press articles, commercial enterprises and his three highly eventful and widely publicized voyages in 1934, 1936 and 1939. By 1939 Dalí had exhibited in two Carnegie Internationals, participated in the Universal Exhibition in Chicago in 1933-34, and had had four one-man shows at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. He had also taken part with Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst and Man Ray in the first Surrealist exhibition on U.S. soil, *Newer Super Realism*, held at the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut in 1931, and showed in the important *Surrealism: Paintings, Drawings and Photographs* at the Julien Levy Gallery in 1932. In 1936 Dalí exhibited twelve paintings in the seminal group exhibition *Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where he had also lectured in 1935.

As if this list were not impressive enough, diversifying from his already

broad output of painting, prints, assemblage-making and writing, Dalí's ballet *Bacchanale* premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1939. He also orchestrated the fantastic Surrealist funhouse for the 1939 New York World's Fair, *The Dream of Venus* pavilion, which he eventually abandoned in protest of the interference by his sponsors. As a testament to his celebrity in America in the 1930s, Dalí appeared in *Vanity Fair* in 1934 and on the cover of *Time* magazine in 1936, while his 1939 Julien Levy Gallery exhibition—a resounding success—was featured in *Life* magazine, *Art Digest* and many other broad-circulation periodicals.⁵ Considering the amount of projects Dalí had brought to fruition, and the remarkable amount of press the Spanish artist had garnered throughout the 1930s, Surrealist scholar Martica Sawin notes that, “it is small wonder that for the American public the term Surrealism was synonymous with the name Dalí.”⁶

While Dalí was immensely prolific in terms of creative production in the United States in the 1930s, it was his comedic, entertaining persona, and the highly accessible nature of his art that so seized the country's interest. The youthful, handsome, highly photogenic Catalan always put on an engaging show for the press, and he even produced a series of comic drawings for the mass-circulation periodical *American Weekly*.⁷ Dalí had become a genuine sensation. In his *History of Surrealist Painting*, Marcel Jean writes that “Dalí had launched one of those crazes which regularly grip everyone in America, from top to bottom of the social scale, like an epidemic.” “The Dalínian version of Surrealism,” he continues, “was apparently the latest brilliant successor to the Coué method, mah-jongg, the Charleston, the song *Valencia*, and so many other dazzling and ephemeral fashions.”⁸ In an article on Surrealism and popular entertainment, Keith L. Eggener indexes this particular thread of discourse on Surrealism in the 1930s United States that played a key role in its reception, “drained of its political content and reconstituted as entertainment, Surrealism was frequently cast as the close cousin of cartoons and popular cinema.”⁹

Dalí's popularity in the United States had much to do with the artist's natural affinity for publicity and his canny showmanship. However, the Dalí “phenomenon” in the U.S. is complex and involves the consideration of artist's work and intent as much as the American public's relationship to and understanding of the “art world,” the media, and the parties invested in making copy or money out of Dalí's product and personality. Attempting to map Dalí's rise “from arch-Surrealist in 1932 to the darling of American consumer culture and the *bête noir* of Modernist criticism in 1939 . . . ,” Dalí scholar Robert Lubar suggests that it follows

...a complex trajectory, marked by ideological transformations

within the Surrealist movement, the increasingly embattled position of Modernist art on the world stage, and the ability of Madison Avenue advertising firms to recuperate the historical avant-garde's revolutionary political and social initiatives as new forms of commercial equity.¹⁰

Considering these factors, Dalí's popularity in the United States might also be understood as performing a mediatory role amid what was at the time a pronounced disparity between "fine" art and mass or popular culture, or what Thomas Crow has deemed, "a necessary brokerage between high and low," very much "as a kind of research and development arm of the culture industry."¹¹

For many Americans, Dalí represented that vague entity known as the avant-garde or the "European [read *French*] artist." His work, executed in a highly appealing and comfortably familiar academic style, provided entrée to what could otherwise be a perplexing phenomenon of modern art to a demographic not familiar with the intellectual and conceptual specifics of the Paris-based historical avant-garde. While Dalí's symbolism was complex, bizarre and occasionally "shocking," it was nevertheless easily explained as "Freudian," and to be deciphered according to Dalí's "personal symbology."¹² Collaterally, Dalí's embracing of popular media, such as cartoons, funhouses (and not to forget he was very soon to collaborate, or attempt to collaborate, with Disney, Hitchcock and Harpo Marx), and his willingness to appear in popular magazines as content or contributor, cannot be underestimated in helping to acclimatize the New World to European vanguard art or in bridging the gap between so-called high culture and popular or "low" production in the 1930s and '40s.

Dalí borrowed from American showmen such as P.T. Barnum and Robert Ripley, whose robust personae were highly present throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as he did the comic satire and gentle social critiques inherent in the work of comedians such as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and his personal favourite, Harry Langdon.¹³ As such Dalí's performance—and there is much to suggest it was a conscious and highly calculated performance—as the eccentric, effete, egotistical and absurd artist, functioned not only to entertain, but to deflate the gravitas of modernist art in a self-reflexive manner that had a good deal in common with what would later be described as "postmodern irony." In other words, Dalí simultaneously made accessible and rendered ridiculous the concept of the avant-garde and modern art in general, to a popular audience often mystified and frequently antagonistic to the increasing flow of European vanguard art into the

American cultural arena (Fig. 1).¹⁴

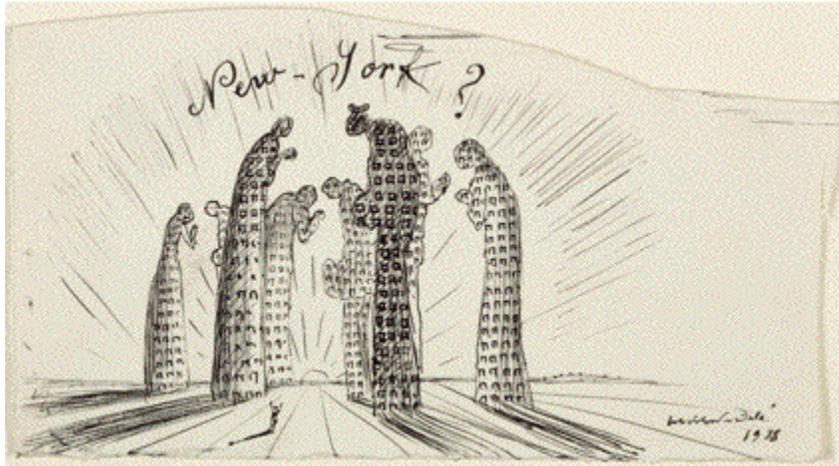


Fig. 1. Salvador Dalí. *New York?* Illustration for *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, 1938, ink on paper fragment. © Salvador Dalí, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres, Spain (2007) / SODRAC (2007).

While Dalí clearly had garnered “mass appeal” by the mid- to late-1930s, a few more culturally-minded Americans had come into contact with Surrealism as early as the mid-1920s through travel or word of mouth, and some had been to Paris and had been exposed in varying degrees to the movement there. For the most part, however, information about art was circulated via exhibition catalogues, journals, magazines, broadsheets and newspapers. According to Eggener, American newspapers and magazines had begun discussing Surrealism with increasing regularity as early as 1925, just one year after the publication of André Breton’s first *Surrealist Manifesto*. “By the mid-1930s,” he documents, “articles on Surrealist art and artists could be found in a broad range of illustrated high-circulation periodicals, which included *Time*, *Life* and *Newsweek*.”¹⁵ Many Americans, however, encountered Surrealism *à la mode* through the annals of fashion and advertising as Surrealist imagery, and what came to be seen as the Surrealist “style” became increasingly *de rigueur*. Appropriating Dalí’s popularity as much as the cachet of vanguard or “fine” art, the predominantly Dalinian inflection of Surrealism permeated visual merchandising and fashion production of all kinds, from the designs of dresses, hats and jewelry, to the covers and fashion layouts of *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar* and *Vanity Fair*, to shop windows and fashion shows. By 1940 Surrealism, or at least a commercialized, prettified illusionist version of it, had become the new idiom for the fantasy language of fashion in the U.S. much as it had in Paris of the later 1930s.¹⁶

While Dalí, from all accounts, sailed smoothly into American waters and seemed to fill a real niche in the cultural arena there, for Breton, the transition was reportedly a painful one fraught with hardship and alienation. With his wife Jacqueline and young daughter Aube, Breton arrived in the U.S. via Martinique in June 1941, and he was to remain until 1946. The family had very little money, and to make matters worse, Breton refused to learn English, which resulted in social isolation, poor employment opportunities, and even cost him a teaching position at the recently founded New School for Social Research.¹⁷ According to his biographer, Mark Polizzotti, Breton justified his unwillingness to learn English so as not to “‘tarnish’ his celebrated command of French,” or to avoid embarrassing himself with a poor grasp and pronunciation of the English language, although the gesture was widely read as one of arrogance.¹⁸ As follows, Polizzotti maintains that while Surrealist visual culture had become familiar in America, the language barrier prevented the movement’s ideas and precepts from being disseminated there. The small number of Breton’s or other Surrealists’ writings that were available in English often appeared in poor translations. Besides, Eggener suggests, in part because few Surrealist texts had been translated into English before 1936, “few English-speaking critics knew or cared that this odd little band of francophone malcontents had set their sights on liberating human consciousness from reason and, as Breton put it in his 1924 manifesto, from ‘aesthetic or moral concern.’”¹⁹

While relations had disintegrated between Breton and Dalí by the time they had both taken residence in America, the friendship and creative alliance between the two when they first met in 1928 and when Dalí joined the Surrealist movement in 1929, was mutually enthusiastic and beneficial, despite some confusion over scatological references in Dalí’s painting *The Lugubrious Game*. In an interview published in 1973, Dalí states of Breton that “he had immediately assumed the guise of a second father to me . . . The Surrealists to me were a kind of nourishing placenta and I believed in Surrealism as in the tablets of the Law.”²⁰ According to Polizzotti, in reality Dalí’s response to Breton involved a mixture of awe and disdain. “On the one hand,” he writes, “he could only admire the man who had organized such an exciting and far-reaching aesthetic current, word of which had reached him even in provincial Cadaqués.” Conversely, he was at the same time, “disappointed to find the Surrealist group subject to so many moral strictures . . . which reminded him of the paternal constraints he had expected to leave back home.”²¹

Breton originally viewed Dalí as the “incarnation of the Surrealist spirit,” a boon to the movement which, already several years underway when Dalí joined, was showing signs of creative stagnation.²² Dalí’s “paranoia-critical method,”

corroborating inquiries into the nature of perception and cognition by the respected psychiatrist Jacques Lacan, was especially welcomed, since it “enhance[ed] Surrealism’s aura as a pioneer force in the study of the mind.”²³ Waxing elegiac, Breton wrote that “with Dalí it is perhaps the first time that our mental windows have opened completely and that we are going to feel ourselves slipping upwards towards the trapdoor to the fulvous sky.”²⁴ It also helped that Dalí had the ability to make Breton laugh “until tears came to his eyes.”²⁵

The relationship between Dalí and Breton was not always amicable, however, and in an attempt to “maintain the purity of the movement” in 1934 Breton required Dalí to defend what seemed to him to be an overly enthusiastic interest in the person of Adolf Hitler. After undergoing a trial before the Paris Surrealists (and apparently putting on quite a spectacle in the process) the Spaniard managed to persuade Breton that his interest in Germany’s dictator was not politically motivated but was a “pathological phenomenon.”²⁶ Nevertheless, over the next five years, Breton became increasingly uneasy about aspects of Dalí’s behavior, including what read as a reactionary stance, an aversion to the communist and revolutionary leanings of the Surrealist group, and Dalí’s increasingly commercial- and publicity-oriented behavior. The direction of his painting, in particular his *trompe-l’oeil* images, also became an issue, and by May 1939, in what was to be the final edition of the Surrealist journal *Minotaure*, Breton refers to it as “already threatened by profound, real monotony. By dint of trying to refine his paranoiac method,” the poet sniffs, Dalí “is beginning, as one can see, to lapse into entertainment of the nature of *crossword puzzles*.”²⁷ Worst of all, especially for Breton, fundamentally opposed to colonialism and maintaining a profound interest in what were at the time considered “primitive” cultures and objects, in the same issue he reveals,

(I have this from Dalí himself and I’ve taken the trouble to make sure that no humor was involved) that all the present trouble in the world is racial in origin, and that the best solution, agreed on by all the white races, is to reduce all the dark races to slavery. I do not know what doors such a declaration can open for the author in Italy and America, the countries between which he now oscillates, but I know which they’ll close. After this I cannot see how, in independent-minded circles, his message could be taken seriously.²⁸

Breton’s condemnation in *Minotaure* effectively dismissed Dalí from the Surrealist movement, although what seems to have been an attempt on Breton’s

behalf at “damage control” came too late. Dalí’s public escapades, commercialism, suspect politics and what Breton and others viewed as the decline of his work had overshadowed the Surrealist movement to the extent, or so Breton was convinced, of disaffecting those with a serious interest in the Surrealist project. In a letter to the Austrian-born painter Wolfgang Paalen written in the summer of 1939, Breton adumbrates his own disinterest in the never-to-be realized October issue of *Minotaure*. “I’ve ignored the issue of *Minotaure* envisaged for October . . .” he writes. “International problems have existed for months, the newspapers talk about it . . . it’s a period of tremendous confusion, with rare chances for hope.” While the immanent war was a prime concern, another great problem for the journal was Dalí. “A lot of criticism of *Minotaure* is going on,” Breton informs Paalen. “Mabille wrote that Dalí has killed sales of the latest number in America and in France the reception has been no less reserved.”²⁹

Breton plainly had sufficient motive to distance himself and Surrealism in general from Salvador Dalí. Given the latter’s penchant for courting ire, it is equally as likely that Dalí was intentionally inciting a possible schism with Breton with his racist pronouncement and offensive gestures that are problematic to decipher other than as provocations. Whether or not Dalí was genuinely racist, however, remains an open question. Conversely, rejecting “the name of the father” was something of a mandate for Dalí, who in the epigraph for his May 1952 entry of his *Diary of a Genius*, quoted Freud’s dictum that “he is a hero who revolts against paternal authority and conquers it.”³⁰

In *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*, the autobiography he penned during his exile and published in 1942 in English in America, Dalí surreptitiously explains his *modus operandi* in terms of the power structure of Surrealism and, implying a bead drawn at Breton, his need to eradicate those who threatened his primacy and individuality:

The Surrealist group appeared to me the sole one offering me an adequate outlet for my activity. Its chief, André Breton, seemed to me irreplaceable in his role of visible chief. I was going to make a bid for power, and for this my influence had to remain occult, opportunistic, and paradoxical. I took definite stock of my positions, of my strongholds, of my inadequacies and of the weaknesses and resources of my friends . . . One maxim became axiomatic for my spirit: If you decide to wage a war for the total triumph of your individuality, you must begin by inexorably destroying those who have

the greatest affinity with you. All alliance depersonalizes; everything that tends to the collective is your death; use the collective, therefore, as an experiment, after which strike hard, and remain alone!³¹

This passage is, of course, revisionist in light of his by then broken relations with Breton, yet it clearly outlines Dalí's need to "exceed his master." As Georges Borgeaud points out, "throughout Dalí's writings one finds a jealous combativeness toward contemporaries . . . André Breton was his favorite target. Their quarrels were fed by their mutual admiration. Neither one wanted to be treated as secondary."³²

In light of this animus, complicated as it was by the terrors of war and the turmoil of exile, the reconciliation of the break made in Paris seemed unlikely on the other side of the Atlantic. However, according to Dalí, he had telephoned Breton to welcome him to New York on the very day of the latter's arrival, and they made plans to meet the following day. "But the same evening," Dalí explains, "friends told me that Breton had just been calumniating me again, calling me an admirer of Hitler. This was too false and dangerous a thing to do, at that period, for me still to agree to see him."³³ Nevertheless, communications to and opinions about each other were to appear in a circuitous fashion in various print formats in America throughout the duration of their exile.

Dalí speaks frankly about his relationship with the press in the *Secret Life*, and although patronizing at times, his flattering comments and welcoming attitude seemed to work wonders for oiling the public relations machinery in the New World. "I love getting publicity," he writes, "and if I am lucky enough to have the reporters know who I am, I will give them some of my own bread to eat, just as Saint Francis did with his birds."³⁴ American reporters, Dalí writes, "were unquestionably far superior to European reporters. They had an acute sense of 'non-sense,' and one felt, moreover, that they knew their job dreadfully well." Further comparing the methods of European to American journalists, he writes that:

Europe has a sense of history, but not that of journalism. The American journalist, on the other hand, starts from a criterion based on instantaneity, in which his all-powerful instinct of biological competition comes first and foremost, enabling him to shoot on the fly those rare and fleeting birds of actuality which he will bring back still warm and bleeding and toss on the desk of his editor in chief. . .³⁵

Judging from attitudes revealed in his writing, Dalí very much saw his dealings

with the press as a sort of blood sport, and as such, provided plenty of those “rare and fleeting birds of actuality” for press-hounds to pursue: the artist was always good copy and willing to oblige all comers by putting on an often extravagantly newsworthy performance. Dalí himself had always been a prolific writer of essays, articles and opinion pieces for arts periodicals. Beginning in his teenage years, he wrote in the Spanish journal *L'Amic de les Arts*, and later he contributed to Breton's *Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution*, the later Surrealist forum *Minotaure*, as well as other French Surrealist and arts-related publications. Seeking a wider and more popular audience, Dalí took his cue from U.S.-style reportage and publishing tendencies, and in the 1930s began to illustrate and write for a number of mass-market American magazines, ranging from *American Weekly* to *Vogue*, *Life* and *Esquire*.

Breton, of course, was also a prolific writer, and in addition to his creative work, produced manifestoes, catalogue entries for exhibitions, and articles for various avant-garde publications. He also had an ongoing vehicle in the journals he had founded himself or helped to found, including the Dada publication *Littérature*, begun in 1919, *Le Révolution surréaliste*, published from 1924 to 1929 and *Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, which ran from 1930 to 1933. In America, however, Breton was at a great disadvantage concerning the press. If the language barrier were not enough, Breton was practically unknown in America except among a small coterie of American avant-garde artists, intellectuals, gallery owners, museum curators and directors such as A. Everett “Chick” Austin, Alfred Barr, Peggy Guggenheim, and the Surrealist exiles. Very few of Breton's writings had been translated into English or were available in the U.S. Even so, if such materials had been available, and Surrealism had enjoyed representation from “authentic” French sources such as Breton, it might well have been crushed under the weight of its own gravitas.

Breton's highly intellectual, communist-directed vision simply had very little appeal to the American public, and his politics, which reflect from every facet of his prose, were clearly too radical and too situated in a European paradigm to be attractive to, or easily grasped by Breton's new demographic. As Julien Levy wrote regarding his 1932 exhibition, “If Breton had been there at that time [when Surrealism was becoming known in the U.S.] there would no doubt have been a more orthodox representation. Manifesto heavy, it would have collapsed of its own rigidity.”³⁶ Also assessing the situation, Dickran Tashjian writes that Breton was “consistently excluded from the American magazines by virtue of his outspoken revolutionary stance,” while “[i]mplicitly set against Breton was Dalí,” who is cited as personifying the Surrealist school of the moment.³⁷ Needless to say, there was no great demand for Breton or his writing in America, especially in the more popular

print sources.

That is, of course, assuming that Breton was *interested* in writing for wider circulation periodicals. Tashjian records that, at least in the early years of Surrealism, Breton “managed to keep his writing free from commerce and was intolerant to the extreme of those who did not, threatening them with expulsion from his Surrealist company.”³⁸ Breton, it seems, labored to maintain an elite distance from social concession, and by 1930 he was to state that it was “absolutely essential to keep the public from *entering* if one wished to avoid confusion.”³⁹ Nevertheless, a year later, under sway of the French Communist Party, Breton was to pin hopes on his literary output, and on Surrealism in general, to attract the populace. That year, he was to inform the poet Paul Eluard that he felt he could adjust his manner of writing to appeal to the proletariat, “since I don’t want to provide any food for thought to the aristocracy and bourgeoisie. I aim to write for the masses.”⁴⁰

From a communist perspective, which Breton maintained until he became alienated from the Communist Party directive, “the masses” of the proletariat had a completely different flavor than that of “the American public,” but there is evidence that, despite his seeming ambivalence, Breton did try to gain access to the latter audience. In a letter to the French poet Benjamin Péret, Breton complained of the difficulty he had in garnering interest for his writing from American magazines. The problem was, he surmised, that there was “no curiosity about anything that isn’t immediately commercial; no respect for the written word, which the publisher or editor assumes the right of cutting as he sees fit, dropping whatever he pleases.”⁴¹ Polizzotti documents that Breton had experienced this first hand when he had submitted a “lengthy, and not especially flattering” account of his impressions of Martinique to *Life* magazine. When *Life* editors tried to alter the piece, Breton duly retracted it.⁴²

Despite the cited obstacles, Breton was determined to maintain an “authentic” Surrealist voice in America. This primarily involved discerning his own Surrealism from that of “Avida Dollars,” the now-famous feminine anagram that Breton devised for Dalí. In the footnotes of later editions of his *Anthology of Black Humor*, he distinguishes this Dalí from “the early Dalí, who disappeared in around 1935 to make way for the personality better known as Avida Dollars, fashionable portraitist recently converted to the Catholic faith and to ‘the artistic ideals of the Renaissance.’”⁴³ As for Breton’s new moniker for him, the artist was to turn it to his advantage by embracing it. It was, Dalí was to claim scathingly, “the only truly brilliant intuition Breton ever had in his life.”⁴⁴

Breton’s attempt to keep something of the Surrealist movement alive in its

temporary location involved close contact with a number of other Surrealists and those affiliated with the group who were living in, or had recently arrived as exiles to America in the early 1940s, mostly in and around New York. This roster included, among others, Louis Buñuel, the Greek Poet Nicolaos Calamaris (alias Nicolas Calas), Leonora Carrington, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Stanley William Hayter, André Masson, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, Wolfgang Paalen, Kurt Seligmann and Yves Tanguy. Breton organized activities for the group, including games, debates and gatherings to plan for a proposed Surrealist journal. Before the latter materialized, however, the temporary American Surrealist vehicle was an avant-garde arts periodical entitled *View*, issues of which were subtitled “through the eyes of poets.” Launched in 1940, *View* was the creation of the American poet Charles Henri Ford and the novelist Parker Tyler, and often published writing by and about the Surrealists. The October 1941 issue, supervised by Breton, was exclusively dedicated to Surrealism.

This issue commences with an interview Ford conducted with Breton. Ford asks if Breton has read an article by former Surrealist and staunch communist Louis Aragon in the commercial Hollywood paper *The Clipper*. In response, Breton describes what today is known as “selling out.” “Nothing will be done,” he claims, until a truly clinical study is made of this specifically modern malady . . . which makes these intellectuals radically change their opinions and renounce in a masochistic and exhibitionist manner their own testimony, becoming champions of a cause quite contrary to that which they began serving with great fanfare.”

The next question is “What is the present orientation of Surrealism?” To which Breton replies,

What is ending is the illusion of independence—I will even say the transcendence—of the work of art. In spite of precautions taken at the beginning of Surrealism, and the reiterated warnings that followed, this deviation has not been completely avoided. It shows itself in *egocentrism* (the poet or artist begins to overestimate his own gifts, scorning the precept of Lautréamont: “Poetry must be made by all, not by one,” which remains one of the fundamental tenets of Surrealism); it brings with it *indifferentism* (he sets himself above the *mêlée*, believes himself entitled to an Olympian attitude) and is generally ratified by *stagnation* (he swiftly exhausts his individual resources, is capable only of sapless variation on the threadbare theme).

Breton cites offenders such as Paul Eluard, the French poet and former husband of Dalí's wife Gala, and of course, "Avida Dollars, in New York, hunting sensational publicity to illustrate . . . the beginning of his 'classical period.'" "It is clear," Breton posits, "that neither the one nor the other, even though they persist in advertising it, has anything more in common with Surrealism."⁴⁵ These comments, uttered soon after Breton arrived in North America, are typical of those in a long trail of invective against Dalí in various journals and other print formats during his exile. In language that becomes progressively acerbic, Breton consistently denounces Dalí's *volte face* tendencies, his retrograde aesthetics, his commercialism, and increasingly, what he suspects are Dalí's fascist leanings.

Perhaps Breton's most influential assessment of the history and partisanship of the Surrealist movement to emerge in print in America appeared in his survey of Surrealist painting and sculpture, "Genesis and Perspective of Surrealism in the Plastic Arts," published in English translation in the catalogue for Peggy Guggenheim's Art of this Century gallery in 1942. Breton discusses Dalí "insinuating himself into the Surrealist movement" in 1929, where he "proceeded thereafter by a series of borrowings and juxtapositions." He gives faint praise to the "paranoiac-critical activity" he once exulted and finishes by stating that "in spite of an undeniable ingenuity of staging," Dalí's work,

hampered by an ultra-retrograde technique (return to Meissonier) and discredited by a cynical indifference to the means he used to put himself forward, has for a long time shown signs of panic, and has been able to give only the appearance of weathering the storm temporarily through a process of systematic vulgarization. It is sinking into academicism . . . and since 1936 has had no interest whatever for Surrealism.⁴⁶

In the March 1942 issue of an English Surrealist publication entitled *Arson: An ardent review* produced by the British-based Surrealist Toni del Renzio, is a no less subtle piece describing "Avida Dollars," in which Breton limns a portrait of Dalí that he knows his readership will recognize well enough without having to use his proper name. "The rustle of paper money," Breton writes,

illuminated by the light of the moon and the setting sun, has led the squeaking patent-leather shoes along the corridors of Palladio

into that soft-lit territory of Neo-Romanticism and the Waldorf Astoria. There in the expensive atmosphere of *Town and Country*, that megalomania, so long passed off as a paranoiac intellect, can puff up and hunt its sensational publicity in the blackness of the headlines and the stupidity of the cocktail lounges.⁴⁷

Breton's mention of *Town and Country* could point to a number of Dalí's appearances in the American society magazine, but most likely refers to the publication of a long promotional excerpt, featured in the May 31, 1941 issue, from the yet unpublished *Secret Life*.⁴⁸ While nothing from the period has come to light regarding Dalí's response to this article, the artist did produce a rebuttal some ten years later in the entry for May 1952 of his *Diary of a Genius*. In it he vows to divulge the truth about his expulsion from the Surrealist movement, referencing Breton's mention of his "squeaking patent leather shoes," an obvious metaphor for the noisome pomp of his persona and the "slickness" and inauthenticity of his artistic and political positioning. "To write the following," Dalí explains,

I am wearing for the first time some patent-leather shoes that I have never been able to wear for long at a time, as they are horribly tight. I usually put them on just before giving a lecture. The painful pressure they exert on my feet goads my oratorical capacities to their utmost. This sharp and overwhelming pain makes me sing like a nightingale or like one of those Neapolitan singers who also wear shoes that are too tight . . . So I put on my shoes and I begin to write down, masochistically and without haste the whole truth about my exclusion from the Surrealist movement. I care nothing for the calumnies hurled at me by André Breton, who cannot forgive me for being the last and only Surrealist. But it is important that some day, when I publish these pages, everyone should know what really happened.⁴⁹

Breton's American journal materialized in June 1942 and was entitled *VVV*. According to an explanatory text on the title page of each issue the Vs stood for "a vow," "Victory," a "total view," and "the myth in process of formation beneath the Veil of happenings." V.v.v., of course, is also the acronym for Julius Caesar's famous maxim, "Veni, vidi, vici": "I came, I saw, I conquered," and perhaps intimates Breton's own aspirations to "conquer" America for Surrealism. The first cover was by Max Ernst, and Marcel Duchamp, newly returned to New York, was on the

advisory board. *VVV* saw four issues between 1942 and 1944, and showcased work by William Carlos Williams, Marc Chagall, Picasso and others, including most of the exiled Surrealists – except, of course, Salvador Dalí.⁵⁰

The first issue of *VVV* featured a declaration entitled *Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism or Else*, which reiterated much of the first and second Surrealist manifestoes, and determined to distinguish “authentic” Surrealism from that subject to “the evils which are always the ransom of public favor or notoriety.” According to Breton,

The precautions taken to safeguard integrity within this movement—measures generally regarded as much too severe—nevertheless did not make impossible the false and embittered deposition of . . . the picaresque imposture of that neo-falangist-night-table, Avida Dollars. Even today, Surrealism cannot possibly be held responsible for everything done in its name, openly or secretly . . . What, in a very definite sense, is being done, bears little resemblance to what was desired.⁵¹

Here Breton’s famous soubriquet “Avida Dollars” has been lengthened to include the scathing description of “neo-falangist-night-table,” and as a matter of course, Dalí’s seeming collusion with Franconian fascism becomes an increasing focal point of Breton’s criticism of the artist, as it did in his *Situation of Surrealism Between the Two Wars*, originally an address to Yale students, then published in *VVV*, issues 2-3, in 1943. As the title suggests, Breton’s focus is political, and speaks of Surrealism as a reaction to, and a possible remedy for, the impulses of war. “I insist on the fact that Surrealism can be understood historically only in relation to the war,” he writes. “I mean—from 1919 to 1939—in relation at the same time to the war from which it issues and the war to which it extends.”⁵²

The appearance of Dalí’s *Secret Life*, according to many of the Surrealists, laid bare Dalí’s reactionary stance and more than hinted at a Spanish Nationalist position. More direct was Dalí’s portrait, likely begun in 1941 and finished in 1943, of the Spanish ambassador Juan Francisco de Cardenás, Franco’s official representative in the U.S. Breton’s worst fears about Dalí were, it seemed, being realized. As such, the Surrealist leader’s now requisite disclaimer of Dalí had a name upon it, and that was the name of Generalísimo Francisco Franco. All the more galling was the fact that Dalí could collude with the regime that was responsible for the shooting of the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, the great friend, and likely lover, of Dalí’s

youth. “Freedom is at once madly desirable and quite fragile,” Breton writes, “which gives her the right to be jealous.”

To find oneself in disgrace before her, there is no need to go as far as . . . Avida Dollars who . . . recently, with obsequious academicism, gilded the portrait of the Spanish ambassador, that is to say, of the representative of Franco. Franco! That monster to whom the author of the portrait precisely owes the oppression of his country, not to mention the death of the great poet García Lorca, the best friend of his youth.⁵³

Despite accusations of fascist leanings from those familiar with the artist, and with the workings of European politics, Dalí was extremely adept at “fence-sitting.” He never publicly admitted to any particular political position, although gestures such as the painting of the abovementioned portrait were, as Breton indexes, hardly neutral. But while Europeans might well be equipped to assess the implications of Dalí’s increasingly reactionary direction, Americans, it seems, predominantly unfamiliar with or uninterested in European politics beyond a growing terror of communism and, naturally, the implications of the war for America, easily glossed over this seemingly benign and “daffy” (as *American Weekly* called him) Spanish artist’s partisanship.⁵⁴ One of Dalí’s early biographers notes that “during the Second World War, his political viewpoint might have been under some scrutiny, but an avalanche of publicity so covered his movements that it was forgotten.”⁵⁵ Reynolds Morse, Dalí’s great patron in the United States, perhaps summarized the American view of Dalí’s politics in 1945, in one of his few references to the subject. In an article in *Art in America*, he writes noncommittally that “the fact that Dalí has never come out with any clear-cut statement as to his political leanings means that he and his art are both probably suspected by the party in ascendancy as well as by the party being submerged.”⁵⁶

Having been expunged from the Surrealist movement in Paris, and finding himself the veritable figurehead of a commercial and facile Surrealism in North America, Dalí quickly went to work—as we say today—to “reinvent himself.” Beginning in 1941 Dalí announced that he was something along the lines of an “anti-Surrealist,” that he had “become classic.” Taking up a patently reactionary stance, he embraced Catholicism—although he had been raised an atheist and remained one until that time, ardent marital fidelity, and—inspired by recent sojourns to Italy—the art of the Renaissance. He renounced “decadence,” revolution, and more or less

maligned the Surrealist movement along with—although this was a continuation of an earlier posture—abstraction, and modernism in most of its forms. He now endorsed without reservation a return to academicism, representation, traditionally noble themes and the privileging of technique. While Dalí claimed to be completely apolitical—or at least uninterested in politics, many émigrés, and others familiar with the vagaries of Spanish politics, could not help but note that the artist's newfound enthusiasms were closely aligned with Franco's version of fascism, and that Dalí's about face occurred not long after the dictator seized power in 1939.

Dalí's new direction was first publicly announced in *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí*, a short piece Dalí wrote as the artist's statement for the catalogue for his 1941 show at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. Like many of Dalí's writings, including his private letters, this piece is manifesto-like in tone, in the sense of his clearly stated position, his use of invective against prevailing standards, and his hyperbolic and declarative tenor. Dalí implements the conceit that *The Last Scandal* was written by someone called Felipe Jacinto, an acquaintance of Dalí's who, having recently encountered the artist, was privy to a declaration of Dalí's new direction. (Felipe and Jacinto are Dalí's middle names, and it was an open secret or in-joke that it was Dalí who had penned the work himself.) This narrative device, however, provided the agency for Dalí to speak about himself in the third person, an affectation that he adopted at this period in his life and was to use for the rest of it. It was also a comic device, as Dalí is portrayed (by himself) as something of a self-aggrandizing buffoon who makes ostentatious pronouncements while choking on his Armagnac. Although this self-parodying approach is amusing, it also serves to downplay the didactic and tactical tone of Dalí's proclamations. Of note, there is no mention here of Surrealism or Breton, although collectively they form what Dick Hebdige would call a "present absence"—a "black hole" around which the text is structured, yet not directly addressed.⁵⁷

"Behold my strategic position:" the writer "quotes" Dalí as stating, "the left flank of my imagination has just contacted the right flank of my realism, while the reserve of my technique is on the march and has promised to arrive on time." What this cryptic statement means is revealed further down, where the "narrator" explains the following:

. . . Dalí has found once more the means of remaining alone and totally removing himself from that crowd of followers and imitators which he sees multiplying too rapidly about him, and he does this with a gesture of absolute originality, indeed: during these chaotic

times of confusion, of rout and of growing demoralization, when the warmed over vermicelli of romanticism serves as daily food for the sordid dreams of all the gutter rats of art and literature, Dalí himself, I repeat, finds the unique attitude towards his destiny: TO BECOME CLASSIC! As if he has said to himself: “Now or never.”⁵⁸

Claiming to be “pursuing that research in *Divina Proportione* interrupted since the Renaissance,” the artist then directs his spleen at contemporary vanguard art in its tendencies towards abstraction, geometry, minimalism and automatism.⁵⁹ He extols the virtues of “form,” especially in his newfound formulation as a “classic” artist, that is, the producer of meticulously painted, narrative, representational works, as opposed to those governed by the *informe* or abstract character of much modernist art.⁶⁰

This rhetoric very much echoes the epilogue of the *Secret Life*, which was being written at the same time as this piece appeared, although *The Last Scandal* is a patently more direct format. In chapter thirteen of the *Secret Life*, titled “Metamorphosis, Death, Resurrection,” Dalí explains that:

...to be classic meant that there must be so much of “everything,” and of everything so perfectly in place and hierarchically organized, that the infinite parts of the work would all be the less visible. Classicism thus meant integration, synthesis, cosmogony, faith, instead of fragmentation, experimentation, scepticism.⁶¹

How being “classic” was made manifest in concrete terms involved Dalí moving from the highly personal and self-mythologizing works of the 1930s Surrealist period to traditionally “grand” themes appropriate to wartime and national or political struggle and “renaissance.” That is, he produced narrative works dealing with the trauma of war, featuring aspects of the life cycle, referencing philosophers and philosophy, and works extolling the “poetry of America,” i.e., taking the New World, in a metonymic or metaphorical sense, as their subject.⁶² “Becoming classic” also validated Dalí’s academic technique, and apparently gave him license to diversify into a number of different creative and commercial disciplines in the “spirit of Leonardo,” including “the conquest of all, the systematic interpretation of all metaphysics, of all philosophy, and of all science . . .”⁶³ In short, “being classic” meant more or less the opposite of being Surrealist.

While Breton sought to distance himself and the Surrealist movement proper

from Dalí via a program of persistent denunciation in many of his “public” writings, Dalí, on the other hand, seems to have retaliated by simply “disappearing” Breton from the Surrealist record as he wrote it. This, he knew, was a very powerful gesture on his behalf, seeing as Surrealism’s “voice” in America was none other than his own. It was at this time that Dalí began to claim “I am Surrealism,” and although Breton and Surrealism loomed large in Dalí’s life in the decade before he wrote his memoirs, Dalí alludes to Breton only a scant six times in his four hundred page autobiography, and even then mostly in passing (Fig. 2).

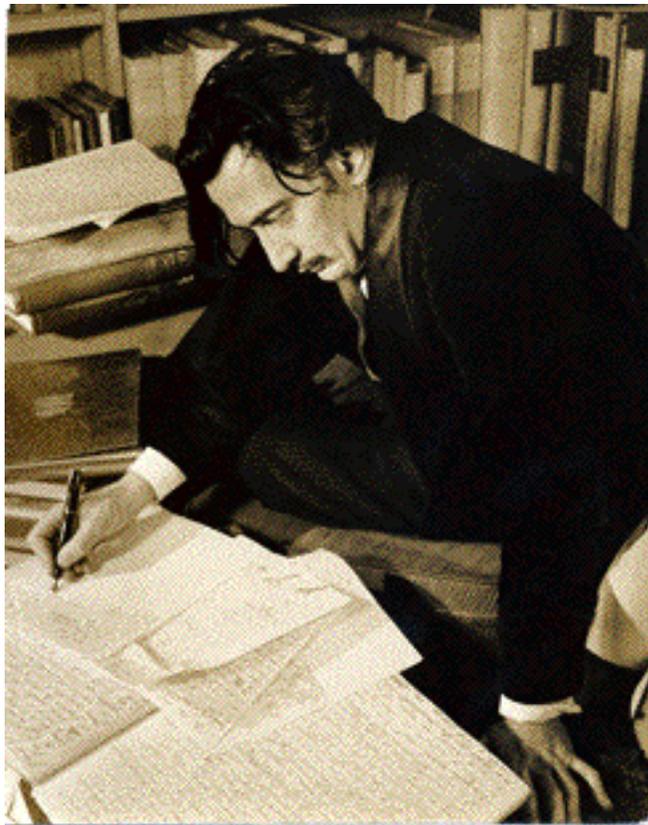


Fig. 2. Eric Schaal. Photograph of Salvador Dalí writing *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* at Hampton Manor, near Bowling Green, Virginia, in 1941. © Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres / SODRAC (2007).

As far as the Surrealist movement is treated in the *Secret Life*, Dalí frequently mentions it in terms of the Paris group, and as such, as something stagnant, “cancerous,” and spent. “From time to time,” he writes, he and Gala “received the

visit of a small group of intellectual Surrealist friends who all hated one another passionately and who were beginning to be gnawed by the canker of left and right ideologies.”⁶⁴ Referring to the “socialist ideal,” and by implication, Surrealism’s affiliation with communism, he expounds upon the futility of revolutions, and writes “I am thinking of you, companions, comrades of nothingness! . . .”⁶⁵ Later, Dalí notes the “disorganization and the incapacity of the Surrealist group to carry through anything requiring a minimum of practical effort directed to no matter what end.”⁶⁶ Recalling a return to the French capital, he sniffs that “upon my arrival in Paris I learned that the Surrealist group had found nothing better to do during my absence than to set up the weariless continuation of . . . pure automatism in opposition to my new search for the esthetic hierarchization of irrational imagination.” Proposing an exhibition where entries would be arranged in alphabetical order, Dalí pits himself against his allegedly torpid colleagues, and notes that “I was going, then, to put myself outside the order of the alphabet of Surrealism, since, whether I wished it or not, I was Surrealism.”⁶⁷

If the latter statement did not infuriate Breton, who was to voice the very same phrase at a later date, then, especially considering Breton’s strongly-stated concerns about Dalí’s supposed fascination with Hitler, Dalí’s reference to *Mein Kampf* would.⁶⁸ At the beginning of chapter eleven, under the title “My Battle,” Dalí places, in the spirit of the manifesto, a list of thirty things that he is “for” and “against.” Among these are: “Against Equalitarianism—For Hierarchization,” “Against the Collective—For the Individual,” “Against Politics—For Metaphysics,” “Against Abstraction—For the Concrete,” “Against Revolution—For Tradition,” “Against Savage Objects—For Ultra-Civilized 1900 Objects,” “Against African-Modern Art—For the Art of the Renaissance” and “Against Philosophy—For Religion.”⁶⁹ Needless to say, for the politically left, avowed revolutionary and atheist Breton, references to Hitler, the privileging of tradition, religion, hierarchy, and the refusal of politics, equality, and revolution—not to mention of “savage objects,” which he personally collected, must have seemed like a direct personal affront.⁷⁰

Certainly this sort of discourse—whether provocation, genuine declaration, both, or something in between, certainly did not escape the notice of the other Surrealists such as Max Ernst, a former lover of Dalí’s wife Gala in the 1920s, and an artist with whom Dalí had a history of strained relations. To make matters worse, like many of the other Surrealist artists in America, Ernst also had to battle against Dalí’s colossal and, from a progressive point of view, decidedly dubious reputation, which overshadowed and clearly debased the original Surrealist ethos of creative, social and political integrity. In a telling moment, Dalí allegedly encountered Ernst

on the street one day in New York. After refusing to shake Dalí's hand, Ernst stated, "I don't shake the hand of a fascist." Ever ready to avoid stating a political position, Dalí replied, "I am not a fascist, I'm only an opportunist."⁷¹

Similarly, in the June 1941 issue of *View*, Nicolas Calas, a poet and member of the Surrealist movement, wrote a scathing assessment of what he saw as Dalí's new position after seeing his 1941 exhibition at the Julien Levy Gallery. Describing the artist as "the painter of Franco's ambassador" and a "stinking Don Quixote," he writes, "how easy to protest in the name of Pure Art: 'You attack Dalí, after having praised him, because he no longer believes in revolutionary values! He has rediscovered Spain, penitence, Catholicism; he adores form and tries to draw as well as Ingres.'" Poignantly referring to Dalí's ubiquitous crutch motif in his painting, he adds that "those who would like to see crutches in such abundance can go to Europe after the war."⁷² Most notably, Calas entitles the piece "Anti-Surrealist Dalí," an epithet which Dalí characteristically turns to his advantage by writing in a footnote in the *Secret Life* that:

Just recently . . . I felt that I needed, among other things to have someone write a pamphlet on me bearing a title something like "Anti-Surrealist Dalí." For various reasons I needed this type of "passport," for I am myself too much of a diplomat to be the first to pronounce such a judgment. The article was not long in appearing (the title was approximately the one I had chosen), and it appeared in a modest but attractive review . . .⁷³

Although Dalí is satisfied to be described as an "anti-Surrealist," he does not renounce Surrealism all together. He proposes a new direction for the movement in the epilogue of the *Secret Life*, where he writes, "Yes! I announce its life, I announce the future birth of a Style . . . [I]t is necessary to try to make of Surrealism something solid, complete and classic as the work of museums."⁷⁴

While the proposed directions for Surrealism and the combative dialogue between Dalí, Breton and others documented here must have been as confusing at the time as they are now, summing up the situation *in situ* was an remarkably clear-sighted and deeply acerbic review in the February 1943 issue of *American Mercury* by Klaus Mann, the German writer of the celebrated novel *Mephisto*. Mann mingled with the avant-garde émigrés in New York, and understood the European political situation and the challenges of immigration and "otherness" in the United States (he was Jewish, German and homosexual) as well as the cultural machinery of

America, having lived there on and off, and being, in fact, in the very process of becoming a U.S. citizen in 1944. Disgusted by what he considers the “fiddling” of the Surrealists while Europe was burning, he names his article “Surrealist Circus,” positions Surrealism as profoundly socially irresponsible, and concedes to Hitler’s pronouncements on their art as degenerate.⁷⁵ “Not everything defamed by Hitler as ‘cultural Bolshevism’” he writes, “is necessarily culture.”

Surrealism, for instance, is not. Indeed . . . Surrealism itself shares the spirit of illogic, negation, vandalism that has found expression politically in Nazism. If the Hitler program, in Hermann Rauschning’s phrase, is a revolution of nihilism, Surrealism is the revolution of nihilism in art.”⁷⁶

Despite charges of fascist leanings by other artists and émigrés, Mann is relatively sympathetic to the Spanish painter here, writing that it is incorrect to assume “that Surrealism is the personal hobby of an ingenious young man named Salvador Dalí. Though the talented Catalan may be regarded by the uninitiated as the very embodiment of Surrealism, he is in fact not even a genuine Surrealist. We have the word of the high priests of the cult for that.” Mann saves his antipathy for the “high priests,” stating that

The point of the matter is that there is no such thing as Surrealism. There are only Surrealists—a coterie of poets, journalists, painters, sculptors and suckers who stick together, purport to admire one another, and abuse those who don’t belong to their set. The chief and founder of the Surrealist tribe is a French critic and visionary named André Breton. His first lieutenant is Max Ernst, a painter of German birth. If you want to become a Surrealist—which offers certain social and emotional advantages—you need the blessing of these two gentlemen. They may reject you regardless of how ecstatically Surrealist you may be in thought and conduct and artistic output.

As a final blow—no doubt to Dalí’s delight—Mann tosses Surrealism to the wind as spent, watered down, and hopelessly irrelevant and irreverent considering the period. “The sad fact is that the group around Breton and Ernst has lost much of its luster of late;” he writes, “maybe it finds more competition in New York than in Paris. Not that the Surrealist circus has lost its appeal altogether—on the contrary, it

is still prospering—but it is no longer what it used to be in the old days.” According to Mann, Surrealism was “Deplorably passé in Montmartre and Montparnasse even before the war,” although, Surrealism now “has a new lease on life along Park Avenue and in the 57th street galleries . . . Of course, some of the more daring gadgets have to be sacrificed – the anti-capitalist and anti-God stuff, for example, is a trifle too hot for Park Avenue palates.”⁷⁷ In the light of this view of Surrealism as irresponsible, démodé, hopelessly cliquish and pandering, Dalí’s “jumping ship” via Breton’s (most likely provoked) expulsion proved to be an extremely canny move on his part—providing agency to distance himself from the obsolescent movement, and to endeavor to launch his own “Style” on fresh ground.

After the *Secret Life*, the writing Dalí produced in America became noticeably less polemic. In 1944 he published his first and only novel, *Hidden Faces*, as well as a few rather whimsical articles in *Esquire*, *Life*, and other magazines. Dalí’s oppositional stance toward Surrealism relaxed after this “extreme” period of classicism during the war years, although as far as Edward Alden Jewell of the *New York Times* was concerned, by 1945 Dalí had so tamed Surrealism that it had “become as comfortable as a pair of scuffed old-fashioned slippers.” Ringing the death knell for the movement’s revolutionary possibilities, Dalí had effectively “put Surrealism in curl papers for the night and given it a glass of milk.”⁷⁸ Breton published a fourth, final issue of *VVV* in the spring of 1944, but turned his sights to creative writing for the duration of his stay in North America. Frustrated by the constant struggle against the prevailing American image of Surrealism as defined by an Avida Dollars whose commercial activities were multiplying at an alarming rate, and by the inability to keep up the Surrealist momentum in the New World, Breton wrote to Péret that the three years he had struggled to establish the Surrealist movement in the United States had “been a resounding failure,” and as far as he was concerned, “the wind of dispersal is by far the stronger.”⁷⁹ Ultimately, the *mêlée* played out in text and page between Dalí and Breton in the New World sputtered out toward the end of the war, as did, for the most part, the Surrealist movement, which would never regain its luster after the schism between its two core members, or its transplantation in a foreign land.

1 Félix Fanés, “The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí,” in Dawn Ades, ed., *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, exh. cat. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 460.

2 Sam Hunter, John Jacobus and Daniel Wheeler, *Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*,

- Photography*, 3rd edition (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2004), 265-66, and Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 2nd edition (New York: Harry N. Abrams and New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 1109.
- 3 Sam Hunter, "Surrealism in Transition: Paris and New York," in Nancy Hall-Duncan and Sam Hunter, *The Surrealist Vision: Europe and the Americas*, exh. cat. (Greenwich, CN: Bruce Museum of Art and Science, 1998), 47.
- 4 Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1995), xi.
- 5 Dawn Ades, ed., *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 489-98 and Isabelle Dervaux, *Surrealism U.S.A.*, exh. cat. (New York: National Academy Museum, and Germany: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 14.
- 6 Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile*, 78.
- 7 The series ran between December 16, 1934 and July 7, 1935, and included amusing cartoons by Dalí of his views of New York, "The American City," Broadway, "American Country Life," "Gangsterism," and a "Crazy Movie Scenario of M. Dalí, the Super-Realist," among others. See Michael R. Taylor, "Gangsterism and Goofy Visions of New York, 1935," in Ades, ed., *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 240-42.
- 8 Marcel Jean, *History of Surrealist Painting* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 261.
- 9 Keith L. Eggener, "An Amusing Lack of Logic": Surrealism and Popular Entertainment," *American Art*, vol. 7, no. 4 (Autumn 1993): 32.
- 10 Robert S. Lubar, "Modern Art and Mass Culture in America: The Case of Salvador Dalí in 1939," in Félix Fanés, ed., *Dalí: Mass Culture*, exh. cat. (Fundación "la Caixa," Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí and the Museo Nacional Centre de Arte Reina Sofía, 2004), 239.
- 11 Thomas Crow, *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 35.
- 12 Reynolds A. Morse, "The Dream World of Salvador Dalí," *Art in America* 33, no. 3 (July 1945): 112.
- 13 "Harry Langdon is one of the purest flowers of the screen, and of our CIVILIZATION as well," Dalí writes in his 1929 essay ". . . Always, Above Music, Harry Langdon," published in the Spanish journal *L'Amic de les Arts* no. 31, March 31, 1929. "Compared to him Keaton is a mystic and Chaplin a degenerate; the good side of Chaplin is his primitive mechanization and not his arty transcendental sentimentalism." Quoted in Salvador Dalí, *Oui: The Paranoid-Critical Revolution, Writings 1927-1933*, Robert Descharnes, ed., Yvonne Shafir, trans. (Boston: Exact Change, 1998), 80.
- 14 This, of course holds true in the United States as much now as it did in the 1930s and early 1940s. Dalí is still one of the most popular and best-known artists in America. If not among the intelligentsia, then certainly among the "masses," who maintain a robust trade in Dalí reproductions, flock to retrospectives and exhibitions of his work and to the highly popular Salvador Dalí museum in St. Petersburg, Florida.
- 15 Eggener, "An Amusing Lack of Logic," 32.
- 16 For further inquiry into the relationship between Surrealism and fashion, see Dilys E. Blum, *Shocking! The Art and Fashion of Elsa Schiaparelli*, exh. cat. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004); Richard Martin, *Fashion and Surrealism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987) and the chapter entitled, "Surrealism in the Service of Fashion," in Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920 – 1950* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 66-90.
- 17 Breton did manage to find work in March 1942 as an announcer for the *Voice of America* radio broadcasts. Produced by the Office of War Information (OWI), these were, according to Polizzotti, "a multilingual series of programs aimed at spurring resistance to Nazism throughout the occupied world . . . For a reasonable salary of about \$250 a month, Breton sat from five-thirty until eight

- o'clock in the evening in the Studio 16 at the OWI offices on West Fifty-seventh Street, alternating with Levi-Strauss and several others in reading propaganda over which he had no editorial jurisdiction . . . It became famous in expatriate circles that Breton had imposed only one condition on his radio announcing: that he never have to pronounce the words 'God' and 'Pope.'" Mark Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind: The Life of André Breton* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 509-10.
- 18 Polizzotti, 503.
- 19 Eggener, "An Amusing Lack of Logic," 34.
- 20 Salvador Dalí, *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí*, André Parinaud, ed., Harold J. Salemson, trans. (New York: William and Morrow Company, 1976), 112.
- 21 Polizzotti, 331-32.
- 22 André Breton, *Conversations: An Autobiography of Surrealism*, Mark Polizzotti, trans. (New York: Paragon House, 1993), 124.
- 23 Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 384.
- 24 André Breton, "Stériliser Dalí," in Daniel Abadie, ed., *La vie publique de Salvador Dalí*, exh. cat. (Paris: Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, 1980), 124-5, as quoted in Ian Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 289.
- 25 Polizzotti, 384.
- 26 Ades, ed., *Dalí: The Centenary Retrospective*, 426.
- 27 André Breton, "Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste," *Minotaure*, May 12, (1939): 17, quoted in Lubar, "Modern Art and Mass Culture in America," 243.
- 28 André Breton, "Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste," 17, quoted in Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, 443.
- 29 Letter, André Breton to Wolfgang Paalen, November 23, 1939, courtesy of Gordon Onslow Ford, quoted in Amy Winter, *Wolfgang Paalen: Artist and Theorist of the Avant-Garde* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 2003), 138.
- 30 Salvador Dalí, *Diary of a Genius: An Autobiography* (London: Picador, 1980), 19.
- 31 Salvador Dalí, [1942] *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), 251.
- 32 Georges Borgeaud, "Salvador Dalí, Writer," *Homage to Salvador Dalí*, special issue of the *XXe Siècle Review* (New Jersey: Chartwell Books, Inc., 1980), 56.
- 33 Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 32.
- 34 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 330.
- 35 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 330-31.
- 36 Julien Levy, *Memoir of an Art Gallery* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), 79-80.
- 37 Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, 75.
- 38 Tashjian, 77.
- 39 André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, Richard Seaver and Helen R. Cane, trans. (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 177.
- 40 André Thirion, *Révolutionnaires sans révolution* (Paris: Le Pré aux Clercs, 1988), 293, in Polizzotti, *Revolution of the Mind*, 369-70.
- 41 André Breton, letter to Benjamin Péret, January 4, 1942, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, quoted in Polizzotti, 506.
- 42 Polizzotti, 506.
- 43 André Breton [1940], *Anthology of Black Humor*, Mark Polizzotti, trans. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997) 323.
- 44 Polizzotti, 471.

- 45 Interview of André Breton by Charles Henri Ford, in *Viem*, nos. 7-8 (October-November, 1941) in André Breton, *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, Franklin Rosemont, ed. (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 202-03.
- 46 André Breton [1942], "Genesis and Perspective of Surrealism in the Plastic Arts," in Peggy Guggenheim, ed., *Art of this Century* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 24. Despite Breton's slight in his catalogue essay, three works by Dalí, owned by Guggenheim and on display in her gallery, were referenced in *Art of this Century*. They date 1926 (*The Spectral Cow*), 1931 (*Woman Sleeping in a Landscape*) and 1932 (*The Birth of Liquid Desires*), that is, from Dalí's "authentic" Surrealist period. The short biographical description reads "Salvador Dalí. Catalanian painter. Born Figueras, Catalonia, 1904. Has been influenced by Chirico, Ernst, Magritte, Miro and Tanguy. Surrealist between 1929 and 1936. Now academic painter. Designed ballets *Bacchanale*, 1939 and *Labyrinth*, 1941. Lives in America," 122.
- 47 André Breton, "Avida Dollars," *Arson* no.1 (1942), n.p. quoted in Meredith Etherington-Smith, *The Persistence of Memory: A Biography of Dalí* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1992), 280.
- 48 Salvador Dalí, excerpts from *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, Town and Country*, May 31, 1941, 94-98.
- 49 Dalí, *Diary of a Genius*, 19.
- 50 Polizzotti, 511.
- 51 André Breton [1942], "Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto of Surrealism or Else" in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, Franklin Rosemont, ed. (New York: Monad Press, 1978), 210.
- 52 André Breton [1943], "Situation of Surrealism Between the Two Wars," in *What is Surrealism? Selected Writings*, 243.
- 53 Breton, "Situation," 243.
- 54 Interviewing and photographing Dalí and Gala while they were staying at the St. Regis in the autumn of 1941, *American Weekly* was inclined to fashion Dalí into a thoroughly benign eccentric. This is particularly evident in a full-page article, entitled "Dalí's Daffy Day" which sought to chronicle a day in the life of "The No 1 Surrealist." "Daffy is the name for Dalí," the article begins, "You can also toss in dicey, dippy and dizzy. But never, never dopey." Inez Robb, "Dalí's Daffy Day," *American Weekly*, October 8, 1941, 7.
- 55 Fleur Cowles, *The Case of Salvador Dalí* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company 1959), 144.
- 56 Morse, "The Dream World of Salvador Dalí," 120.
- 57 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 68.
- 58 Salvador Dalí [1941] "The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí," in Haim Finkelstein, ed., *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 337.
- 59 Dalí, "The Last Scandal," 338.
- 60 Dalí was, of course, aware of Georges Bataille's concept of the *informe*, that entity without boundaries and formlessness manifest in phlegm and putrefaction, even referencing Bataille's gloss on the word in an article entitled "Objets psycho-atmosphériques-anamorphiques" which he wrote in the May 1933 edition of *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (45-48). In *The Secret Life*, Dalí's original French usage of the word *informe* has been translated to "amorphous" as documented in Frédérique Joseph-Lowry, *La Vie secrète de Salvador Dalí: Suis-je un génie?* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 2006), 62. The word therefore does not carry with it the collective associations held by Bataille and the Surrealists. Nevertheless, Dalí's use of the term by the early 1940s, with the artist's newfound emphasis on "BECOMING CLASSIC" had for him come to signify abstraction, automatism, and to some degree the streamlining, geometricizing and minimalist tendencies characteristic of a great deal of modernist art and design of the period. Typically, Dalí pits the concept squarely against his newfound

emphasis on form, as he does in *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí* of 1941, writing “Finished, finished, finished, a thousand times finished – the experimental epoch . . . Finished – the epoch of improvised dramatic-lyrical blotches, of irresponsible spontaneous drawing, of two-cent philosophy disguising the technical and spiritual nothingness of the gratuitous, the shapeless and malformed . . . FORM, FORM, FORM – which is to say: [Here Dalí writes a two-page stream-of-consciousness list of words roughly synonymous with “form”] “SHAPE FIGURE CONFIGURATION CONFORMATION FIGURATION ARRANGMENT DISPOSITION,” etc., etc., etc. . . . (Dalí, *The Last Scandal of Salvador Dalí*, in Finkelstein *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, 338-339).

61 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 354.

62 Representative examples of paintings from Dalí’s “classic” period include works such as *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)* (1940); *The Face of War* (1940-41); *Nativity of a New World* (1942); *Poetry of America – The Cosmic Athletes* (1943); *Geopolitical Child Watching the Birth of the New Man* (1943) and *Allegory of an American Christmas* (1943).

63 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 383.

64 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 276.

65 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 303.

66 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 310-11.

67 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 378-79.

68 See chapter nineteen, “I Am Surrealism!” in Polizzotti, notably page 572.

69 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 286.

70 Breton’s unease over Dalí’s interest in Hitler dates at least to 1934, when Breton brought Dalí to task over references to Nazism in his painting and other work. In response to a letter Breton sent to Dalí to voice his concerns in January 1934, Dalí explained his position, stating that his recent books *The Visible Woman*, and *Love and Memory*, and his paranoia-inspired paintings would be infinitely offensive to both the Nazis and the Communists. He claimed that Hitler was a nurse with foul-smelling genitals and that he was absolutely not in favor of Hitler. To quote Ian Gibson, Dalí stated that he was determined to “interpret the phenomenon for himself,” and that it was his “duty to try to try to penetrate the hidden causes of the phenomenon” (Gibson, *The Shameful Life of Salvador Dalí*, 377.)

71 Jacqueline Bograd Weld, *Peggy: The Wayward Guggenheim* (New York: EP Dutton, 1986), 271.

72 Nicolas Calas, “Anti-Surrealist Dalí,” *Viem*, vol. 1, no. 6 (June 1941), 1.

73 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 207.

74 Dalí, *The Secret Life*, 397. Here Dalí paraphrases Cézanne, who looked to “make of Impressionism something solid and durable like the art of the museums.” (Hunter, *et al, Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography*, p. 28.)

75 Hitler’s opinion of modern art and artists, including Surrealism and the Surrealists (and presumably in relation to the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition in Munich in 1937, although not cited), was recorded in the foreword to Peggy Guggenheim’s *Art of This Century* catalogue, as follows: “If they really paint in this manner because they see things that way, then these unhappy persons should be dealt with in the department of the Ministry of the Interior where sterilization of the insane is dealt with, to prevent them from passing on their unfortunate inheritance. If they really do not see things like that and still persist in painting in this manner, then these artists should be dealt with by the criminal courts” (Guggenheim, ed., *Art of this Century*, 7).

76 Klaus Mann, “Surrealist Circus,” *American Mercury* (February, 1943), 174.

77 Mann, 174-78.

- 78 Edward Alden Jewell, *The New York Times*, November 25, 1945, n.p., quoted in Meryle Secrest, *Salvador Dalí* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1996), 191.
- 79 Polizzotti, 522.