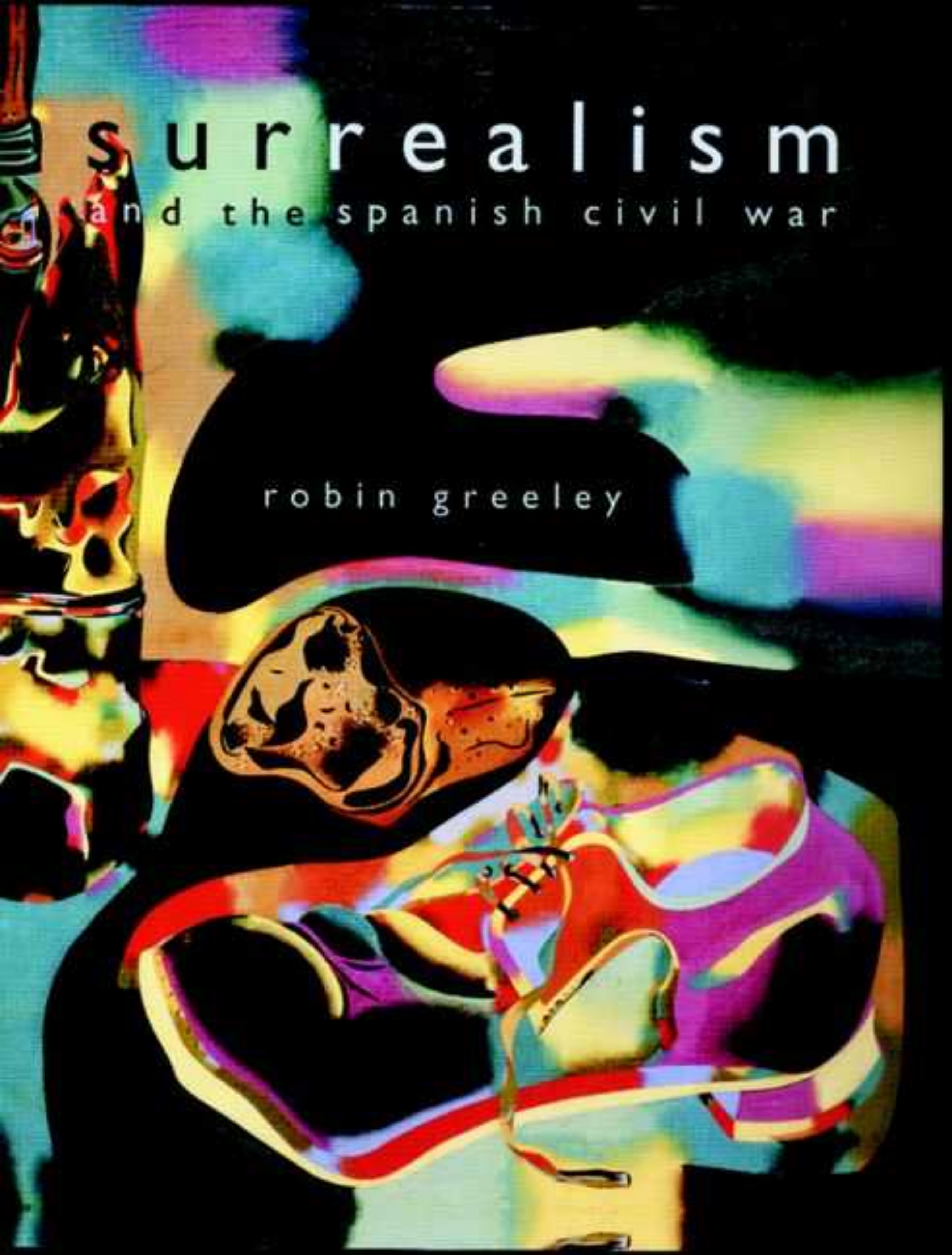
surrealism

and the spanish civil war

robin greeley



Surrealism and the Spanish Civil War

Robin Adèle Greeley

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Frontispiece André Masson, *Death in the Arena*
(*Mort dans l'arène*), in *Miroir de la tauromachie*, 1938
Endpaper André Masson, *Massacre* (Detail of Figure 80), Oil of canvas.
Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson family

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As this book goes to press, the images of devastation and outrage generated by the Spanish Civil War are once again being publicly invoked. Picasso's *Guernica* especially has appeared constantly in the news media and popular critiques, as the U. S.–led war in Iraq continues to result in untold numbers of civilian and military deaths. Although the particular circumstances of the war in Iraq differ from those of the Spanish Civil War, the sense that this is a war of enormous ramifications does not. And again, visual representation is called upon to help us come to terms with war.

Because of its subject matter, the completion of this book has been perhaps more difficult than usual. Writing about war, even through the lens of art, places a special burden on the author to judge the delicate relationship between description, analysis and object. In completing the book's various phases, however, I have been blessed with the help of an extraordinary set of friends and colleagues. My first debt of gratitude is to my advisors at U. C. Berkeley – Anne Wagner, T. J. Clark and Martin Jay – under whose guidance (mostly patient, at times exasperated) I gradually gained the intellectual tools necessary to bring a deeply held set of beliefs together with a rigorous scholarly analysis. I have never ceased to wonder why they let me in the door in the first place, but remain eternally grateful that they did.

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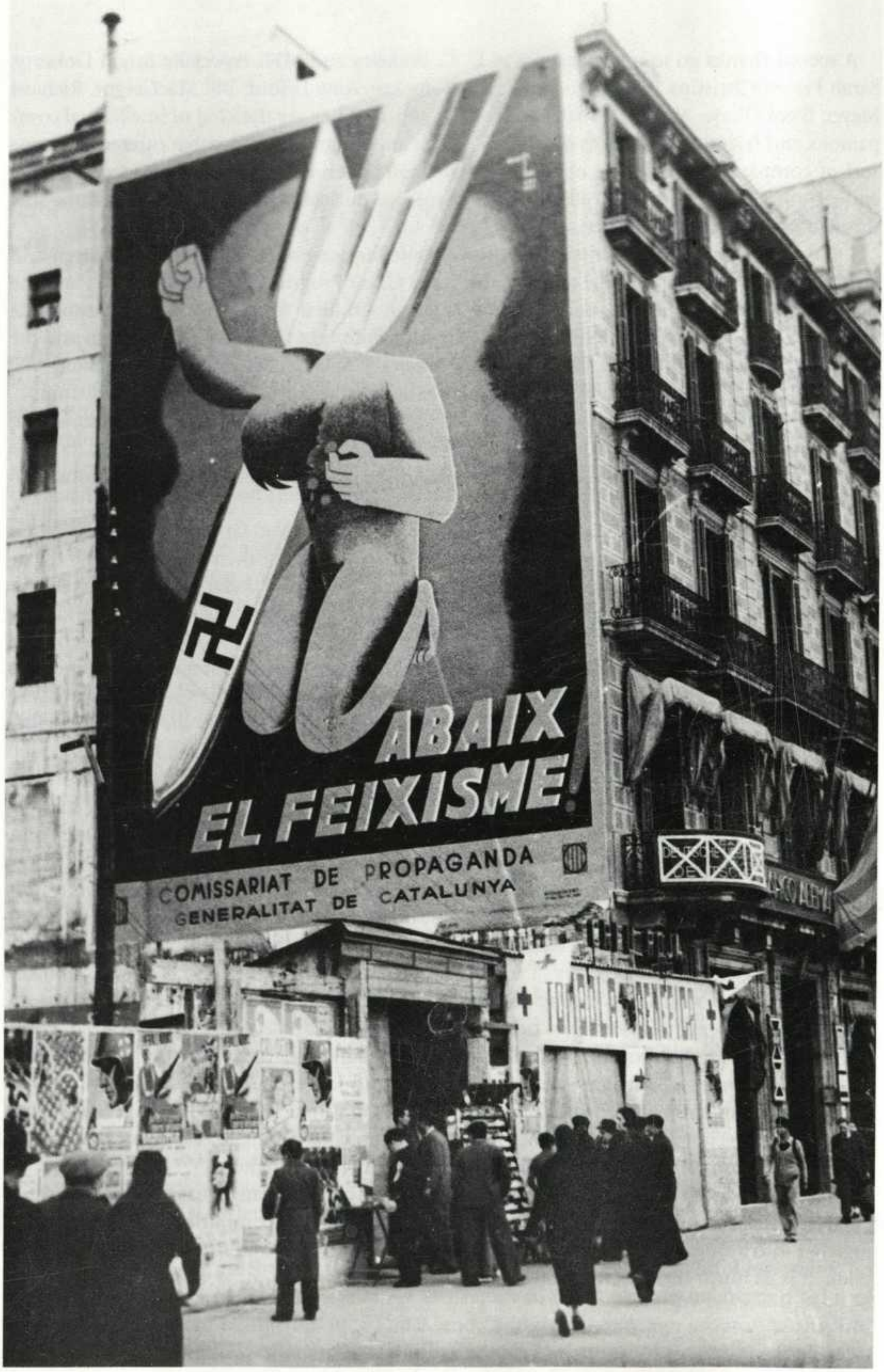

ABAIX
EL FEIXISME!
COMISSARIAT DE PROPAGANDA
GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA
TÓMBOLA BENÉFICA

'Abaix le Feixisme', photo of giant poster on building, Barcelona, 1936. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

I

PICTURES AND BATTLEFIELDS

This study takes as its focus the relationship between art and politics in Europe of the 1930s and, more specifically, Surrealism's attempts to negotiate an increasingly complex and challenging, not to say catastrophic, set of political circumstances. I concentrate on Surrealist responses to a particular event – the Spanish Civil War – because they offer an especially useful means to track a nexus of issues which I feel are of fundamental importance in the concept of the "political" in the Surrealist imagination. The French Surrealists had applauded the election of the Spanish Republican government on April 14, 1931, which put an end to the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, and they were convinced that Spain's working class would provide a shining example of proletarian revolution for France.[1] Yet until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on July 18, 1936, when Spain's immediate political situation suddenly forced itself into Surrealist consciousness, there is little sense that the Surrealist movement paid close attention to the intricacies of Spanish politics.[2] In 1936, the Parisian Surrealists published several frantic tracts calling upon the French people to support the Spanish Republican government's armed struggle against General Francisco Franco's fascist military forces.[3] The tone of desperation and alarm became stronger as the Surrealists watched the French Front Populaire quickly turn its back on its Spanish counterpart, the Republican Frente Popular. When, less than a month into the war, the French government stopped material aid and closed its borders to Spanish refugees in a declaration of neutrality,[4] the Surrealists published a call to arms admonishing the French government to keep its promise of support to the beleaguered Spanish Republic:

> The "neutrality" that the French government observes regarding the *Frente popular* . . . is the equivalent of applying more rigorous sanctions than fascist Italy has ever known . . . Why this atrocious mockery of the solidarity that nevertheless links the two democracies of France and Spain to life and death? . . . Get a grip on yourself, Front populaire! To the aid of the heroic *Frente popular*! Down with speeches and empty gestures; up with volunteers and material aid! . . . Front populaire: organize the masses quickly! Establish, drill, and arm the proletarian militias without which you are nothing but a façade![5]

This text presents a Surrealist "party line" that conceives of political engagement as a realm apart from aesthetic production. The language of such tracts has to do with armed uprising, with nation-states and their governments, and with political and military combat against fascism. Conspicuously absent is any of Surrealism's usual advocacy of the creative endeavor as a mechanism for social revolt; there is little here to remind one that Surrealism concerned itself with artistic and literary expression as a primary mode through which revolutionary social change could be effected. Nor is there any hint of Surrealism's commitment to theorizing a relationship among social transformation, visual representation, and the human psyche. Nowhere in sight is any hint of Surrealism's early preoccupation with dreams, or its subsequent elaborations of psychoanalytic concepts such as desire, the unconscious, memory, or the self. Indeed, Surrealism's faith in the psychically and socially transformative power of aesthetics was being radically questioned by external events such as the Spanish Civil War, the rise of fascism and the instability of French and Spanish leftist governments. The anxiety-ridden tone that the Surrealists found themselves adopting to write such tracts had to do not only with the precarious situation of 1930s European politics, but also with the way in which political discourse and Surrealism's aesthetic considerations seemed forcibly to exclude one another.

Yet tracts such as this were not the only, or even the principal, outlet for Surrealist responses to the civil war. Individual artists responded in a variety of ways: some abandoned pen or brush for gun; others, such as André Masson, put their artistic talents directly at the service of the war effort. Joan Miró was shocked temporarily into creative silence; Picasso was galvanized into action.[6] The discrepancies between these diverse responses and Surrealism's published tracts raise many questions as to the efficacy of the movement's various strategies in confronting an increasingly violent situation that threatened any hope of positive social change.

This study proposes that a careful examination of the works produced can offer insight into how, exactly, the Surrealists understood the political during this moment of crisis. Surrealism's articulation of politics, I argue, moved along two axes: one concerned the tension between the movement's attachment to individual autonomy and its commitment to collective action. The famous Affaire Aragon of 1931 turned around this dilemma. Louis Aragon, like many of the Surrealists, was profoundly influenced by anarchist-inspired individualism. Yet his notorious rupture with Surrealism and conversion to communism involved repeated, indeed rabid, condemnations of the strain of anarchistic individualism at play in Surrrealism's notion of the political. Unlike Aragon, however, Surrealism continued throughout its history to search for a means of balancing individualism with group action; it did so through a variety of aesthetic and intellectual strategies, alongside (and often conflated with) numerous ventures in the political sphere. Indeed, Walter Benjamin admired Surrealism precisely for "its highly exposed position between an anarchistic *fronde* and a revolutionary discipline."[7]

The second axis involved claiming visual representation itself as a political enterprise, in which politics enters the image through the formal strategies of artmaking and viewing, while simultaneously resisting that very incorporation. Surrealism was, of course, not alone in this claim during the interwar period, as any glance at movements such as Russian Constructivism, Futurism, Dada, or the Bauhaus will show. All of these argued that politics could be embedded in praxes of picture-making, and that representation itself could become a political enterprise. But Surrealism was the first movement in the twentieth century – political, philosophical, or aesthetic – to envision this idea through a systematic combination of Freudian theory with Marxist theory, such that pictures might (to borrow from Theodor Adorno) "embody [society's] contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in [their] innermost structure" as a "force of protest."[8] It did so by refusing conventional notions that the domain of psychoanalysis was the private individual, and by insisting that psychoanalytic theory had larger social ramifications. The Surrealists argued that the psychic unconscious had political dimensions, and that these affected broader social relations than simply those of the individual or the domestic family sphere. They also insisted on the opposite side of the coin: that class conflict and economic relations had a psychic dimension and, furthermore, that this psychic dimension had a visual or representational character to it. The relationship between the specific visual episodes I examine here and the circumstances of the Spanish Civil War points up how aesthetic production can offer insight into the way that images can speak to the conditions of politics through the conditions of representation. Benjamin recognized this very point, when he argued that the "intoxication" produced by Surrealist language experiments "loosen[ed] the self" and left "no chink . . . for the penny-in-the-slot called 'meaning.'"[9] "To win the energies of intoxication for the revolution," he wrote, "this is the project about which Surrealism circles in all its books and enterprises."[10]

Thus, the "political" in Surrealism directs us to something more than a restricted definition of politics as concerning, say, the various maneuverings of political parties in the Spanish Civil War, or the question of certain artists' actual membership of any given political party. Understanding the political struggles between the progressive Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, the Spanish Workers' Socialist Party) and the legalist-right Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA, the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rightist Groups) over who would legally control the Republican regime is obviously crucial to comprehending the 1934 insurrection by the left in the Asturias and Catalonia, and thus to understanding Miró's and José Caballero's responses to that insurrection. But it does not entirely explain Miró's 1934 pastels on sandpaper, in which the trauma evident in the harsh materials, garish colors and extreme bodily distortions cannot be encapsulated through simple reference to the political history of the insurrection (see fig. 20). Nor can it fully clarify the oddity of Caballero's poster design for the proto-fascist Acción Popular, made in the midst of his longstanding affiliation with Federico García Lorca and the progressive politics of the PSOE (see fig. 60). One must look beyond the machinations of political parties to examine that more nebulous realm of social values and human subjectivities, and how they come to be defined and installed in the public realm. One must suggest the group nature of the political, but in no way exclude the private or personal as an affective element of that larger public realm. Marx, as is well known, envisioned "that branch of moral philosophy" called "politics" as having a strong thrust: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it."[11] For Marx, to move beyond philosophical analysis into political action, it was necessary to think in historically materialist terms.[12] His notion of historical materialism as a political enterprise was taken up in the 1930s by Benjamin and Adorno, those two Marxists most intrigued by Surrealism. Although both were ultimately frustrated with what they saw as Surrealism's lack of a constructive, disciplined thinking which would "[bind] revolt to revolution,"[13] they recognized the movement's insistence on the psyche, aesthetics, and representation as crucial to any revolutionary analysis of capitalist society. Benjamin in particular found Surrealist images of the city to be dialectical – and therefore political – in how they reveal the historical transience of commodity fetishes to be integral to the very nature of capitalism. The

Surrealists, he realized, had combined a Marxist notion of the fetish with a Freudian notion of it, to indicate the role of individual psychic desire in capitalist consumption. What was important for the development of capitalism was not the consumer object itself but the desire for it. Culture, of course, played a crucial role in constructing this desire, and this process could be interrogated by studying its history. In his unfinished book, *Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin took this lesson to heart, seeking to analyze the cultural contents of history, according to Susan Buck-Morss, as:

> the source of critical knowledge that alone can place the present into question. Benjamin makes us aware that the transmission of culture (high and low), which is central to this rescue operation, is a political act of the highest import – not because culture in itself has the power to change the given, but because historical memory affects decisively the collective, political will for change.[14]

In part via his consideration of Surrealism, Benjamin related culture, historical memory, and their interpretation to a Marxist notion of politics. Much of Surrealism's political actions, in Benjamin's eyes, centered around its attempts "to organize pessimism."[15] At their best, he wrote, the Surrealists sought to rid politics itself of the moral metaphor associated with bourgeois humanism and to expose the "unprincipled, dilettantish optimism" of bourgeois politics.[16] Such a project seems especially poignant in the case of the Spanish Civil War, the history of which includes not merely overcoming a fascist insurgency (as if that were not enough) but also the conflicts on the left between the revolutionary factions (anarchists, communists, and the radical socialists) and the more centrist blocs still strongly wedded to the idea of bourgeois democracy.[17]

The definition of politics must be pushed further, however. The multiple aesthetic responses to the Spanish Civil War describe Surrealism's commitment to the creative act as a political gesture; but these were framed by tensions concerning the translation of political thought into action. These tensions had much to do with Surrealism's self-definition as an ethical – rather than purely aesthetic – enterprise, based on a concept of individual and social freedom embodied in various types of artistic acts, most pertinently automatism. Automatism, as I describe later, was central to Surrealism's efforts to negotiate the status of the individual vis-à-vis the collective, and to bridge the divide between political thought and political act. As the book discusses, the Surrealists remained largely caught between the spheres of culture and politics, unable to resolve what Raymond Spiteri has termed "the profound ambivalence Surrealism harbored towards political action, the gulf between words and deeds, image and action."[18]

The Surrealists' unconventional uses of Marx, needless to say, also brought them into contact, and conflict, with the Communist Party. Surrealism's sustained engagement with the Party, and the differences that ultimately made it impossible for the two groups to work together productively, are by now notorious.[19] Yet they bear further investigation because of the ways in which that notoriety has tended to obscure the ideological issues at stake.[20] One of the most telling moments came after the Parti Communiste Français castigated the Surrealists for publishing Salvador Dalí's "Rêverie" – an essay that described the painter's fantasies as he purportedly masturbated in front of a young girl – in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* no. 4 (December 1931). An outraged Party official accused the group of "complicating the simple and healthy relations between man and woman." Breton retorted, "Who would dare argue that, in bourgeois society, these relations were simple or healthy?"[21] Surrealism's insistence that the psychic formation of human subjectivity was intimately entwined with the class formation of that subject proved a bone of contention with the communists time and again. In arguing that both the human psyche and its cultural and representational manifestations played powerful roles in the construction of social relations and hegemonic domains, Surrealism forced open the definition of politics maintained by the Communist Party.[22] This challenged the abiding Party view of the relationship between an economic base and a social superstructure, which posited that relationship as largely uni-directional and uncomplex.[23]

Thus, the long, tumultuous relationship between Surrealism and the Communist Party shows how much the Surrealists found that dominant leftist accounts of the political simply were not sufficient. But the length and continuity of the Party's highly vocal exasperation with the likes of Breton, Dalí, and Aragon goes far to demonstrate that the Party knew that, despite their intractableness, the Surrealists were on to something. The history of what that "something" was has largely not figured in standard art-historical accounts of Surrealism, bent as they have been on viewing the movement largely as an aberration within the unfolding saga of modernism's involvement with abstraction and the picture plane.[24] That version of art history has seen Surrealism's insistent politicking as amusing but less than consequential at best, childishly histrionic at worst, sidetracking artists from their true vocation, which is to make internally coherent works of art.[25] But as the Surrealists themselves demonstrate, the one cannot be understood without the other. The harsh critique of warfare found in André Masson's 1930s *Massacre* drawings, for instance, derives from their terse, "scribbled"[26] linear form – a pictorial tactic that must be situated both in relation to his experiences in the First World War and his Nietzschean sojourn in Spain on the eve of the civil war (see fig. 79). It must also be related to the extremely complex attitudes to eroticism and violence that the drawings exhibit.

Perhaps the most difficult issue to address, both for the Surrealists and for us today, is the way in which it became less and less easy to distinguish between a "leftist" politics and other sorts from across the political spectrum. I have outlined Surrealism's tendentious relationship with the Communist Party. There is also increasing scholarship arguing for an essentially bourgeois turn to certain interpretations of Surrealist practice, particularly those of Breton.[27] Less well studied are Surrealism's flirtations with fascism, and how these were determined within particular historical circumstances.[28] The essentially distinct development of Spanish Surrealism from its French analog played a major role in this regard. Differences in attitudes to the political of Spanish versus French Surrealism had deep repercussions for the movement in both countries. They affected Dalí's envisioning of Hitler and fascism as manifestations of erotic desire. They played themselves out bizarrely in the visual production of those Spanish Surrealists associated with the left during the Spanish Republic, yet who later participated in Franco's right-wing cultural policies. It provided a context for Masson and Bataille's magazine, *Acéphale*, which sought to maneuver between an investment in ritual sacrifice and Bataille's notoriously ambiguous theory of the use-value of ritualized social excess for revolutionary change. Bataille, of course, theorized a concept of violence in the public sphere that came uncomfortably close to what the Nazis were already engaging in.[29]

This study therefore seeks to offer an expanded notion of the political in relation to representation that puts the parameters of the political itself under continual scrutiny. But it also offers a reassessment of art, of aesthetic production, and of modernism. It proposes a reappraisal of the procedures of art in the 1930s, of what avant-garde art was supposed to do, of what its tasks were thought to be. The war in Spain shocked the Surrealists into recognizing that the political, ideological, and aesthetic strategies they had been at pains to secure for more than a decade were being contested by both the left and the right, and from within the surrealist movement itself as well as from outside.[30] Surrealist efforts to subvert conventional ideologies that construct the "public" realm as the sphere of politics and the "private" as that of sexuality were faced with the particular challenge of fascism's deadly recoding of human desire into the public sphere.[31] This forced a reevaluation of the movement's efforts to mediate how "representation" might be brought together with "sexuality" and "politics." The gendered body proved crucial time and again for this reappraisal as that site where the violence and confusion of private sexuality might become the mode for addressing the chaos (ideological or physical) of the world at large. The particular forms that this reassessment took – be they Dalí's psychoanalytic interpretation of narcissism in the fascist body, Picasso's use of the body as the site for the performance of a politics of representation, or Masson's view of the body as the focal point for manipulations of violence and the sacred – constitute an issue that I treat throughout.

For this study, Surrealism's importance lies in its insistence on the political nature of the juncture of the realms of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and representation. For the movement, this meant a commitment to considering sexuality and the workings of the unconscious mind as important factors in the construction of larger social relations. It meant reevaluating the relationship between private and public, between the poetic and the political, between the rational and the irrational, in order to undermine the split which Western capitalism imposed on these domains and which Stalinist communism upheld. Visual representation, as the Surrealists recognized, can play a forceful role both in delineating the language structures through which those values are formulated and in determining the character of social values.

What is most useful for us, therefore, might be stated this way: Surrealism's achievement was to insist on desire as a component of political behavior, and on the crucial role of representation in structuring desire. Miró has much to tell, for example, about how visual narratives of national identity function while the nation-states they represent degenerate into armed conflict. For Miró, those images of nationalism were structured around the body of the Catalan peasant – a visual language of gendering that underwent remarkable transformations and ruptures in consonance with the political fortunes of his Catalan homeland. Both Masson and Picasso utilized the Spanish bullfight as a lens through which humanity's propensity to spectacularize its own participation in violence could be explored. The theme of the bullfight in the work of both artists also offers insight into the way in which the visual could aid in the mobilization and organization of ritual violence in the collective sphere, but so as to avoid a number of its looming pitfalls. These insights range, on the one hand, from representation's ability to offer a positive challenge to fascism's recoding of violence in the public realm; and, on the other, to offering an alternative to the Communist Party's relentless ideological rationalism on the subject of social violence – a rationalism that admitted to class conflict but refused to acknowledge the deep-seated violence inherent in the difficult process of individual subject formation. In so doing, Masson and Picasso can be seen as part of the debates of the period between the Surrealists and the communists over these issues.[32] Dalí offers an important bridge between Jacques Lacan's investigation of narcissism and paranoia in terms of the psyche of the individual and the use of those concepts in imagining the political on the level of the nation-state. That is, Dalí's visual and textual imaginings of "hitlerism" allow one to consider paranoia, or the will toward Lacan's *autopunition*, on the scale of entire nations rather than solely at the level of the individual. Importantly, he provides a means of demonstrating the essentially representational character of these concepts. As an alternative, the career and work of José Caballero give one the means to analyze the ways in which representation can fail when the relationship between desire and the political remains insufficiently theorized. Caballero's political swings from moderate socialism to fascism indicate the precariousness of attempts to fix a political position through specific aesthetic strategies.

Thus, the negotiation of Marx and Freud through representation is key, as I show, to any understanding of Surrealism's concept of the political. Yet Surrealism found it difficult to interpret the Marx/Freud relationship with any precision. Picasso's use of Freudian concepts of memory and desire as a critique of fascism differed markedly from Dalí's, for example; indeed, Dalí's version caused the movement not a few headaches. Masson's reliance on Nietszche to provide an alternative vision of social and sexual violence to that of either Freud or Marx did not prevent him from joining Catalonia's anarchist Anti-fascist Militias Committee in 1936 at the outset of the war. Nor did it hinder him (in a seeming abandonment of any consistent political vision) from placing his images in Stalinist, Trotskyist, and Christian-Socialist publications over the next three years.[33]

Breton addressed the political and aesthetic import of the Marxian-Freudian conjuncture at several key moments throughout the 1930s, including *Les Vases communicants* (1932), *Position politique du surréalisme* (1935), and *L'Amour fou* (1937). In particular, the manifesto "Pour un art révolutionnaire indépendant" (For an Independent Revolutionary Art), written with Trotsky in 1938, carries the traces of Breton's long history of thinking on this subject. By considering social freedom through the conditions of artistic production, the manifesto sought to delineate a space for creative autonomy in the face of totalitarian politics of both left and right.[34] But it was not simply aesthetic freedom that was at stake. Breton also sought to define an autonomous realm for pictures themselves:

> The analysis of ideological superstructures, which permits one in the last instance to see in certain cases (religion, morality) nothing but the pure and simple reflection of the economic conditions of life, allows to subsist as *partially* irreducible to [the economic conditions of life] three factors that contribute, through their partial autonomy, to the progressive modification of society. These are art, science, and the pursuit of the social ideal in its most elevated form. Certainly these three domains can never pretend to escape the grip of dominant power that comes back, in the end, to economic development. But in them one finds translated distinct and fundamental aspirations, capable of reacting on the base of material necessity and of furnishing certain complementary elements of appraisal [*appréciation*]. All other conceptions of history will inevitably fall into fatalism.[35]

Much like Adorno's theory of aesthetic autonomy, Breton argued that art (along with science and the "social ideal") allows at least a partial stepping outside our immersion in "the economic conditions of life" so as to provide a critique of those conditions. Here and elsewhere, Breton alluded to what might be called a politics of representation, in which political meaning occurs not simply (often not even primarily) at the level of content but also at the level of form.[36] Politics functions within the image as a type of negative dialectic, as a refusal of objects to assume conventional political symbolism, a refusal that is carried out on a pictorial level.[37]

* * *

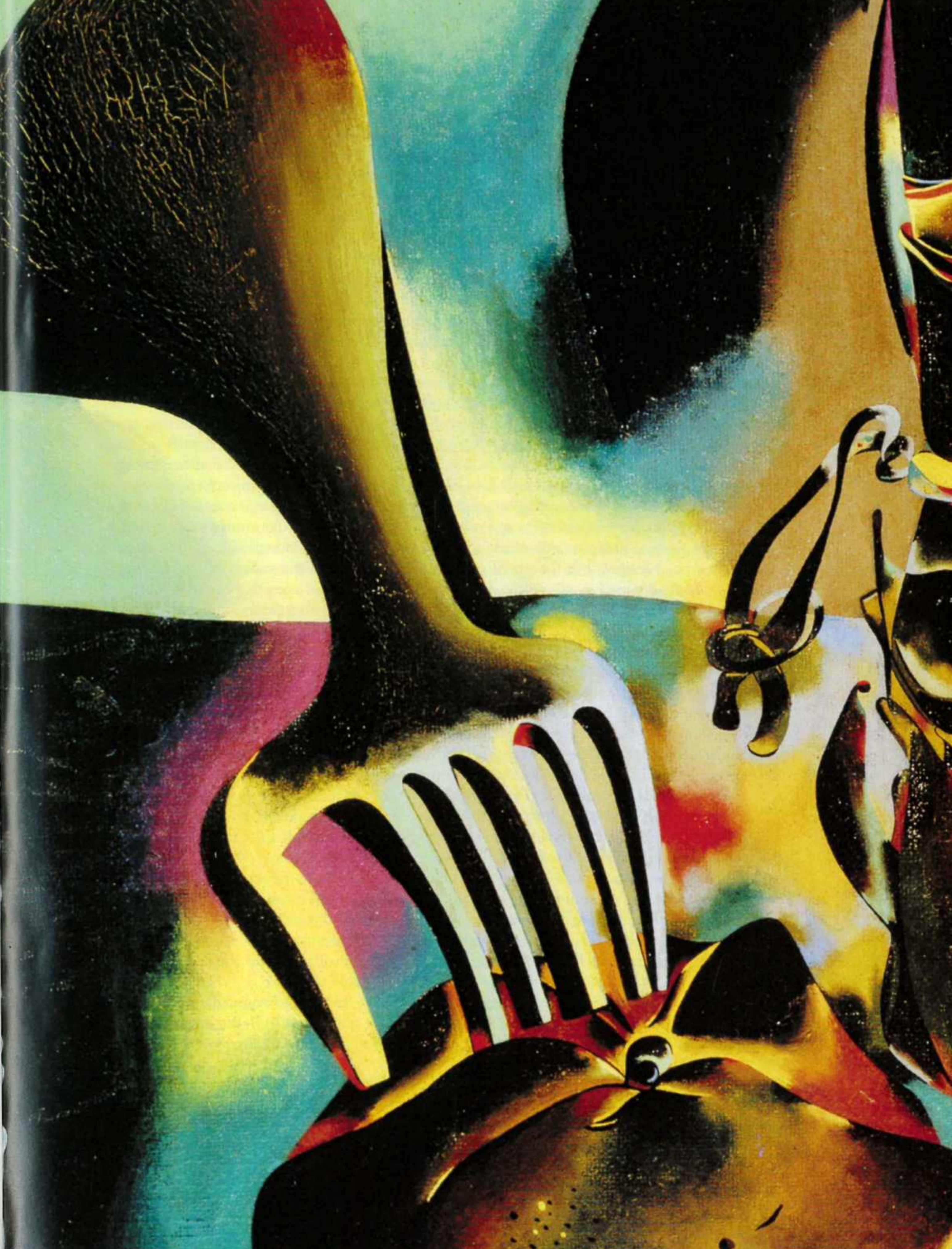
In the chapters that follow, I focus on five case studies representative of different responses to the Spanish Civil War. The war provides a focal point or culminating moment for a whole set of Surrealist practices that took some version of Spain as their centrally defining characteristic, whether this was a national identity, a geographic site, a historical moment (Republican versus Nationalist Spain, for instance), as a counterpoint to France, and so on.[38] But I am less interested in the historical recuperation of Surrealist involvement in the war (of which there was much more than I cover here) than I am in setting out the terms of certain issues which I see recurring consistently throughout the period. The war thus acts as an Althusserian "historical conjuncture," a historical moment that serves to reveal the underlying structure of events and ideas normally obscured. I therefore use the framework of these five case studies to move from the peculiarities of the period to the larger notion of what it is to imagine a politics through visual imagery. All of the artists I treat here, with the exception of those in Chapter 4, are canonical figures in both the history of Surrealism and the history of modernism. While it is not my intention to write yet another study to support that canon, I have nevertheless found that the artists I discuss in detail – Miró, Dalí, Caballero, Masson, and Picasso – produced works which crystallized a set of ongoing concerns that seemed important to artists, politicians, and intellectuals then, and continue to resonate for us now.

Chapter 2 arises from what seemed to me to be the widely different intentions of three pictures Miró produced that directly address the Spanish Civil War. His mural *The Reaper* (see fig. 1), his drawing *Woman in Revolt* (see fig. 5), and his painting *Still Life with Old Shoe* (see fig. 6) offer a range of pictorial solutions to Miró's problem of bringing his deeply felt sense of national identity into some kind of alliance with his aesthetic production at a moment when both were put under extreme stress by the civil war. Miró's inability to find one single visual language through which to address the cataclysm enveloping his country suggests his ambivalence as to how to think visually about his own identity as Catalan. In order to address this ambivalence, I trace the artist's fluctuating relationship to Catalan nationalism from 1924 to 1938, particularly through his crucial encounter with Surrealism and the so-called "assassination of painting" period (1924–33).[39] Miró's Spanish Civil War production allows us better to characterize that period, as well as to locate different kinds of "failures" in his project as a whole – failures which nevertheless point to a way out of certain impasses concerning the interrogation of visual language as politicized endeavor, and how to bring that interrogation into the realm of organized politics.

The third chapter lays out the problem of fascism's political intrusion into Surrealism. In 1936, Dalí painted two responses to the growing turmoil in Spain: *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War* and *Autumn Cannibalism* (see figs. 28 and 29). The paintings transform the artist's standard theme of sexual perversion into allegories of the extreme violence of war. I relate these two extraordinary images to Dalí's continuous efforts to analyze contemporary political events, especially fascism, as manifestations of paranoid aggressions deeply embedded in the human psyche. Such analyses did not always sit well with orthodox Surrealism; in February 1934, Dalí was summoned before a Surrealist "court" presided over by Breton on charges of Nazi sympathizing. He was only saved from expulsion by his own tension-deflating buffoonery and by the support of the old-guard Surrealists Paul Eluard, Tristan Tzara, and René Crevel. The Catalan painter's fascination with Hitler and the problem of fascism threatened to bring about the "ruin of Surrealism"[40] as a movement, however, by exposing the ideological flaws in existing Surrealist attempts to distinguish between fascism and non-fascism, between right-wing and left-wing politics in relation to aesthetic production. To Breton's great dismay, Dalí seemed to take literally Breton's call in the First Surrealist Manifesto to produce works "outside all aesthetic or moral preoccupations."[41] Yet in directing Surrealist attention to Hitler, I argue, Dalí analyzed the "hitlerian phenomenon" as an apocalyptic symptom of the alienation and auto-aggression afflicting bourgeois society. In so doing, he relied heavily upon a dialogue he had struck up with the Freudian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan concerning paranoia, *autopunition*, and their relationship to the fascist persona.

Dalí had developed the fundamental principles of this new method in the context of the Spanish avant-garde centered on the Generación del '27 before reaching Paris. I argue that this difference in contexts profoundly affected the character of Dalí's contribution to Surrealism. In this chapter, I trace the effect that the earlier and more complete access in Spain to Freud's writings had on Dalí. I also track his contact with the unorthodox Catalan Marxists and anarchists and with the philosophies of Ortega y Gasset at Madrid's elite school, the Residencia. Dalí's position within this unique set of social and political circumstances allowed him to develop a

Detail of Figure 6



Freudian critique of desire and subject formation not bound by Bretonian Surrealism's commitment to automatism. Dalí turned his theories of actively produced perversion toward analyzing political catastrophes from Hitler and Nazism to the Spanish Civil War.

The life and work of José Caballero, which I examine in the fourth chapter, offer entry to one of the most controversial aspects of Spanish Surrealism, that is, its seeming inability to produce a strongly defined relationship between a set of visual stylistics and a (leftist) politics. The ambiguous, intelligent flirtation with fascism which is glimpsed at certain moments in Parisian Surrealist circles turned to outright collaboration with Franco's fascist policies in the case of Caballero.[42] Caballero's work for Federico García Lorca's La Barraca theater and then, after Lorca's assassination by Franquist insurgents, for the Franco regime, throws into serious doubt Surrealism's efforts to find a stylistics that would be perceived as inherently leftist no matter what the context. In Caballero's case, these surrealizing stylistics include figure distortions and the shocking juxtaposition of unlike objects in erotic scenarios. Whether these formal maneuvers continued to be Surrealist in any political sense is a question with deep-seated repercussions.

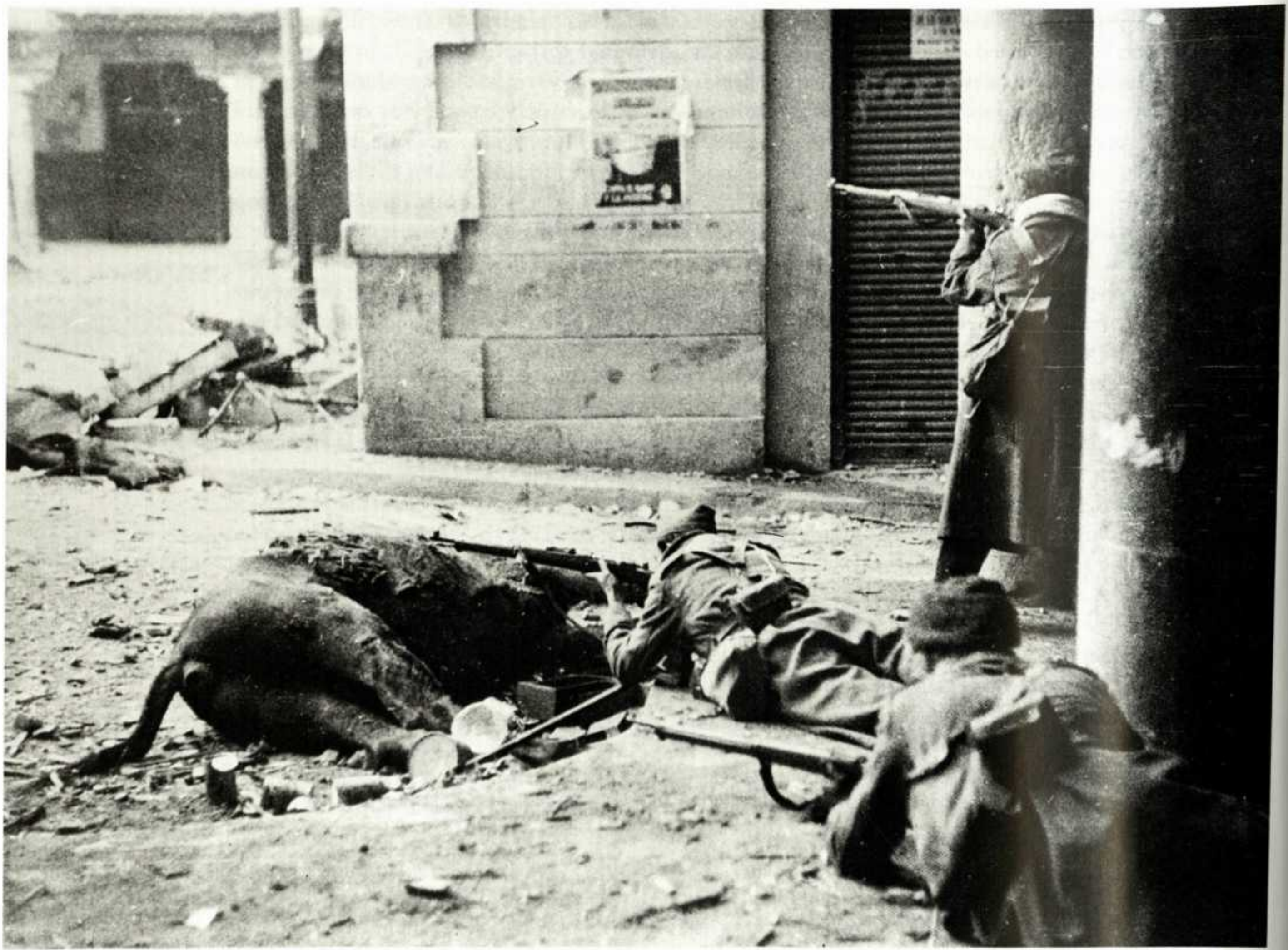
Caballero's trajectory is one of the more dramatic examples of the shock Surrealism in Spain felt as it moved from its pre-Republican, largely de-politicized status to becoming a socially responsible art form during the 1930s under the Republican government. I trace the discrepancies between the utopian ideal and the realities of aesthetic production first in Republican Spain and then during the civil war as they affected the circumstances of Caballero's production. In particular, the painter's work for Lorca's 1930s traveling theater project La Barraca point up the difficulties of maneuvering between a personal, non-political allegiance to the poet (fostered by Lorca himself) and the commitment to the Republican government's progressive-socialist political platform embodied in La Barraca. Caballero's production during this period offers crucial insight into the pitfalls encountered by Spanish Surrealism in negotiating an erotics of representation as a public enterprise with a politicized agenda.

In Chapter 5, I examine André Masson's efforts to define a visual theory of violence that ran counter to fascism. To do so, I look at three distinct but interrelated sets of aesthetic work by Masson that were directly oriented toward the Spanish Civil War: his illustrations for the journal *Acéphale*, those for Michel Leiris's *Miroir de la tauromachie* (meant to be the successor to *Acéphale*[43]), and his anti-fascist drawings. When analyzing Masson's concept of politics during this period, scholars have overwhelmingly focused on his illustrations for *Acéphale*, and their clear links to Bataille's Nietzschean attitudes to violence and the deconstruction of a unitary human subjectivity. While not wrong, such investigations have generally failed to examine how Masson's theories of violence, warfare, and human subjectivity diverged from those of Bataille on many counts. By looking at the *Acéphale* drawings in relation to Masson's other production for the Spanish Civil War, I track the difficulties Masson had in putting into lived practice the Nietzschean politics he developed in *Acéphale*. Through these distinct but interdependent spheres of production, Masson tried to negotiate a path between his view of Spain's investment in sacrifice and ritual (manifested in the bullfight) as it related to the realities of Republican – and then wartime – Spain, and the use-value of ritualized social excess back in Paris in formulating oppositional stances to totalitarian societies. Masson's difficulties in determining a practical representational strategy to deal with warfare culminated in an untitled drawing, which I call the Barcelona *Acéphale*, that tries to modify Nietzsche with communism as a response to fascism.

Chapter 6 explores Picasso's maneuvers in producing *Guernica*, to argue that any notion of the politics of Picasso's work resides not so much in the final image as in the conjunction of a set of pictorial practices situated within specific historical moments. In the case of *Guernica* in particular, that matrix was overdetermined by a notion of Spain that was less a geographical site or a stable national entity than a framework for a highly particular conjunction of performative spaces or constraints which supplied the artist with the conditions for the production of this particular picture. Picasso's investment, under the sign of Spain, in the process of representation privileges that procedure itself as a political praxis. This process involved various interlocking concepts of the body – the artist's own body, of the body wounded in war, ritualized combat, or personal strife, of the sexualized or politicized body, of the body as indicator of unconscious desires.

A confluence of events affected how Picasso thought of his mandate, the most important of which can be listed as follows: the commission delivered to him by the Spanish Pavilion Committee; the civil war and bombing of the Basque town of Guernica; Picasso's own long history of thinking politics through representation; and Surrealism. Picasso never became a full member of the Surrealist movement; nonetheless, he found it provocative in its insistence on representations of sexuality and the body as mechanisms for understanding the construction of meaning within a wider social context. Picasso utilized this aspect of Surrealism to develop a powerful imagery in which layers of private meaning are built up and made to stand for a range of issues well beyond the personal. How he responded to all these mandates, or "briefs" as Michael Baxandall has called them, is less a question of demarcating one-to-one correspondences between mandate and product than of mapping fields of discourses and actions within which Picasso developed his pictorial choices.[44]

I argue that the conjunction of the painting's circumstances makes it possible to claim a politics for it which resides not solely in what is represented but rather in the praxis of representation itself. The painting functions, I am convinced, through something even more than a combination of its subject matter with its stylistics. *Guernica* offers a politics that resides in an artistic praxis that imagines itself on the levels of subject matter, style, and in the actual process of producing the work. It gives us a politics which lies in the painting's ability to stand as an allegory for representation itself at its most intense moment of pathos: when what is being represented – and what representation stands for – is the tragic nature *per se* of human existence. Through thinking about several of the productive modes Picasso used in painting *Guernica*, then, I suggest the significance of art as a mode of comprehending the irrationality of human suffering and terror, brought about by a society whose own claims to rational conduct allowed it no scope for coping with such human tragedy.



Aragon front, 1938: Republicans shooting across dead horse. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

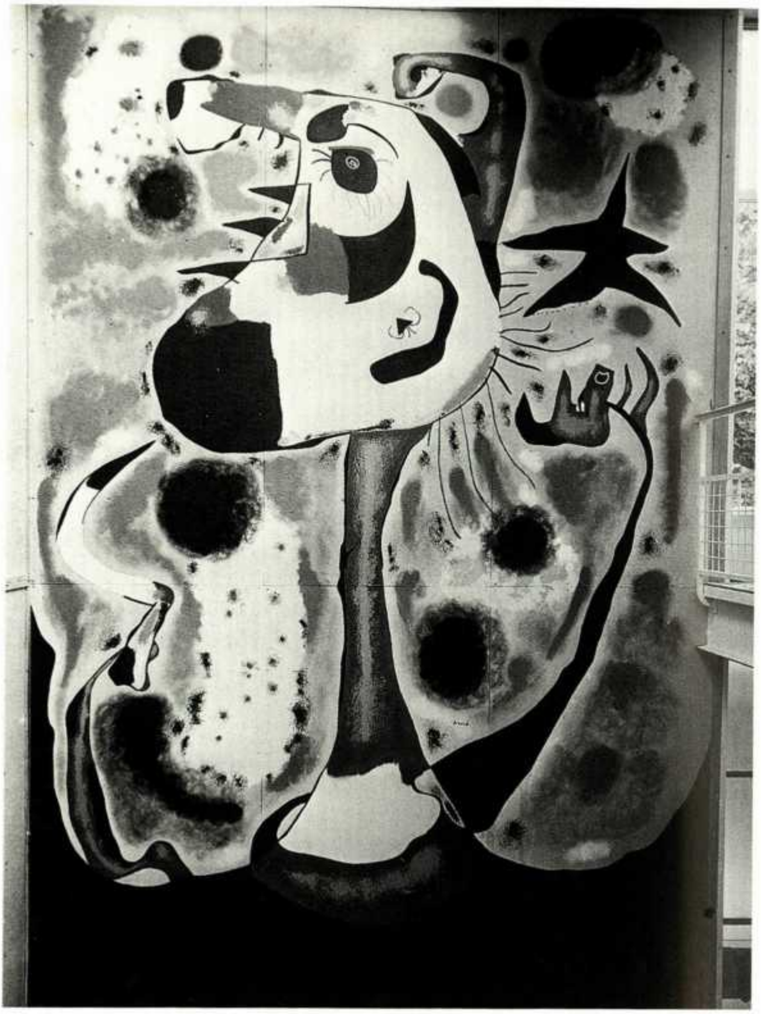
2

NATIONALISM, CIVIL WAR, AND PAINTING: JOAN MIRÓ AND POLITICAL AGENCY IN THE PICTORIAL REALM

I begin this chapter with a problem, one faced by Joan Miró in 1937 when he undertook to paint a mural for the Spanish Pavilion at that year's Paris World's Fair (fig. 1). The stakes for this particular painting were very high: Spain was already a year into its disastrous civil war, and the Republican government sought to use the Pavilion to garner international support against the fascists. By all accounts Miró himself, unable to return to his beloved Catalonia, lived like a tormented refugee in France. Only slowly and painfully did he drag himself out of his depression. For seven months he had no studio and was confined to painting on the mezzanine of Pierre Loeb's gallery. Paris ceased to be the city of promise and excitement and became instead a place of exile for the Catalan in which he was forced to reevaluate the artistic identity he had developed since 1924.

THE POSSIBLE AND THE IMPOSSIBLE

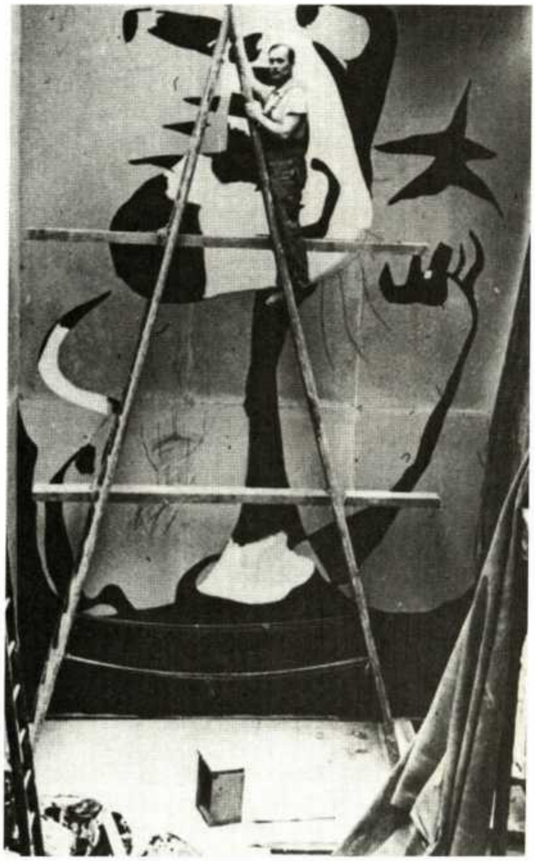
For several years, Miró had watched his country edge ever closer to the brink of war. Spain's euphoria in 1931, when the Republic was voted into power without bloodshed, gradually turned to disillusionment on all sides. From 1931 to 1933, global economic depression created a context in which the tentative efforts of the Republic's bourgeois-socialist coalition to institute a progressive platform could not overcome increasing social divisions. Catalonia's efforts to gain



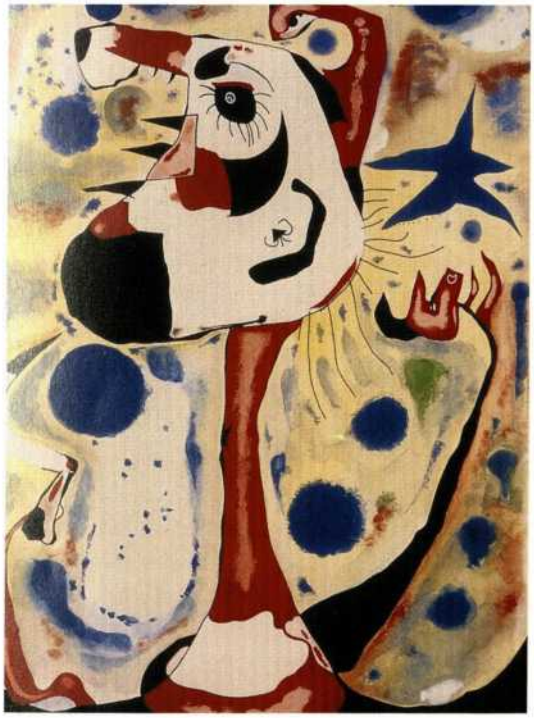
1: Joan Miró, *The Reaper* (*El Segador*), 1937. Oil on celotex panels. 5.5×3.63 m. Whereabouts unknown. Photo courtesy Francis Loeb Library, Harvard University

more autonomy from the hostile Madrid central government were consistently frustrated.[1] The reformist agenda of the Republican left, responsible for overturning pre-1931 social and economic structures, compelled the right to react, first in attempts to block reform, then in efforts to legislate for an authoritarian state. In 1934, the incursion into the government of the right (under the CEDA) prompted large-scale leftist rebellion and Catalonia's declaration of independence, both savagely quelled by the Madrid central government. The "two black years" that followed, the *bienio negro*, saw increased polarization between the PSOE, which dominated the Republican left, and the CEDA; the PSOE tried to hold back the steady advancement of the right through threats of revolution, while the CEDA in turn threatened military action. Tens of thousands were thrown in prison; Miró's home state of Catalonia underwent particularly harsh repression. By 1936, the situation had come to a head. When new elections were called and the Frente Popular voted into power, the right realized that its "Trojan horse" efforts to institute an authoritarian state through democratic means had come to naught. It abandoned legal tactics and turned instead to war.

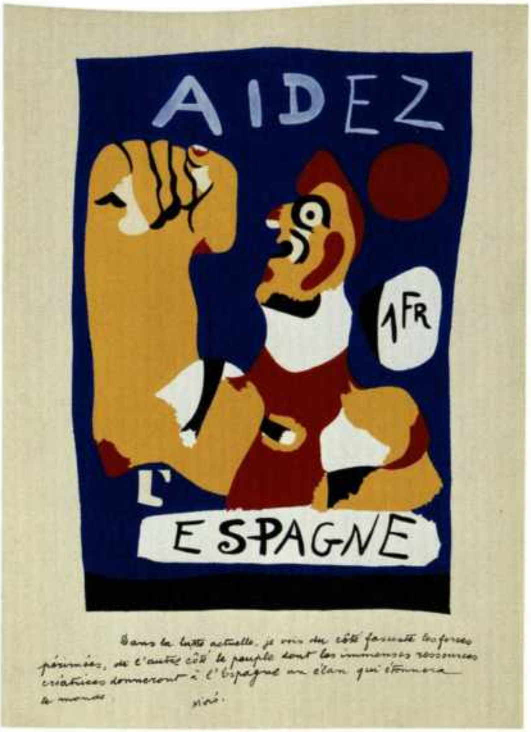
Throughout this period, Miró had never openly addressed the increasingly polarized political and social factioning in Spain. His art had remained tightly concentrated on purely pictorial issues in which any overt politics registered only secondarily, if at all. But in 1937, Miró departed from his rejection of direct political involvement. Accepting the commission for the mural, in the early summer he erected scaffolding against the only space in the Pavilion large enough to hold his planned image and began painting *The Reaper* directly onto the wall (fig. 2).[2] The Pavilion as a whole presented a version of Spain ideologically in tune with Republican views on the Spanish Civil War: a united people battling against the invading fascist forces to defend freedom, social justice, and material prosperity.[3] Miró's mural was no exception. It introduced Spain to a (largely) foreign audience through a deliberate evocation of Catalan nationalism – or *Catalanisme* – meant to coincide with the political aims of Republican Spain and its Popular Front government.[4] In the mural, the figure of a Catalan peasant raises a sickle high into the air to fend off an enemy located outside the picture field. He lifts his other hand in the Republican salute, and tilts his bereted head defiantly back. *The Reaper* recalled the sickle-wielding peasant of the Catalan national anthem and also reverberated with earlier uses of the male peasant figure in Miró's own work. Viewers were meant to recognize not only the painter's characteristic non-realist style, but within it, the terminology he used for his peasant: the alert, even jaunty posture and defiant features are all clearly legible. The masculine figure wears the traditional red cap of the Catalan peasant – a symbol which had come to signify nationalist passion in Miró's painting (fig. 3).[5] The mural's symbolism, its inclusion in the Spanish Pavilion, and the fact that Miró referred to it as the "Catalan Peasant in Rebellion" show that he intended his picture as a heroic call to defend both his homeland and Spain as a whole against the fascist forces led by General Franco.[6] As such, the mural complements Miró's poster *Aidez L'Espagne*, also produced at this time in order to raise funds in France for the Republican cause (fig. 4).[7] Like the mural, *Aidez L'Espagne* shows a brawny male Catalan peasant with fist upraised in the Republican salute.[8]



2: Joan Miró painting *The Reaper* for the Spanish Republican Pavilion, 1937. Photo courtesy Francesc Català-Roca, Barcelona



3: Color reconstruction of *The Reaper*, realized by Fernando Martín Martín in collaboration with the artist. Photo courtesy of Fernando Martín Martín


AIDEZ
1FR
L'
ESPAGNE
Dans la lutte actuelle, je vois du côté fasciste les forces
périmées, de l'autre côté le peuple dont les immenses ressources
créatrices donneront à l'Espagne un élan qui étonnera
le monde
Miró.

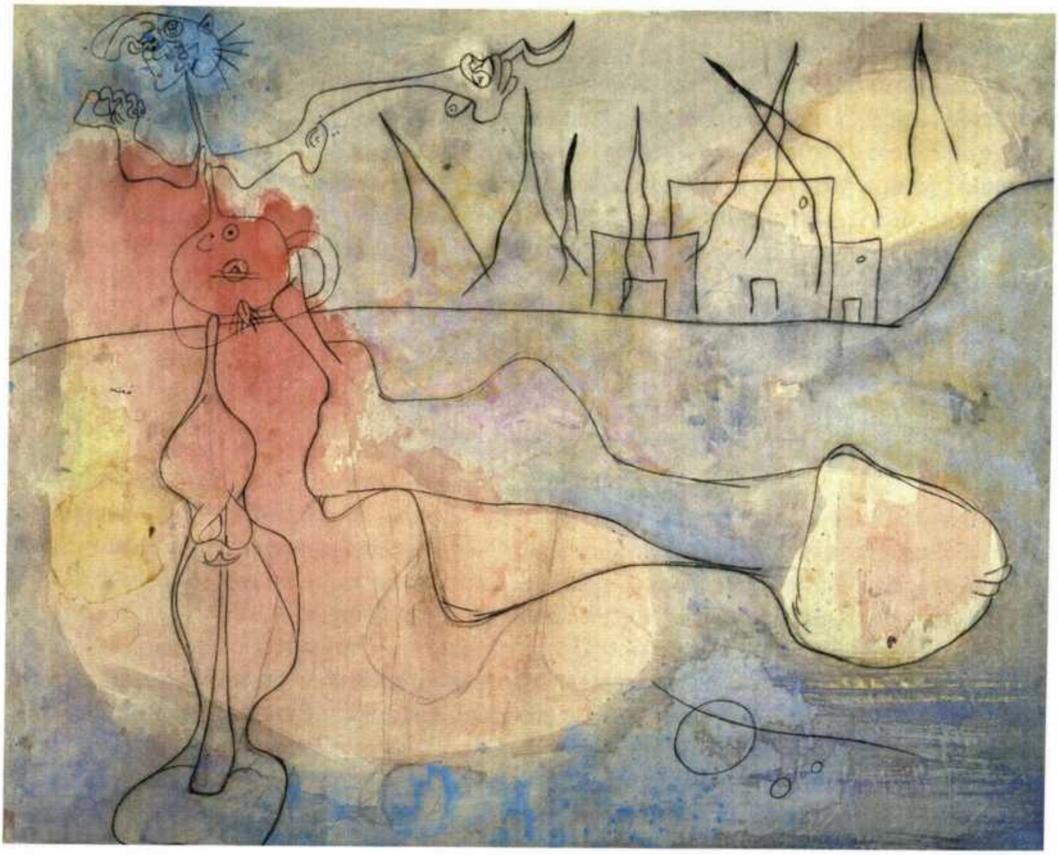
4: Joan Miró, *Help Spain* (*Aidez l'Espagne*) 1937. 24.8 × 19.4 cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art, gift of Pierre Matisse (634.19). Photo courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/SCALA/Art Resource, N. Y.

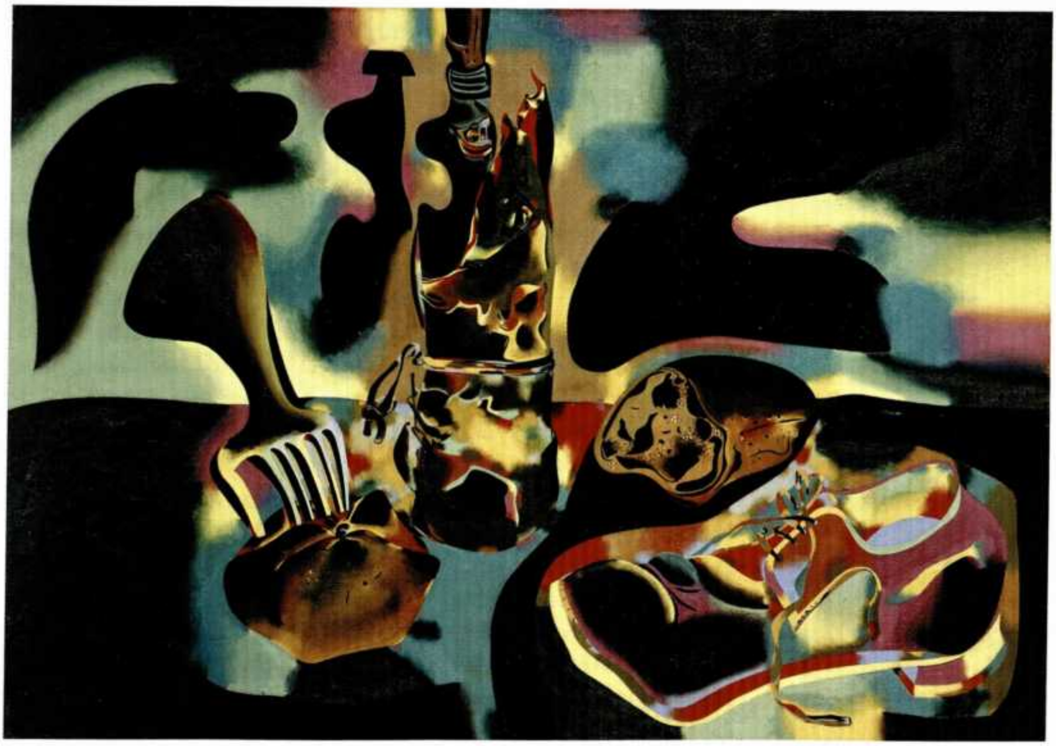
At first glance, Miró's sudden switch to the directly political appears to differ little, either stylistically or rhetorically, from his work of the previous decade. The huge figure of the Catalan peasant is recognizably a "Miró" and the artist seemed to have slipped with ease from his earlier images, produced in the service of aesthetic exploration, to this one, painted to rally international opinion to the Spanish Republic's political cause.

The problem I wish to address, however, becomes apparent when *The Reaper* is compared with two other images that Miró also produced at the height of the Spanish Civil War, *Woman in Revolt* and *Still Life with Old Shoe*, both of which take up disturbingly different attitudes to visualizing political crisis (figs. 5 and 6). While the mural appeared to repress Miró's own sense of anguish over the war in favor of a valiantly confident image of Republican and Catalan politics, Miró's *Woman in Revolt* rests at the opposite pole; a private image conceived outside the constraints of the Pavilion's trajectory, it avoids any claims for the efficacy of political action or social progress.[9] The drawing, one of the few images Miró produced which directly addressed the Spanish Civil War, is intimate in size and shows a panic-stricken woman instead of a heroic male. Rather than standing her ground in the face of calamity, she flees screaming from the burning city behind her, and the sickle becomes less a symbol of defiance than a useless tool to be flung away. But what the sickle loses in symbolic power, the woman's own body disconcertingly gains; her left leg metamorphoses into a nightmarishly phallic, tumor-like appendage which at once underscores the wartime destruction and propels her flight from it.

Still Life with Old Shoe furthers this sense of nigh-hysterical anxiety, twisting the quotidian objects of a simple table arrangement – an apple, a fork, a bottle, a discarded shoe – into horrifically distorted and monstrous elements, metaphors for the war-ravaged Catalan landscape.[10] In contrast to *The Reaper*, these two images demarcate the gap between Miró's public show of bravura and his private feelings of doubt and impotence. They also present different images of the Catalan national body. *Still Life with Old Shoe* and *Woman in Revolt*, respectively, associate national identity with the Catalan landscape as a ravaged territory of terror, self-wounding, and despair, and the Catalan individual as a human (female) body forced by circumstances into obscene sexual reconfiguration as the only possible means of escape. *Woman in Revolt* turns masculinity, used with heroic bravado in *The Reaper*, to an ominously different use; the woman's own body marks the deadly clash between a delicate femininity and a grossly distorted masculinity that at once forces her off the picture edge and pins her pitilessly within the landscape. In *Still Life with Old Shoe*, the objects seem aflame with menace. Some, such as the shoe, seem consumed by the violent atmosphere; others, such as the fork, seem animated by an evil force to plunge aggressively into defenseless objects. The phallic, thrusting appendage of *Woman in Revolt* becomes here a bayonet-like advance of the fork upon the passive, rounded apple. Sexualization of bodies and objects becomes a metaphor for Republican nationalist politics in *The Reaper*, *Still Life with Old Shoe*, and *Woman in Revolt*, but with vastly different meanings.

The discrepancy between these responses to the Spanish Civil War points up Miró's dilemma: to imagine a visual language able to cope with the extreme political turmoil in his home-





5 (*top*): Joan Miró, *Woman in Revolt* (*Femme en révolte*), 1938. Watercolor and pencil on paper. 57.4 × 74.3 cm. Paris, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou. Photo courtesy of Art Resource

6 (*bottom*): Joan Miró, *Still Life with Old Shoe* (*Natura morta del sabatot*) 1937. Oil on canvas. 81.3 × 116.8 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art. Photo courtesy of Art Resource.

land of Catalonia. There is no doubt that Miró meant the formal visual tactics of all these images in large part to define their political messages. Of *Aidez L'Espagne*, he later said "I wanted it to have great visual impact. That was the important thing. If I managed to get that, then it would have intellectual impact as well. Did I realize what I was doing when I took this stance? Of course I did. . . . After painting this I was really afraid. When the bombings began and the Nazis invaded France, I had to get out."[11] And of *Still Life with Old Shoe*, he gave this famous description:

> The civil war was all bombings, deaths, firing squads, and I wanted to depict this very dramatic and sad time. I must confess I wasn't aware that I was painting my *Guernica*. This comparison was made much later. What I do remember is that I was fully aware that I was painting something tremendously serious. The color is certainly what helps give it a penetrating strength.[12]

But while *The Reaper* and *Aidez l'Espagne* place their formal language directly into the service of the Spanish Pavilion's rhetoric, *Still Life with Old Shoe* and *Woman in Revolt* posit the contract between art and politics as much more mediated and oblique. Indeed, *Still Life with Old Shoe* entirely rejects subject matter as a mechanism for expressing Miró's views on the civil war, and it is only the date that it was painted – 1937 – that offers any direct contextual link to the turmoil of events (fig. 6a). This discrepancy between direct and indirect, public and private, demonstrates Miró's predicament in reconciling political militancy with a commitment to a particular artistic process as itself having a form of political resonance. The war, in fact, threw Miró into a desperate quandary, forcing him to question the very representational strategies he had been at pains to secure for more than a decade. Unable to find one comprehensive mode of address appropriate for the war, he split his production into disparate and indeed competing conceptual frameworks.

In this, Miró elucidates a central problem of Surrealism's concept of the political: if – and how – pictures might become the basis for political agency. This necessitated articulating how images might provide a means through which the political collective could voice its aspirations and transform them into concrete strategies for action. The Surrealists, to their dismay, found this process to be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile with the concept of individualist creative autonomy at the heart of their enterprise. Walter Benjamin labeled the latter "a radical concept of freedom" and opposed it to a moribund "liberal-moral-humanistic ideal of freedom." But he also noted the dangerously difficult necessity of "welding this experience of freedom to the other revolutionary experience that we have to acknowledge because it has been ours, the constructive, dictatorial side of revolution."[13] Miró's *The Reaper* did attempt to embody a political collectivity – that of Republican Spain – in concert with the organized partisan enterprise of the Spanish Pavilion. In this, *The Reaper*'s aims differed starkly from either *Still Life with Old Shoe* or *Woman in Revolt*. But, I shall argue, it did so by turning the historical realities of that collectivity into myth, substituting an idealized view of "the people" for a historicized investigation of the difficulties, false starts, confusions, and triumphs of real people trying to organize themselves in the face of the Nationalist attack.

6a: Ruins of the Alcazar, Toledo, 1936. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

Exploring this dilemma will of course require coming to grips with Miró's definition of the political vis-à-vis aesthetics, in relation to Bretonian Surrealism's understanding of the same. Miró's position, like that of all those involved in or circling around orthodox Surrealism, was highly nuanced. It can be understood as a shifting trajectory in which Miró privileged certain aspects of Bretonian Surrealism while questioning the validity of others, according to the circumstances in which he found himself.[14]

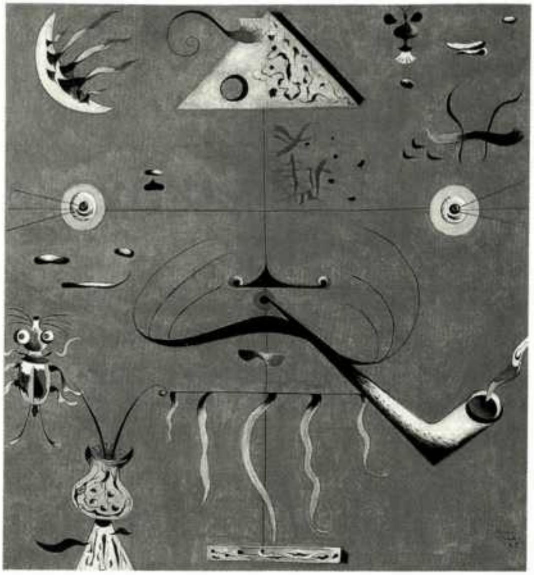
This problematic – and the shifts in how Miró approached it – is most overt at those times when the artist felt obliged to respond to political difficulties in Catalonia. Miró's intense Catalan nationalism has long been recognized as deeply affecting his aesthetic production. But how he directed his pictorial efforts toward what forms of *Catalanisme* has only been thoroughly explored for his pre-Surrealist period.[15] I address here the further question of how Miró's *Catalanisme* registers as an instance of his broader concept of the political in relation to either artistic practice or to orthodox Surrealism's investigations of that issue. The Spanish Civil War pictures can thus be seen as the culmination of a series of responses in which Miró tested a variety of visual tactics to address political upsets in his homeland. I shall examine three key parts of his surrealist production: the 1924–5 series *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, his response to the 1934 October insurrection in Catalonia and the Asturias, and his Spanish Civil War production.

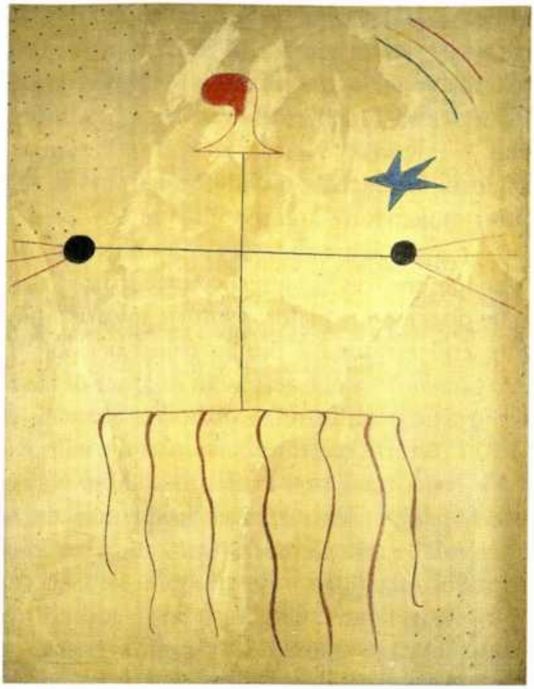
At the heart of any study must be an address to Miró's project of "assassinating painting" in which he first strove to reduce painting to its most elemental and then sought to get rid of it altogether. It was through this project that Miró developed his particular approach to the key Surrealist theory of automatism, bridging from it to his related interest in a theory of origins. Also crucial to any study of this period must be the impasse to which the assassination of painting brought Miró in 1933; for him, the tensions around the assassination project revealed its limits as a direct response to the social realm. His subsequent return to figuration developed out of a recognition of these limits, but nevertheless in relation to the assassination project's close interrogation of the structure of aesthetic form.

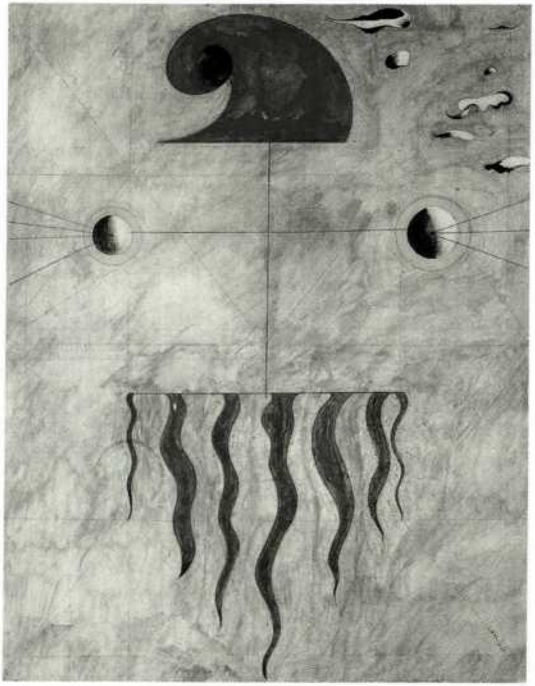
CATALANISME AND THE "ASSASSINATION OF PAINTING"

In 1924–5, Miró painted four works all titled *Head of a Catalan Peasant* (figs. 7–10).[16] Instead of the full masculine figure of the Catalan peasant, in each painting one sees merely his head, reduced to a thinly scratched set of perpendicularly crossed lines floating in an expansive field of color. In several of the series, the painter compels the figure's *barretina* (the Catalan cap or beret) and beard to carry the entire weight of that human entity called "Catalan peasant."[17] Miró forcibly concentrates *Catalanisme* onto the symbolic possibilities of those simple features as signifiers of class, gender, and nationalist pride emanating from the circular eyes. In the last and most pictorially daring of the group, *Head of a Catalan Peasant IV*, the crossed lines signify not only Catalan peasant but also the horizon line which serves to anchor the viewer – however tenuously – within the nebulous depths of the blue color field (fig. 10). The horizontal reads both as a perspectival locator in an endless blue sky and as marks which plot the elements of the peasant's face. The figure becomes the site of pictorial experiments as to how reduced a painted mark can be before it collapses under the semantic weight placed on it.

It is tempting to read not only the subject matter but also the aesthetic form of Miró's series as the painter's effort to bring his new experiments in Surrealism to bear upon the worsening political situation in his homeland. As the most prosperous region of Spain and with strong historical ties to France and the Mediterranean area, Catalonia had long sought to rid itself of





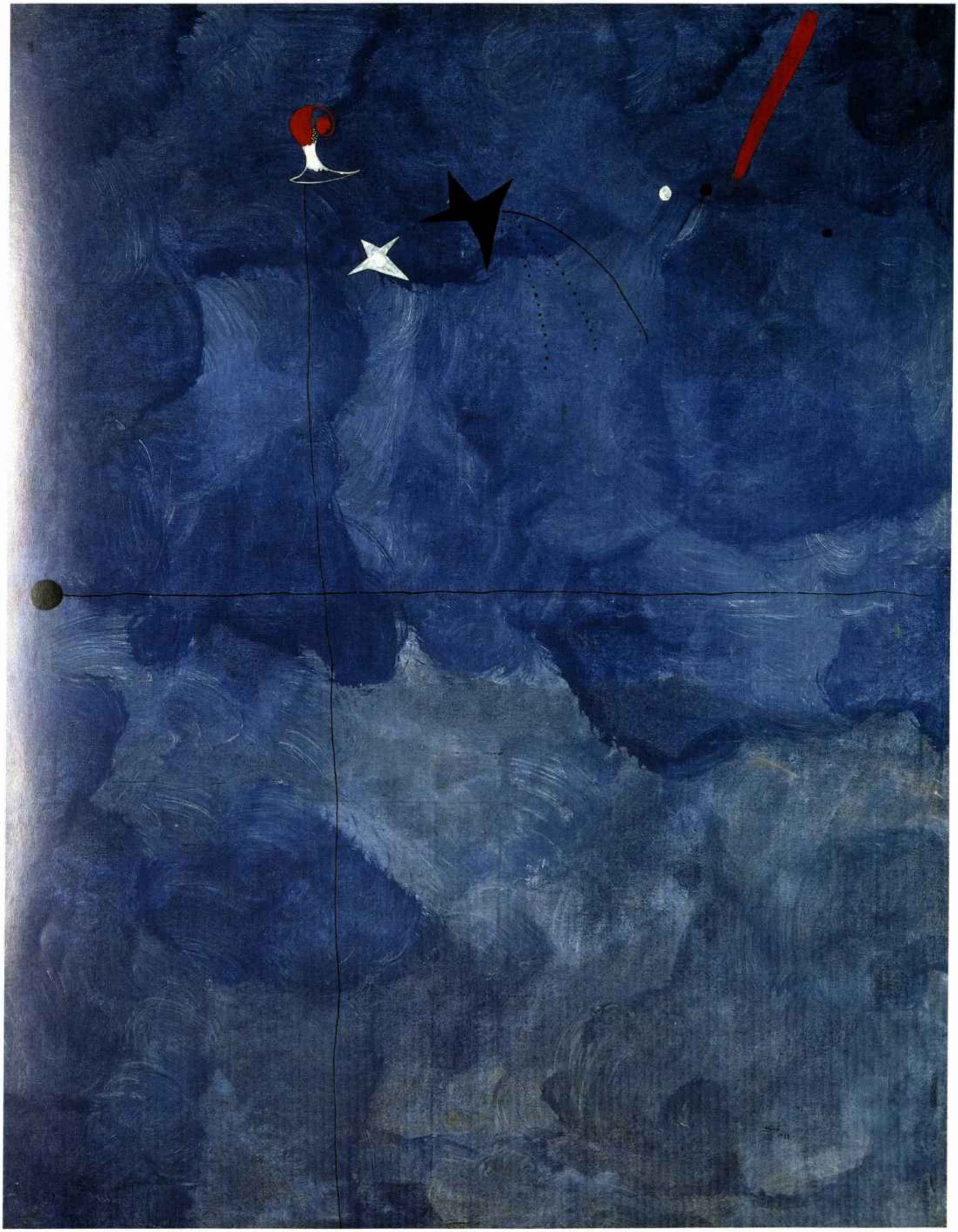


7 (*above left*): Joan Miró, *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, 1924–5. Oil on canvas. 46.3 × 44.4 cm. Paris, private collection

8 (*above right*): Joan Miró, *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, 1924. Oil on canvas. 57.5 × 45 cm. Washington D. C., National Gallery of Art

9 (*left*): Joan Miró, *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, 1925. Oil on canvas. 91 × 73 cm. London, Tate Modern Gallery

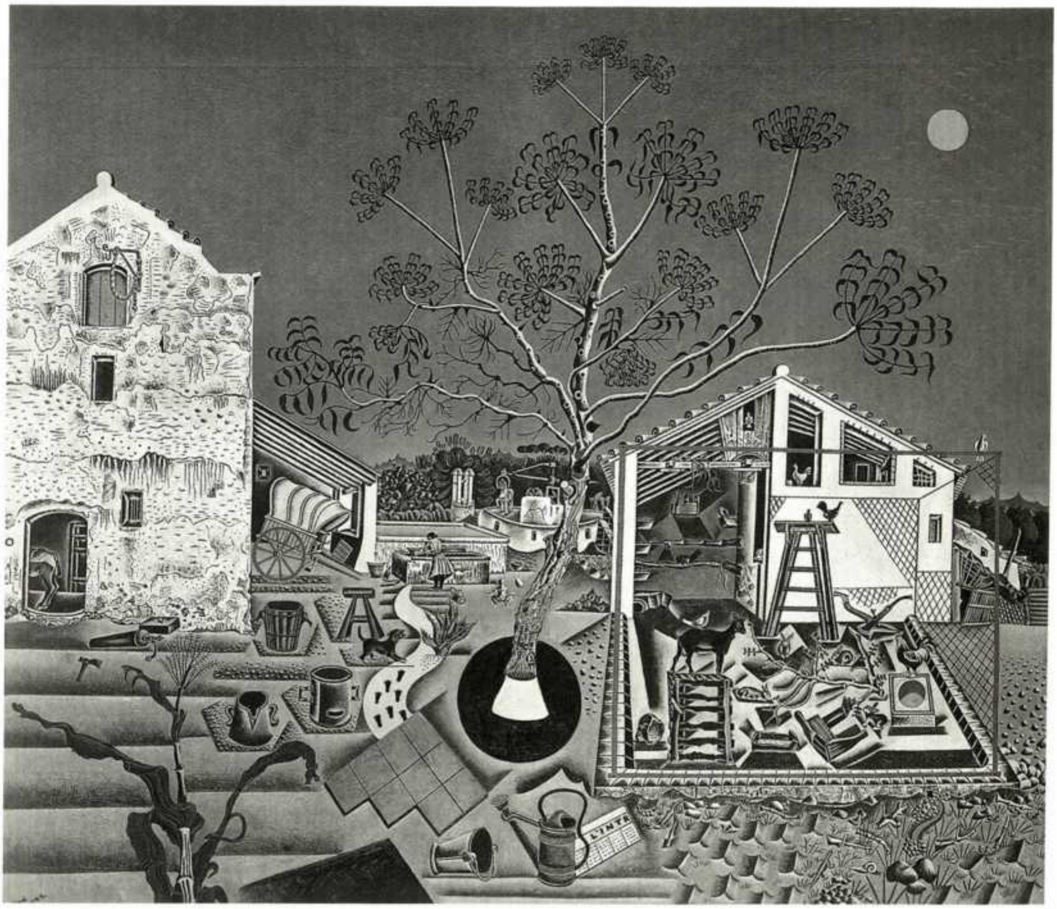
10 (*facing page*) : Joan Miró, *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, 1925. Oil on canvas. 146 × 114 cm. Stockholm, Moderna Museet



the unsympathetic control of Madrid.[18] Efforts at independence oscillated between advocating local autonomy on the one hand and full separatism on the other.[19] In April 1914, all four Catalan provinces banded together to create the *Mancomunitat*, or "Commonwealth." The *Mancomunitat* was the first such recognition of the distinctive character of Catalonia, and its leaders tried to give it a pre-state form.[20] Due to the lack of full autonomy, however, they were unsuccessful, and Catalonia's independent governing body, the Generalitat, was not established until 1931 along with the Second Republic. The Catalan language, that important marker of Catalan identity, was not given full status but it was regularized and did have a flowering. During the First World War, Catalonia experienced a burst of economic growth as a result of Spain's declared neutrality and the region's subsequent ability to trade with both sides. The industrial boom brought rampant inflation, however, and spurred both working-class protest and syndicalist organized activity that challenged the bourgeois government. The period from 1914 to 1919 saw the inherently conservative *Catalanisme* of the bourgeois Lliga Regionalista (a predominantly Catholic and monarchist group advocating a measure of local self-government) ever more pressured by radical peasant groups and anarcho-syndicalist labor unions such as the powerful Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT).

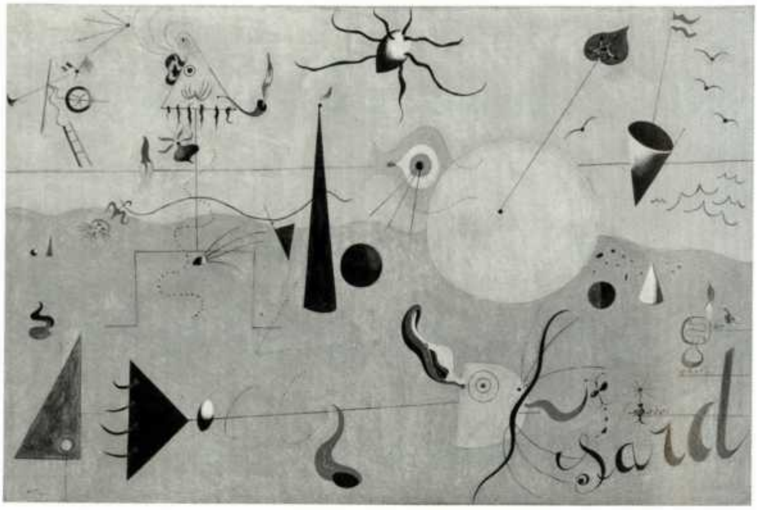
In 1919, Catalonia voted overwhelmingly for a Statute of Autonomy; Madrid, in response, closed down the Catalan parliament. Less than a year later Miró moved to Paris, claiming that the only true Catalan was an "International Catalan" and thereafter visiting his homeland only during the summer.[21] In September 1923 Catalonia's fortunes worsened still further: General Miguel Primo de Rivera seized power in a coup d'état and immediately prohibited the Catalan language and the display of the Catalan flag.[22] He then set about replacing civil government officials with military authorities in order to rid the region of its subversive tendencies. "Such was the need to subjugate Catalonia – because of the double danger of Catalanists and unionists," has written the historian Albert Balcells, "that it had become a sort of vice-royalty in which the action of the military authorities went unchecked."[23] Primo de Rivera subsequently maneuvered throughout 1924 to undermine the *Mancomunitat*'s power and finally, in 1925, he abolished it entirely.

Like Miró's earlier painting *The Farm*, of 1921–2 (fig. 11), the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series attempted to demarcate something essential about Catalan identity that would survive in the face of such political upsets.[24] The Catalan press recognized the significance of this at Miró's June 1925 exhibition at the Galerie Pierre in Paris. Critics praised the show for promoting Catalan nationalism in the international sphere at a time when censorship of things Catalan reigned at home.[25] In the daily newspaper *La Veu de Catalunya*, Josep Carner wrote "the Jews [Carner used them as a metaphor for the stateless Catalans] elaborated a formidable internationalism which was, in the end, a spiritual imperialism, in the face of which all the struggles and depraved sanctions of oriental despots will never amount to anything but ephemeral dust."[26] Carner went on to suggest that under repression Catalans grow stronger rather than weaker, and that the more they are persecuted at home, the more they strive to succeed in the international sphere. Miró's paintings further inspired him to write that "we must vindicate our torture in order to shed light on a more beautiful future."[27] Indeed, the series seems to take up just such a challenge, positing a reciprocity between the political resonance of the Catalan peasant figure and the aesthetic explorations upon which Miró had embarked. The peasant, stripped of even his most humble possessions, floats ever more freely in the atmospheric washes of pure color. Reduction takes on the connotations of freedom rather than oppression; boundaries fade away. The peasant's terrain of existence becomes not just Catalonia but the whole universe. Limiting the figure of the peasant to its most elemental becomes precisely the condition for imagining that figure anew.



11: Joan Miró, *The Farm* (*La Masia*), 1921–2. Oil on canvas. 132 × 147 cm. Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art. Gift of Mary Hemingway, 1987.18.1

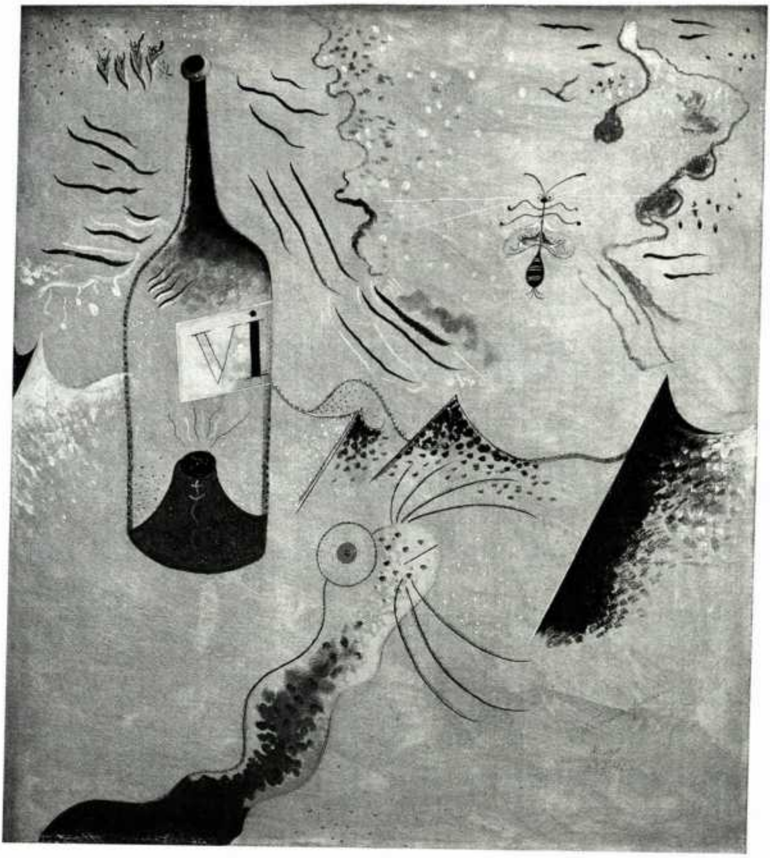
Unlike *The Farm*, however, which reformulated the aesthetic problematics posed by Cubism, all four *Head of a Catalan Peasant* paintings were produced during the first rush of Miró's Surrealist experimentation. As such, the series has implications not only within discourses of Catalan nationalism but within Surrealism as well. Miró first came into sustained contact with Surrealist circles in the early 1920s, soon after moving to Paris. After meeting Masson, whose Rue Blomet studio stood adjacent to his, Miró widened his circle of friends to include Michel Leiris, Paul Eluard, Benjamin Péret and many other leading Surrealist writers. Rejecting his earlier cubist and futurist experiments, the Catalan painter began producing ethereal landscapes filled with fantasy creatures and soon started his long search for a means to "assassinate painting."[28] It is in this latter project, I shall argue, that Miró most clearly located his concept of the political in relation to Surrealism's aspirations. While he remained wary of orthodox Surrealism's collectivist political endeavors, he nevertheless adhered strongly to the ethic of individualism and absolute freedom which Surrealism sought to embody in its aesthetic practice.[29] He was also enthralled by the unparalleled aesthetic possibilities opened up by Surrealist experiments with automatism, random chance, dreams, and hallucination. These taught Miró how to upset traditional formal conventions in order to promote unrestrained expression.

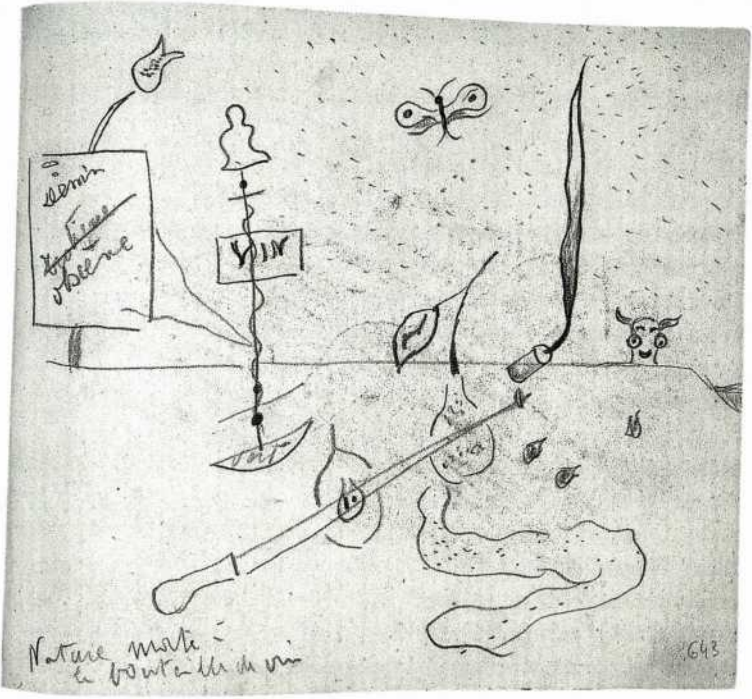


12: Joan Miró, *Catalan Landscape (The Hunter)*, 1923–4. Oil on canvas. 64.8 × 100.3 cm. New York., The Museum of Modern Art. Photo courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/Art Resource

Certain politicized symbols of Catalan identity – especially representations of the male Catalan peasant – functioned to heighten the sense of urgency Miró felt concerning the assassination project. Such symbols allowed the painter to embed a deeper sense of the project's political overtones into a wide range of canvases, whether the subject matter was overtly Catalan as in *Catalan Landscape (The Hunter)* of 1923–4, as mundane as a still life such as *Bottle of Wine* of 1924, or as minimal as *Painting* (1925) (figs. 12–15). *Catalan Landscape (The Hunter)* offers a quasi-taxonomy of objects and creatures schematically indicated, spread across the surface of the canvas so that each remains distinct from the next. The iconography has been plotted in a chart by William Rubin. The hunter himself, standing to the left of the tall black gun in the center, is pulled together in a cursory fashion through his various parts – ear, beard, genitals, pipe – to indicate the most humorously potent aspects of Catalan maleness. He smokes his pipe with gusto and gaily ejaculates into the air. But at the same time he is dispersed across the surface of the canvas as these parts take up different positions and meanings: his triangle head becomes the green geometric rule bottom left, then becomes the sardine's tail; and his masculine beard reappears in the sardine's whiskers and tail. His genitals transform themselves variously into a free-floating sun-egg in the sky or an eye that beams rays.

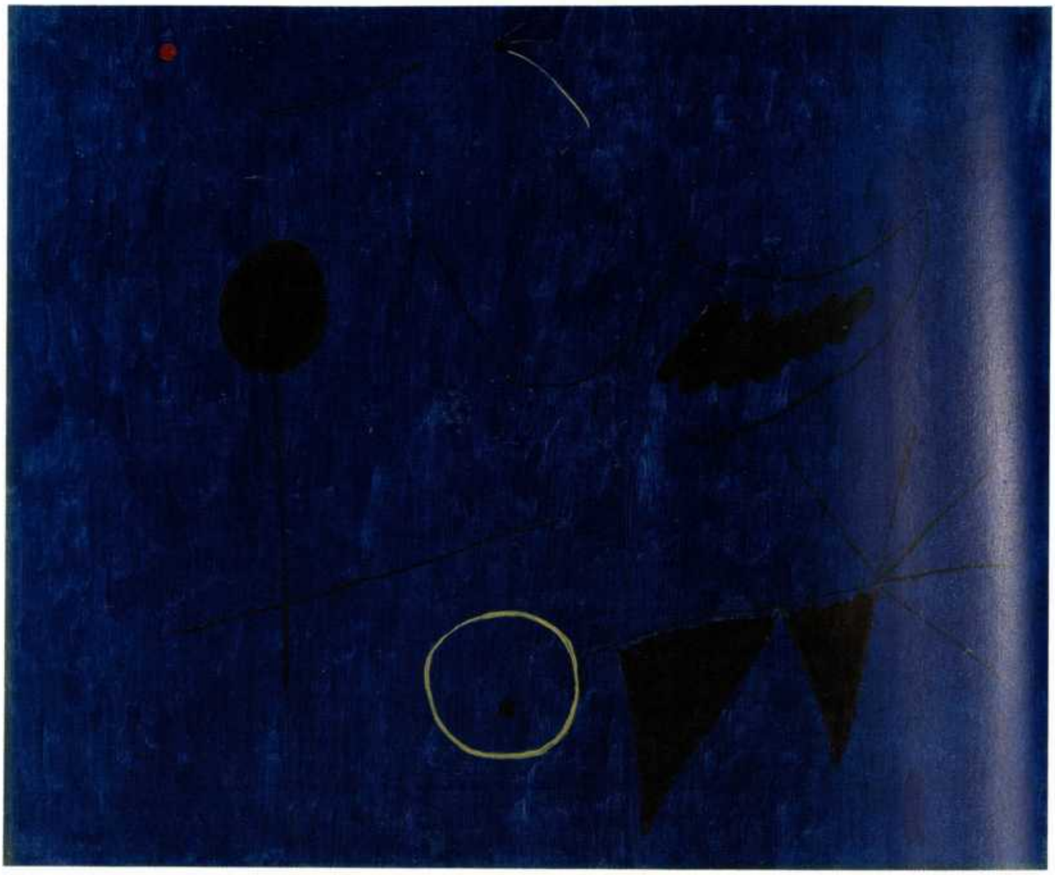
In *Catalan Landscape (The Hunter)* Miró creates a catalogue of signs within the painting itself but in *Bottle of Wine* the signification of each sign is built up, not only through interreferencing objects within the picture frame, but also between images. This peculiar work seems to begin, in an early preliminary study, as a fairly conventional still life. A ripe pear stands upright; its peel, cut away by a dinner knife, unravels across the table. In the upper right corner, a small fly buzzes in an atmosphere of cracks and scratches. In the finished painting, Miró has kept the buzzing fly, now adorned with gossamer wings; but the pear has metamorphosed into a bottle, while the tabletop has changed into a sandy beach (see fig. 13). Whereas the transformation from pear to bottle might seem at first merely a case of substituting one innocuous object for another, a second preliminary drawing throws new light on Miró's thinking during the image's various stages (see fig. 14). In this study, the pear gives pride of place to another figure: a rock-




VIN
Nature morte
à bouteille de vin
643

13 (*top*): Joan Miró, *Bottle of Wine*, 1924. Oil on canvas. 73 × 65 cm. Barcelona, Fundaciò Joan Miró

14 (*bottom*): Joan Miró, Sketch for a *Bottle of Wine*, 1924. Pencil. 19.1 × 16.5 cm. Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró



15: Joan Miró, *Painting* (1925). Oil on canvas. 49 × 60cm Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró

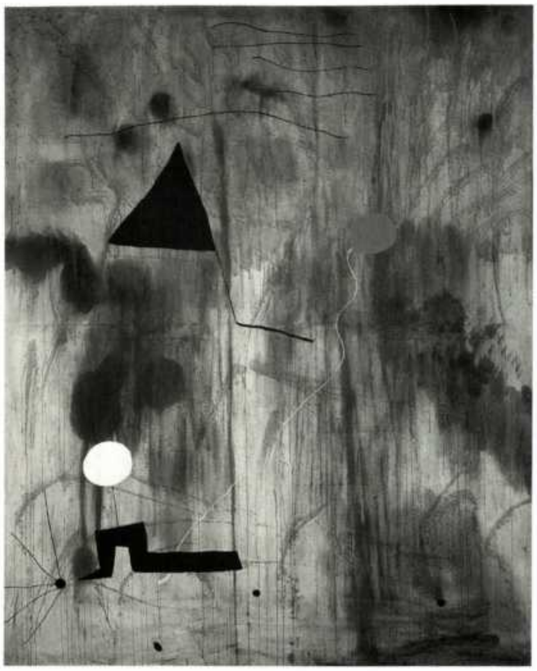
ing, stick shape that is both bottle of "wine" (note the label) and "Catalan hunter" (note his traditional cap), its identity seemingly caught between a quotidian object and the masculine figure in *Catalan Landscape (The Hunter)*. In the finished painting the metamorphosis has been completed but traces remain of the hunter's vibrant sexuality: the hunter's pipe has been tilted up on its phallic length to end pertly in the bottle's rounded opening; his genitals have been turned inward and colored blue-green, their form reminiscent of both the Catalan's jubilant ejaculation in the previous painting and the rounded, rocking form of the figure's base in the preliminary sketch.

While nationalism was clearly not the only issue affecting Miró's production, it was nevertheless important and the examples noted here are only a few of a much larger number of works, such as *Painting* (1925), in which Miró repeats the familiar version of the schematized Catalan peasant in the crossed lines.[30]

In 1930, Miró proclaimed his notorious wish to "assassinate painting."[31] Styled as an attack on conventions of Western painting up through Cubism, the artist's intention has been taken as part and parcel of Surrealism's efforts to dismantle a bourgeois art heritage in favor of a more liberated artistic production.[32] It has also been understood as the painter's attack on his own history of production, specifically against the more anecdotal works from his earlier cubist and futurist influenced phases.[33] Although most scholarship dates the beginning of the "assassination" project to May 1928, Christopher Green argues persuasively for a much earlier date coinciding with the painter's first Surrealist output.[34] Miró's production during the 1928–33 period attempted to demolish painting more aggressively than the 1924–8 period, but the destructive attitude was noted soon after Miró entered the orbit of Surrealism.[35] As I shall discuss, both Green and David Lomas have laid out detailed arguments for considering automatism fundamental to Miró's extended "assassination" production.[36] My intention is to expand their readings into the territory of the more forthrightly political, to argue for Miró having conceptualized his version of automatism as a politicized endeavor aimed at transforming the language one uses to articulate the world to oneself. It was precisely this conceptual project whose political aspirations were challenged by the Spanish Civil War and the commission to paint a mural at the 1937 Spanish Pavilion.

The formal and conceptual structure carries nearly all of the attack in these early works.[37] Miró began systematically simplifying his color palette, ridding it of the multiplicity of colors in favor of monochrome washes across an entire canvas. These spatially nebulous color fields effectively rid the pictures of any connection either to illusionism or to the fractured material space of Cubism; instead, they launch the viewer into a dematerialized realm in which gravity has no value. Onto these luminous fields, Miró sparingly painted attenuated forms which float weightless in their vibrating atmospheres of color. Lines wander across the surface of the canvas, occasionally forming themselves into shapes, sometimes into words or numbers. Yet these cursive scrawls exist at best on the edge of narrative, metaphor, or anecdote, and tend instead toward an extreme abstraction. As Rosalind Krauss has eloquently described, these lines and shapes signal Miró's affinity with Surrealist language experiments.[38] Similar to Surrealism's inquiry through automatic writing into the status of the linguistic sign, Miró's pictures from this period query the function of line in structuring the color field surface of the canvas. Both Miró's paintings and the automatic writing of such foundational texts as *Les Champs magnétiques,* writes Krauss, "shared the problem of inventing a language which would simultaneously describe the world of objects and the opacity of the medium that renders them – whether that medium be line or words."[39] By the time of the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series, Miró already aimed to reduce painting to its most essential, to interrogate painting's status in order to reveal its communicative structure.[40] The extreme reductivism of the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series takes this interrogation deliberately out of the realm of resemblances and illusionism into the realm of signification. The national symbol of the Catalan peasant functions less as an embodied, narratively contextualized figure than as a pictographic sign that structures the formal logic of the color field. In this way, its "meaning" has as much (if not more) to do with depicting space on a flat surface, with negating volume and weight, or with the expressive possibilities of doodled lines, as with Catalanist sentiment or organized Catalanist political movements. In these and other paintings from the period, Miró used his floating lines and nebulous forms to disconnect the signifier from any single referent ("Catalan peasant" as nationalist symbol in this case), so as to generate possibilities for new and different meanings.

The "assassination of painting" project not only aimed to demolish painting, it also meant to demolish the concept of the individual painter. Throughout the assassination period, Miró sought to interrogate the status of the artist and all its associated myths. Traditional concepts of creative genius, the unique master touch, even the idea of consciously willed productivity – Miró treated them all with intense scorn. By 1931 his contempt had reached its height; an interview of that year finds him vehemently stating that he is "only interested in anonymous art, the kind that springs from the collective unconscious. . . . When I stand in front of a canvas, I never know what I'm going to do – and nobody is more surprised than I at what comes out."[41] This particular refusal of artistic talent, of course, fitted directly with Surrealism's anti-

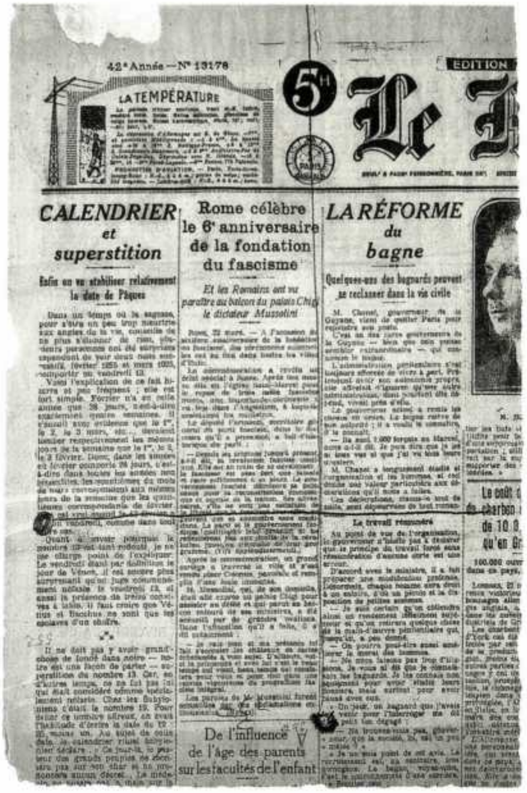


16: Joan Miró, *The Birth of the World*, 1925. Oil on canvas. 250.8 × 200 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art. Photo courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/ Art Resource

Enlightenment attack on intentionality. Miró, in fact, had developed a technique that appeared to coincide with the Surrealist notion of psychic automatism – that the production of an image (or a text) should abandon conscious control and that the final construct should register this lack. He repeatedly claimed to leave himself open to a state of free association when starting his canvases: "Rather than setting out to paint something, I begin painting and as I paint the picture begins to assert itself, or suggest itself under my brush. The form becomes a sign for a woman or a bird as I work . . . The first stage is free, unconscious."[42] Comments such as these, in conjunction with his seemingly random techniques of paint application, have been used to secure Miró more closely to a strict Surrealist paradigm. This paradigm imagined the artist less as a creator than as a psychic medium for the transference of images from an unconscious "dream state" to the canvas.[43]

Miró's "assassination of painting" project was, therefore, not simply a destructive process. It was also a campaign for renewing painting itself, a means of liberating painting from convention, and along with it, of liberating both artist and viewer into new inspiration. As such, it coincided with Surrealism's ambitions as expressed in automatism. Christopher Green and David Lomas have analyzed the multiple levels at which Surrealist automatism is invoked in Miró's *The Birth of the World* (1925; fig. 16), which has been labeled the quintessential "dream" painting because of both the schematization of its figures and the mode of painting itself.[44] Here the figures are no longer anchored within illusionistic perspective. Nor do they even remotely resemble animals or humans, having been pared down from the figural pictograms of the preparatory sketches to the pure geometric elements of circle, triangle, and line. The field in which these geometric figures rest is composed of layered washes of paint dripped or spread onto the canvas surface in seemingly haphazard patterns. The type of careful calculation of each figure's placement in relation to its fellow creatures and the Catalan landscape seen in *The Farm* no longer seems to guide the compositional arrangement.

Before the publication in 1976 of a preliminary sketch for *The Birth of the World*, this painting appeared to corroborate Miró's strategic insistence on the "automatic," random nature of his technique during this period, as though his visual thoughts were recorded spontaneously and directly onto the canvas.[45] Although the discovery of the sketch precluded any reading of *The Birth of the World* itself as spontaneously produced, Green and Lomas nevertheless argue persuasively for Miró's technique of mark-making as a commitment to automatism. Green demonstrates how Miró's "automatism" occurred not so much in the final paintings as in the artist's repeated tracings of arbitrary marks in his notebooks, such that a first jotting down of something seen – a crack, stain, or scribble on a wall – became the basis for Miró's interrogation of the process of representation itself.[46] (Indeed, a sketch for the last *Head of a Catalan Peasant* suggests that Miró found visual inspiration for the peasant's crossed lines by tracing the graphic organization of newspaper columns rather than in some abstract nationalist concept; fig. 17.) Green investigates this in the light of Surrealism's suppression of willed creativity, while Lomas links it to Freud's theory of tracing in the function of memory and the unconscious. Thus at issue in *The Birth of the World* is not automatism in the traditional Surrealist sense but a nevertheless related effort to uncover the genesis of mark-making.


42e Année — N° 13178
LA TEMPÉRATURE
5H
EDITION
CALENDRIER et superstition
Rome célèbre le 6e anniversaire de la fondation du fascisme
LA RÉFORME du bagne
De l'influence de l'âge des parents sur les facultés de l'enfant

17: Joan Miró, sketch for *Head of a Catalan Peasant*, (1925). Ink and pencil on newspaper. 31 × 60 cm Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró

"Origins" and "essence" here are envisioned not in terms of a catalogue of the fundamental aspects of Catalan country life, as in *The Farm*, but rather as the original psychic impulses of representation, unimpeded by any attempt to conjure up reality. Yet, as I shall discuss, this concept of origins holds implications for Miró's pictorial nationalism in the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* paintings and beyond.

At the height of automatism (corresponding more or less to the first phase of Miró's assassination of painting, 1924–8), Surrealism held to the idea of the unconscious as a region of psychic activity laid down in childhood but later shrouded by the socially conditioned conscious mind.[47] Only through assuming the existence of an unsullied "primitive" subjectivity constructed prior to – and indeed against – a "civilized" adult subjectivity could the Surrealists posit this as a realm of complete freedom. In the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* of 1924, Breton argued that certain conditions promoted unfettered imagination more than others: dream states, madness, childhood were chief among them. Also to be included were hypnotic states, hunger-induced hallucinations (which Miró claimed to have undergone regularly), the "primitive" mind, and of course automatism. Underlying this was the idea of a "return" to some state of being anterior to – and therefore outside of – Western capitalism. "Existence is elsewhere," wrote Breton.[48] To gain access to the unconscious was thus to uncover a purer, more originary state of being; such a state of "nonconformism," moreover, could act as a platform from which to critique the "carcass" of "this world" against which the Surrealists had declared war.[49]

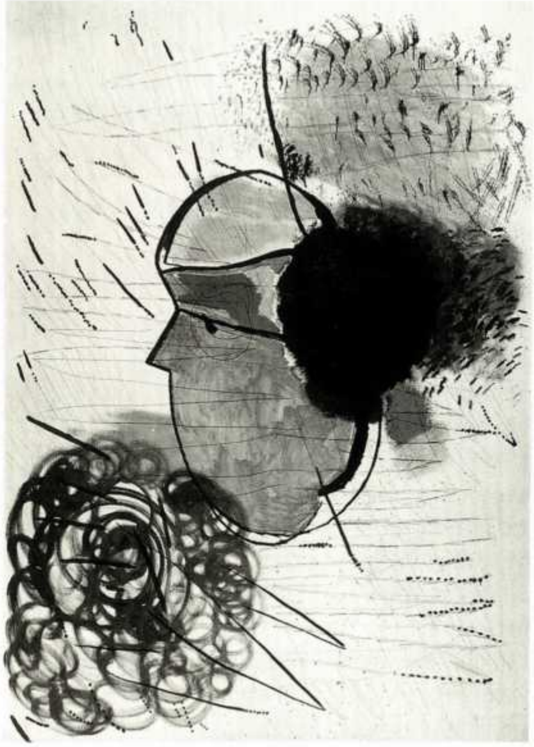
Freud, of course, warned against this assumption.[50] The unconscious itself, he asserted, was produced through repression rather than prior to it, and could neither be directly accessed nor separated from the conditions of repression. There was no Edenic garden of non-repressed origins to be got back to. But in their search for the origins of the human psyche, the Surrealists (both orthodox and dissident) were men of their era.[51] Their concept of "origins" functioned as a philosophical framework which they used to hook together a number of related issues: childhood, the Freudian "primal scene" and its role in formulating the psychic unconscious, cave painting on the edge of history, the naïve scribbles of children, and the beginnings of human life itself in conception and birth. *The Birth of the World*, produced in the same period as the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series, evokes these issues on the intertwined levels of both form and content.[52] The elemental geometric figures, floating in an unformed space, seem to refer to the beginning of time before even the mass of cosmic gasses cohered into what we now know as the earth. Along with the striated lines in the upper portion of the canvas, they also recall the beginnings of art, of human efforts to record experience and meaning in such places as Spain's Altamira caves, when art's ability to conjure up the magic of lived experience was most potent and least obscured by reason, it was thought. And, as has often been observed, the genesis of the individual through the fertilization of a human egg by a sperm is evoked through the painting's yellow-tailed red circle as it swims away from the humanoid ejaculating figure in the lower left. Indeed, in a 1931 essay titled "Joan Miró or the childhood of art," Georges Hugnet described the artist's technique in just such terms: "he traces the index of the child and of prehistory; the line 'number one,' the only line of its commencement, the egg."[53]

As Hugnet and others recognized, the assassination paintings sought to strip away the history of art in order to recapture a mythic state of innocence.[54] Miró's reduction of the painted surface to its most schematic reenacted a return not just to the beginnings of the artist's own mark-making but to the dawn of all mark-making. Thus the assassination works repeatedly take one back to the very outset of humanity's effort to make visual notations stand for an experience of the world. In this way, reduction is at once a rebirth. Hugnet, along with Leiris, Carl Einstein, and Bataille, mounted a debate on the concept of origins in relation to Miró's refusal of pictorial conventions during these "assassination of painting" years.[55] In so doing they set out a certain theoretical grounding for the painter's project. Images such as *Painting (Head)*, published in *Documents* in 1929, seem to confirm Leiris's characterization of Miró's images as a process of mentally stripping down a scenario viewed in real life to its most basic elements (fig. 18). By means of this "series of steps repeated according to a faster and faster rhythm," Leiris wrote, the whole work acquired a "comprehension of the physical void, first step toward the comprehension of the true void – that of the moral and metaphysical void."[56] Such an emptying was necessary, Leiris claimed, for Miró to recover "a parallel infancy." Leiris conceptualized the originary impulse toward representation dually in terms of childhood scribbles and of the "primitivism" of prehistoric mark-making.

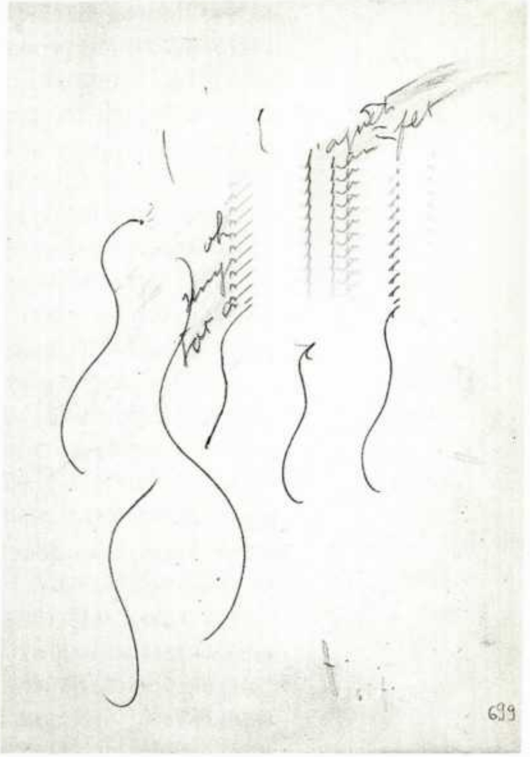
Miró's pictographs fit themselves into a lively debate on the beginnings of art that oscillated between the poles of the historical origins of humanity (epitomized by prehistoric cave paintings) and the individual's origins in childhood.[57] Bataille's 1930 article on Miró – published in the same number of *Documents* as and directly following his review of G.-H. Luquet's influential book on children's and prehistoric art, *L'Art primitif* – brought Miró into the fray as a counter-argument to the then prevalent tendency to equate the development of children's art with the development of prehistoric figuration. Prehistoric mark-making's figural simplifications were not, according to Bataille, a question of unwitting regression (as Luquet had it) but a matter of deliberate, conscious choice. Miró's "regress" to primitivist pictographs (the article accompanies a set of his most relentlessly non-mimetic paintings; see fig. 18) was not a question of simplicity or innocence but a matter of violent, premeditated attacks on Western traditions of painting:

> Finally, as Miró himself professed that he wanted to "kill painting," the decomposition was pushed to such a point that nothing remained but some formless blotches on the cover (or, if you prefer, on the gravestone) of painting's box of dirty tricks. Thereafter little colored and alienated elements irrupted anew, after which, today, they have disappeared once more from his pictures, leaving only the trace of who knows what disaster.[58]

Einstein, however, situated the debate on the terrain of imaging Spain, arguing that for Miró to arrive at an "essential" mode of painting that would convey "the Iberian man with the foot of a giant, the peasant who fertilizes the earth in striding upon it," Miró himself had to go through "a shedding [*dépouillement*] that was necessary for him."[59] For Einstein, Miró's work of 1930 was proof



18: Joan Miró, *Painting (Head)*, 1930. Grenoble, Musée de Grenoble



19: Joan Miró, sketch for *Oh! One of Those Gents Who Did All That!*, (1925). Ink on paper. 27.3 × 19.68 cm. Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró

of just such a self-imposed shedding. The artist reduced detail that might specify "individual" until the figure ceased to represent any single person but instead signified the universal "human." Miró escaped the trivializing dangers of anecdote through stripping the graphic line until it reached a point where its forms could take up the same mythic and "archaizing telepathy" as prehistoric Iberian figuration: "[Miró] fled the comparative metamorphosis, toward a more profitable, simpler ignorance."[60] This was an address to the "origins" of a historical accumulation of national characteristics that had gone through the sifting procedure of time; they were not anachronistic but universal and thus appropriate to a modernist visual language of the most severe kind. These were not about representing Spain in any kind of mimetic way; they were about how Spain represented itself, demarcated its identity through the more fundamental process of mark-making.[61]

Miró's "assassination of painting" meant, therefore, more than just reducing his figures to the status of pictographs; it involved deconstructing the very act of putting pigment on canvas. Leiris in his *Documents* article wrote of Miró's pictures of this time as "not so much painted as dirtied."[62] Indeed, the rough smudges and scribbles in images such as *Painting (Head)* hark back to the 1925 *Oh! One of Those Gents Who Did All That!* (fig. 19) but reject that work's humorous reference to scatological experiences external to painting, to replace it with a relentlessly anti-aesthetic return to the bodily act of mark-making. The marks even disrupt the mimetic impulse toward defining a human face, emphasizing instead the action of visual notation in its most basic identificatory role.[63] "Man" is no longer equated with either the human face or, as Leiris characterized it, the "sole of the foot."[64] Instead, humanity is aggressively conjured up on both sides of metaphor's fence, becoming both the tool with which the "assassination of painting" is carried out and the subject of that attack; the human body leaves its mark in the primitive scribbles strewn across the page, deleting its own face in the process.

It is within this extended conceptual framework that the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series must be understood. The series powerfully unites Miró's willful attack on traditions of painting with his search for the philosophical, psychic, and historical origins of representation; these in turn resonate with the artist's long pictorial quest for an essential Catalan identity. It is through the body of the male Catalan peasant, pared down to a crossed set of calligraphic lines floating weightless in an expansive color field, that Miró explores humanity's effort to make marks stand for experience. Moreover, by standing as interpretations of that experience, the four paintings serve to mediate between the material world and humanity's endless quest to comprehend the "meaning" of its worldly existence. Miró thus links the finite project of *Catalanisme*'s political search for legalized statehood to deep philosophical questions regarding human identity. "Catalan Peasant" is therefore not a fixed category limited to a specific set of cultural or political experiences but, rather, a means of continually rethinking those more circumscribed definitions in the light of humanity's larger philosophical enterprise, and in such a way as to open that nationalist symbol to ever-expanding significations. [65]

Yet the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series also hints at the conundrum that Miró faced most openly in his Spanish Civil War images: how to bring such philosophical and aesthetic inquiries back to the everyday realm of concrete socio-political action. Although certain Catalan critics interpreted Miró's production during this period as directly political, neither Breton nor Miró himself were quite so sure.[66] Miró's uneasiness regarding this problem can be seen not only in his Spanish Civil War production but also in another moment edged with politics. In February 1929, a questionnaire was sent to a number of Surrealists and fellow travelers asking about their current ideological position with regard to collective versus individual action.[67] Miró's response, which stated his ambivalence in typically bold fashion, read: "There is no doubt that when action is taken, it is always the result of a collective effort. Nevertheless, I am convinced that individuals whose personalities are strong or excessive . . . these people will never be able to give in to the military-like discipline that communal action necessarily demands."[68] Miró clearly thought of himself as a "strong or excessive" personality prone to anarchic individualism, and refused to attend the meeting called by Breton at the Bar du Château to discuss the questionnaire results.[69] Yet despite this seeming break with orthodox Surrealism's search for a collective political practice, he nevertheless admitted the need for such. Indeed, the issue for Miró seems to have been less whether to accept or reject collective action than to privilege one aspect of Bretonian politics over the other according to circumstances. He remained committed to discovering the revolutionary potential within the creative visual act itself, even if doing so precluded collective political militancy.

Breton had in fact begun to express doubts about Miró's commitment to political action in 1928, over what he perceived to be Miró's "desire . . . to abandon himself to painting and only painting." Miró, he wrote, "asks nothing of the real but the sur-expressive [*surexpressif*], the expressive in the most infantile sense. . . . Word for eye, tooth for word."[70] In 1941 Breton extended this none too sympathetic critique. The painter's production, he claimed, attested to an unsurpassed "innocence" – a commendable Surrealist state. But it was nonetheless prey to "a certain stoppage of the personality in the infantile state" that stunted its possibilities.[71] Breton wrote these critiques, of course, with a particular agenda in mind. His first 1928 criticisms of Miró came when the Surrealists were under heavy pressure from the Communist Party to reject what the Party considered to be Surrealism's pornographic and bourgeois attitudes. At that time, Breton seemed to find it expedient to censure Miró's seeming unwillingness to relate his work to a more directly politicized agenda. The Surrealist leader faulted Miró's concentration on the notion of the sign within the bounds of representation itself at a time when Breton was trying to turn Surrealism away from a more purely aesthetic stance (the so-called *époque de sommeils*) toward a more actively political position.[72] Breton's impatience with what he regarded as Miró's overly close focus on painting *per se* fed his worry that Miró's aesthetic enterprise was too isolated from world events to contribute usefully to Surrealism's reformulated project.

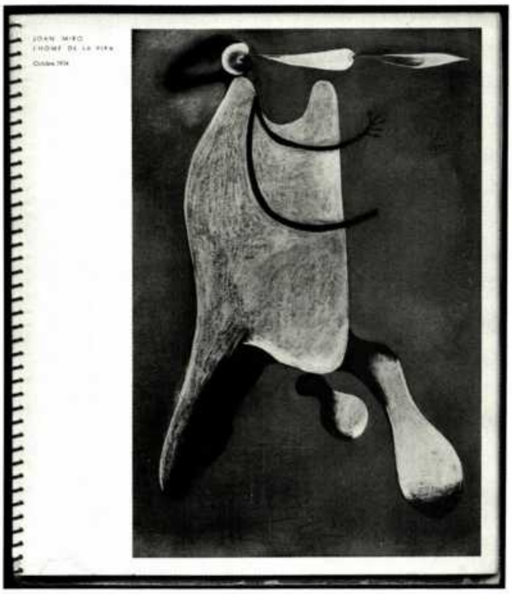
This was also a period of doubt within Bretonian Surrealism about the effectiveness of automatism's liberatory powers generally.[73] Time and again, the group had run up against the refusal of the unconscious to act differently from how Freud suggested it would. The Surrealists' continued ambivalence toward automatism shows they were aware of this problem but unable to resolve it decisively as regards political practice. Breton, in "The Automatic Message" of 1933, admitted that "the history of automatic writing in surrealism has been . . . one of continuing misfortune" and that "the term 'automatic writing' as used in surrealism, lends itself . . . to disputation."[74] Clearly responding to criticism, he took pains to distinguish between Surrealist automatic writing and that "practiced . . . by mediums . . . in a completely *mechanical* way."[75] This suggests that some conscious interference in automatism's (purported) ability to reach the unconscious was what distinguished Surrealism from other "inauthentic" forms, and thus refuted Breton's earlier claim that poets only function as "recording instruments" when writing automatically.[76] Breton went on to argue rather defensively for the legitimacy of automatism as much in the realms of artistic production and "moral compensation" as in the "determination of the precise constitution of the subliminal," thereby admitting that Surrealism was perhaps after all not entirely interested in discovering the structure of the unconscious if that structure did not fit the movement's political goals.[77]

These doubts and pressures frame Breton's 1928 criticism of Miró, in which he argued that Miró remained too naïve, too much embroiled in an earlier, less sophisticated form of automatism to adapt to Surrealism's changing program. By 1933 Miró also felt he had reached the limits of the assassination project. In its concentrated focus on the laws of aesthetic form, that project had attained a level of hermetic detachment that seemed to stray too far from a connection to reality.[78] It risked remaining too isolated from everyday life to address reality with any specificity.

Nevertheless, Miró's much touted "return" to painting after 1933 did not entirely abandon the assassination precepts but, rather, couched that return strongly within the lessons learned over the previous decade concerning visual form as ideological critique. Thus if Miró felt that a return to painting was necessary in order to ground the work once again in the act of seeing – and in the connection to lived experience which that act implies – he carried out such a maneuver from within the structural interrogation of aesthetic form he had developed during the assassination of painting years. The post-assassination shift also marked boundaries within Miró's life in other directions. On April 14, 1931 the Second Spanish Republic was declared, ending all vestiges of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship along with any threat of a return to monarchical rule.[79] In January 1932 Miró moved from Paris back to Barcelona, where he remained until the Spanish Civil War forced him into exile. Miró wrote in April 1932 to a friend, the influential Catalan art critic Sebastià Gasch, of his admiration for Barcelona, in sharp contrast to his previous disdain for that city's purported provincialism.[80] In September of that year, Catalonia finally gained its long desired Statute of Self-Government, administered under the independent Generalitat.[81] Yet this autonomy lasted a mere two years before Miró was again forced to respond to threats against his homeland.

DOUBT AND TERROR, INSURRECTION AND WAR: 1934–7

On October 6, 1934 Miró was at his family farm in Montroig when Asturian coal miners, supported by many factions in Catalonia, revolted against the inclusion of the quasi-fascist CEDA party in the Republican government.[82] The CEDA, headed by José María Gil Robles, had found legal means to frustrate the reformist policies of the new Republican regime and made no secret of its intentions to follow the models of Hitler and Mussolini to gain legitimate power. As the largest leftist party in the government, the PSOE found itself pushed to the wall by the CEDA's increasingly fascist tendencies. More progressive than the bourgeois Republican factions led by Manuel Azaña but less radical than the anarchists or the Partido Comunista de España (Spanish Communist Party, PCE), the PSOE (Paul Preston has written) "viewed with considerable trepidation the prospect of actually organizing a revolution. Rather, they hoped that their threats of revolution would serve the same purpose as the real thing, satisfying the demands of the rank-and-file and giving the right pause."[83] Gil Robles saw through the bluff, however, and forced the left into a revolutionary uprising for which it was not prepared. The October insurrection, resolute and desperate, began with general strikes in the larger cities, moving into the proclamation of the "Republic of Catalonia within the Federal Republic of Spain"[84] and into full-scale, class-based armed revolt by the Asturian miners against the Madrid

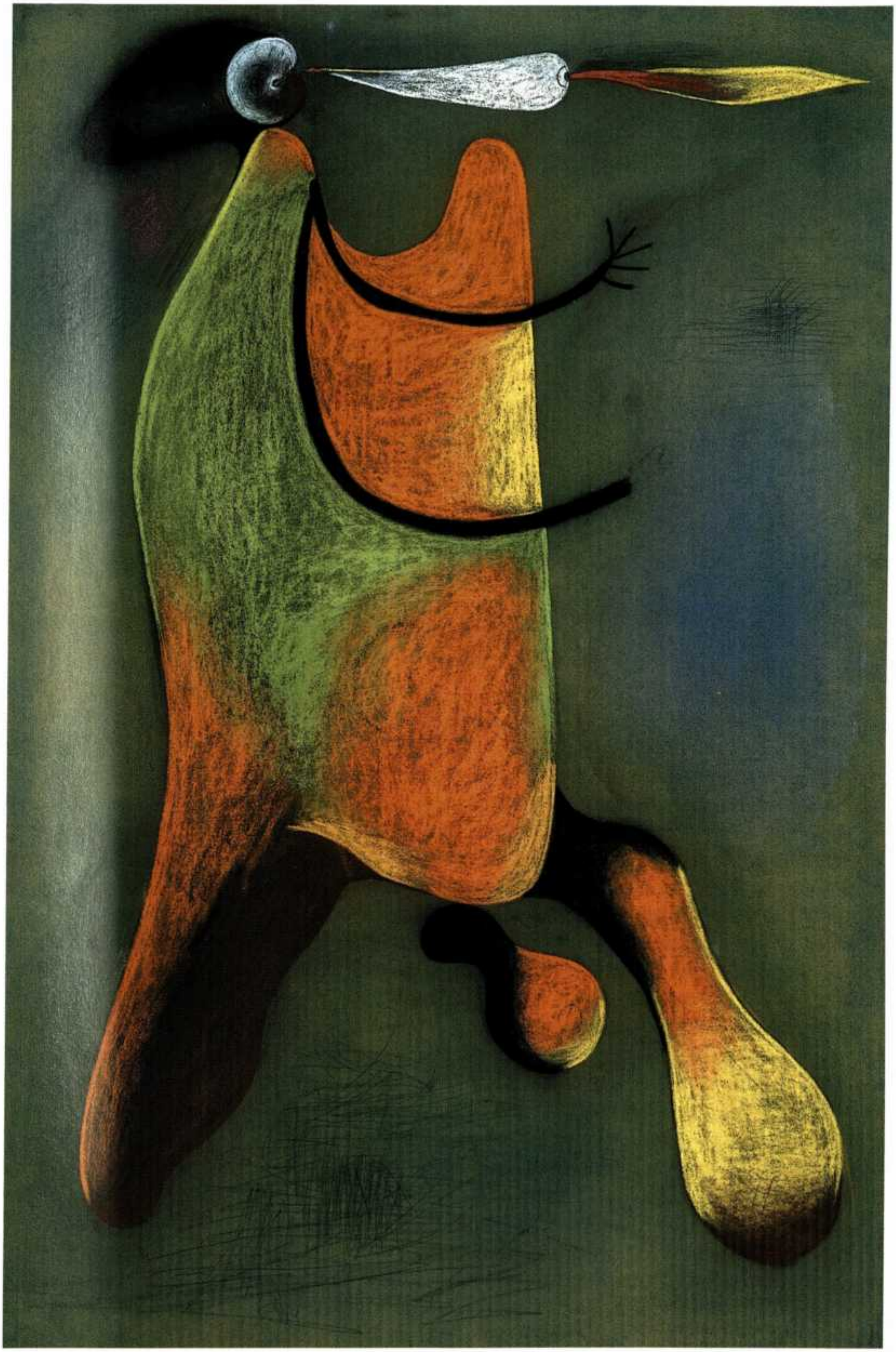


20a: Joan Miró, *Man with a Pipe* (*L'home de la pipa*), illustrated in *D'Aci i d'allà*, Barcelona, October 1934: n.p.

government. But despite the miners' revolt, and the show of support from segments of the Catalan left, the events of October clearly demonstrate how ill-prepared the left was for an organized uprising. Only in those areas where party bureaucracy was weakest did the workers effectively seize power. In Catalonia support for the uprising was limited largely to the more bourgeois Esquerra; the anarchists took little part, due to their distrust of the Generalitat's recent repressive tendencies. The Asturias revolt was doomed the moment it became clear that Madrid and Barcelona had not risen in revolt. Fearing that the regular army conscripts would perhaps desert to the revolutionaries, the government called in General Francisco Franco with his specialist troops. After two weeks of heavy fighting in which more than 1,300 people died, the Asturian miners surrendered.

Miró, like most Spaniards, would have had to rely mainly on rumor to assess the extent of the government reprisals. In the months that followed the insurrection, the Madrid government took between 30,000 and 40,000 political prisoners, suspended many municipal governments, and instituted heavy press censorship.[85] Catalonia's "independence" was short-lived: Madrid closed the Catalan parliament, revoked its statute of autonomy, suppressed the Catalan language press, and instituted martial law. Catalonia was summarily thrown back into a pre-1931 condition. Most of Spain had very little information as to the Madrid government's tactics of warfare and repression during the October fighting. Many Republican Spaniards felt at first that the insurrection was a great political mistake, serving only to undermine the Republic's stability, and consequently supported Prime Minister Lerroux's heavy reprisals. Yet in the following weeks the government lost control of the situation after a parliamentary investigatory commission published findings that revealed the high levels of torture implemented by the Civil Guard and Franco's troops, and sanctioned by Madrid.[86] These findings were soon affirmed by a British parliamentary group, fanning international outrage.[87] The Spanish public became increasingly embittered while the government vacillated, unwilling to admit to its role in the atrocities. Censorship meant that supporters of both left and right could believe their own myths about the October insurrection, a situation which fed the political polarization of Spain and the rise of the country's fascist party, the Falange Española (FE).[88]

During this period of escalating social violence, Miró collaborated with the Barcelona magazine *D'aci i d'allà*, designing the cover and a color insert for its December 1934 issue. He also included a pastel on paper, *Man with a Pipe* (figs. 20 and 20a), and a "glue-painting" (*encolat-pintura*) that formed part of the group of works named the "savage paintings" (*pintures salvatges*). The last two are prominently dated – October 1934 – a date whose significance, in the light of the horrific bodily distortions that Miró's works presented, would have been all too clear to the magazine's readership.[89] Social violence in Miró's homeland seems to have shocked him out of the flat reductiveness of the "assassination of painting" years, back into modeling, figuration, and ferocious color. But these are now the terrain of nightmare and horror rather than either the aggressive, playful fecundity of his earlier pipe-smoking peasant (see fig. 12) or



20: Joan Miró, *Man with a Pipe* (*L'home de la pipa*), October 1934. Pastel on sandpaper. 105 × 70 cm.
Col. Kazumasa Katsuta

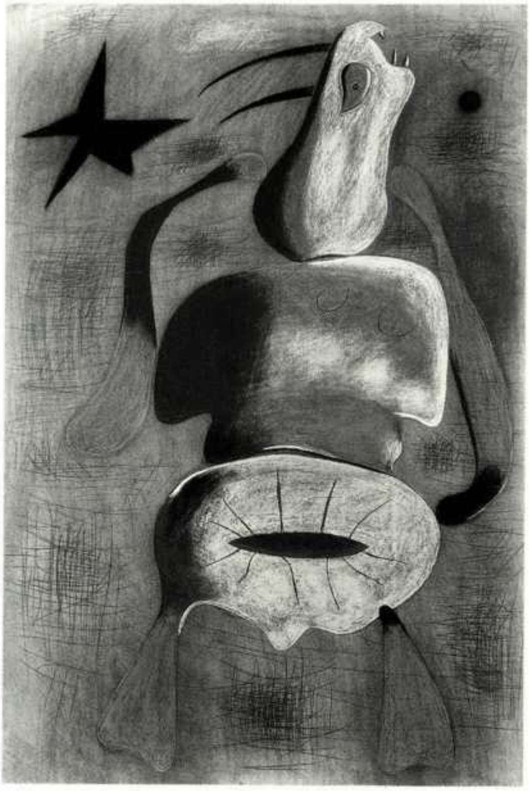
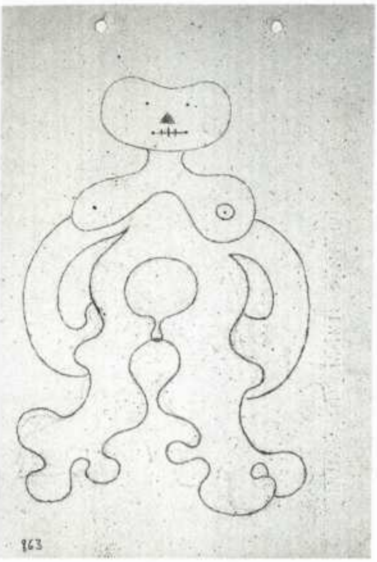


Figure 21: Joan Miró, *Woman* (*Dona*), October 1934. Pastel on sandpaper. 106 × 70 cm. New York, Richard S. Zeisler

the abstract Catalan peasant floating in his cosmic color field (see figs. 8 and 10). Miró's *Man with a Pipe* appears in nightmarishly garish colors, his body twisted and deformed, that seem to forecast the extreme visual anxieties of *Still Life with Old Shoe* and *Woman in Revolt* (see figs. 5 and 6). The pipe, visible at the top edge of the drawing, has been elongated into an overtly phallic shape, and now spouts fire as though the figure's body itself were about to explode into flames. The figure's arms have been reduced to useless, blackened sticks, while his legs and genitals have become bloated to unwieldy proportions, hanging off the lower portion of his torso. He floats in an undefined yet menacing space, prey both to his own malignant metamorphosis and to the unknown dangers threatening from the murky green background. Miró has returned to a shorthand notation of the body (the head is a mere point attached to the top of a torso) but it is a body whose distended fullness and grating coloration contrast sharply with his previous interest in reducing the human form to its most spare configuration.

This pastel is one of a series "based on reality" that Miró produced during the summer and fall of 1934, which took as its subject matter ordinary people whose everyday circumstances had unexpectedly gone horribly awry.[90] In *Woman* (fig. 21) the figure remains unanchored in space similar to the "assassination of painting" images, but her bodily distortions have none of the whimsical character of the earlier figures (fig. 22). The hermeticism of those earlier figures has been forcibly pried open by historical circumstances: "[the savage images] mark the begin-

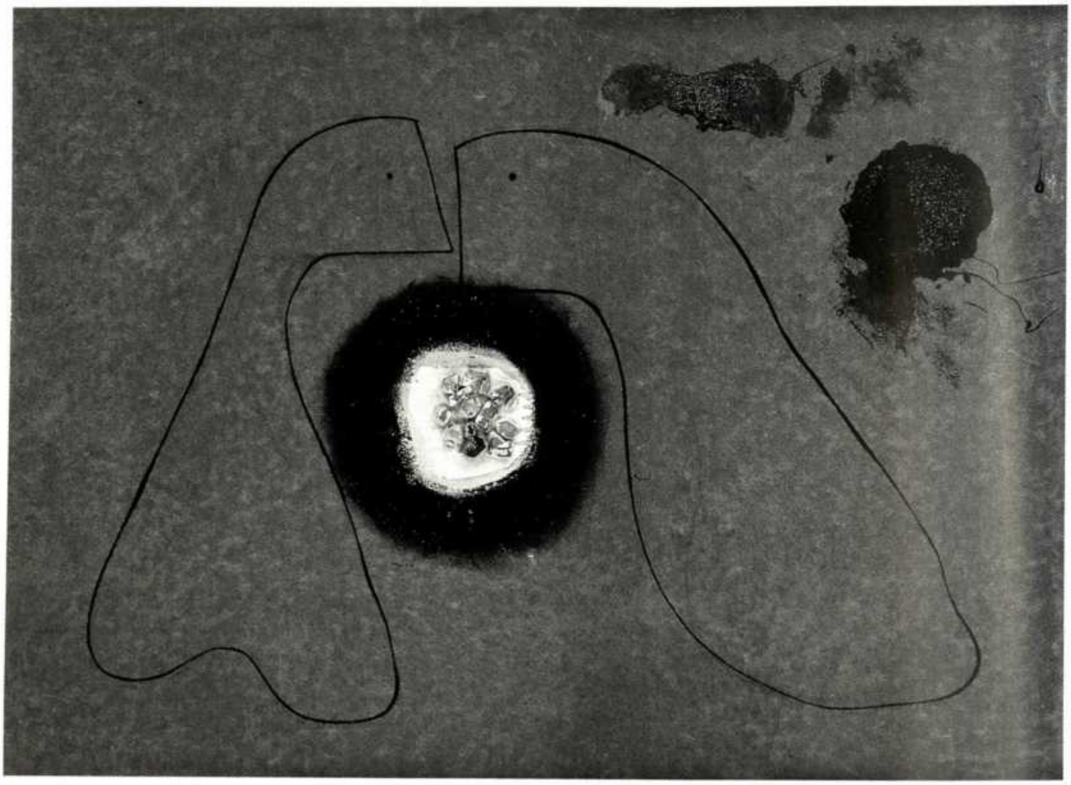


22: Joan Miró, *Woman* (*Dona*), November, 1930. Graphite pencil on paper, 23.6 × 15.8 cm, F. J. M. 863. Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró

ning," wrote Miró in 1962, "of the cruel and difficult years that the world lived through. . . . They swarm with oppositions, conflicts, contrasts. Thinking about death led me to create monsters that both attracted and repelled me."[91] The figure's sex functions as a hole, opening onto unknown and menacing spaces within her own body as though it were split into two components – interior and exterior, instinctual and cerebral – in terrible conflict with each other. Anxiety, located within the sexualized body, registers with a new forcefulness that presages Miró's later treatment of the body in his civil war production, and which belies the brash expressive confidence of his earlier work.

Despite the censorship that precluded any direct address to the issue of Catalan nationalism, the critical essays on Miró in the 1934 *D'aci i d'allà* clearly managed to locate these works within the context of *Catalanisme* and the October insurrection. Magí A. Cassanyes described them as "psychic seismographic" responses to a "Mediterranean sensitivity."[92] He stressed their "automatic" and "spontaneous" character against the more calculated, cerebral efforts of that other great Catalan painter, Dalí. Cassanyes found Miró's imagery capable of addressing both the larger phenomenon of *Catalanisme* and the specific historical moment of crisis that threatened his home state. Miró's work, Cassanyes implied, was more flexible in its ability to address emotively the fundamental nature of that *Mediterranisme* than the work of Dalí, which he qualified as more interested in the surface image of things.[93]

Yet, although Cassanyes characterized Miró's imagery as able to register closely the psychic upheavals of Catalonia's state of affairs, the painter still seems to have found this kind of figuration inadequate to the gravity of the situation. He continued to search for a pictorial form that could embody the social struggles occurring in Catalonia, and that could bind the attack on bourgeois aesthetic traditions of the assassination project to a transformatory critique of lived reality. Even after the February 1936 election of the Popular Front, and the consequent amnesty for all those involved in the October 1934 insurrection, street fighting between right and left continued while terrorist assassinations by the fascist Falange increased. Large-scale demonstrations by the extreme left of the PSOE, under the leadership of Francisco Largo Caballero, further undermined the Popular Front's stability and threatened to provoke a fascist response similar to the riots in Paris on February 6.[94] With the escalating violence culminating in the outbreak of the civil war in the summer of 1936, Miró found himself trapped in a pictorial quandary. In the paintings of this period, done on Masonite board, he sought the most difficult of aesthetic circumstances for artistic production, almost as a test for himself to see if meaningful work could be done under increasingly harsh conditions. Due to the intractability of their media – oil, tar, casein, and sand on Masonite board without any ground to smooth over the board's roughness – the paintings register a kind of heavy muteness. There is not, for example, a color line that coheres into any intricate patterning; instead smudges of paint and contours of figures record – in their awkwardness, in the traces of lines unable to be erased completely – the painful difficulty of their execution. "Lovers," when they lean toward each other "in ecstasy" (as Miró described it[95]), do so across an indistinct blob of black paint that contains another patch of white paint and sand (fig. 23). In the sketches for this work, the coloration is much richer, and attached to the bodies of the lovers in a conventionally allegorizing



23: Joan Miró, *Painting on "Masonite,"* 1936. Oil, tar, casein, and sand on wood conglomerate. 78.1 × 107.9 cm. Col. Kazumasa Katsuta

way – red for male passion, white for female purity.[96] By the time of the painting, however, color is separated from bodies and made to seem the inhibition of passion, the incompletion of love. The terms "lovers" and "ecstasy" seem wildly out of sync with the inexpressiveness of the worm-like figures on their rough Masonite support. The painting's relative muteness is one that superseded Miró's own intentions to produce a different kind of work opening up onto anecdote and narrative. Exegetical links that would reveal any measure of intention, even if that intention was to "kill all external sensibility,"[97] are far less the issue here than the refusal of painting to communicate. These paintings register a deadlock that seems to have grown, even in the move from sketch to painting, to unfathomable proportions. "If you look at the Masonite 'Painting' from the summer of 1936," Miró said later, "it is clear that I had already reached a very dangerous impasse, from which I could see no escape. . . . When the war came in July 1936, it made me interrupt my work and plunge deeply into my spirit; the forebodings I had that summer and the need to *ground myself* by doing realism came out in Paris with the still life of the shoe."[98]

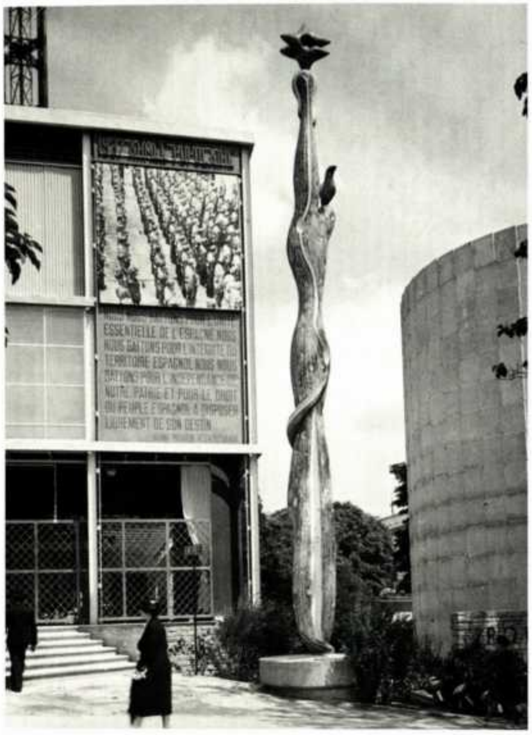
The predicament of 1936 marks a crucial point in the development of Miró's work. Although the assassination project had come to some closure (a closure which had allowed the artist to return anew to painting), it does not seem to have provided a clear-cut pictorial strategy for contending with the increased pressure of social and political events after 1934. The visual and spiritual block spawned by those events required a different mobilization of Miró's pictorial resources. In a certain odd way, the catastrophe of the civil war forced Miró out of his quandary. Later, even in the midst of his profound depression over the war, he wrote to Pierre Matisse about *Still Life with Old Shoe*: "I'm pleased with my work."[99]

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: POLITICS AND PAINTING IN CRISIS

It seems appropriate to claim, as Jacques Dupin has, a kind of reassessment of realism for Miró's production during the first harsh months of the civil war compared with the images of the previous decade.[100] *The Reaper*, on public display in the Spanish Pavilion at the Paris World's Fair, foregrounds the dynamic figure of the peasant, showing little of the sophisticated abstract interplay between ground and figure evident in Miró's earlier *Head of a Catalan Peasant IV* (see figs. 1 and 10). The peasant with upraised fist in the poster *Aidez L'Espagne* has all his anatomical parts resolutely in place despite their gross exaggeration (see fig. 4). *Still Life with Old Shoe* details its forms, situating them in space and giving them weight through chiaroscuro (see fig. 6). In perhaps the most telling instance of Miró's desperate confrontation with reality, he attended life-drawing classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière to produce a series of sketches from the model. These images evince a compelling return to the observed reality of the human body as the point of origin for a visual language appropriate to the degenerating political situation. Or, to paraphrase Dupin, the drawings mark Miró's attempt to control the monsters that had burst forth, by forcing them through the sieve of reality.[101]

Yet to consider the work of this period solely from the point of view of an engagement with realism induced by the shock of the war does little to account for the discrepancy in tone between the various works, particularly between the mural and the more private *Still Life with Old Shoe* and *Woman in Revolt*.[102] It is not a sufficient explanation of why Miró felt a certain conventional legibility of the body, especially a male body, to be necessary when addressing the audiences of the 1937 Spanish Pavilion. Nor does it enable one to interpret the different attitudes to mimesis presented in works not meant for such grand public display and produced under different constrictions. It does not, above all, explain why Miró found the aesthetics–nationalism equation he had previously worked out, particularly in the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series, inadequate to this fraught situation. After he had worked doggedly to "assassinate" certain pictorial strategies – naturalism, conventional narrative, anecdote, chiaroscuro, and figural modeling – why did it seem necessary to bring those strategies back at that precise moment? What is their relationship to the continued appearance of formal abstraction in the works at hand? What role – if any – does automatism play here as both a visual and an ideological strategy?

Any answers to these questions will of necessity take into account the particularities of the addresses to reality, how they are mobilized within the picture frame, and how they register against other pictorial mechanisms; and it will also of necessity locate these observations within the socio-political scene as it stood in 1937. Scholars have tackled this issue most forcefully with regard to Miró's *Still Life with Old Shoe*. Lubar, in particular, gives a superb reading of that painting as "a microcosm of the crisis of ideology that ravaged the ill-fated Second Republic."[103] He describes the painting as a "collision between realism and abstraction – between the material presence of objects in space and an insistent flatness"; and he relates this clash to the era's intense, ideologically charged debates about the relationship of artistic style to politics.[104] I shall return to this point shortly but here I want to recast somewhat Lubar's sense that *Still Life with Old Shoe* represents a more opportune response than *The Reaper* to the difficulties of imaging social protest in the face of war. To me, it seems less a question of privileging one response over the other than of understanding all of Miró's various responses in relation to each other – as



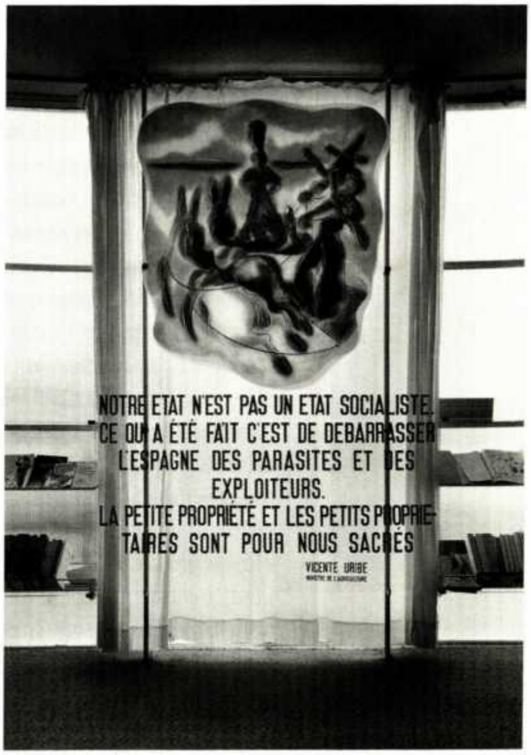
23a: The Spanish Pavilion entrance, Paris, 1937. Photo courtesy of the Frances Loeb Library, Harvard University

different aspects of his thinking on the same general problem. All of the Spanish Civil War works I analyze here demonstrate in different ways Miró's reassessment of the assassination project, that is, his effort to rid painting of its bourgeois humanist heritage, as a mechanism for transforming the language in which society articulated itself. The wider political ambitions of this conceptual project were precisely what the war put in jeopardy.

In large part, Miró found such a reassessment necessary because the foundations on which he had based the work of the previous decade had shifted considerably. *Catalanisme* no longer functioned under its pre-civil war terms. The founding of the Catalan Generalitat in 1931 with the proclamation of the Republic, and the ever stronger associations formulated between Catalan governmental leaders and worker/peasant coalitions, meant serious contention for the previously dominant bourgeois nationalists. The main bourgeois nationalist party, the Lliga Regionalista, found itself more and more pressured by leftist nationalists pushing for agrarian and social revolution as well as for Catalonia's complete autonomy from the rest of Spain.[105] After the first months of the war, besieged Catalonia was no longer able to sustain its previous expansionist rhetoric; indeed, its history of resistance to Madrid's Castilian centralism made it now the site of some of the most treacherous and brutal conflicts of the war. On a cultural front, Miró found it difficult to fit his most recent visual experiments back into the rapidly changing nature of *Catalanisme* as it fluctuated between bourgeois nationalism and its more radical anarchist and Marxist components. Spanish aesthetic production during this period tended to oscillate between academicism and the versions of Socialist Realism dominating leftist propaganda during the civil war.[106] Miró had already declared personal war on the first, but his aesthetic ideas must have seemed rather hermetically sealed to many leftists as well.

Shifts in audience required shifts in visual language. *The Reaper* was the first work commissioned from Miró whose audience would have been seeking primarily a political manifesto on the Spanish situation, and only secondarily a statement of aesthetic concerns.[107] Aesthetics in the service of politics was necessarily the watchword for the entire Spanish Pavilion (fig. 23a). From September 1936 on, when Luis Araquistáin (appointed ambassador to France by Largo Caballero) took control of the project, the Pavilion was conceptualized as a crucial means of informing the world at large of the role of culture in the Republic's fight for liberty. Under Araquistáin's guidance, Commissary José Gaos developed a program of regional exhibitions designed to represent the "marvelous effort of the Spanish people in defending its independence and the cause of peace throughout the world."[108] The Pavilion began, under the Largo Caballero government, with a relatively inclusive program, incorporating a wide range of political and cultural views – as long as they were on the side of the Republic. Miró's friend the Catalan architect José Luis Sert was named principle architect of the Pavilion building itself. The governments of Catalonia and the Basque Country were given special areas within the building to mount exhibitions. However, after Largo Caballero, the leader of the PSOE's more radical branch, was replaced as prime minister by the rightist PSOE Juan Negrín in mid-May 1937, the tone of the Pavilion shifted from anything that could remotely be considered revolutionary. Angel Ossorio y Gallardo, Araquistáin's replacement, insisted that the Pavilion display a phrase by President Azaña to the effect that the Republic had no intention of going communist, as well as a phrase by the minister of agriculture (a communist) echoing Azaña's statement and declaring private property "sacred" to the Republic (fig. 24).[109] These political fluctuations, from progressive to centrist, prescribed the parameters within which Miró produced his mural. As I have suggested, Miró conformed to these dictates by separating the grand public nature of *The Reaper* (and *Aidez L'Espagne*) from the intensity of his private anguish. This split allowed him room to negotiate a workable response with which to address both the defensive nationalism imposed by the representational dictates of the Spanish Pavilion (which posited fixed distinctions between Spain and the enemy despite the fact that in real terms such distinctions were by no means clear) and a more flexible national identity able to question and alter its own boundaries in response to social pressures.[110]

Miró intended the strident tone of the two works he produced to aid the Republican effort to project a sense of confidence in both form and content. *The Reaper*'s hands raised in defiance and holding the Catalanist symbol of the sickle signal the aggressive stance of a Catalan fighter defending his land. Heroism takes masculine form, both through the peasant's upright posture and gestures and through reference to Miró's past gendering of the Catalan peasant figure. Fear of defeat cannot enter here, and the nation is presented as an unquestioned and positive entity, harmoniously joining the Catalan nationalist cause with that of the Spanish Republic. Neither does doubt about the possibility of unifying leftist forces find any place (although by 1937 such unity was largely illusory), and the image assumes that its audience will respond in kind to its vigorous call to arms. The same is true of the *Aidez L'Espagne* figure, his powerful arm raised in the traditional Republican clenched-fist salute. Here Republican politics is given even stronger masculinist overtones, in the overtly phallicized distortion of that right arm. The figure's call to arms links an appeal to the bourgeois pocketbook with the elemental force of the peasant's brute male strength in a show of cross-class unity. The mural itself was enormous, made up of six joined panels measuring a total of 5.5 × 3.63 meters (see fig. 2). Miró meant this enormity of scale, in conjunction with the spontaneity of its production, to be read as directly inspired by the Republican war effort and supremely confident of a Republican victory. *The Reaper*, he insisted, emerged with minimal planning: "I presented . . . 'The Catalan Peasant in Rebellion' of large dimensions, which I painted directly from the scaffolding set up in the exhibition hall; I lightly sketched some preliminary designs in order to know more or less what I had to adhere to, but . . . the execution of this work was direct and brutal."[111]


NOTRE ETAT N'EST PAS UN ETAT SOCIALISTE.
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LA PETITE PROPRIÉTÉ ET LES PETITS PROPRIE-
TAIRES SONT POUR NOUS SACRÉS
VICENTE URIBE

24: Spanish Pavilion, statement by Vicente Uribe, Minister of Agriculture printed on translucent panel, 1937. Photo courtesy of Archive Photographique François Kollar, Paris

Yet the mural seems in many ways remarkably different in orientation from the painter's previous work. The medium itself of mural painting necessitated a different relationship to both audience and the production process from that Miró had professed in response to the Bar du Château questionnaire, an aspect which he himself noted: "Mural art is the very opposite of solitary creation," he stated in 1958, "While one must preserve one's personality, one must also commit it profoundly to the collective spirit of the work."[112] And although the picture conjures up a familiar symbol – the masculine figure of the Catalan peasant – that body is less put into the service of exploring the procedures of representation *per se* than engaged directly in propagandistic support of the Republican war effort. Unlike what occurs in the *Head of a Catalan Peasant* series, masculinity in *The Reaper* no longer functions as a basis for investigating visual metaphor but rather as a stable aspect of an unconstested national symbol; Miró's Catalan peasant has slid dangerously close to stereotype. Representation itself is not at issue here; the image does not foreground questions of how meaning is produced visually. Instead, Miró mobilized his carefully constructed reputation as Surrealism's most deeply automatist painter not in the service of imaging pre-conscious ideas, but to suggest that this particular image of Catalan nationalism came from some instinctual and spontaneous – therefore non-propagandistic – source of creativity. By implying his freeform production of the mural, Miró invoked his reputation to suggest that he was a medium not for pictorial inspiration but for the guarantee of a Catalan and Republican victory. *The Reaper*'s address lies not so much in the domain of interrogating representation as elsewhere: it openly responds both to the wider shift in Republic patronage of and attitudes to art, and to the particular ideological bases of the Pavilion itself.

Leftist critics certainly took the mural's positivism to heart. Juan Larrea's reaction is typical; he saw it as an expression of an explosion of defiant joy at the possibility of a new revolutionary social order: "In vain those who have eyes that refuse to see will be brought, before Miró's canvas, to interpret as failed caricature that which is nothing but a joyous upsurge, expressed in pictorial terms, of the new dawn. Joy, joy."[113] The mural, in fact, offered a visual articulation of the relationship of national identity, politics, and cultural forces much in tune with the prevailing leftist production during the war. Spanish artists felt growing pressure after the election of the Republic in 1931 to produce politically engaged art rather than introspective, self-engaged images.[114] By the time of the civil war, this attitude was well-nigh mandatory in the leftist camp.[115] For Republicans, "culture" was transformed during the Spanish Civil War into what the historian Miguel Gamonal Torres argues was a substitute for religion, against Franco's ideological cooptation of Catholicism. Culture was made the common focus of the Republican defense campaign to the point of "converting itself into a myth"[116] and of fomenting much contradictory rhetoric. Culture itself became the primary basis of propaganda for the Republic.[117] "For the Republic," writes Gamonal, "Culture (with a capital C) was the great *totem* on which a consciousness of unity was erected ending in an absolute identification of the terms, Culture and Republic."[118] Under this rubric, tendencies and events that seem at odds were brought together during the war to serve the Republican cause, among them the attempts to save Spain's cultural patrimony, to transmit the country's bourgeois cultural heritage, and the various efforts by socialists and anarchists to define a proletarian art. Thus, for example, the Republican government asked Picasso to supervise *in absentia* the evacuation of the Prado Museum's collection, as a means of drawing international attention to the fascist bombing of Madrid. The anarchists took advantage of their *Ateneos Libertarios* (Libertarian Athenaeums) to promote considerations of a proletarian culture and to investigate the relationship between culture and power.[119] They succumbed in the end, however, to the immense prestige of Socialist Realism and its associations with the Bolshevik Revolution.[120] Exhibitions of Catalan medieval art held outside Spain were advertised as upholding art against the fascist threat to destroy culture itself.[121]

The Spanish Pavilion took a more stylistically varied view of what could be considered "politically engaged" art than did much of the left, but nonetheless fell within the dominant strategy of the recuperation of culture in the service of the Republican cause.[122] And Miró, although not usually considered an "engaged" artist, was nevertheless by this time too internationally famous a son of Spain to be neglected by the Pavilion's committee. His decision to collaborate with the Pavilion project in the manner in which he did, however, demonstrates his full awareness of increasing tension after 1931 in Spain and France between purportedly apolitical art and art that was politically engaged. Given that the Pavilion was such a major public arena, Miró chose not to continue with his more opaque subject matter but rather to ally himself with the Pavilion's propagandistic message in favor of the Republican effort. *The Reaper* fit neatly into the *Cultura y República* identification, sliding the two terms over one another until they were indistinguishable. The propagandistic positivism of the Republic's cultural platform became the ideological basis for Miró's imaging of the Catalan peasant.

Closely related to the mural's slippage between the cultural and the politically propagandistic is its blurring of distinctions among the terms Spain, Catalonia, and "Republic." Miró's aesthetic reaction to the October 1934 insurrection and the events leading up to it must be read as a negative critique of the Republican government's swing to the right, and to its extreme measures of repression against the Asturian miners (see figs. 20 and 21). His decision to include *The Reaper* in the Spanish Pavilion ultimately must be understood, however, as endorsing the Republican government in 1937.[123] Despite the Republican government's political shift after October 1934 toward the Popular Front ideology of uniting leftist forces against fascism, by the opening of the Pavilion in June 1937 any claims on the goverment's part to representing the revolutionary rank and file were illusory. Political cooperation between those calling for radical social change (particularly the anarcho-syndicalist CNT and the Federación Anarquista Ibérica or FAI, the political wing of the CNT, and the POUM, the Catalan Trotskyist alliance branded an "enemy of the Popular Front" by the PCE[124]) and those calling for more moderate reform (factions within the government, including the socialists and the communists) had largely broken down. The Republican government, under the influence of the reformist PSOE, had maneuvered to curb the most radical calls for social revolution, for fear of destroying the Popular Front coalition and alienating both the Spanish middle class and international support.[125] In March 1937 the moderate Catalan Generalitat recalled all arms from workers' unions and peasant organizations and forbade all worker and peasant political councils – a decree seen by the rank and file as a betrayal of their cause that paved the way to the PCE persecutions of the radical left in May 1937.[126]

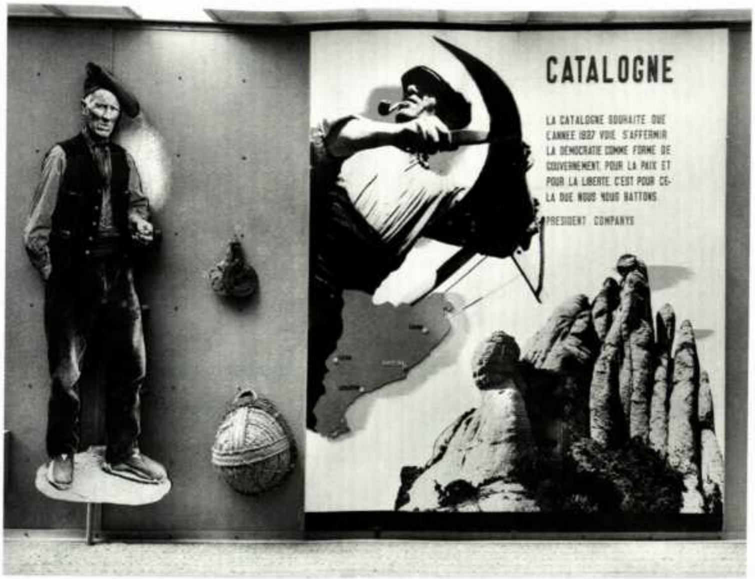
That Miró's endorsement of the Republican cause came in the form of an enormous image of Catalan nationalism is thus highly significant. For both foreign and Spanish audiences, Spain was represented ideologically at the Paris World's Fair as showing a unified national front struggling to eliminate the invasion of a foreign (Franco's German and Italian allies) enemy, fascism. Miró himself fostered this idea in interviews.[127] To the world at large, generally unaware of the long history of conflict between Catalan and Castilian Spain or the deadly internal political struggles, Catalonia's fate represented the fate of the Spanish Republic, and the Republican cause became a generic anti-fascist cause. That Miró chose to portray a peasant is also significant. In so doing, he participated in the Spanish Pavilion's pervasive cooptation of the figure of the peasant to indicate popular support for Republican social and political platforms. The peasant was thus used to underpin a myth of popular solidarity with the Republican cause, despite the realities of outlawed peasant organizations, government disarming of the revolutionary peasantry, and the general failure of the Republic's social policies on agrarian reform and rural labor conditions.[128]

The Reaper's uncomplicated notions of *Catalanisme* and the Catalan body did nothing to alleviate this situation. In fact, *The Reaper* risked tipping over into essentialism. José Bergamín, Minister of Culture in 1937 and Director of Public Information for the Pavilion, described this essentializing rhetoric as it functioned from the point of view of foreign powers during the war. He criticized the "mirage" formulated by a foreign (French) viewpoint about Spain that deformed the social and political reality of that country in wartime. This deformation, he claimed, was not simply a romantic notion that exalted the "typically Spanish"; it had precise and dangerous political functions.[129] Proclaiming the radical "difference" (or "essential nature") of Spain led to arguments about the specificity of the civil war (its local, "civil" character seemingly unrelated to political issues on an international scale), causing Spain's psychological isolation and supporting the Non-Intervention policy of France and England.[130]

Araquistáin, Gaos, and Bergamín insisted, therefore, on cultural diversity in the Spanish Pavilion. Sadly, neither the Pavilion nor Miró's mural ever managed to find a balance between linking cultural to political diversity, on the one hand, and the strong urge toward presenting a unified front, on the other. The Pavilion's image of a unified front was far from the truth; not only did such an image gloss over antagonisms between Catalan nationalists and Madrid's central government, it also refused to address the friction among Catalan anarchists, Trotskyists, and the Communist Party, and between the working and peasant classes and the bourgeoisie.[131] Indeed, by May 1937 tensions among the left had reached a killing point. The PCE, guided by the Comintern, had joined the Frente Popular government in order to prevent outright revolution in Spain that might threaten Stalin's efforts to form an alliance with England and France. Largo Caballero had been pushed out of the Prime Ministry, replaced by Negrín who denied the anarchists and the Trotskyist POUM any role in the government (fig. 24a). The radical left of Catalonia was thus without any representation in the Popular Front. As George Orwell agonizingly portrayed in *Homage to Catalonia*, the POUM was outlawed in June 1937, its members arrested and often shot, and its leader Andrés Nin assassinated. The radical anarchists soon suffered a similar fate.

Despite this treachery, the Frente Popular had no qualms about utilizing images of Catalonia's revolutionary fervor to suit its own needs. Catalan culture in particular was repeatedly used at the Pavilion and elsewhere as a rallying flag for appeals to potential foreign allies

24a: Photo of Republican troups, Barcelona, May 1937. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris.


CATALOGNE
LA CATALOGNE SOUHAITE QUE
L'ANNEE 1937 VOIE S'AFFERMIR
LA DEMOCRATIE COMME FORME DE
GOUVERNEMENT POUR LA PAIX ET
POUR LA LIBERTE C'EST POUR CE-
LA QUE NOUS NOUS BATTONS
PRESIDENT COMPANYS

25: Spanish Pavilion, "Catalogne" panel, 1937. Photo courtesy of Archive Photographique François Kollar, Paris

to aid "the people of Spain" (fig. 25).[132] There is a view that it was precisely this refusal to address publicly the serious internal rifts in Republican strategies for combating Franco, particularly those of class difference as instanced by the Catalan radical left, that led to the Republic's eventual defeat (fig. 25a).[133] Miró never spoke openly of this difficulty with *The Reaper* but his other significant works of the same period attest to his extreme unease with an unproblematized nationalism not evident in the Pavilion works. The two images that address the civil war with the most complexity – *Still Life with Old Shoe* and *Woman in Revolt* – are rife with conflict, panic, and terror.

Still Life with Old Shoe seems at first to fulfill Miró's own promise, in late September 1936, that he would soon "plunge in again and set out on the discovery of a *profound* and *objective* reality of things" (see fig. 6).[134] The simple, homely objects of this table setting suggest a retrenchment from the conceptual extremes he had reached in the Masonite paintings of the previous summer. The crevasses, folds, and wrinkles of the dilapidated shoe, or the coarse grain and crust of the half-loaf of farmer's bread, hark back to a descriptive tactics of attentive looking not seen since Miró's still lifes of 1921–3 such as *Table with Glove* (fig. 26).[135] Yet the comforting familiarity of this modest arrangement is overthrown by the distortions of the objects and the harsh, jarring colors in which they are described. The bottle is warped into a tortured, hunch-backed version of its former self, while the loaf of bread bleeds a pool of black across the table surface; the fork hangs suspended above the fruit, caught at the climactic moment when it is about to pierce the apple's flesh. The whole scenario registers the internal turmoil of quotidian objects about to explode into flame. The traditional still life here takes on a nightmarish life of its own, forced into metamorphosis through events and conditions somehow beyond human control.

The tabletop, cracked and scorched under a burning sky, reads also as a landscape. The humble still-life objects, thereby thrown into monumental relief, are haunted by terrifying doppelgängers in the form of black abstract shapes that are half-shadow, half-monstrous bodies

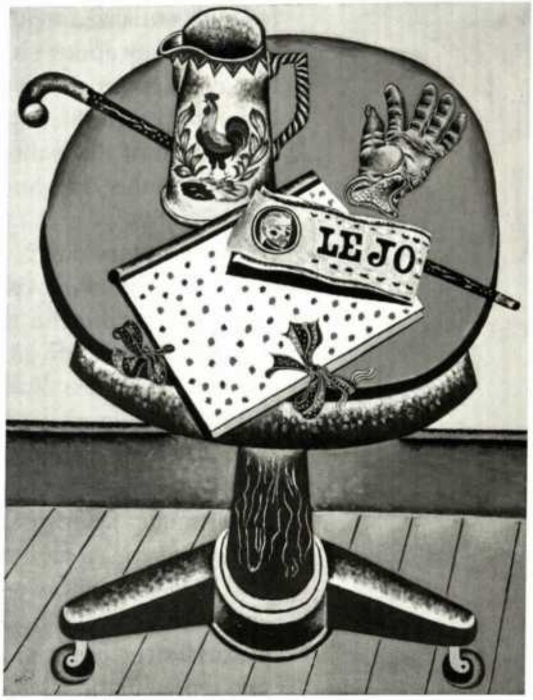
25a: Photo of ruins, Barcelona. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

emerging from a celestial fire. Metaphorizing into the national panorama of anguished Spain, the blackened earth/tabletop with its tortured objects marks the schism within the painting between the visual languages of realism and abstraction. The political symbolism of the painting is thus instilled through the clash of stylistic strategies that seem to attack a benign, non-political content. Form forces the picture to take on a politicized symbolism it would not otherwise have carried. This is echoed in Miró's own 1953 statement:

> Despite the fact that while working on the painting I was thinking only about solving formal problems and getting back in touch with a reality that I was inevitably led to by current events, I later realized that without my knowing it this picture contained tragic symbols of the period – the tragedy of a miserable crust of bread and an old shoe, an apple pierced by a cruel fork and a bottle that, like a burning house, spread its flames across the entire surface of the canvas. All this, as I said, without the slightest conscious thought, and entirely devoid of any narrative or literary intentions, confining myself solely to the eternal and human laws of art.[136]

Thus *Still Life with Old Shoe* registers a deep sense of crisis and pessimism absolutely contrary to the optimism of the Spanish Pavilion mural. But while rejecting the more directly political paradigm of *The Reaper*, Miró's *Still Life with Old Shoe* also refused what the artist in 1939 saw as the "ivory tower" of pure abstraction with no conceptual link to lived reality.[137] In a 1937 interview Miró had vehemently criticized the Abstraction-Création group: "Have you ever heard of anything more stupid than 'abstraction-abstraction'? And they ask me into their deserted house, as if the marks I put on a canvas did not correspond to a concrete representation of my mind, did not possess a profound reality, were not a part of the real itself!"[138] Two years later, in one of his most openly politicized remarks, Miró spoke about the role of aesthetic form in articulating the ideological aspirations of the revolutionary masses: "If the interplay of lines and colors does not expose the inner drama of the creator," he argued,

> then it is nothing more than bourgeois entertainment. The forms expressed by an individual who is part of society must reveal the movement of a soul trying to escape the reality of the present, which is particularly ignoble today, in order to approach new realities, to offer other men the possibility of rising above the present. In order to discover a livable world – how much rottenness must be swept away! . . . On the other hand, a revolution interested only in comfort will end in the same disgrace as the one the bourgeoisie has plunged us into. To offer the masses no more than material satisfactions is to annihilate our last hope, our last chance of salvation.[139]



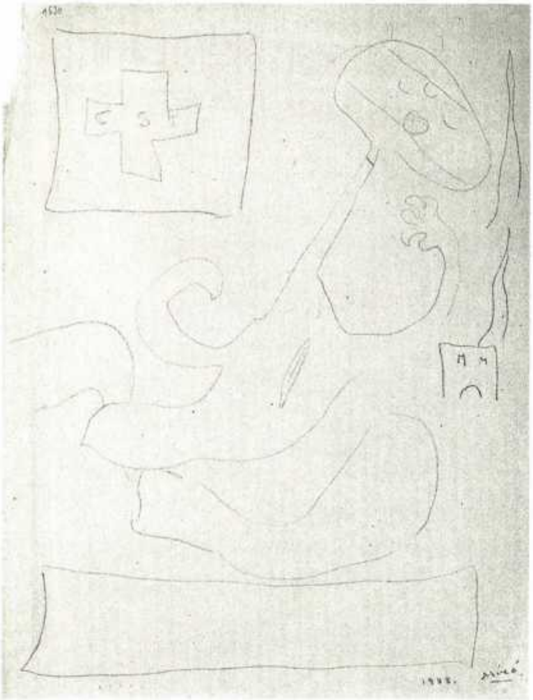
26: Joan Miró, *Table with Glove*, 1921. Oil on canvas. 115 × 90 cm. New York, The Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Armand G. Erpf. Photo courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art/Art Resource

Still Life with Old Shoe stands as perhaps Miró's greatest visual expression of this philosophy. *Woman in Revolt* also embodies the artist's doubt and anguish induced by the civil war (see fig. 5). Similarly to *The Reaper*, the woman's figure dominates the picture plane, dwarfing the burning city in the background. But rather than presenting a picture of nationalist fervor, her body records a violently schizophrenic reaction to her situation which the traditional leftist symbols of raised fist and Catalan sickle seem unable to embody. The upper part of her body – that part conventionally associated with thought and reasoned action – has been rendered fragile and useless, infected by her circumstances. The lower part of her body, however, sectioned off neatly by the horizon line, tells a different story. Here the conflict between the woman and her surroundings has been internalized into her body. Her right leg anchors her solidly to the ground and to reality; and its muscled contours link it to the life-drawing sketches made at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière a few months earlier, its smooth lines reflecting the assurance of a trained artist studying the live model. Her other leg, however, has metamorphosed from this workaday vision of solid reality into a monstrous growth extending from her protesting body. Traces remain of its previous incarnation as a vertical replica of its anatomical other, with the partially erased lines left embedded in the paper. While the one leg grounds the figure to the earth, the other leg propels her forward against the strident verticality of the first, crashing the woman into the left edge of the picture frame. This leg at once authorizes the woman's escape from the burning town and anchors her within that same catastrophic landscape. It becomes both the agency of her flight and the embodiment of what she so desperately wants to escape, its horizontal length visually underscoring the destruction in the background at the same moment that it provides the energetic impulse to flee it.[140]

Through its own sexual metamorphosis, the female body becomes paradoxically the site of both an immobilizing terror and the brute force that will drive her out of her shock into some sort of action. Catastrophe is registered throughout the painting – in the background of the burning city and in her futile political posturing – but it finds its most unconventional and most powerful outlet localized in the phallic leg. Its unsettling strangeness comes not merely from its sexualized nature but from the way in which it serves several disruptive functions at once; not only does it evoke the terrible conflict within the woman's own body but it also relates that conflict visually to the landscape and burning town. Perhaps most importantly, the left leg sets up a conflicting formal relationship between its distorted, nightmarish fantasy and the realism of the right leg. The two visual codes – realism and Surrealist nightmare – crash into each other, heightening the sense of torment induced by the civil war to the point of unbearability.

A preparatory sketch for *Woman in Revolt* underscores through difference Miró's deliberate choice of contrasting visual languages in the finished drawing (fig. 27). The visual language in this sketch retains the artist's flattened, linear stylistics for evoking female anatomy from the previous years; there are no traces of either the detailed attention to a live body seen in the Grande Chaumière drawings, or the precise and deliberate distortions from it.

Woman in Revolt is a pictorial moment of distraught terror embodied in the fetishistic warping of female features. However, it is the violent confounding of realms of sexuality normally kept separate, and the equally ferocious counterposing of illusionistic representational modes against fantastical, imaginary ones, that give the image its power. Realism no longer serves as a register of some sort of direct and verifiable equivalency between things in the world and their two-dimensional representation.[141] It functions merely as one term among others, to be tested, brutalized, disbelieved, made to reveal its limitations. It suggests that the pictorial structures and nationalist narratives at work in *The Reaper* can no longer stand as the sole representational address. *Woman in Revolt* has much to tell, therefore, about the way in which the feminine and the sexual erupt into the master narrative of national identity, precisely at those points where the traditional standard of the heroic can no longer explain events or offer refuge from the terror of disintegration on the national scale.



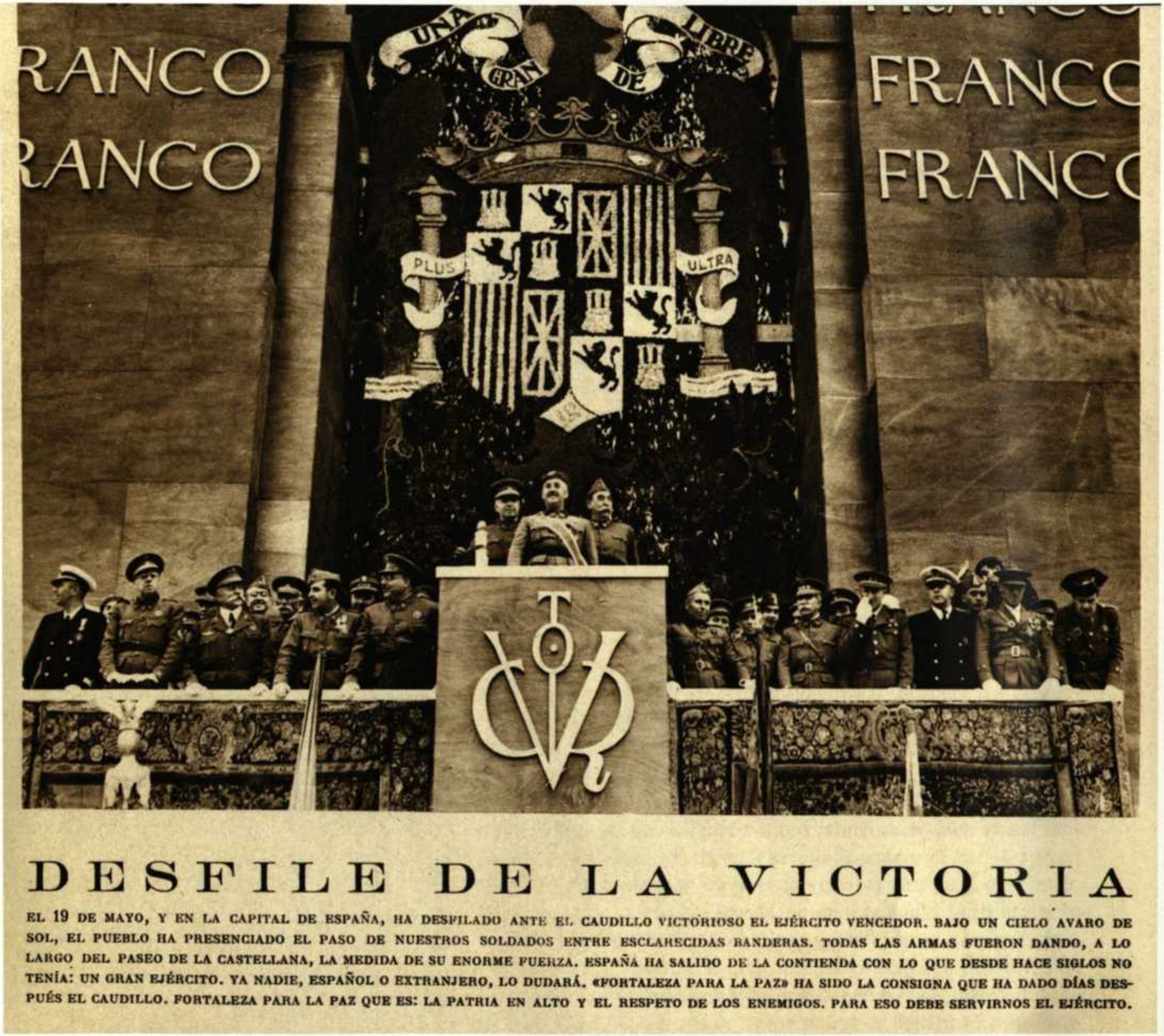
27: Joan Miró, sketch for *Woman in Revolt*, 1938. Pencil on paper. 27 × 21 cm., Barcelona, Fundació Joan Miró, (F. J. M. 1530)

CONCLUSION: PAINTING, JUDGMENT, AND FUTILITY

Miró's immense mural was seen by thousands; later it disappeared, destroyed by the war itself.[142] Its moment was short-lived and spectacularly bound by history. *Woman in Revolt* and *Still Life with Old Shoe*, much more intimate in size, are images which have endured as the artist's most profound responses to the horrors of war. I think of the differing fates suffered by these works as a symbolic consequence of the social positions which their own visual languages determined for them. The public sphere of the 1937 Paris World's Fair could not support the doubts and fears evident in works such as *Woman in Revolt*. Yet neither could Miró utilize in his private moments the visual language of bravura he readily produced for the Pavilion mural and its contingent poster, *Aidez L'Espagne*. The uninflected faith envisioned by both Miró and the Spanish Pavilion as a whole in the power of the left to transform the symbolic resistances of the upraised sickle or the idealized portraits of the Catalan male peasant into concrete action could not address political factioning, the communist witch-hunts against anarchists and Trotskyists already in progress, or the difficulties of turning an imagery of Catalan nationalism into one that could also represent, to foreign audiences, the treacheries of the Madrid government. Still less did they rally their audiences to combine forces in an effective resistance against Franco and the spread of fascism.

Woman in Revolt and *Still Life with Old Shoe*, I have argued, present counter-strategies to those Miró used in *The Reaper*. They delve back into the visual tactics he had explored during his "assassination of painting" period around his concept of *Catalanisme*, to visualize both that national body and national landscape – and the representational codes used to envision them – as contingent. In so doing, Miró reconfigured Catalan nationalism in these two images not as an essential, coherent entity but rather as a contested, embattled, and shifting identity, at a moment when dominant discourses visualized national identity as anything but fractured.

These pictures, however, could not measure up to the task taken on by *The Reaper*. They give the viewer no confident sense of victory, or even any strategies for battle; they offer only an apocalyptic vision of disaster imploding into the quotidian. Yet despite their apparent inability to fulfill the urgent necessity for concerted political action defined by the Spanish Pavilion and attempted by *The Reaper*, they do propose a different one. It is the often more melancholy one assigned to representation that refuses the facile solution of the purely didactic or purely propagandistic.



DESFILE DE LA VICTORIA

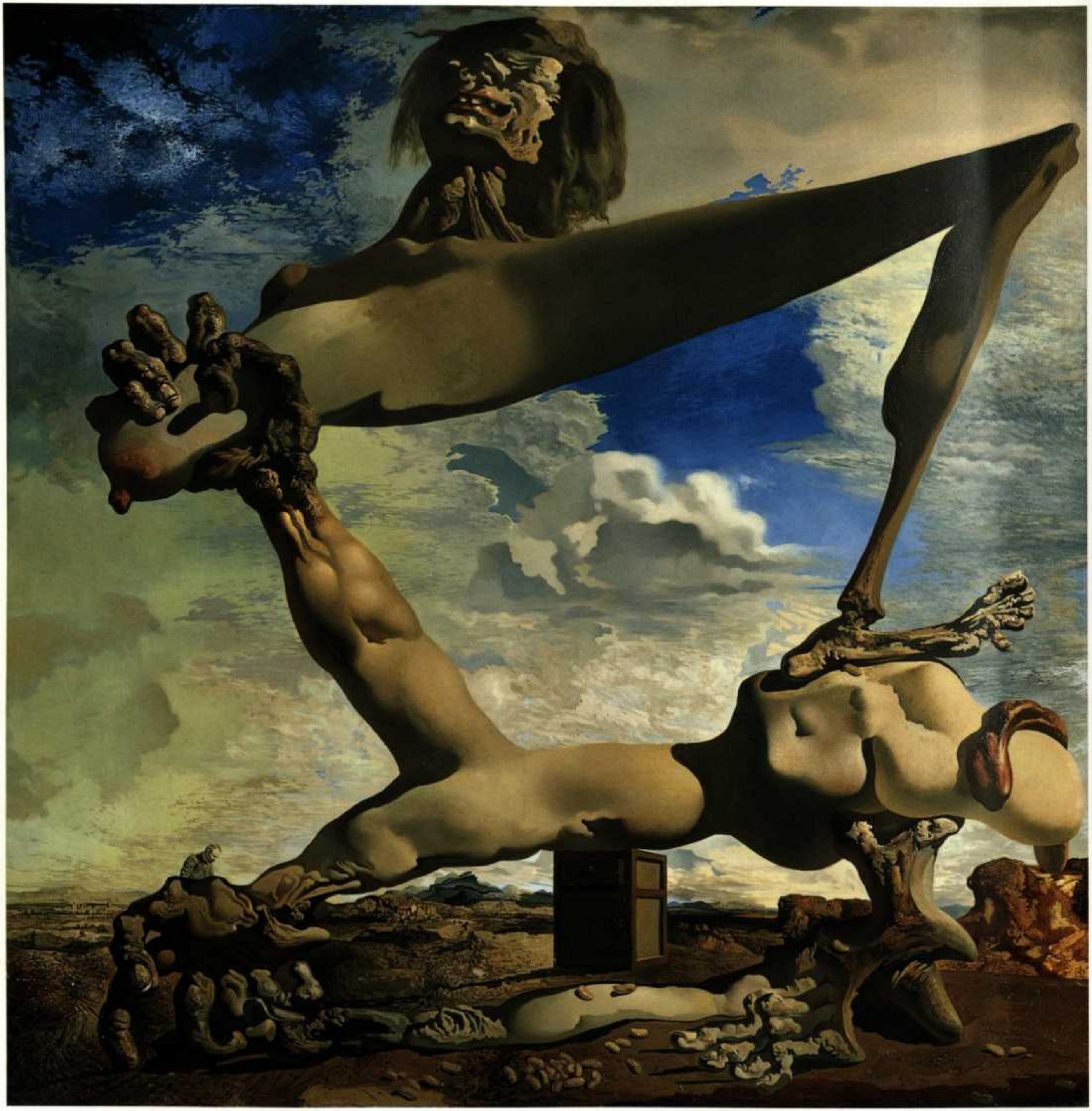
EL 19 DE MAYO, Y EN LA CAPITAL DE ESPAÑA, HA DESFILADO ANTE EL CAUDILLO VICTORIOSO EL EJÉRCITO VENCEDOR. BAJO UN CIELO AVARO DE SOL, EL PUEBLO HA PRESENCIADO EL PASO DE NUESTROS SOLDADOS ENTRE ESCLARECIDAS BANDERAS. TODAS LAS ARMAS FUERON DANDO, A LO LARGO DEL PASEO DE LA CASTELLANA, LA MEDIDA DE SU ENORME FUERZA. ESPAÑA HA SALIDO DE LA CONTIENDA CON LO QUE DESDE HACE SIGLOS NO TENÍA: UN GRAN EJÉRCITO. YA NADIE, ESPAÑOL O EXTRANJERO, LO DUDARÁ. «FORTALEZA PARA LA PAZ» HA SIDO LA CONSIGNA QUE HA DADO DÍAS DESPUÉS EL CAUDILLO. FORTALEZA PARA LA PAZ QUE ES: LA PATRIA EN ALTO Y EL RESPETO DE LOS ENEMIGOS. PARA ESO DEBE SERVIRNOS EL EJÉRCITO.

General Fracisco Franco, Victory Parade (Madrid, 19 May 1939), reproduced in *Vértice* (1939)

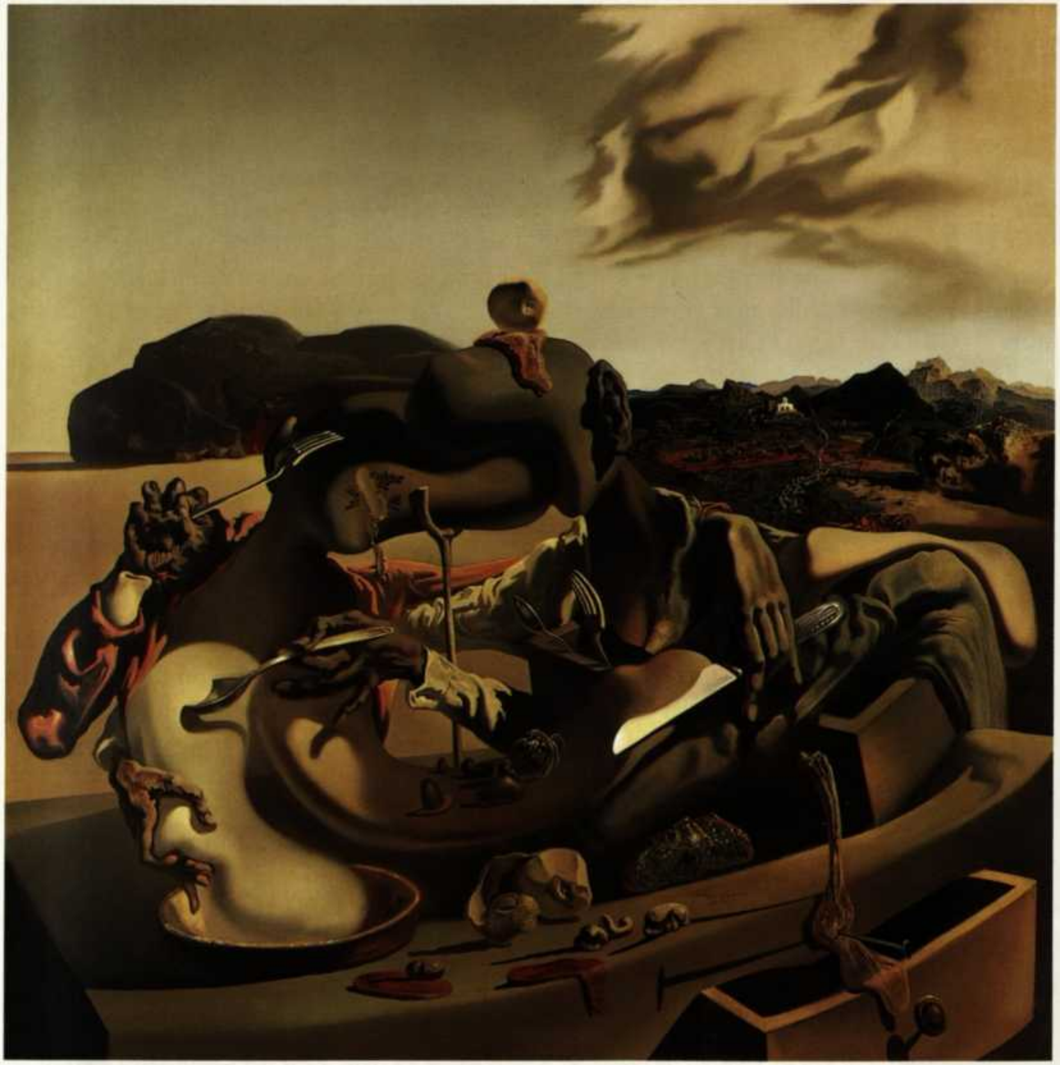
DALÍ, FASCISM, AND THE "RUIN OF SURREALISM"

On October 6, 1934, Salvador Dalí escaped Barcelona for France, fleeing the October insurrection and the Madrid government's subsequent brutal reprisals with the help of an anarchist taxi driver.[1] Keenly aware of the mounting tensions in Spain between left and right, Dalí painted *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War* only a few months before the outbreak of war in July 1936 (fig. 28). In the painting a monstrous, putrefying body rears high over the Spanish landscape, a Goyesque colossus tearing at itself in a frenzy of sadomasochistic self-destruction. Its grotesquely deformed limbs alternate between the scabrous disfigurement and smooth limp fleshiness that characterize Dalí's concept of disgust. *Autumn Cannibalism,* painted toward the end of 1936, is perhaps even more horrific (fig. 29). The genteel custom of bourgeois dining reveals its barbarous underside; a cankerous couple feign affection as they dip spoon and knife into each other's flesh, swallowing one another whole. Painted in a nauseating palette of shit browns tinged with pus greens, the couple personifies the Spanish landscape behind them and the festering sadomasochistic aggression Dalí seems to imply is inherent within it. The faceless heads insidiously suck each other like two parasites feeding surreptitiously on decaying flesh, turning an amorous kiss into an inescapable deathtrap all the more appalling for its uncanny mockery of love.

* * *



28: Salvador Dalí, *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, 1936. Oil on canvas. 110 × 84 cm. Philadelphia, Philadelphia Museum of Art. Collection Arensberg

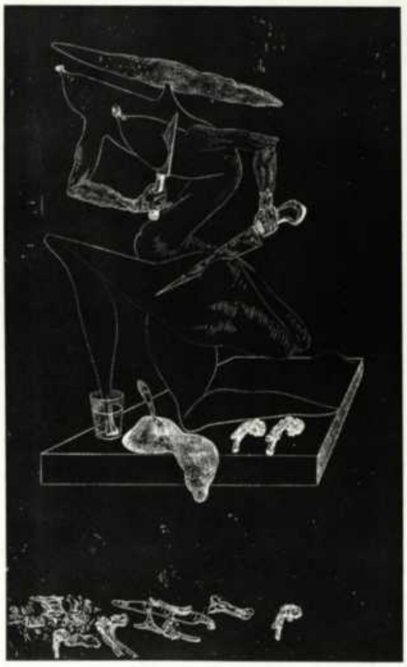


29: Salvador Dalí (1904–89) © ARS NY. *Autumn Cannibalism*, 1936–7. Oil on canvas. 65 × 65.2 cm.
Photo courtesy of The Tate Gallery, London/Art Resource, NY

FASCISM PENETRATES THE SURREALIST HEARTLAND

As allegories of the murderous violence of the Spanish Civil War, both *Autumn Cannibalism* and *Premonition of Civil War* stem from Dalí's long fascination with the murky and turbulent depths of human passion. True to his 1930 equation of "love" with "perversion and vice," he drags orthodox Surrealism's often lofty exaltations of love as a source of liberation into the mire of sexual depravity.[2] Caresses turn to death grips, kisses turn to leech-like suckings, as what Dalí described as the "monstrous excrescences of arms and legs tearing at one another in a delirium of auto-strangulation" act out a savage repertoire of erotic cruelties.[3] These two paintings turn the theme of sexual perversion, developed in earlier works such as his 1934 illustrations for Lautréamont's *Les Chants de Maldoror* (fig. 30), into allegories of the extreme political and social violence that devastated Spain during the war.[4] As such, they mark two extraordinary episodes in Dalí's persistent efforts to analyze contemporary political events – particularly the rise of fascism – as outgrowths of paranoid aggressions deeply embedded in the human psyche. These two paintings are part and parcel of a larger body of works in which Dalí takes fascism as a focal point for exploring the political ramifications of paranoia. In order to judge their effectiveness as political critique, therefore, I turn to another, earlier defining moment.

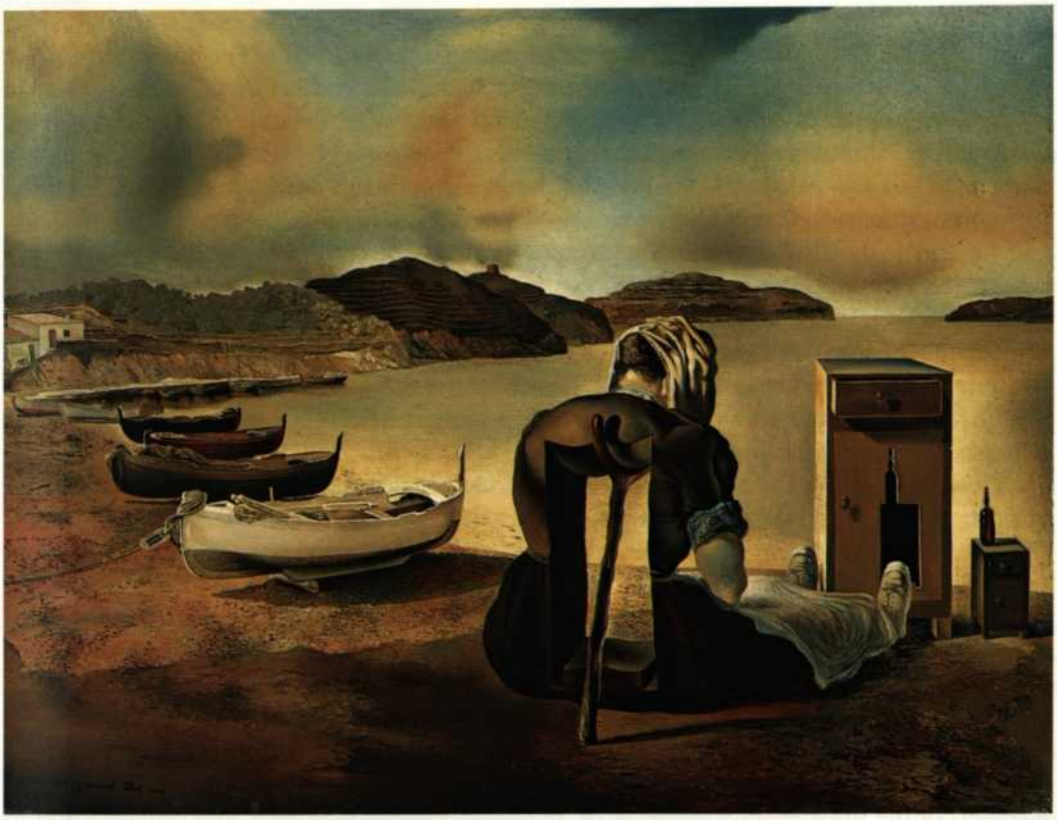
In 1933, several months after Hitler's rise to power in Germany, Dalí began a strange picture, titling it *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition* (fig. 31). It shows a wetnurse, sitting slumped with her back to the viewer, on an otherwise unpeopled beach. The shoreline stretches out to the left, enclosing several boats anchored in the bay, and ends in a range of hills reminiscent of Dalí's native Catalan landscape. The nurse herself, oddly, has the shape of a night-table carved out of her torso, while that same night-table stands in the sand next to her with an even tinier table next to it. The hollow left in the nurse's body by the "furniture-nutrition" night-table presents its squared-off edges in perfect three-dimensional, architectonic form; she herself is propped up by a trademark Dalinian crutch.



30: Salvador Dalí, plate from Comte de Lautréamont, *Les Chants de Maldoror*, Paris, 1934. St. Petersburg, Florida, The Salvador Dalí Museum

At first glance, the painting does not seem particularly controversial, at least not for Dalí. But an earlier version of it had infuriated Breton to the point of calling a Surrealist tribunal on February 5, 1934 to condemn Dalí for his fascist tendencies.[5] Dalí had painted a swastika on the nurse's armband, which the Surrealists later forced him to paint out; the slumped figure was, as one critic called her, a "hitlerian wetnurse."[6] Such iconographical inclusions are deeply troubling. Do works such as *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition* subvert fascist ideologies, as Dalí later indeed claimed, or do they slip into a dangerous fascination – even admiration – for that very thing they purport to undermine? Do they warrant censure or do they help one come to grips with the psychic origins of fascism? The issue becomes even more disturbing when one realizes that the nurse is a portrait of Dalí's own, and that she droops hollowly on the shore near the painter's Catalan childhood home, suggesting that Dalí himself might have had a "hitlerian" upbringing.[7] The picture furthermore has an intimate quality; only nine inches long, it seems to be meant to be held close like a book or a photograph in a family album. Dalí seems here to be revealing a secret about his own middle-class background.

Breton and company appear not to have appreciated a fellow Surrealist suggesting that there were connections to be made between bourgeois childhoods such as their own and the family life of the Nazi dictator.[8] The painting profoundly upset the Surrealists, who castigated Dalí in the infamous February tribunal for his "counter-revolutionary acts tending toward the glorification of



31: Salvador Dalí, *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, 1933–4. Oil on panel. 18 x 24 cm. St. Petersburg, Florida, The Salvador Dalí Museum

hitlerian fascism."[9] Even Dalí's long-time supporter Paul Eluard was extremely disturbed by the painter's apparent interest in fascism, and warned Dalí away from the topic in a letter to Gala Dalí: "I won't hide . . . the almost insuperable difficulties which will come about if Dalí persists in his hitlerian-paranoiac attitude. *It is absolutely necessary* that Dalí find another object of delirium. . . . [T]he elegy to Hitler, including and above all the level on which Dalí situates it, is unacceptable and will bring about the ruin of Surrealism and our separation."[10]

Dalí, it seems, had hit a surrealist nerve. Yet ten days before the February meeting, he had defended himself to Breton, claiming "I am hitlerian neither in fact nor in intention" and argued that the Nazis would certainly burn his paintings and probably him as well.[11] He went on to warn of the dangerous "confusion" on the part of leftist intellectuals with regard to the Hitlerian phenomenon; their lack of insight into fascism, as he had stressed since Hitler's rise to power, was for Dalí a critical weakness of the left.[12] Dalí was right: the left had conspicuously failed to block the Nazi threat. But if in order to combat fascism one needs to know one's enemy intimately, then a whole host of perplexing problems emerges. Knowledge of this sort would imply similarity, even likeness; and untangling the twists of a mind such as Hitler's would mean engaging in its logic to dangerous degrees. The line between the openly fascist and those who claim simply to investigate them can – and did – become very thin.

In examining the significance of paintings such as *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, *Autumn Cannibalism*, and *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, my purpose is neither to condemn nor to vindicate Dalí's "*supposé hitlerisme*";[13] it is rather to understand his fascination with fascism in its multiple guises from Hitler to the Nationalist incursion in Spain. To do so means studying it within the context of his paranoiac-critic method, because Dalí consistently formulated his interest in the fascist body through its theories. His famous method not only carved an important niche for him within orthodox Surrealism but also caught the attention of Freud and Jacques Lacan. Within Surrealism, the paranoiac-critic method provided a much needed reevaluation of the movement's political discourses and goals. Through it, Dalí not only delineated an active investigation of the human psyche – in opposition to automatism's passivity – but also articulated a concept of human psychic and social development stemming from Freud's theory of narcissism and similar to that of early 1930s Lacan. Dalí's argument that one must consider "reality" to be a construction of the human psyche influenced the young French doctor and presaged aspects of structuralist psychoanalytic theory; it also gave the Surrealist movement another potential weapon in its struggle to undermine capitalism.

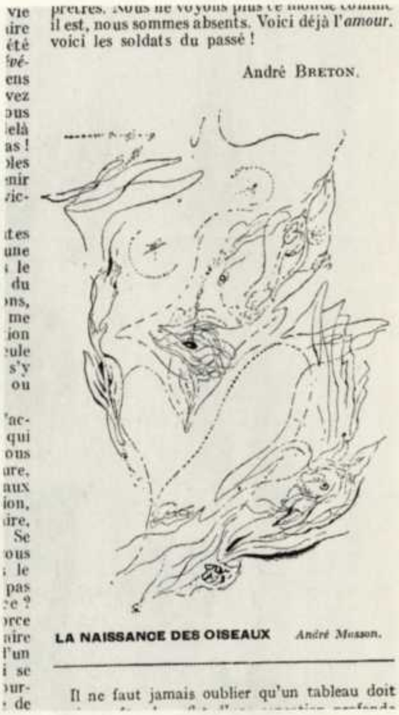
Dalí developed the key elements of his paranoiac-critic method within the context of the Spanish avant-garde, well before moving to Paris in 1929. This Spanish context, centered on the *Generación del '27*, enjoyed earlier and more complete access to Freud's writings than did the Parisians and also a perhaps longer and more intimate contact with a non-Stalinist left that included anarchists and Trotskyists. Significantly, the *Generación del '27* was not subject to automatism in the same way as the orthodox Surrealist movement in Paris. This left Dalí free to explore a process of conscious desublimation of sexual desires as the foundation for his paranoiac-critic method.

It is therefore not wise, as many writers do, to dismiss Dalí as fascist *tout court*; that is to negate the vital role that the paranoiac-critic method played in delineating certain structural elements of the 1920s Spanish avant-garde, in defining Surrealism's post-1929 program, and in the development of Lacan's theories of the social function of paranoia.[14] It also gives short shrift to any complex understanding of Dalí's civil war images, *Soft Construction* and *Autumn Cannibalism*. Even if, in the end, one finds Dalí's attitude to Spanish fascism and Hitler suspect (as I do), it is necessary to any understanding of the Surrealist political imagination to track the Spanish painter's development and influence. The critique of leftist political morality that Dalí's paranoiac-critic method provided, especially its critique of automatism, must be taken seriously. However, it is also necessary to understand the failures of Dalí's critique of leftist politics, which I argue are most clearly perceptible in his critique of fascism.

AUTOMATISM, THE PARANOIAC-CRITIC METHOD, AND LACAN

Dalí joined the Surrealist movement in 1929, during a moment of crisis: the movement's attempts to form an alliance with the French Communist Party had come to naught. Despite their best efforts, the Party had consistently rejected the Surrealists' sustained attack on bourgeois morality as itself the mark of mere bourgeois individualism. While the history of this dilemma is by now well known, certain details bear repeating. Since Surrealism's inception, its members had characterized themselves as being in constant revolt against a society that reduced all human desires to "market values, religious impostures, universal boredom, and misery."[15] Captivated by Freud's theory of dreams as twisted images of socially repressed desires, the Surrealists invented automatism as a tactic for releasing the unruly and chaotic imagery of dreams into the waking realm of everyday life. In pictures such as Masson's automatic drawing, published in the fifth issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1925), the artist purportedly acted as a passive medium through which the imagery of the unconscious flowed uninterrupted by social conventions (fig. 32). By bringing to light imagery repressed into the unconscious, automatism sought to subvert bourgeois morality; it sought to tear down the boundaries of conventional rationalism, carefully constructed by so-called "civilized" society, that foster not only alienation between peoples but also the alienation of an individual from him/herself. To the Surrealists, automatism represented a subversive and poetic weapon in the Marxist struggle toward total human emancipation.

Automatism, however, proved to be a sore point between Surrealism and the French Communist Party. Despite all the Surrealists' self-styled "revolutionary" fervor, to the PCF they still seemed nothing more than just another art movement, with no ties to the proletariat who, the communists insisted, were the locus of real social change. Pierre Naville, who had left the Surrealists to join the Party, published a damning critique in 1926 under the title: *The Revolution and the Intellectuals: What Can the Surrealists Do?*, in which he posed the exasperated question: "Do the Surrealists believe in liberation of the mind before the abolition of bourgeois conditions of material life, or do they comprehend that a revolutionary spirit can only be created after the Revolution is accomplished?"[16] Naville singled out "the life of dreams" and automatic writing, among other Surrealist activities, as mere "illusions of liberty" all too easily defused by the bourgeoisie.[17] He put into words the uneasiness with which the Party viewed such practices as automatism, which the PCF saw as a ridiculously passive mode of political organization. What, the communists demanded, could this business of effacing one's persona in order to produce poetry and drawings possibly contribute to worldwide proletarian organization and revolt?



prêtres. Nous ne voyons plus ce monde comme il est, nous sommes absents. Voici déjà l'*amour*, voici les soldats du passé !

André BRETON.

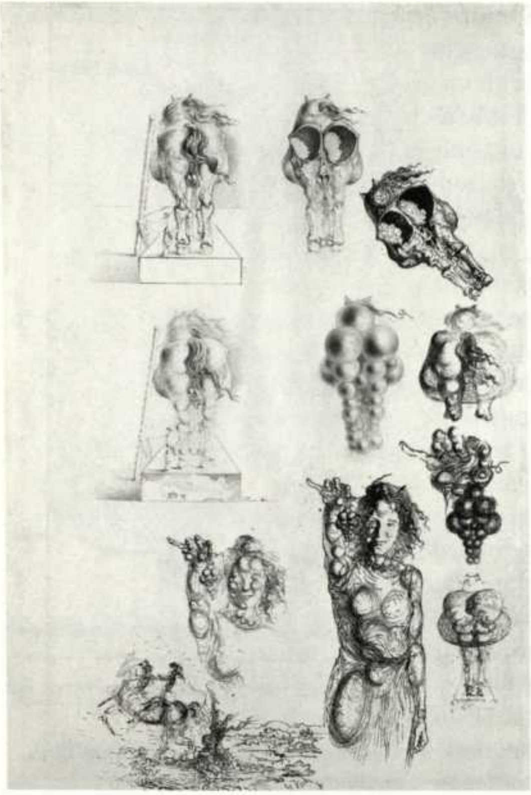
LA NAISSANCE DES OISEAUX *André Masson.*

Il ne faut jamais oublier qu'un tableau doit

32: André Masson, *The Birth of Birds*, reproduced in *La Révolution Surréaliste* no. 5, 1925.

By 1929 even the Surrealists themselves had begun to question automatism's effectiveness. In the Second Surrealist Manifesto, Breton writes of the "regrettable" lapse into the "picturesque" and the "obvious cliché" by those practitioners not fully committed to automatism's revolutionary premise.[18] In his book *Surrealism and Painting* he had defended the practice of painting against those who claimed drawing as the only truly automatic visual tactic. Surrealists such as René Magritte and Max Ernst were engaged in alternative aesthetic practices from *trompe l'oeil* painting to collage.

Dalí's great contribution to resolving this dilemma was his paranoiac-critic method. Unlike automatism, in which the individual merely tried to avoid taking any conscious control of his or her actions, the paranoiac-critic method advocated a dynamic role for the artist and an active production of imagery in the service of social critique – ideas designed to spark the interest of the PCF.[19] First articulated in 1930, it was based on the idea that any given visual image was open to multiple interpretations. By linking this with a theory of paranoid "delirium of interpretation," Dalí proposed to systematize these multiple possible accounts into an operative analysis of reality.[20] He claimed that through a deliberate simulation of paranoia, anyone engaging in the paranoiac-critic method would be able to demonstrate that "reality" was not a fixed entity to which an individual responded but, rather, a construct born out of that individual's comprehension of the world. In this manner, the paranoiac-critic method pointed the way to a critique of the symbolic realm as an integral part of any interrogation of social relations. More than a mere critique, however, Dalí's method theorized a calculated attack on bourgeois existence that would throw capitalism's efforts to portray itself as the universal standard for judging reality into confused disarray. Consequently, the paranoiac-critic method



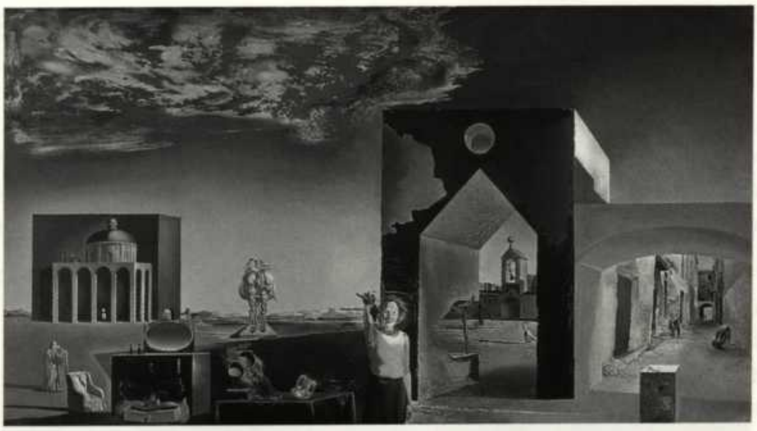
33: Salvador Dalí, sketch for *Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critic City:Afternoon on the Outskirts of European History*, 1936. Ink and pencil on paper, 32.5 × 20 cm. Berlin, Stifung Sammlung Dieter Scharf

seemed to offer a way out of Surrealism's bind: it posited a strategy of active interpretation of social and political events through the conscious production of destabilizing imagery – a strategy that could satisfy the communists and yet maintain the psychological and irrational aspects of visual interpretation dear to Surrealism's heart. In his 1930 article "The Rotten Donkey," Dalí set out the program of his paranoiac-critic method:

> theoretically, any individual gifted with a sufficient degree of [induced paranoia] can – according to his desire – see the form of an object taken from reality change successively, just as in the case of voluntary hallucination but with the more ominous particularity, in the destructive sense, that the diverse forms that the object can take will be controllable and recognizable by everyone, once the paranoiac has simply indicated them.[21]

How does this work? A preliminary understanding would go as follows: in the *Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, the nurse's body appears to come apart like a Chinese puzzle, until it is strewn in the form of tables, bottles, and boats along the entire seashore (see fig. 31). Dalí seems to have consciously willed this orderly, repetitious display of her insides for the viewer's visual delectation, such that "reality" becomes centered on the conundrum of the disintegrating nurse. He supplements this destabilizing effect through sharp spatial distortions, forcing the viewer's gaze through the small aperture of the nurse's inert body only suddenly to let it loose into the limitless space of an open sky and expansive ocean. This drastic spatial shift threatens to upset the security one feels in physically relating one's own body to one's surroundings. Another example utilizes the paranoiac-critic method's famous double images: in a sketch (fig. 33) for the 1936 painting *Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critic City: Afternoon on the Outskirts of European History*, Dalí visualizes his desire for his wife Gala through circular forms which then change into other objects and contexts, such that the entire experience of reality is continually eroticized. Breasts become grapes and then turn into horses and skulls, all of which appear in the final image (fig. 34). This repetition of form gives a specifically visual definition of reality, a reality that emanates from the individual's psyche in pictorial form and that conforms to the artist's personal desire rather than to external actuality.

Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critic City presents a lyrical evocation of endless desire but a third example, Dalí's portrait of Lenin titled *The Enigma of William Tell* (1933), gives a much more anxiety-ridden and Oedipal version of paranoiac-critic activity (fig. 35). The picture of the Soviet leader in a radical state of undress put Breton in such a rage that he tried to slash it.[22] It is not hard to see why: the kneeling Lenin wears a limp version of his characteristic cap but is otherwise barely clothed in a bourgeois shirt and vest. One naked buttock has been so elongated that it needs the support of a wooden crutch, making the great communist appear paradoxically phallicly overpowering but ridiculous and unmanly. Rather than portraying Lenin as the revered leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, Dalí evokes him as a bourgeois father figure who provokes Oedipal anxiety and disgust.[23] The painting is one of a long series of paranoiac-critic images begun in 1930 that offer a critique of patriarchal authority through the myth of

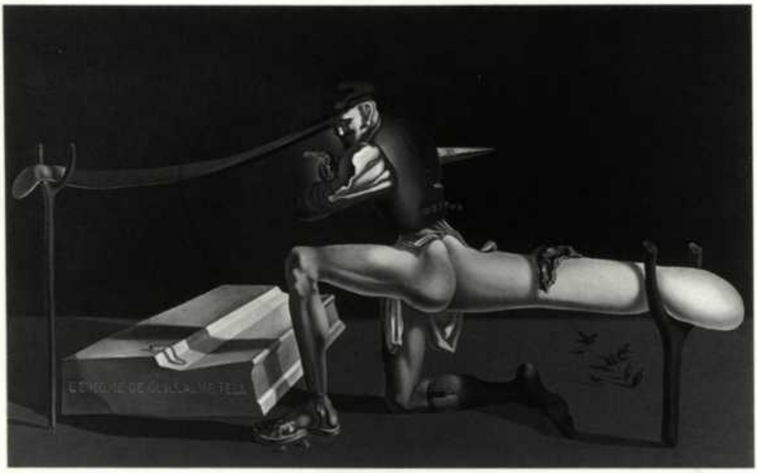


34: Salvador Dalí, *Suburbs of the Paranoiac-Critic City:Afternoon on the Outskirts of European History*, 1936. Oil on panel. 46 × 66 cm. Photo courtesy Sotheby's Auction House

William Tell, in which Dalí pictures the figure of the father as at once threatening and weak. Taking his cue from Freud, Dalí recognized the problem of paternal authority to be central to any understanding of contemporary society, communist or otherwise.

These examples give some insight into the complexities of Dalí's method. While automatism relies on a passive opening of the mind to the irrational images of the unconscious, the paranoiac-critic method advocates an active production of imagery intended, as Dalí put it, "to systematize confusion and to contribute to the total discrediting of the world of reality."[24] Clearly, Dalí never intended his paranoiac-critic method to be used to comprehend or cure people suffering from paranoia; this would be patently absurd given the context of its development. Dalí's purpose was instead to transform the Surrealist political imagination by systematizing the manipulation – and disruption – of conventional perceptions of reality, a claim to which I shall return.

At first, the Surrealists looked askance at Dalí's claims to the scientific aspects of his theories, especially as his use of the paranoiac-critic method proved more and more troublesome.[25] Dalí's prestige rose, however, after Lacan took an interest in his theories. He visited Dalí in 1930 to discuss "The Rotten Donkey"; after that, the psychoanalyst and the painter carried on a dialogue of sorts through articles published in the surrealist press on the subject of paranoia, culminating in the 1932 publication of Lacan's doctoral thesis, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité*.[26] This dialogue is telling in the similarities of the two theorizations of paranoia: against contemporary theories which considered it a natural physiological malfunction of body, both Dalí and Lacan conceived of paranoia as sociological.[27] That is, both saw paranoia as a (mal)function of the individual in relation to society, as a psychic reaction to social structures. Lacan claimed that paranoiac interpretation came from an already existing delirium whose "conceptual structures" concerned the individual's personal history, rather than from some biological malfunction.[28] Paranoid interpretation was, according to the young doctor, indelibly linked to a delirious state provoked by the individual's psychological relationship to a social context: "the symptom . . . [is manifested] especially with regard to *relations of a social nature*."[29] Dalí also understood paranoia as a form of hallucination, or deliriant interpretation of reality.[30] Against standard psychiatric definitions of paranoia as an "error" in judging reality, or "a hypertrophy of the reasoning function," the artist theorized paranoid



35: Salvador Dalí, *The Enigma of William Tell*, 1933. Oil on canvas. 201.5 × 346 cm. Stockholm, Moderna Museet

delirium as an interpretation already within reality, and paranoia as a creative – indeed deeply subversive – activity whose logic was comprehensible.[31] That is, reasoning and paranoia were not separate states; the paranoiac's delirium was itself a form of reality. It is this distinction that became crucial to Dalí's conception of paranoia as social critique.

In his doctoral thesis Lacan argues that paranoid interpretations come from the same source as dreams: "Certain interpretations seem to us to be a matter of physiological mechanisms related to those of dreams."[32] He goes on to claim that "there is a perception of the external world, but it presents a double alteration close to the structure of dreams: to us, it seems refracted through a psychic state intermediary between dreams and a waking [*vigile*] state."[33] Paranoid interpretation therefore is an "oniroid state" that refracts repressed desires as do dreams, but one based in tangible reality.[34] Lacan provides an important theoretical bridge between a fact that the Surrealists had already grasped – that it is dream imagery, not dreams themselves, which one remembers and communicates – and the systematized, conscious production of destabilizing imagery that Dalí proposes. It is these oniric images of desire, not dreams themselves, that Dalí claims to transfer, through the paranoiac-critic method, into a reality verifiable by anyone. Paranoiac vision restores to dreams their status as visual documentation of sublimated desire; oniric imagery from paranoid hallucinations can be treated as "factual" – indeed reproducible – evidence of those desires. Dalí therefore shifts attention from automatism's passive recording of dream imagery to the active (paranoid) perception of the exterior world: "paranoia utilizes the external world in order to valorize the obsessive idea."[35]

From this, Dalí deduces a crucial but difficult claim: he argues that the realization inherent in this view of paranoid activity – that these visions are fabricated out of the individual psyche in response to external reality – causes a *crise mentale* both at the level of personal existential anguish and throughout the whole of society:

> I submit to materialist examination the type of mental crisis that such an image can provoke; I offer for examination the even more complex problem of knowing which of these images is more likely to exist if one admits the intervention of desire . . . All this . . . permits me . . . to advance the thesis that these images of reality themselves depend on the degree of our paranoiac abilities . . .[36]

In claiming this, Dalí manages to push Surrealism's investment in the creative potential of mental illness one significant step further: not only may paranoid activity overturn conventional notions of reality but it can also purportedly demonstrate that "reality" itself is a psychic construction. Paranoiac imagery, because it demonstrates that paranoid delirium and the process of visual interpretation are coextant, undermines rationalist differentiations between objective and subjective reality. And it does so by means of imagery formulated in response to contemporary society. "Reality," it seems, is nothing other than a (paranoid) construction:

> It is through their lack of coherence with reality and through what gratuitousness there might be in their presence, that [paranoia-induced] simulacra might easily take the form of reality while that same reality in turn might adapt itself to the violence of the simulacras . . . Connoisseurs of simulacra, we learned long ago to recognize the image of desire behind simulacra of terror, and even the awakening of "golden ages" behind ignominious scatological simulacra.[37]

According to Dalí, the issue is not merely one of the paranoid vision's similarity to reality but also the reverse: that objective reality itself will begin to replicate the images induced by paranoia. Lacan took up this same idea in 1936 when in "The Mirror Stage" he argued that "man does not adapt himself to reality, he adapts it [reality] to him."[38] He refers to Freud's earlier theory, developed in the 1914 paper "On Narcissism," of the ego's role in fabricating an imaginary relation between the subject and reality.[39] Lacan later reiterated this concept in his 1938 essay *Les Complexes familiaux* and it became fundamental to his notion of the "imaginary."[40] Both Lacan and Dalí conceptualize "reality" not in Cartesian terms as an inherently concrete actuality that human beings strive to comprehend but, rather, as an externalization of internal psychic conflicts and desires. Thus, paranoid interpretations (in fact, all interpretations of reality) are produced out of the psychic traumas of the contemporary individual. The delirious visions that paranoia produces accentuate, rather than diminish, the disturbing sensation one feels when an object or a face is temporarily misread. "The Rotten Donkey" essay stresses the importance of such interpretations (representations) in disrupting the existing social order; they point up that reality might be other than what it seems. To argue, as Dalí did here and elsewhere, that the deep personal anguish of the mentally ill could be politically subversive may seem at once silly and callous, and at the end of this chapter I shall come back to questioning just how much of a *crise* such images might actually produce.

Lacan utilized his theoretical arguments on paranoia to analyze a particular kind of deviant behavior, that of individuals who commit seemingly motiveless crimes of aggression against others and allow themselves to get caught. He went on to use this exploration of criminal behavior to theorize the fascist persona. Dalí, in contrast, looked at two spectacular instances of the seemingly motiveless crime of aggression – Spain's dissolution into civil war and Hitler's attempt to conquer the world.

COMMUNISM AND THE PARANOIAC-CRITIC METHOD

In this way, the paranoiac-critic method represented a new form of political action. Although it never entirely supplanted automatism, in the wake of Breton's Second Manifesto Dalí's method and its implications became central to Surrealism's determination to resolve the contradiction between dreams and material existence. Nevertheless, the nature of politics in relation to the paranoiac-critic method was far from being resolved either within Surrealism's ranks or in the movement's attempts to forge political alliances with the French Communist Party.

It seems small wonder, then, that pictures such as *The Enigma of William Tell* did not sit well with the PCF. Yet despite what might seem to be a clear collision course with the PCF, the Spanish painter went to great lengths to map out a trajectory of collaboration between Marxism and his own paranoiac-critic method.[41] In March 1930 he proposed a rapprochement between the Communist Party and Surrealism, advocating a systematic attack on the moral order of capitalism. In a speech at the Barcelona Ateneu (Athenaeum), "Posició moral del surrealisme," Dalí argued that "The surrealist revolution is above all a revolution of moral order."[42] He then linked the paranoiac-critic method's goal of undermining perceived reality with communism's aim of destroying bourgeois social institutions:

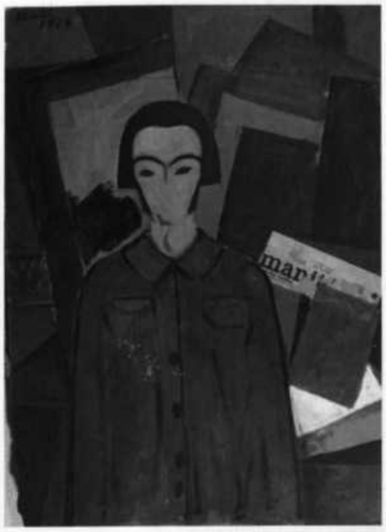
> paralleling the procedures [of surrealist acts of demoralization[43]] (which must be considered good as long as they serve to ruin definitively the notions of family, fatherland, religion), we are equally interested by anything that can also contribute to the ruin and discrediting of the perceived and intellectual world, which, in the lawsuit [we have] brought against reality, can be condensed in the rabidly paranoiac will to systematize confusion, that confusion which is taboo to Western thought . . .[44]

"Surrealisme al servei de la Revolució," a speech given the following year in Barcelona under the auspices of the Trotskyist Catalan party Bloc Obrer i Camperol (BOC), continued to define Surrealism's political stance.[45] After haranguing several liberal and conservative critics out of the hall, Dalí claimed that the Surrealists were communists, and spelled out Surrealism's goal specifically in relation to Marxist objectives of overthrowing capitalism: Surrealism "reconstitutes super-reality, to oppose capitalist 'reality,' with which it finds itself in open struggle, and for which it is the seed of total demoralization."[46] This time, however, Dalí attacked not only capitalism but also what he saw as the Communist Party's collusion with bourgeois morals.[47] He differentiated Surrealism's struggle for a new, non-bourgeois culture from that of the Party, which he reviled as completely reactionary:

> [Surrealism's] reconciliation of Freudianism and Marxism at times clashes with the cretinism of the official representatives of proletarian literature such as Barbusse, for example. One of the most common accusations against Surrealism is that of considering its members as representatives of bourgeois degeneration. This might be true historically. But what do the communists offer by way of proletarian culture and proletarian spiritual states? A bourgeois culture historically anterior to that of Surrealism![48]

Dalí went on to berate the Party for its lack of historical awareness, managing to suggest that the Surrealists knew how to apply Marx's theories of historical materialism better than the communists themselves: "It would be anti-historical to believe that Surrealism is the spiritual state of the future proletarian society, but meanwhile it is the only one compatible with the worker's movement."[49]

Criticism of official Party policies that demarcated "proletarian" from "bourgeois" culture was not new in Surrealist circles[50] but it is important to note how much of Dalí's interest in Marxism was developed in conjunction with Catalan rather than French leftists. His enthusiastic engagement with both communism and anarchism stemmed back at least to 1919 and was conditioned by his close friendships with political activists such as the Trotskyist Jaume Miravitlles and Jaume's anarchist father.[51] In Dalí's diaries of the time he claimed (with typical bombast) to be a "violently anti-social anarchist" and wrote approvingly of anarcho-syndicalism.[52] He also offered passionate critiques of an enormous range of political endeavors, from the electoral tactics of the French socialists to workers' strikes in Barcelona, to Madrid political gambits.[53] He commended the revolutionary tactics of Lenin and Trotsky; Spain, he judged, needed to undergo its own Bolshevik revolution if it were ever to rid itself of the bloodsucking bourgeoisie.[54] By fall 1921 he had subscribed to the French Communist Party paper *L'Humanité*, including it several years later in a cubist portrait of himself in a blue worker's smock (fig. 36).[55] At the same time he and his childhood friends Miravitlles and Martí Vilanova (the "Lenin of Ampurdán"[56]) set up what Miravitlles later called the first "soviet" in Spain.[57] Both Miravitlles and Vilanova eventually became influential in the BOC, convincing Dalí to become a fellow traveler with that Catalan group.[58]



36: Salvador Dalí, *Self-Portrait with 'L'Humanité'*, 1923. Oil and gouache with collage on cardboard. 104.9 × 75.4 cm. Figueres, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

It is not surprising that Dalí became associated with the least orthodox of the already fairly unorthodox Catalan communists.[59] The BOC in particular was committed to a more adventurous attitude to the relationship between culture and politics than the Communist Party, and Miravitlles backed Dalí's bold assertion that Surrealism was the only cultural movement close to providing the revolutionary foundations for a new proletarian culture. He did so by claiming the painter for the BOC.[60] In his introduction to the 1931 BOC event featuring both Dalí's provocative talk and a speech by René Crevel, Miravitlles argued for new cultural paths under the sign of both Freud and Marx:

> Surrealism moves on a parallel plane to communism. To bring together Surrealism and communism is the central preoccupation of men as significant as Dalí. This event has, in addition to its doctrinal significance, the following goal: that of definitively centering Salvador Dalí in the Bloc Obrer i Camperol. Decidedly and communistically, Dalí will continue his studies concerning the reciprocal confluence of those two formidable movements: Marxism and Freudism.[61]

His words, although overhopeful about Dalí's future relationship to the Trotskyist group, suggest a search for Dalinian and Surrealist alternatives to Soviet cultural policies.[62] Miravitlles then gave the floor to Dalí, who harshly criticized the Communist Party's refusal to theorize adequately the relationship between the economic base and the social mores of the superstructure:

> Another point of view common to the communists is not to concede any importance to the present moral crisis. Basing themselves in an obscurantist interpolation of Marxism, they claim that the new proletarian morality will be a vigorous consequence of the economic and social revolution. This – says he [Dalí means himself] – is the equivalent of not wanting to prepare this social revolution because fate deems that it will arrive at its proper moment. It is necessary to flee from such fatalism.[63]

Dalí's critique was double-edged: he ridiculed the Party's concept of reality and at the same time denounced its refusal to include sexual desire as part of what constituted an individual's reality. In his opinion, the Communist Party fell into the trap prepared for it by capitalism, that is, it defined reality so as to exclude desire and to credit solely the objective and the tangible. Despite his harsh criticisms, however, Dalí clearly felt by 1931 that there was no pragmatic alternative to communism. Speaking several months after the birth of the Spanish Republic, he attacked bourgeois democracy and Republicanism; anarchism no longer merited his attention.[64] Consequently, Dalí appealed to the Communist Party (with true Surrealist flair) to "take up the moral revolution and attack first the republican and democratic manifestations of bourgeois morality . . . which still contain ignoble ideas such as those of patriotism, the family . . . [Dalí] recommends ridding oneself of sentimentality, spitting on the national flag, castigating fathers with a revolver, and descending to the world of subversion."[65]

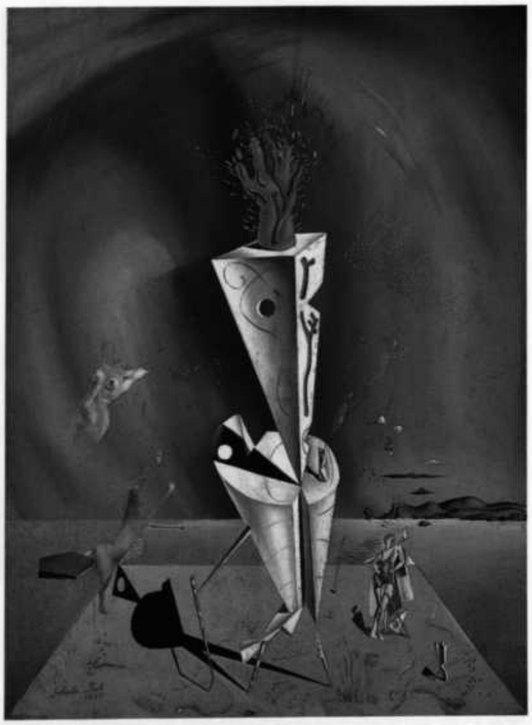
In offering what to his mind was "constructive" criticism of the Party, Dalí was clearly searching for a complement to communism's social plan, one which emphasized undermining bourgeois morality in the present over imagining a utopian socialist future. Dalí's strategy, as I shall argue, advocated a systematization of abjection under the label of *putrefacción*. This was both the strength and the weakness of what became his paranoiac-critic method. In order to understand its structure, one must look more closely at the context out of which the paranoiac-critic method developed.

THE CATALAN AVANT-GARDE AND DALÍ'S PARANOIAC-CRITIC METHOD

The paranoiac-critic method grew out of pictorial explorations rejecting surrealist automatism that Dalí had begun in Spain. This pre-1929 critique of automatism was two-fold: on the one hand, Dalí developed a rationalist, objectifying pictorial practice based largely on the lessons he learned from Purism. It was a method with which he tried to systematize what he considered to be the chaos of imagery provoked by modern life. On the other hand, he sought a means of mechanically producing shockingly sexualized imagery; such "mass production" techniques would, in theory, allow anyone to produce traumatizing, subversive visual material. As such (and despite his loud claims otherwise) Dalí's position was far from a complete rejection of Surrealism; rather it was an effort to use Purism's optimism regarding machine culture to counter what he saw as Surrealism's undisciplined attitude to psychic exploration, while also using Surrealism to criticize the more puritan and rationalist aspects of Purism.

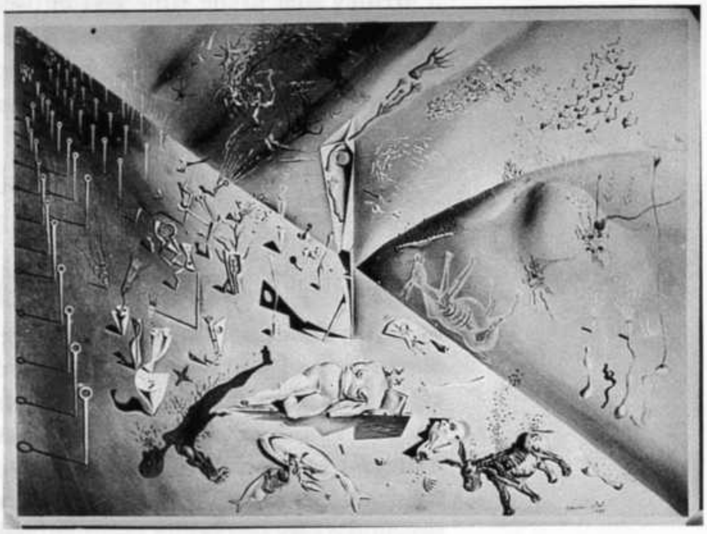
In October 1927 Dalí wrote to his close friend Federico García Lorca to say that he had been invited to show two paintings, *Apparatus and Hand* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, in the Autumn Salon in Barcelona (figs. 37 and 38).[66] The two works provoked a flood of negative criticism accusing Dalí of having defected to the Surrealist camp.[67] The critics' fears that Dalí had turned Surrealist seem justified, for the paintings repeat a series of fantastic and horrific creatures: decaying, decapitated figures pouring blood from innumerable wounds, rotting animals spilling their intestines, body parts floating in the air, all painted in painstakingly rendered detail.[68] The figure that seems to generate the scenarios in both paintings is a geometricized body whose arteries lead upward to a blood-filled hand in place of a head. This body is the "apparatus" that appears again and again in Dalí's production of this period and which mechanically stimulates a pictorial recounting of those symbols he used to define his concept of modernism, from the putrefying donkey covered in flies, to the female body classically nude but headless, the bodiless heads representing Lorca and Dalí, to the sexualized hand itself. It seems immediately apparent that Dalí's modernism (which he termed "anti-art") provided a rebarbative critique similar to Surrealism's attack on artistic tradition.[69]

Dalí, however, rejected the label of Surrealism. Piqued by what he felt to be the critics' lack of comprehension, he lashed back with a characteristically strong retort, "My Paintings of the Autumn Salon," published in the Catalan avant-garde magazine *L'Amic de les arts*. "All this," complained Dalí after ranting for several paragraphs, "seems to me more than sufficient to show the distance that separates me from Surrealism, despite the intervention of that which one might call poetic transposition, from the purest subconscious to the freest instinct."[70] And true to his word, although both *Apparatus and Hand* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* show a clear interest in the French Surrealists' investigations of dream imagery and sexuality, the shift is far from being a wholesale conversion. The paintings instead indicate that Dalí was keen to demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of Surrealism, in order to state his differences from it. The images seem to pay little heed to Breton's 1924 dictum to create works "in the absence of all control exercised by reason," a definition of automatism that continued to be foundational for the French movement's pictorial ideology in 1927.[71] In fact they go far to register the opposite. At first glance they seem to have much in common with Surrealist evocations of dream imagery, fantastic landscapes, or *cadavre exquis* figures; the transparent figures floating in the air are reminiscent of those in Tanguy landscapes, while the deep space and geometric construction of the central "apparatus" owe much to de Chirico. Miró's comically demonic creatures also come to mind. Yet Dalí's meticulously detailed references, in *Apparatus and Hand* for instance, to academic classicism in the nude female figure to the left and the classically posed figure on the right indicate his studied harnessing of the history of Western painting in decided contrast to the simplicity of Tanguy's imagery (fig. 39). It is almost as if the reference to Tanguy were chosen specifically in order to be counteracted. The central "gadget" and the mathematically regimented placement of forms are also more reminiscent of Purism's investment in machine aesthetics than of automatic drawing. In fact, both pictures are painted with such tight precision as to seem a reaction against Surrealist attempts to break through the constraints of rationalism, and in favor of the coldly cerebral analysis of form on which Dalí had already built his reputation.[72]

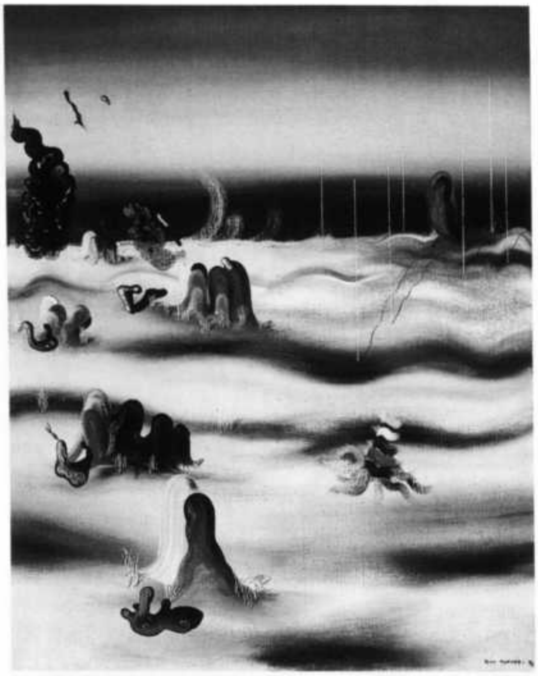


37: Salvador Dalí, *Apparatus and Hand*, 1927. Oil on panel. 62.2 × 47.6 cm. St. Petersburg, Florida, The Salvador Dalí Musuem

These are paintings steeped in everything Surrealism (as Dalí understood it in 1927) wanted to avoid – meticulous affirmations of Western art's major reference points from start to finish, painted with excruciatingly conscious attention to technique in the best flourish of traditional academicism Dalí could manage. He deploys the slick surface and facility of line inherited through Purism from Ingres in order to offer an almost hyperactive illusionism. In *Apparatus and Hand*, for example, he takes care to show off his ability to register natural phenomena, to convince one of the precise number of flies roaming in strict formation off to the right, of the degree of atmospheric transparency of the classical female nude, of the fragile placement of that mechanized body on its toothpick legs. His insistence on the detailed "observation" of "reality" – that is, his skilled deployment of illusionist techniques – allows him to claim rationalism as a fundamental principle of his artistic vision in opposition to the irrationality proclaimed by the



38: Salvador Dalí, *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, 1927. Oil on canvas. Dimensions and whereabouts unknown. Photo courtesy of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres



39: Yves Tanguy, *Shadow Country*, 1927. Oil on canvas. 99 × 80.3 cm. Detroit, Detroit Institute of the Arts

Parisian Surrealists. The objects populating the landscape of *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, Dalí asserts, come from an observation of nature intense to the point of being painful.[73] Nothing, he claims, differs more radically than this from the French attempts through automatism to avoid the intervention of the conscious mind in the interpretation of reality.[74]

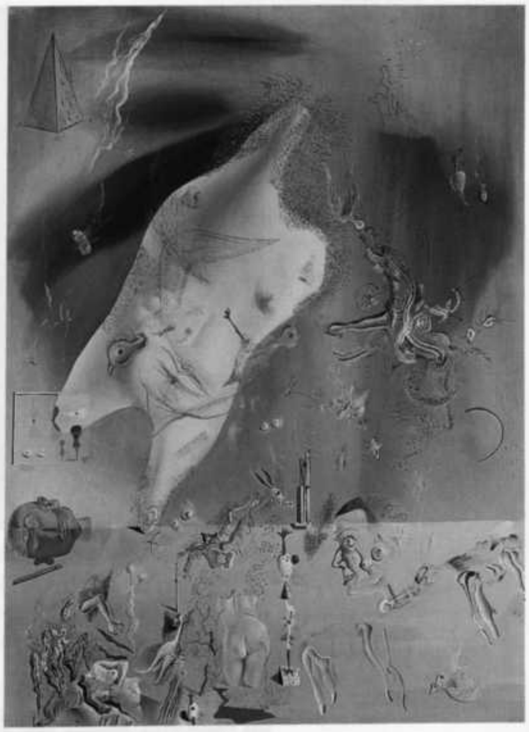
In late February 1927, Sebastià Gasch, the most voluble and daring of the Catalan avant-garde critics, covered an entire page of *L'Amic de les arts* in an effort to deny any Surrealist influence in Dalí's early works.[75] To do so, he discussed the importance of compositional study and formal procedures in producing certain illusions and effects on the surface of the canvas. "In defining the object of the painted work," wrote Gasch, "we can say that one must pay attention first to the visual sensation in order later to pay attention to intelligence and sensibility. This is to say, by means of the eyes, satisfy the necessities of the brain and heart."[76] Gasch argued that the essential element separating painting from other forms of human intellectual activity was its organization of the visual (and meant thus to counter Surrealism's early rejection of painting as a Surrealist medium). Invoking the magazine *L'Esprit nouveau* and Amédée Ozenfant, he argued for "order" and "equilibrium" as necessary and natural elements of good visual composition, claiming that Dalí's works satisfied these conditions superbly. It was only from the formal elements of Dalí's painting that any interest in the subject matter stemmed, insisted Gasch; the studied precision of composition was exactly that which allowed the painter to address the "tortured" subject matter of his figures without falling into frivolous sentimentality or useless fantasy.

Writing later in the same year on Dalí's contributions to the Autumn Salon, Gasch argued that Dalí did not arrive at a "poetics" of painting through the "turbulent processes of the subconscious" as did the French group; the painter's source was the real, not the imaginary. Against the confused images Surrealists obtained from dreams, Gasch claimed that Dalí opposed the clear images found in life:

> And to the lyricism of the image found by the surrealist in the tortured moments which immediately precede the act of sleeping, Dalí wants to oppose the found image, thrown down on the sand, face to the sea. . . . Against the turbulent and confused vagaries of the North [that is, Paris], Dalí wants to oppose the clear anatomy of the crab.[77]

Gasch invoked clarity in both an ideological and a formal sense, linking Dalí's intensely focused observation of natural phenomena and his miniaturist technique to the painter's ability to evoke a shocking and up-to-date set of images. According to him, Dalí developed a range of imagery whose formal characteristics were similar to Surrealist dream imagery but whose sources and treatment differed. Dalí's images were not half-remembered dream sequences surging up from the unconscious; they were poetic images encountered, wide awake and attentive, in the concrete reality of his immediate surroundings. Gasch qualified Dalí as a "materialist," indicating that the painter investigated the poetics of the mysterious but with the same impersonal objectivity and exactitude one found in banking, commercial sales, and the sterility of medical clinics: "Physical, objective, materialist, he fatally must turn toward the miraculous, the mysterious, the material unknown."[78]

The argument equates Dalí's "objective" processes of visually interpreting modernity with a production of spectacular imagery (Gasch notes "mutilated arms," for instance) that differs greatly from those works of surrealist interpretation such as Aragon's *Le Paysan de Paris*. Whereas Aragon's 1926 novel proposes discovering the bases for a new society in the individual's dialectical relationship to the products of modern consumerism, Gasch attributes the dynamic of the new much more heavily to the objects themselves. Aragon finds a match between the individual's response to modern objects and the bizarre nature of those objects themselves. Dalí, in contrast, strives for a rationalist pictorial production that will act as a counterweight to the fantastic aspects of modernism. This is the rationale evident in a letter Dalí wrote to Lorca about another 1927 picture, probably *Little Ashes* (fig. 40):

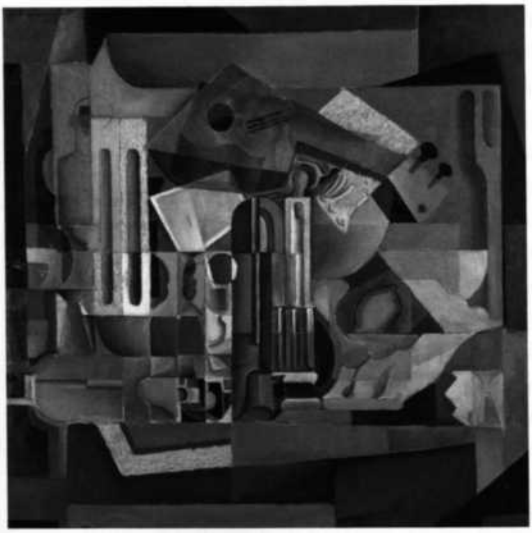


40: Salvador Dalí, *Little Ashes* (*Cenicitas*), 1927–8. Oil on panel. 64 × 48 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

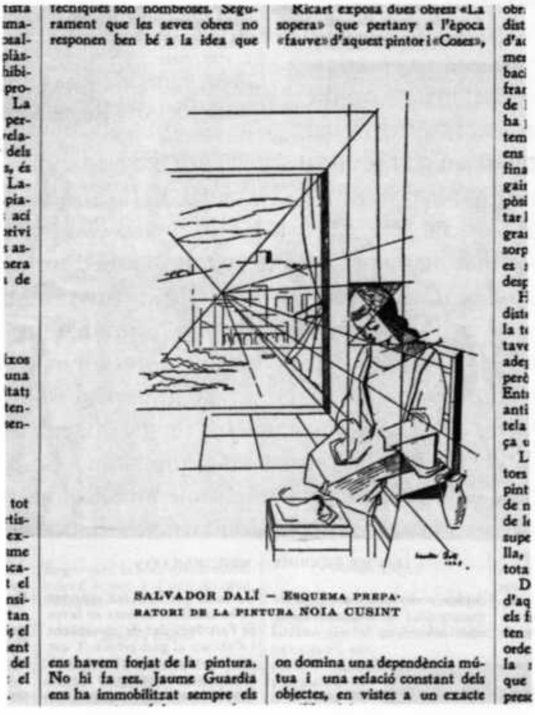
> Just now I'm painting a very beautiful woman, smiling, burnt to a crisp with feathers of all colors, held up by a small die of burning marble; the die is in turn held up by a little puff of smoke, churned and quiet; in the sky there are asses with parrot-heads, grasses and beach sand, all about to explode, all clean, incredibly objective . . .[79]

Dalí's insistence on "objectivity" itself fits oddly with his description of the painting's imagery, and seems less directed at the subject matter than at the actual procedures he utilized to translate "things that leave me profoundly moved" into visual images on the canvas.[80] In order to externalize successfully the chaotic intensity of these private sensations, they had to be mediated through the control of an appropriate form of painting. In this, Dalí had not forgotten the lessons learned from Purism. It was not coincidental that Gasch linked Dalí with Ozenfant, one of Purism's greatest advocates, or that many of Dalí's images responded to the neoclassical Picasso; by 1927 Dalí had been imbibing the movement's stylistics for several years.[81] He seems to have been particularly struck by Purism's theory that an invariable universal order underlay the vagaries of everyday life, and that this order could be expressed mathematically. One sees him testing various elaborations on this idea, especially in terms of hollows and volumes, in the earlier *Purist Still Life* (fig. 41). Dalí often extended the Purists' focus on "type-objects" to his portraits of people, relating the physical structure of the human body to the rigidly geometric forms of the townscape environment as if the same architectonics underlay both (fig. 42).[82] In many of these pre-1927 works, this physical structure takes on moral and class implications. His delicate 1925 portrait of his father and sister strove to register the psychic normality of the bourgeois family (fig. 43).[83] Furthermore, Dalí's enthusiasm for machine culture – cinema, aeronautics shows, motor-racing, magnificent ocean liners and "the gramophone, which is a little machine" are some mentioned in the 1928 *Manifest groc*, which he wrote with Gasch and Lluís Montanyà – places him closer to the Purists than to other post-cubist artists such as Picabia, Ernst, or even Léger whose attitudes to modern machines were far more ironic.[84]

While *Little Ashes* and the other works of this period by no means represent a steadfast adherence to Surrealism, neither are they wholeheartedly purist. Indeed, by 1927 Dalí seems to have found untenable the conflict between the class implications evident in the 1925 portrait



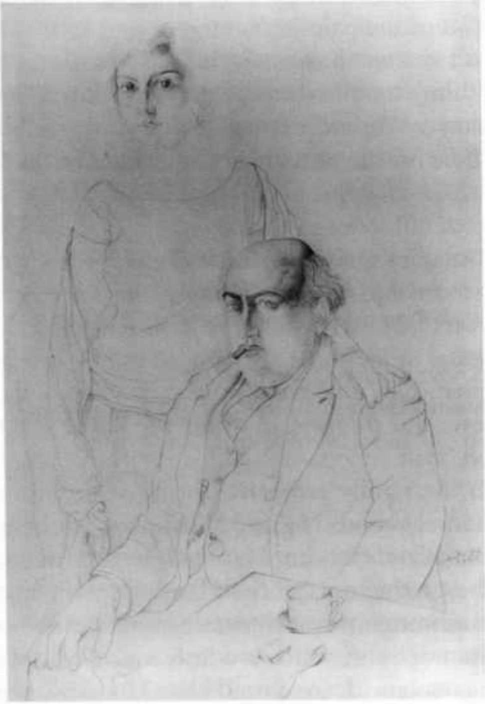
41: Salvador Dalí, *Purist Still Life*, 1924. Oil on canvas. 100 × 100 cm. Figueres, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí



tecniques son nombroses. Segurament que les seves obres no responen ben bé a la idea que ens havem forjat de la pintura. No hi fa res. Jaume Guardia ens ha immobilitzat sempre els

Ricart exposa dues obres «La sopera» que pertany a l'època «fauve» d'aquest pintor i «Coses», on domina una dependència mútua i una relació constant dels objectes, en vistes a un exacte

SALVADOR DALÍ — ESQUEMA PREPARATORI DE LA PINTURA NOIA CUSINT



42 (*above left*): Salvador Dalí, sketch for *Girl Sewing* (*Noia cusint*), *L'Amic de les Arts* no.8, November 1926:6

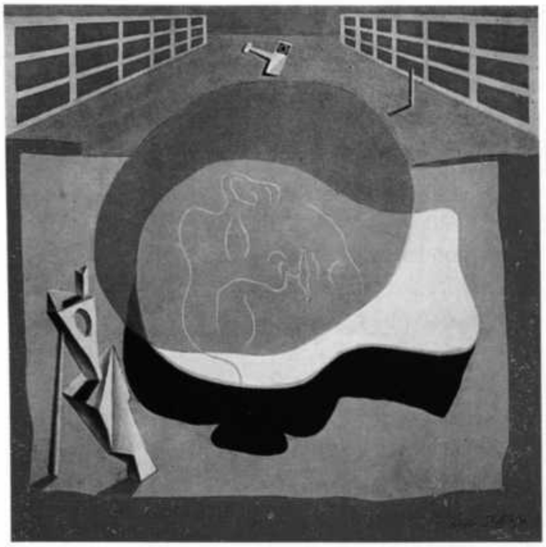
43 (*above right*): Salvador Dalí, *The Artist's Father and Sister*, 1925. Pencil on paper. 49 × 33 cm. Barcelona, Museu d'Art Moderne de Catalunya, Gabinet de Dibuixes i Gravats

and his espoused leftist sympathies. In the later works, Dalí discards the straightforward link between an "objective" stylistics and the complacently middle-class, rationalist subject matter seen in the 1925 portrait. The detached, emotionally cool style is still there in the 1927 paintings but the subject matter seems dredged up from the wildest of fantasies. Dalí, it appears, was intent on placing Purism on a collision course with Surrealism to see what might result, imbuing the content of his works with psychically traumatic material that deliberately strains against their purist-influenced style. Thus, the measuring devices and mathematical formulae Dalí includes in *Little Ashes* waft about in the same universe that produces maggot-ridden carcasses and phallic fingers. Much purist energy is spent carefully elucidating the precise placement, weight, volume, and atmospheric transparency of such menacing, non-purist objects as the deformed torso that dominates the entire picture.

Thus while on the one hand surrealizing and erotic imagery allowed Dalí to push Purism's boundaries, on the other, Purism's emphasis on rationalism and objectivity proved a useful structural mechanism for ordering the tumultuous subject matter of Dalí's erotic anxieties. The tension between the real horror of that bulbous floating torso – a horror that derives from its uncanny resemblance to a decapitated body that seems to have littered the ground below with jabbering heads, fingers ripped from hands, and other human detritus – and the lessons from purist stylistics that Dalí uses to contain that horror into something representable, is palpable.[85] In fact, *Little Ashes* along with *Apparatus and Hand* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* form part of a series of experiments during this period, through which Dalí developed mechanisms for producing visual evocations of sexual complexes, particularly those related to auto-eroticism.

Interest in the active production of eroticism had appeared in the Spanish avant-garde literature almost a decade earlier. In 1919, J. V. Foix, the proto-Surrealist Catalan poet who later had a major influence on Dalí, published his "Capítol II d'una Autobiografia" in which the notion of a mechanism for deliberate auto-arousal is made central to the work.[86] The story's protagonist describes the device with which his uncle teaches him shorthand, how to shoot a revolver, and with which his uncle "initiated me into fornication that we stimulated with the erotic chorus of two contrabass strings, applied to a sort of copper pot, which were pulsated by means of an extremely simple mechanism that functioned by turning the appropriate switch."[87] Foix's matter-of-fact prose (meant to replicate the language of an investigative reporter) intends to explore the relationships of modernity, violence, and eroticism; here, images of violence and sexuality are deliberately linked with the quotidian objects of modernity – mechanographics and home appliances – to demonstrate that sexuality could no longer effectively be characterized by an outmoded sentimentalism.[88]

Echoes of Foix's "extremely simple mechanism" for fornication and for the writing of shorthand are found in Dalí's imagery during the precise period in which the painter claimed to be producing "anti-artistic" works based on an "objective" scrutiny of reality. The ubiquitous apparatus, which makes its first appearance in the 1926 painting *Still Life: Invitation to Dream* (fig. 44), propped up in contemplation of Lorca's severed head, embodies literally the effort to measure the relationship between the progressive mechanization of modern life and the human gesture of sexual anxiety/pleasure found in its blood-filled hand (see fig. 37). A similar conflation of sexual anxiety and the machine occurs in *Bather* of 1928 (fig. 45). Here Dalí plays off what the viewer at first supposes to be a pleasure scene – a version of Manet's *Olympia* displaced onto a beach – instead offering a scenario of violence. Unlike Manet's prostitute, Dalí's female figure seems a threat less because of her aggressivity to the viewer than because her body has become the battleground for the struggle between rational thought and irrational sexual desire. Dalí represents the duality of human existence that has produced this struggle in terms that recall its status within a modern mechanized era: the figure's head, traditional seat of spir-



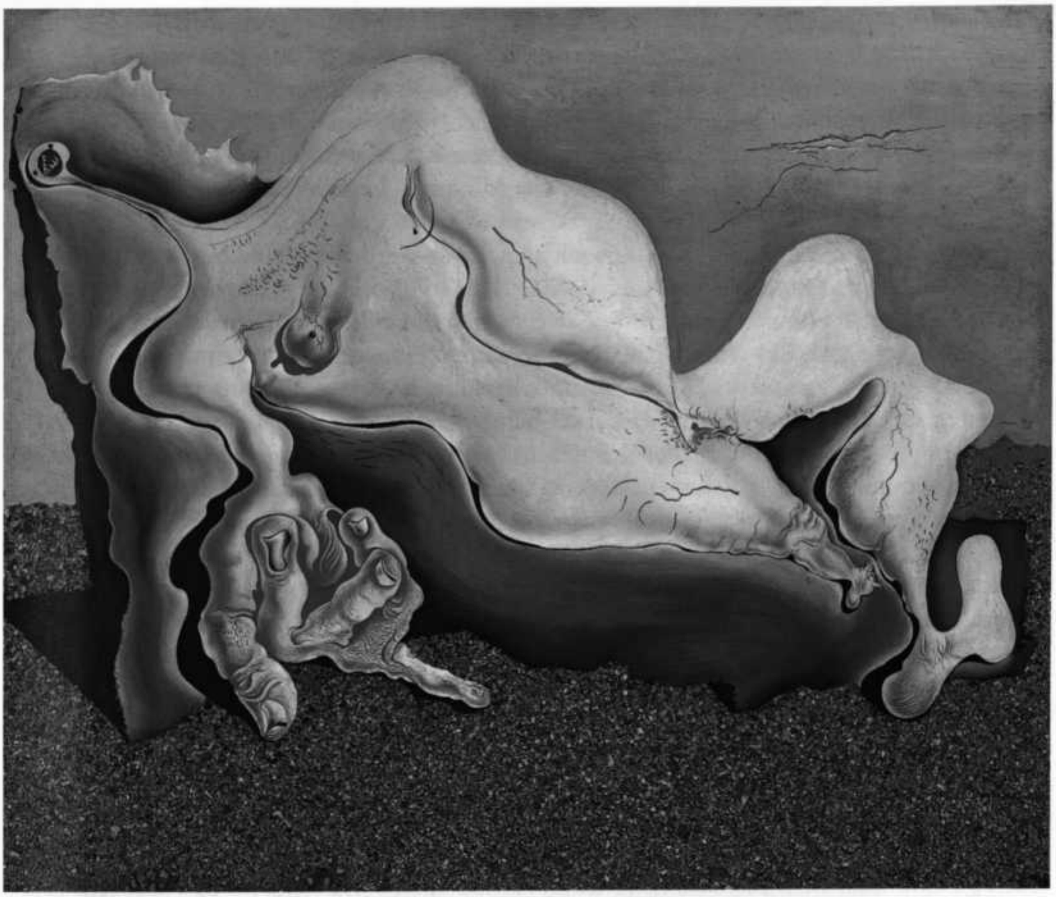
44: Salvador Dalí, *Still Life: Invitation to Dream*, 1926. Oil on canvas. 100 × 100 cm. Turin, Collection Giuseppe y Mara Albaretto. Photo courtesy of the Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres

itual and intellectual superiority over base sexual drives, has shriveled to the half-gadget, half-insect circular shape and sharpened teeth of an industrially produced praying mantis. Jaws opened in a razor-sharp cry, the figure protests helplessly over the movements of her uncontrollable right hand. This hand, enlarged to lumbering and useless proportions in response to unassuaged desire, offers a bulbously detailed rendition of that sexuality which remains inaccessible, barely sketched, a disappointment covered over by the left hand. The powerful visual attraction found in the detailed renderings of hand and breast, in the figure's wildly curvaceous silhouette, and in the slickness of the disc-like head, contrasts sharply with the repulsiveness of those tumor-like growths and the complete absence of conventional female beauty in a manner intended to replicate and demonstrate visually the polarities of fascination–repulsion that characterized the erotic for Dalí.

PUTREFACCIÓN AND THE GENERACIÓN DEL '27

Thus by 1927, well before moving to Paris or meeting Lacan, Dalí had developed an alternative to surrealist automatism that proposed a systematization of visual imagery combined with a mechanics of desublimated desire. The paintings of this period indicate several issues that became fundamental to his visual production: that modernity must be pictured through acute attention to concrete reality, rather than through loosing the unconscious or the irrational through automatism, as Surrealism argued; that modernity was as much a psychological and a visual phenomenon as a social experience; and that pictorial mechanisms could be developed through which the psychological experience of alienation and fragmentation peculiar to modernity could be comprehended or even measured.

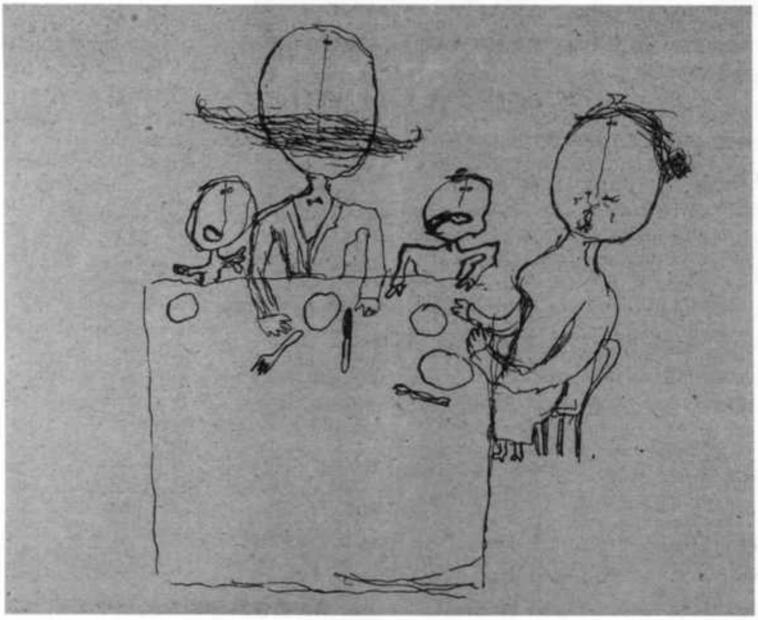
Dalí was not alone in championing these ideas; they were common to a whole generation of Spanish artists and intellectuals. This group, known as the Generación del '27 and centered around Madrid's Residencia de Estudiantes, included Dalí, Lorca, Luis Buñuel, Rafael Alberti, and José María Hinojosa.[89] Dalí arrived at the Residencia in late 1922, remained enrolled until 1926, and stayed associated with this unusual institution until his 1929 departure for Paris. The Residencia, founded in 1910 as a residential college for young men, replicated the Oxford and Cambridge universities type of a general humanities education for a select elite. Its educational philosophy proposed a revitalized intellectual and artistic tradition that would confront what was thought to be the decadence of modern society, or as one *residente* put it, the "ideal of luxury" which was the product of "the false bourgeois civilization."[90] Against this decadence, the Residencia sought to resuscitate certain traditional values of the aristocracy as examples of a vigorous moral and spiritual system, and to combine these with what were perceived as the pragmatism and vitality of the bourgeoisie. This liberalist project of class cooperation was meant to instill a reinvigorated sense of social mission in its members, who would then act as responsible "leadership minorities" to change Spanish society.[91] Accordingly, Residencia members were a select group of young men taken from the upper ranks of the "comfortable classes" and exposed to a complete educational and living program modeled on the ideal of the "gentleman inglés."[92]



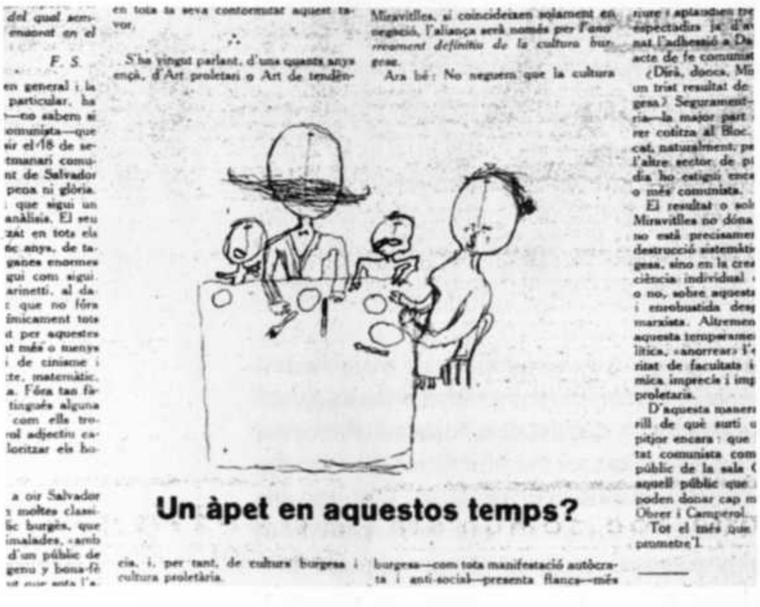
45: Salvador Dalí, *Bather*, 1928. Oil and pebbles on laminated panel. 63.5 × 75 cm. St. Petersburg Florida, The Salvador Dalí Museum

The Residencia's educational philosophy meant that Dalí's encounters with some of the most prominent intellectual and scientific minds Europe had to offer, from Einstein and Unamuno to Gropius, from Claudel to Aragon, occurred within an intellectual atmosphere that considered the propagation of culture to be a moral imperative of the upper classes. The Residencia viewed the social desolation of the postwar years as resolvable through a reinvigorated set of traditional values rather than through class struggle. This concept of values based on a sense of cultural refinement rather than on class conflict automatically relegated any consciousness of the latter to one social philosophy considered among many. Class harmony was thought to be possible but any contact with people outside the European aristocratic and middle classes at the Residencia was a purely individual affair.[93] The extreme disillusionment with this notion of social harmony that the First World War and the Russian Revolution produced in the rest of Europe had not yet infiltrated Madrid's social elites; in fact they seemed to do their best to hold those struggles at arm's length. Even within Spain, the Residencia represented an attitude to social issues found in Madrid that contrasted with those found in Catalonia. In Madrid, more isolated from the rest of Europe than Barcelona, the direct effects of the war (in the form of refugees, cultural exchange or economic trade, and large-scale social unrest) were not felt as strongly; thus central Spain remained much less radicalized in its attitudes to modernism

Yet, this clear distinction between superior and inferior beings was not to last. Visually, the concept of putrefaction was first associated with Dalí's derisive sketches of innocuous little creatures. In one of several illustrations Miravitlles used in the leftist Barcelona journal *L'Hora*, Dalí has comically sketched a bourgeois putrefact family at the dinner table, wearing a typically confused look as they blunder through their meal seemingly unaware that their plates are empty (fig. 46 and 46a).[106] Stylistically, the drawings carry all the buffoonery associated with caricature, implicitly placing the viewer in a position of superiority over the *putrefactos*. The sketchy, deliberately childlike quality of the drawing style reflects on the half-witted nature of the *putrefactos* rather than on the artist or viewer. But Dalí's imaging of putrefaction takes a



46: Salvador Dalí, *Putrefacts: "An appetite in these times?* (*"Un àpet en aquestos temps?"*), *L'Hora*, 6 November 1931 :7



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negació, l'aliança serà només per l'ano-
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Ara bé: No neguem que la cultura

burgesa—com tota manifestació autòcra-
ta i anti-social—presenta flanca—més

Un àpet en aquestos temps?

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El resultat o sol
Miravitlles no dóna
no està precisamer
destrucció sistemàti
gesa, sino en la crea
ciència individual
o no, sobre aquesta
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D'aquesta maner
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Tot el més que
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46a: *L'Hora*, 6 November 1931: 7

sudden turn with *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* (see fig. 38). This painting is (among other things) a psychic landscape in which the artist plumbs his own mental state vis-à-vis his friendship with Lorca. As such, it posits the exact reverse of the viewer–image relationship one finds in the first set of *putrefacto* drawings; efforts at maintaining a distinction – moral, psychic, or cultural – between the viewer and the characters pictured are abandoned. Now the viewer is implicated along with Dalí himself in the scene of disaster – maggot-infested body parts strewn about, including those of Dalí, Lorca, and the ubiquitous putrefying donkey – rotting under the aegis of modernity's Janus face in the form of the apparatus that marks the crucial center point of the painting. The artist has left the ostrichlike safety of an Ortegan elitist liberalism for a more compelling understanding of modernity as a deeply conflicted enterprise. It is an alluring yet dangerous view, in which all avenues throw one into a Dalinian hell that oozes the inescapable horror of festering sores and decaying excrement.

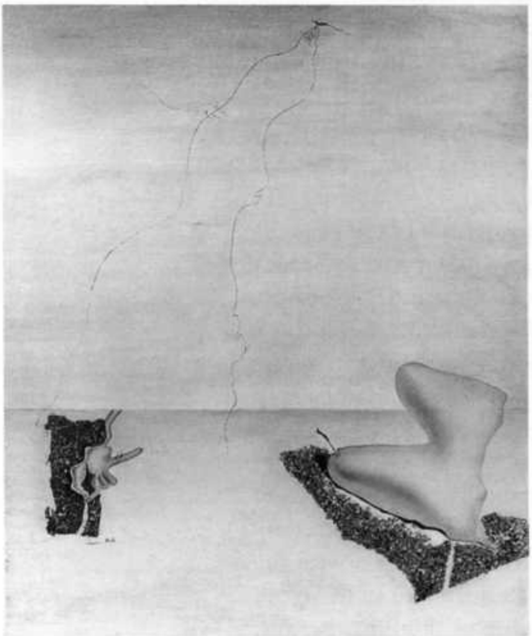
By 1927, then, putrefaction had mutated into a much more subtle and complex theory. Rotten donkeys and other Dalinian purulence signal Dalí's incessant tirade against anything he considered backward, nostalgic, or antiquated.[107] Putrefaction became a mechanism for autocritique, for self-reflection rather than sheer derision or smug assuredness. As such, it marks the beginning of the aggressive attack on conventional cultural and moral standards that Dalí later honed to a fine point.

FREUD AT THE RESIDENCIA

The Residencia was also the place where Dalí began reading Freud. Biblioteca Nueva, whose owner was closely associated with the Residencia, began translating the *Complete Works* in 1922.[108] Ortega y Gasset, one of the few Spaniards who read Freud in the original German, supported the project, and the *Revista de occidente* wrote of the "greed" with which the translations were "devoured" in Spain.[109] By the time Dalí moved to Madrid in fall 1922, Biblioteca Nueva had published the first two volumes: *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and *A Sexual Theory and Other Essays*, which contained *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, *On Dreams*, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. José Moreno Villa wrote that Dalí immersed himself in Freud as soon as he got to the Residencia; he began reading *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1924.[110] Although Dalí started engaging consistently in self-analysis by 1925, overtly Freudian iconography makes a pronounced appearance in his work only in 1927 with *Apparatus and Hand* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*. To avoid a mere laundry list of the countless ways in which Dalí responded to Freud after this point, I shall concentrate on those aspects that reappear consistently from 1927 through the Spanish Civil War and Hitler imagery: first, perversion as a conscious moral critique and, second, the fragility of any coherent human subjectivity especially as it relates to narcissism.

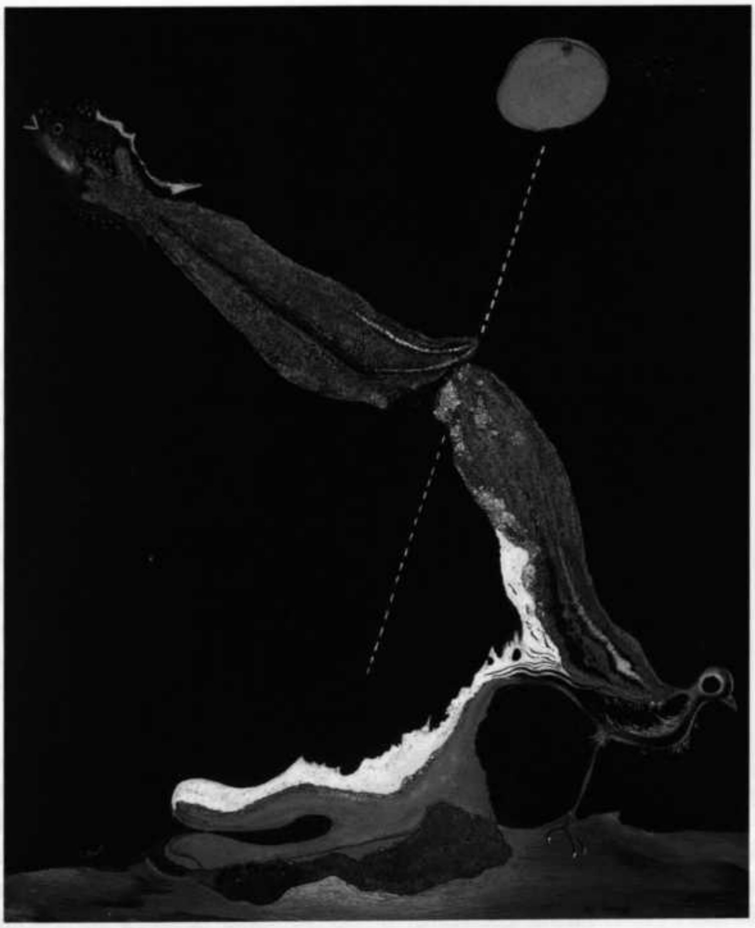
Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality starts with an examination of sexual "inversion" and goes on to analyze any number of so-called sexual perversions. It is tantalizing to think what Dalí made of the book. What becomes clear is that reading Freud (and *Three Essays* in particular) gave Dalí the means to bring together the rationalist productivism of Purism with the nigh-unbearable press upon him of his own subliminal desires. At the Residencia and therefore not subject to orthodox Surrealism's fidelity to automatism's privileging of the unconscious, Dalí saw in Freud's definition of perversion a means of consciously systematizing his erotic complexes, of desublimating them in fact. Perversion, argues Freud, is the conscious display of abnormal sexual impulses in opposition to the impulses of neurosis which are repressed into the unconscious: "Thus symptoms [of neurotic behavior] are formed in part at the cost of *abnormal* sexuality; *neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions.*"[111] Dalí responded to this by linking the notion that perversions are conscious phenomena to the rationalist philosophies he gained from Purism; the analytical structures learned from Purism could be brought to bear upon the psyche so as to expose to the cold light of day the fantastic workings of the unconscious. Furthermore, Dalí seems to have picked up another key point, that perversion in the Freudian lexicon is associated with disgust. Dalí probably came upon this idea by reading Freud's *Three Essays*, in which he argues that "disgust seems to be one of the forces which have led to a restriction of the sexual aim" and stamps certain sexual aims such as anal intercourse as perversions.[112] Disgust, continues Freud, "play[s] a part in restraining [the sexual] instinct within the limits that are regarded as normal."[113] Nevertheless, "the sexual instinct in its strength enjoys overriding this disgust."[114] Dalí had a field day with this, producing a long series of outrageous images, from *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* with its rotting corpses, to *Bird . . . Fish* painted in various shit-colored hues, to *Dialogue at the Beach* (*Ungratified Desires*), which got him censored for indecency in 1928 (figs. 47 and 48).[115] Clearly Dalí knew how to provoke his audiences, attacking normative concepts of moral behavior by systematically imaging sexual perversion.

Thus even before moving to Paris Dalí was quite unlike Breton, whose ambivalence about the desublimation of sexual desires has been well studied.[116] However, Breton's personal distaste for the sort of perversions Dalí painted points to theoretical differences between the two men that help clarify Dalí's position. As David Lomas shows, Breton mistrusted the explicitness with which Dalí evoked sexual fantasies, insisting instead on Freud's distinction between manifest and latent dream content. Breton made this plain when commenting upon Dalí's work in *Communicating Vessels*: "The willing incorporation of latent content – decided on in advance – in the manifest content serves here to weaken the tendency to dramatize and magnify, which the censor [the psychological function that prevents forbidden wishes from becoming conscious] imperiously uses with such success in the opposite case."[117] Breton, then, tended to evaluate surrealist works by how they replicated rather than explicated the functions of dreamwork.[118] "What Breton seems to imply," Lomas writes, "is that the transmutations that the unconscious wish undergoes in an effort to bypass the censor – the displacements, condensations and other poetic operations so vividly described by Freud – are necessary to the creation of genuinely surrealist images, and the poet or artist should not attempt to bypass or pre-empt them. A degree of unawareness is hence preferable to Dalí's ultra-lucidity."[119]



47: Salvador Dalí, *Dialogue at the Beach* (*Ungratified Desires*), 1928. Oil, seashells and sand on cardboard. 76 × 62 cm. Private collection

So already while at the Residencia, Dalí showed signs of the provocation he later posed to Bretonian Surrealism that intrigued Georges Bataille.[120] Bataille famously used Dalí's 1929 entrance work into Surrealism, *The Lugubrious Game*, with its scandalously explicit depiction of castration fear, to criticize orthodox Surrealism's preference for dream symbolism over direct confrontation with psychic desire (fig. 49). "The elements of a dream or a hallucination," he wrote, "are transpositions; the poetic utilization of the dream comes down to a consecration of the unconscious censorship, that is to say to a secret shame and cowardice."[121] Dalí's blatant evocation of sexual complexes, claimed Bataille, challenged Surrealism's reliance on substitution and metaphor –

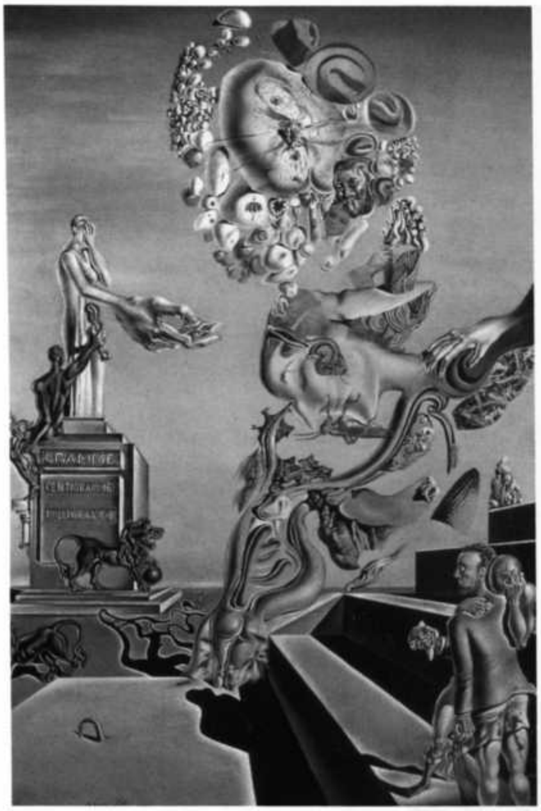


48: Salvador Dalí, *Bird…Fish*, 1927–8. Oil on panel. 61 × 49.5 cm.
St. Petersburg, Florida, The Salvador Dalí Museum

those effects that merely replicated the very prohibitions Bretonian Surrealism wished to undo. In 1927–8, however, Dalí's engagement with perversion was still primarily descriptive. Not until he developed his paranoiac-critic method in Paris did Dalí theorize an active production of perversion as a critique of bourgeois normality.

Reading Freud also prompted Dalí to begin a highly sophisticated inquiry into the contours of human subjectivity. The writings to which he had access at the Residencia emphasize the fragility of identity construction, especially as Freud delineates it through concepts such as the ego and its self-preservational bent, narcissism, the pleasure principle, and the death instinct. Dalí's work of 1927–8 shows him experimenting with a wide range of attacks against the Cartesian concept of a unified human subject, to explore the tension between the unified and the fragmentary, the human and non-human, the self and the other.

Both *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* and *Apparatus and Hand* are key to these explorations (see figs. 37 and 38). Sexuality turns not around the human figure but around the anthropomorphized apparatus that forms the crux of each picture – a machine rather than a person is what Dalí describes as most erotically charged. In *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, it is the forest of gadgets and pins, rather than human bodies, that seems able to convert the auto-eroticism of

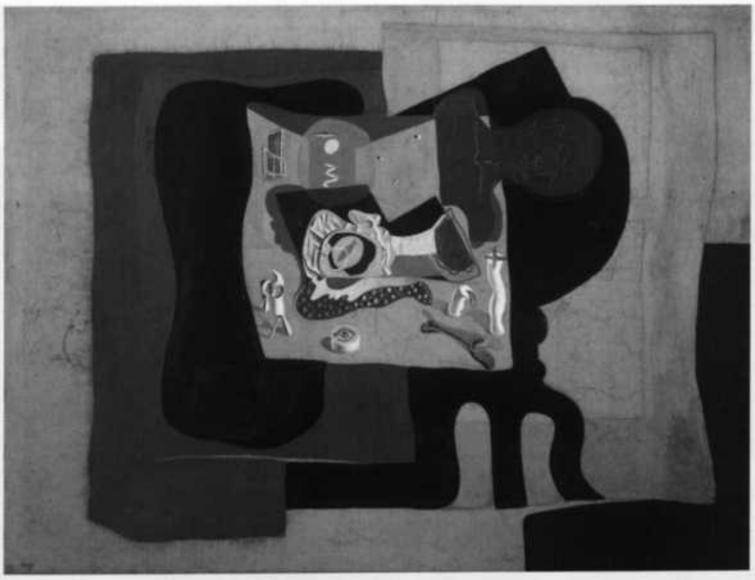


49: Salvador Dalí, *The Lugubrious Game*, 1929. Oil and collage on canvas. 31 × 41 cm. Private collection. Photo: Descharnes and Descharnes Sarl

the central apparatus's hands into a lively, erect energy; all human and animal figures lie dead and rotting at the bottom of the painting. The sensuality of the apparatic forest reminds one of Lautréamont's eroticized umbrella-sewing machine contraption, beloved by the Surrealists, which attributes eroticism to gadgets as a metaphor for forbidden human sexuality.[122] Once having separated human from machine, Dalí reimplicates human subjectivity with the machine: the apparatus's shadow geometrically replicates the profile next to it of Dalí's self-portrait with exaggerated eye and sharply pointed nose.

Dalí repeats this ambiguity of sexually defined identities by dislodging his own shadow from his head onto the head of Lorca below. The personalities of the two friends thus become meshed in such a way as to blur the conventional bodily and spiritual distinction between individuals. Again and again in the paintings of this period one finds the disembodied heads of Lorca and the artist himself, often fused together such that the silhouette of one becomes the shadow of the other (fig. 50 and see fig. 38). Writers have frequently taken these as signs of Dalí's conflicted feelings about his own repressed attraction to Lorca; yet the paintings suggest a much more systematic and deeper investigation into the nature of subject formation that goes far beyond the merely biographical.[123] *Honey is Sweeter than Blood*, for example, blurs gender boundaries by placing Lorca's head directly below the decapitated female figure, as though it has just fallen off her neck. This brutal equation between an individualized portrait and an anonymous but gendered body has the effect of lifting the visual metaphor from the realm of the personal (Lorca's homosexuality and his relationship with Dalí) to the level of an interrogation of the concept of identity *per se*.

These paintings, like all of Dalí's work of this period, are filled with a mesmerizing but treacherous eroticism produced from a nexus of modern machines, deliberately disordered identities, and violent death. In them, the erotic is tied to the collapse of the subject, which in turn portends extinction. Dalí's work of this period explores the unbearable tension in this dichotomy of threat and attraction; already at issue are Eros and Thanatos, which Dalí took up in later explorations of narcissism, paranoia, and fascism.[124] This suggests that Dalí, reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, was affected by Freud's astounding claim that libidinal pleasure and the death drive were related.[125] Moreover, there are points where Freud's text takes on decidedly homoerotic and narcissistic implications. It is tempting to think, for instance, that Dalí read Freud's recapitulation of a myth recounted by Plato in which Zeus decides to cut the human being in two parts. "After the division had been made," writes Freud, "the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and threw their arms about one another eager to grow into one." "Shall we follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher," he continues, "and venture upon the hypothesis that living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavored to reunite through the sexual instincts?"[126] This passage is highly suggestive of the way in which both Freud and Dalí, especially in his 1927–8 imagery, articulate intimate but fraught connections among death, love of self, and love of other. Both painter and psychoanalyst foreground the precariousness of iden-

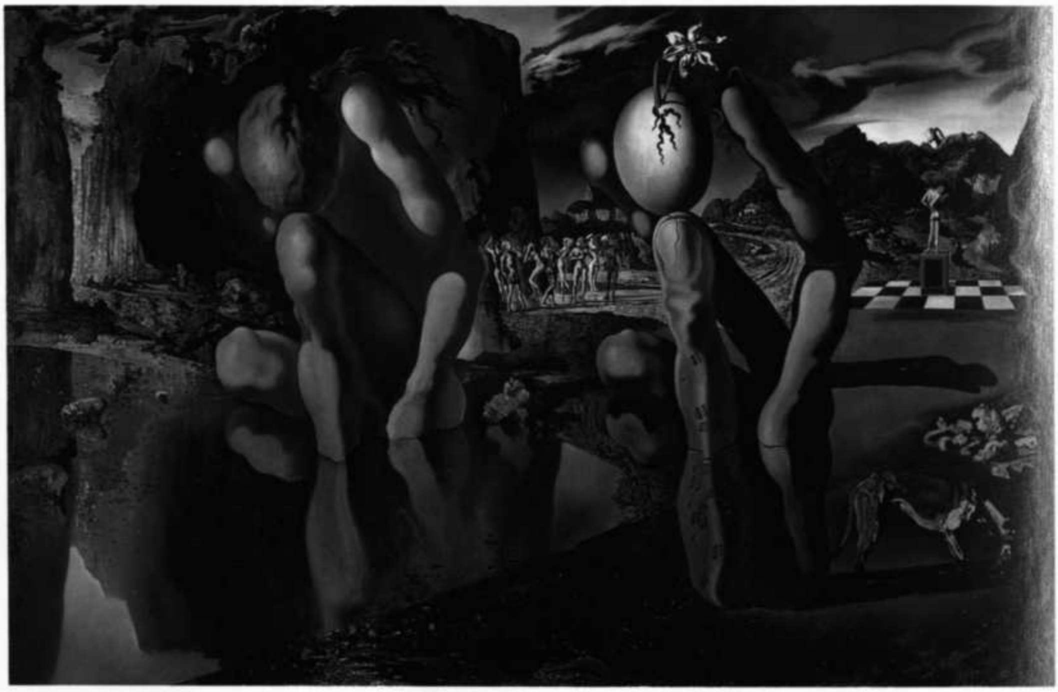


50: Salvador Dalí, *Still Life by Mauve Moonlight*, 1926. Oil on canvas. 140 × 199 cm. Figueres, Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí

tity formation – a formation which even as it seeks to cohere constantly threatens to disintegrate into a morass of incoherent fragments.

It was, in fact, Freud's study of narcissism – the state in which the sexual libido is withdrawn from external objects and redirected inward toward the subject's ego – that helped him formulate his theory of the death instinct. Dalí addressed the theme of narcissism most prominently in his 1937 painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, which he took with him to meet Freud in 1938 (fig. 51). The painting, a meditation on alienation and homoeroticism among other things, shows Narcissus turned to stone through the treachery of his own misguided passion. I shall come back to this image and its ties to Lacan's theories of the imaginary and split subjectivity but in 1927 Dalí seems to have conceptualized alienation in Freudian rather than Lacanian terms as being separated from a whole sense of self, or the conscious being separated from the unconscious.[127] Freud and Dalí both posited the subject as made up of two aspects that never fully join, and is therefore condemned to live forever alienated from its complete self. This, of course, has ramifications for understanding identity itself as a contested terrain, and thus as having political implications; and it lays the groundwork for Dalí's consideration of narcissism and paranoia, Hitler, fascism, and the Spanish Civil War.[128] Against conventional post-First World War theories of identity construction, which viewed deviance as a threat to the self, Surrealism attempted to integrate deviance into a notion of radical politics. With the paranoiac-critic method, Dalí pushed this further, by advocating an active production of deviance (in the form of controlled paranoia) as a political maneuver. The most formidable test case for this theory came in 1933 with Hitler's rise to power.

* * *



51: Salvador Dalí, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937. Oil on canvas. 51.1 × 78.1 cm. London, Tate Modern Gallery

DALÍ, LACAN, AND THE "HITLERIAN PHENOMENON"

In July 1933, six months after Hitler came to power in Germany, Dalí wrote a long letter to Breton:

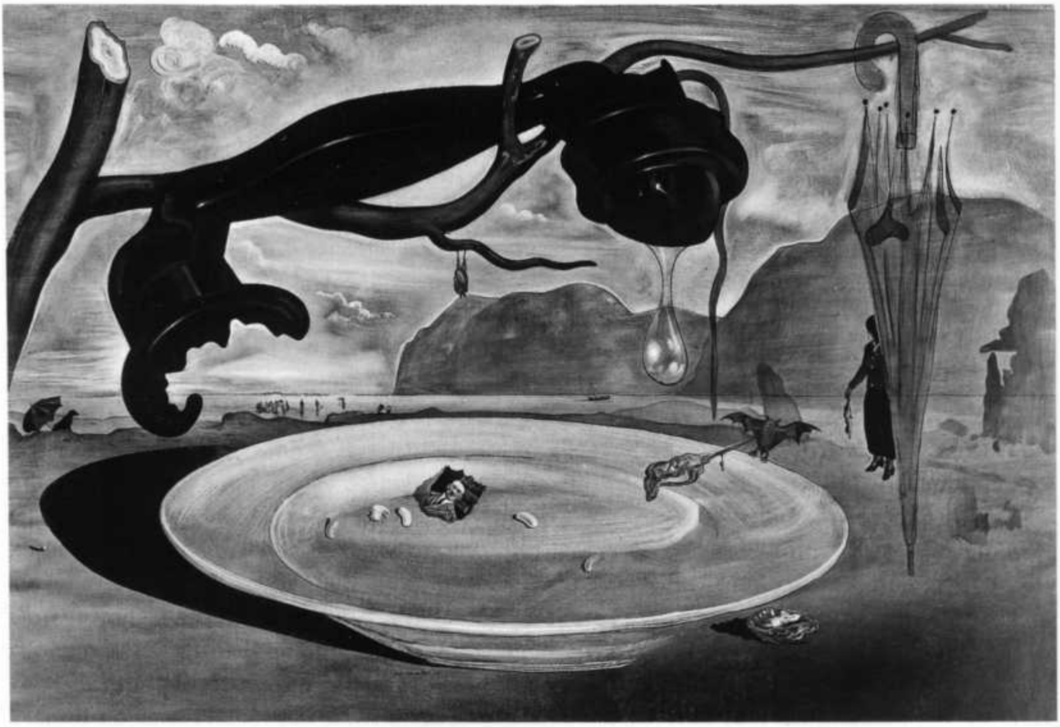
> Politics, there's something that *might*... become a "*surrealist specialty*" of the finest sort, substantial and really phenomenal. In my opinion, we must pay lots of attention to the hitlerian phenomenon. I know officially that Georges Bataille is preparing a great panegyric to Hitler in Souveraine's *La Critique sociale*,[129] and once again things are passing right under our noses [*naz*] (sic).[130] That will always be a very bad antecedent which renders the task of situating Hitler from the Surrealist point of view much harder for us, even though I am persuaded that we are the only ones who can say pretty things on the subject. The communists, who by their philosophical situation should be the best situated for understanding all this, are paradoxically the furthest from even the most *humble* clairvoyance. It is colossal to hear how the materialists tell us all the time that the hitlerian revolution *means nothing*, that it *signifies nothing*, and that it will pass *quickly*(!).[131]

The letter is written with the Spaniard's typical quirkiness that often irritated Breton but here Dalí writes in earnest, urging an analysis of Nazism that he insists leftist intellectuals had not yet produced. Hitler, he insists, must be viewed from within Surrealism's political critique of capitalism. As such, the dictator is as vulnerable to Surrealist efforts at moral destruction as any other social phenomenon, and indeed is ripe for them. Dalí evidently feels that while ideologically the communists should be able to offer such a critique, politically they are too deeply implicated in many of the same bourgeois and nationalist alliances as their proclaimed enemies to be capable of anything substantial or viable. Surrealism, therefore, is ideally situated to criticize Hitler's rise to power through an investigation of the dictator's manipulations of bourgeois morality.

Breton, however, remained unconvinced, and brought Dalí under fire six months later for his "*supposé hitlérisme*." In a letter dated January 23, 1934 Breton accused Dalí of (among other things) "*antihumanitarisme*," of defending the "new" and the "irrational" in the "Hitler phenomenon," of favoring academic painting, and of defending family values and paternal authority.[132] Two days later, the painter countered these accusations in a long letter in which he adroitly turned the tables on Breton by evoking at several points the leader's own words.[133] Asserting that "I am Hitlerian neither in fact nor in intention," Dalí then countered Breton's charges with several closely argued propositions for subverting fascism and furthering Surrealism's political program.[134] "No dialectical progress will be possible," Dalí argued, "if one takes the guilty attitude of denying and combating hitlerism without trying to understand it as fully as possible."[135] The subtext of such a statement was, of course, the veiled imputation that both the Communist Party and the Surrealists were refusing to follow their own ideological principles of dialectic engagement and historical materialism. Their knee-jerk response to Hitler's rise to power was, in Dalí's opinion, downright reactionary. It led to such unsurrealist statements as that with which Breton ended his accusatory letter: he claimed that he valued moral rigor and integrity above all else.[136]

The painter continued, arguing for a comprehension of the novelty of Nazism by noting how it had neatly escaped any satisfactory leftist analysis thus far. Anything that upset the obvious stagnation of (leftist) intellectual theorizing was therefore useful for concrete political strategizing: "All phenomena that unsettle our intellectual certainties would have a revolutionary character. And hitlerism, rightly, would destroy intellectual certainties in the political domain."[137] This statement, despite the dubious claim that "hitlerism" could be "revolutionary," should nonetheless be read in the context of a growing recognition of the left's political impotency in combating totalitarianism: the utter collapse of German Socialism in the face of the Nazi challenge, the repeated flounderings of the Spanish Republican government, the growing rigidity of Stalin's USSR, and the rise of the fascist right in France, which resulted in the February 6–7 riots just two weeks after Dalí put pen to paper. The November 1933 Spanish elections, in which the authoritarian CEDA had managed a decisive victory, had already demonstrated the dangerous weakness of Spain's Republican left. If Dalí's insistence that "all phenomena" that upset "intellectual certainties" were revolutionary seems absurd, he was nevertheless correct in arguing that the left seemed stuck in a political quagmire. The following year, Dalí codified this attitude in his pamphlet *La Conquète de l'irrationnel.* In this text, he suggested that intellectuals were "systematically cretinized" by (among other things) "ideological disorder" and by "affective paternal famines," leading them to seek in vain "spiritual and symbolic nourishment" in the body of the Hitlerian wetnurse as a bulwark against "the cannibal frenzy and moral and irrational famines." In place of a futile search for nourishment in the hollow body of a Nazi wetnurse, Dalí offered them Surrealism's interpretation – through paranoiac-critic activity – of "the congested cutlet, bloody and biological *par excellence,* which is that of politics."[138] This analogy suggested that fascism offered only an illusion of meaty sustenance while Surrealism offered the real thing, and Dalí used it to pit Surrealism against fascism precisely in that treacherous field called political morality.

Concerning Breton's charge that Dalí advocated family values and patriarchal authority similar to the Nazis, the painter insisted that the issue was not the use or absence of reactionary patriotic or familial values, which were manipulated oppressively by capitalist, fascist, and communist régimes alike, a fact Dalí had already grasped in 1933.[139] To focus on these values *per se* (as he insinuated Breton had done) was both to miss the point of Hitler's power and to rule



52: Salvador Dalí, *The Enigma of Hitler*, 1939. Oil on canvas. 51.2 × 79.3 cm. Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

out the necessary autocritique of leftist political solutions that was desperately needed. The question was, rather, one of recognizing issues such as patriotism and patriarchy as being social myths, and of comprehending precisely how they might be effectively recontextualized: "All the novelty resides in the truculent unseating [*dépaysement*] of these myths, given the concrete circumstances of the times, of the intellectual situations, etc., which constitute all the phenomenological sense of the problem."[140]

Thus, Dalí's interest in interpreting the "hitlerian phenomenon" from a paranoiac-critic point of view marks an attempt to comprehend the fascist use of capitalist social values such as patriotism and patriarchy specifically in terms of desire. At various points in his letter, Dalí proposes exploiting perversion for Surrealism's political goals. He cites in particular the perversions of the "new deliriant world to which we have just gained access [through the paranoiac-critic method]" and the Sadean pleasure one might experience over the misfortune of others, especially the innocent and the pure, since delight in the misfortune of one's enemies was not perverse.[141] Although Dalí does not explicitly spell out in his letter to Breton the connections among the fetishistic aspects of paranoiac-critic imagery, Sadean pleasure in the misfortunes of innocent victims, and the "hitlerian phenomenon," I shall argue that he attempted to recontextualize the most horrific element of fascism – its mass persecution of innocent people – within the specifically Surrealist aesthetic of his own paranoiac-critic method in order to lay bare its perverse sexual nature. My claim is that Dalí – not unlike Lacan with paranoid criminals – sought less to defeat fascism outright than to comprehend it as a sexual perversion whose bases were also those of so-called normal human behavior.[142]

There are two ways a trajectory such as Dalí's can be taken. First, that understanding fascist perversion (particularly its sadomasochistic, narcissistic, and Oedipal aspects) held distinct advantages for a Surrealist politics in opposing fascism. Investigating fascism as a particular twist on "normal" human behavior would be a necessary step toward explaining both the rise of Nazism or Franco's regime and the left's seeming inability to eradicate them. And if one viewed fascist motivations as not far different from anybody else's, one could begin to account for the otherwise inexplicable tendency of contemporary societies to develop fascist characteristics. It was at this point, with this kind of knowledge, that one might really begin to combat fascism effectively. The second way in which Dalí's trajectory can be taken, however, is that engaging in this kind of neurosis merely meant becoming fascist. This is evidently what Breton thought Dalí was doing and what the Surrealist leader felt should be avoided at all costs, even if it meant retracting certain beliefs fundamental to Surrealism.[143] I tease out the implications of these opposing views because this conflict is a fraught example of Surrealism's eternal inability to resolve the discrepancy between its political philosophy, based on releasing repressed desires into the social realm, and concrete political action. Perversion might be a useful theoretical tool but when it was time for practical application in mid-1930s Europe, other means needed to be found.

Over the next decade Dalí himself took on his self-appointed task of saying "pretty things" about the "hitlerian phenomenon." The December 1934 issue of the avant-garde Catalan magazine *D'aci i d'alla* carried a reproduction of *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, illustrating a review by the leftist critic Magí Cassanyes of Dalí's most recent work. In 1939 Dalí painted another paranoiac-critic assessment of Hitler, this time picturing the dictator outright. The canvas, recalling the English Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's 1938 meeting with the Nazi Führer, was titled *The Enigma of Hitler* (fig. 52). Chamberlain's characteristic umbrella hangs ghost-like off a dead tree branch, while the historic use of the telephone to set up the meeting was commemorated in an enormous, dripping telephone that menaces the tiny portrait of Hitler on a dinner plate below. Dalí included a self-portrait being dragged off the plate by a hungry bat, and placed the whole scenario once again in his native Catalan landscape. Here the radical jump in size between the postage-stamp Hitler and the enormous telephone has nothing to do with spatial perspective and everything to do with an anguished visual pinpointing of a fetishized object. By fixing Hitler's picture, fetishistically small, on a near-empty plate, Dalí transformed him from a stern, all-powerful dictator into a helpless, savory delight. There remains, however, an ominous, plaguing sense that the power relationship between the gigantic viewer and a minute Hitler could be reversed at any moment.

Dalí was right to argue with Breton that his works would certainly be burned by the Nazis. The kind of body that Dalí attributes to the "hitlerian phenomenon" is decidedly not one that would have pleased Berlin; the faceless wetnurse of *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, whose lumpish body is propped up as though its internal muscle structure had atrophied to the point of uselessness (indeed with a large hole in it), is not the sort of figure with which the Third Reich wanted to be associated (see fig. 31).[144] Neither does the tiny portrait of the dictator in *The Enigma of Hitler*, threatened with annihilation by an oozing telephone, seem to coincide with the Nazi ideal of masculine Aryan leadership. Dalí's version of the fascist body contrasts distinctly with what Hal Foster describes as the "mechanical-commodified body," or the type of male soldier-worker body militarized into a flawless weapon obsessively lauded by Nazis and Francoists alike (fig. 53).[145] Furthermore, it clearly deviates from fascist constructions of paternal authority as wholesome and positive.

Thus for Dalí the fascist body was a key site for analyzing the political implications of surrealist practise because it marked a high point of political tension. Many writers have exam-

he Guard, 1937.
Kunst im Dritten

ined the fascist persona in relation to theories of flawed identity construction.[146] But what I am concerned with here is Dalí's comprehension of the fascist body in terms of narcissism, sadomasochism and the Oedipus complex. In exploring these concepts in relation to the fascist body, Dalí attempted to desublimate the procedures of fascist ego construction, so as to reveal the intricacies of its fabrication and therefore learn something essential about it. This has implications not only for Dalí's view of Hitler but also for the two key images of the Spanish Civil War with which I began: *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War* and *Autumn Cannibalism* (see figs. 28 and 29). For it is these two paintings that envision the civil war through the "delirium of auto-strangulation" and self-annihilating narcissism that Dalí explored in relation to fascism.[147]

In order to unravel the tangles of the sadomasochist impulses in Nazism, Dalí underwent a multi-level process: first, he effected a positive identification with Hitler, in which he deliberately switched the libidinal object of his own narcissism from himself to Hitler, mimicking the process that Freud claimed inherent in the selection of group leaders.[148] Yet, instead of merely replicating the behavior of the German masses (as Breton thought), in each case Dalí linked this positive identification with a highly ironic description of Hitler that openly contradicted the Nazi ideal of the warrior hero or patriarchal authority figure. Again, the painter's ideas resonate closely with Lacan's theories of self-punishment and paranoia, set out in his doctoral thesis. Lacan later clarified what he saw as a fundamental aspect of fascism – its imaginary identification with the father – in his 1938 *Les Complexes familiaux.*[149] Stemming from arguments begun in Lacan's doctoral thesis, this essay offers a position from which to evaluate Dalí's visual investigation of Hitler as a paternal authority figure.

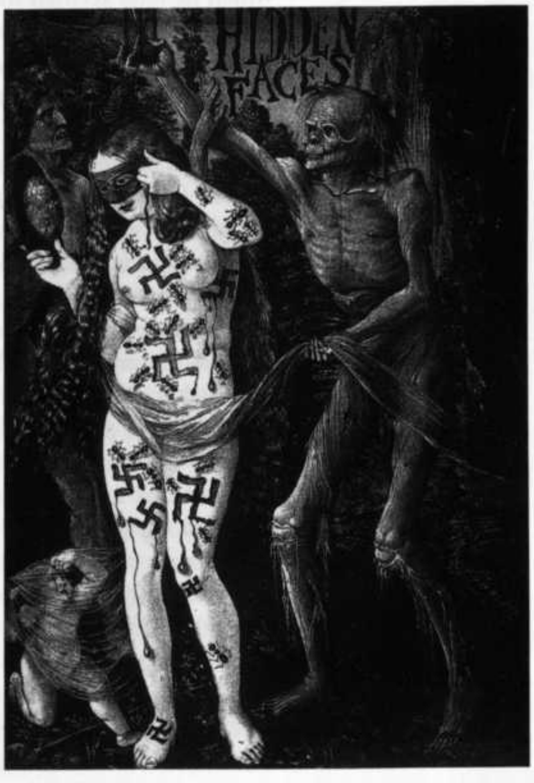
By 1934, in *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, Dalí had painted a fascist body that appears to be arbitrarily coming apart before our very eyes, and the hitlerian wetnurse hints at Dalinian descriptions of fascism to come. By 1944, in his novel *Hidden Faces* Dalí was specifically describing Hitler as a quintessentially Germanic masochist: "Hitler wants war, not in order to win, as most people think, but to lose. He is a romantic and an integral masochist, and exactly as in Wagner's operas it has to end for him, the hero, as tragically as possible. In the depth of his subconscious, the end to which Hitler at heart aspires is to feel his enemy's boot crushing his face."[150] In the epilogue Dalí describes Hitler isolated in a bombed-out tower listening to Wagnerian opera while ranting about the blood of the German people: "like a cancer I am in the blood of the German people . . . and like a cancer I shall . . . end by reproducing myself again inexorably in the soul of the entire German people!"[151] In 1973, the artist reiterated both this idea and his mental image of Hitler as an object of libidinal desire:

> [Hitler's] fat back, especially when I saw him appear in the uniform with Sam Browne belt and shoulder straps that tightly held in his flesh, aroused in me a delicious gustatory thrill originating in the mouth and affording me a Wagnerian ecstasy. I often dreamed of Hitler as a woman. His flesh, which I imagined whiter than white, ravished me. I painted a Hitlerian wet nurse sitting knitting in a puddle of water. . . . There was no reason for me to stop telling one and all that to me Hitler embodied the perfect image of the great masochist who would unleash a world war solely for the pleasure of losing and burying himself beneath the rubble of an empire.[152]

By fantasizing about Hitler, Dalí substituted the Nazi leader for himself as the libidinal object of his own narcissism. In so doing, he deliberately replicated the process of "narcissistic, sadomasochistic, imaginary identification with the father" that Lacan considered a defining trait of fascism.[153] In a moment, I shall turn to Lacan's belief that this imaginary identification with the father demonstrated a blockage in the process of Oedipal identification – a blockage that Dalí deliberately turned to his advantage. Now I note that Dalí not only produced this fascist and Oedipal identification with Hitler knowingly (rather than unconsciously) but also immediately undermined its fascist characteristics by representing the dictator as anything but the heroic Nazi ideal. He ironically imagined Hitler as a masochistic female, noting the fleshiness, the plumpness of the Fürher's body, encased by the tight, corset-like, feminine fit of the uniform. His imagining of the dictator's flesh as the purest of whites hints both at the most sexually coveted object – the virgin female – and at Nazi Aryan racial policies. His evocation of Hitler as a feminized libidinal object overtly embodies everything the fascists found threatening or terrifying in a leader.[154]

Masochism and femininity also came together elsewhere in Dalí's thinking about the fascist theme of *Hidden Faces*. A proposed frontispiece drawing modifies a German Renaissance *vanitas* image of a woman admiring herself in a mirror while a Death figure holds an hourglass over her head (fig. 54).[155] The painter "carved" swastikas directly into the woman's body (also covered with the ubiquitous Dalinian ants), which she seems to treat like beautiful, decorative jewels. Bearing the bloody marks of the swastika, she not only represents German fascism but seems delighted to do so despite the threat of Death behind her. Dalí thus manages to imply that Nazism is at once narcissistic, feminized, and (sado)masochistic. The illustration goes further, however, to suggest that fascism's narcissistic *vanitas* is not historically unique to the twentieth century but is in fact embedded in the social history of Germanic culture, a theme that repeats the story's linking of Hitler with the apocalyptic excesses of Wagner. The swastika becomes the sign of sexual perversions embedded in German society; masochism and narcissism are represented here as the norm, not the aberration, of that society. What fascinated Dalí, however, was not simply the fact of narcissistic masochism but the monumentally public and spectacular scale on which Hitler played out his personal psychic traumas. Dalí was attracted both to the enormity of Hitler's project – his lifting personal perversion to world scale – and to the visual impact of it.

In terming Hitler a masochist, Dalí proposed an intriguing argument for why Hitler would have started a world war that dragged not only himself but also an entire nation to self-destruction.[156] Concurrently Dalí addressed the problem of why the German people would follow the Führer into self-annihilation. This brings one back to Lacan. Through imaging Hitler and the fascist persona as bent on self-destruction (as much or more than on destruction of others), Dalí defined certain connections between masochistic tendencies and the narcissistic phase of ego development, between self-hate and self-love, close to those proposed by Lacan in his 1932 doctoral thesis. Dalí opened the possibility of viewing Hitler as a case study of a problem Lacan addressed generally: that of crimes of aggression against other people committed without any obvious motive and which always resulted in the criminal being punished. In his thesis Lacan



54: Salvador Dalí, frontispiece drawing for *Hidden Faces*, 1944. Cadaquès, Museu/ Centre d'Art Perrot-Moore described his case study of "Aimée," an unknown female admirer who attacked an actress at the exit of a theater. The admirer, when questioned by the police, justified her attack by claiming (falsely) that the actress was persecuting her. Aimée's identification with the actress through jealousy and admiration became the means of visualizing the actress as her persecutor. The admirer's attack was directed against what Lacan called "the unique object of her hate and her love," that is to say, against herself as represented by the other woman.[157] The actress, rather than being the true object of Aimée's aggression, was the means by which Aimée directed her aggression masochistically against herself, both symbolically and concretely; she suffered internment. Lacan thus developed a theory of paranoid aggressivity as a form of self-punishment (*autopunition*). He argued that, in the case of the paranoiac, hostility is turned both outward (in Aimée's case, toward a complete stranger) and inward against the paranoiac her/himself. That is, paranoid aggressivity is at once narcissistic, masochistic, and sadistic. It is keyed to a (mis)interpretation of reality, in which the paranoiac interprets her/himself narcissistically to be the center of events having in actuality no relation to her/him.

Far from analyzing Aimée's paranoid sadomasochism as an aberration, Lacan astounded the medical world by suggesting that the same mechanisms were present in "normal" ego development.[158] Four years later, in his essay "The Mirror Stage," Lacan theorized that in normative ego development, as in paranoia, the self is constructed through a misrecognition of reality in which the identification of the self with an "other" is key.[159] Aimée's reflexive paranoid aggression, in fact, gave Lacan the means to structure his innovative concept of ego development, which he later termed the "imaginary" structure of the self. In 1936, with the first presentation of his theory of the mirror stage, Lacan broadened this notion of love–hate, displayed through the reflexive aggression of paranoia, to address the development of an individual's sense of self. The individual, constituted within society as alienated from him/herself, therefore identifies with the self in terms of masochistic auto-aggression, as his/her own rival. Lacan argued that the infant identifies narcissistically with its own image idealized in a mirror; but this self-recognition is a mis-recognition in which a coherent identity is constructed precisely as imaginary (never real). With the child's sense of self organized around an external image, its subjecthood is necessarily defined through self-alienation. This results in a deeply ambivalent relationship to that image, which oscillates between love of its unified status and hatred of it because it remains external. This aggression toward one's image can be turned inward, becoming self-hatred or masochism.

Once again, Dalí's imagery provides striking parallels to Lacan's theories. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, the painting that impressed Freud, engages Ovid's myth of Narcissus (see fig. 51).[160] Instead of witnessing the moment when the young man is charmed by his own reflection, he is encountered at the moment when that self-absorption has already proven fatal. Narcissus, kneeling at the edge of the mirror-smooth water, has already turned to stone. His predicament is repeated physically and symbolically next to him, in the stone hand that holds the egg sprouting a narcissus flower, while the desire-induced violence implied in this scene is shifted from the inert figure of Narcissus onto the landscape and figures behind him. An emaciated dog tears ravenously at a chunk of rotting meat; mountains and lake-bed excrete glutinous decay. A "heterosexual group" frolics wildly in the middleground ignoring Narcissus's plight, while in the distance a "god of snow . . . annihilat[es] himself noisily among the excremental cries of minerals."[161] Dalí takes to an extreme the idea that a narcissistic misrecognition produces a necessarily alienated subjectivity, in which alienation results in death. Narcissus's death can be understood as a self-annihilation, a masochistic love–hate of his own reflection culminating in self-extinction.[162] This misrecognition, according to Lacan, is not merely intrinsic to paranoia; it is inherent in normative concepts of self as well.

As such, Lacan understood the problem of paranoia, and the concurrent sadomasochistic aggressivity often resulting in apparently motiveless crimes, as an issue affecting not merely individuals but whole societies, particularly post-Great War Europe and the United States. He saw it, in fact, as intimately linked to what he called "the great contemporary neurosis," or that of the "social decline of the paternal imago."[163] This decline, according to Lacan, was the result of a gradual disintegration of traditional patriarchal authority, due to historical changes in social and family patterns, but without a concurrent development of a healthy alternative.[164] In *Les Complexes familiaux* Lacan described this decline as a particular blocking of Oedipal identification that arrests this identification at the imaginary stage (at the level of primary identification, when the son strives to be – and is – the rival of the father). This blockage – which Lacan considered a defining trait of contemporary society – ruptures the "dialectical condition" of the Oedipus complex, before it reaches the second stage that ensures the full sublimation of that murderous identification and the ability to live peacefully with others.[165] He warned of the dangers of this, noting that the most common consequence of the decline of the paternal imago is the psychic disturbance "we call *autopunition*."[166]

Warning of a dangerous "decline of paternal imago," however, was not an argument on Lacan's part for the reinstitution of strong patriarchal values. Rather, it was an argument against those who advocated increased paternal authority as a solution to the ills of modern society.[167] This, Lacan cautioned, could lead to fascism.[168] In fact, far from advocating a return to patriarchal authority, he saw the problem of an arrested Oedipal development as characteristic of all modern cultures that support precisely such a return. This return, or "excess of paternal domination," was for Lacan especially typical of the modern nuclear family and particularly of fascism.[169] In his view, it was the "narcissistic, sadomasochistic, imaginary identification with the father," that is, an Oedipal identification blocked at the primary level, that characterized fascism.[170]

Dalí not only discussed his own theories of paranoia with the young Lacan in 1930 but also read his thesis once it was published.[171] Although there is no further concrete evidence that he kept up with Lacan's prewar scholarship, what I have discussed suggests that Dalí continued to view the nexus laid out by Lacan of paranoia, a blocked Oedipal identification, and criminal aggressivity as crucial to an understanding of the fascist persona.[172] The painter's "hitlerian" production from 1933 through 1944, culminating in the novel *Hidden Faces*, attests to his continual efforts to engage in an imaginary identification with Hitler as a deliberate form of critique. Dalí's description of Hitler as a Wagnerian masochist becomes more comprehensible in the light of Lacan's theories; the dictator can be seen not only as an instance of paranoid self-aggression on the personal level but also as the culmination of an entire society's ruptured and masochistic attempts to construct a self-identity.[173] In fact, the *hitlerisme* Breton accused Dalí of is precisely where one can locate the Spaniard's criticism of fascism. By evoking the actual process of imaginary identification with the father that Lacan equated with fascism, but at the same time continually portraying that "father" to be imperfect, bulbous, soft, sexually available, and so on, Dalí deliberately opened up for inspection the terms of this particular, stunted process of Oedipal identification. He did so through the quintessential surrealist tactic of making the familiar strange, of recontextualizing the myth of patriarchal authority. Dalí used identification, therefore, not to argue for the increased paternal authority typical of fascist ideologies but to reveal that stunted Oedipal construction as deeply perverse on both the sexual and the visual level. The difficulty, however, comes in determining how far the painter meant this to be an effective political tactic against fascism.

* * *

THE CRISIS OF THE PARANOIAC-CRITIC METHOD'S *CRISE MENTALE*

In January 1934 Dalí wrote a letter to Foix in which he hinted strongly at yet another Surrealist reassessment of its political position: "Soon you will receive a surrealist manifesto, in which we break violently with our political past, and, directly following, a new review in which we *situate ourselves in a new political position* and begin from a *specifically surrealist* platform."[174] Dalí's excitement over the political possibilities of Surrealism remained, at least through early 1934, unquenched. Yet only a few months later he wrote Foix in a far different tone: "I found the defense of poetry you made in your *Notes i simulacres* really 'brilliant.' Nothing more abject than poetry 'applied' to propaganda [labeled] patriotic, Marxist, hitlerist, etc."[175] These two letters suggest that Dalí's run-in with Breton on February 5th that year had momentarily scared the painter off politics. Dalí's temporary retreat from any consistent, leftist politics was not only bound up with the Surrealists' sharp criticism of his attitudes, but also with the movement's own difficulties in charting a viable political path.[176] Surrealism could never quite decide how to maneuver between its investment in loosing repressed desires into the social realm and the exigencies of concrete political action. Dalí was caught up in the dilemma, as his two Spanish Civil War paintings demonstrate.

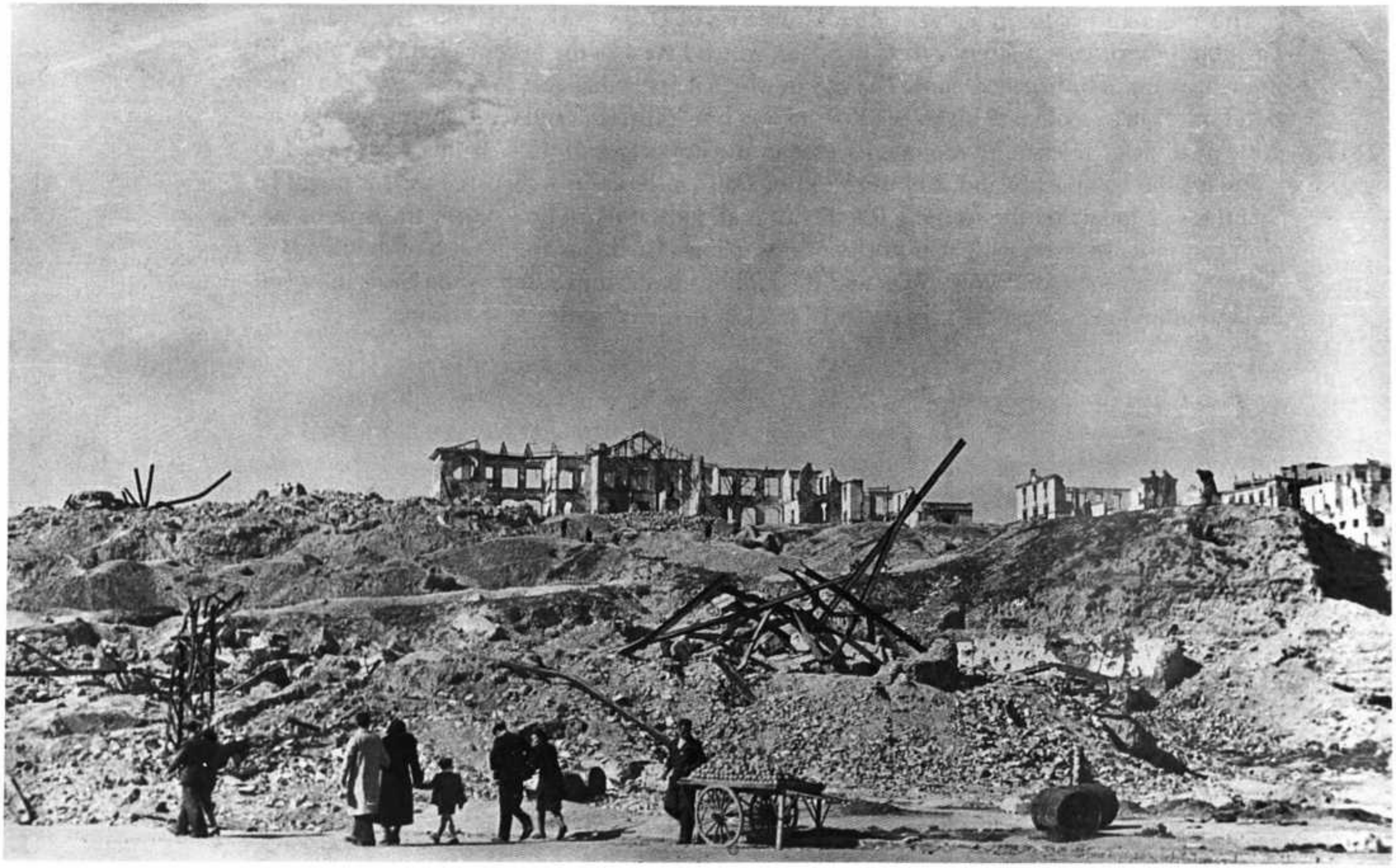
In both *Autumn Cannibalism* and *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War*, history is largely absent (see figs. 28 and 29). Dalí renders the conflict not as two opposed political views but as a body that wars with itself (*Soft Construction*) or as two bodies to whom no particular political affiliation is attached (*Autumn Cannibalism*). The Spanish Civil War is registered purely as a product of internal psychic violence, not as the result of historical and political conflicts between the legitimate Republican government and the fascist incursion. History is only revealed obliquely through the titles and dates of the paintings, while the sole suggestion of anti-Franco judgment on the artist's part comes in the fact that these images were painted in response to war rather than peace. Both pictures attribute the apocalyptic self-destruction of Dalí's homeland not to historical or political factors but to psychic deformations. Spain, in Dalí's rendering, has called its own destruction down upon itself, exhibiting all the sadomasochistic characteristics of extreme paranoia.

Where does such a claim lead? If the purpose of *Autumn Cannibalism* and *Soft Construction* is to evoke the horror of Spain's war, they do so shockingly well but they are less successful at eliciting its causes or how it might be avoided; the paintings leave the viewer feeling sickened but helpless. Unlike in his studies of Hitler, Dalí offers no narcissistic identification with a father figure that might function as a critique of fascism. One does not identify, but, rather, feels repulsed in a conventional (for Dalí), non-Sadean way.[177] If there is a suggestion that the eruption of self-reflexive aggressivity seen on the canvas is the result of a latent fascist tendency in Spain's temperament, it is an obscure and oblique suggestion at best, to which it is difficult to attach the same kind of analysis as to the Hitlerian images.

In these images one finds Dalí caught between the concept of desire expressed by the Surrealists and that which Lacan developed throughout the 1930s. Lacan, like the Surrealists, defined the human self through desire rather than through reason or morality. Unlike the Surrealists, however, he viewed desire not as liberating but as produced through repression and punishment. That is, he argued that the desiring self was produced through the very mechanisms that the individual as a desirous being sought to escape.[178] His definition of the desiring self as a political being therefore can be seen as a harsh critique of Surrealist notions of desire as a political tool for radical social change. But Dalí, despite his closeness to Lacanian theory of this period, never managed to break free enough of his investment in membership of the Surrealist movement to elaborate fully the challenge to Surrealism's theory of the role of desire in human liberation that remained implicit in his paranoiac-critic method.

Like Lacan, Dalí had explored the erasure of the boundary between pathology and so-called normal human development, particularly the destructive, imaginary identification with a (paternal) ideal that at once represses and is produced out of a fundamentally fragmented sense of self. But the thorny issue of whether Dalí's paranoiac-critic focus on Hitler was an effective political critique of fascism remains. How much one can engage in the processes proposed by Dalí, while at the same time remain critically distant, is open to serious question. Despite Dalí's efforts to maintain the distinction between an analysis of Hitler as a paranoid masochist and a fascist identification with the dictator, there is one significant moment in which these two issues are conflated, not by Dalí himself but by an artist working under his influence. The consequences of such a conflation point up Breton's worst fears.

This moment has to do with the direct influence of Dalí's work, especially *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, on fascist artists in Spain, which I treat in the next chapter. This pictorial influence cannot be brushed aside. The way in which it easily manages to throw into deep question both Dalí's passionate insistence that he was not "hitlerian" and the elaborate paranoiac-critic analysis of fascism he mounted seems to me important. In this chapter I have tried to argue for the complexity and sophistication of Dalí's analysis, as well as the ways it might be useful for us today. Yet the seeming fragility of it all indicates just how deeply the issue of fascism continues to affect us. The histories of the Spanish Civil War and its tens of thousands of deaths and of the Second World War and the millions of deaths caused by the Nazis must still be accounted for, as must the persistence of fascism in today's political landscape.

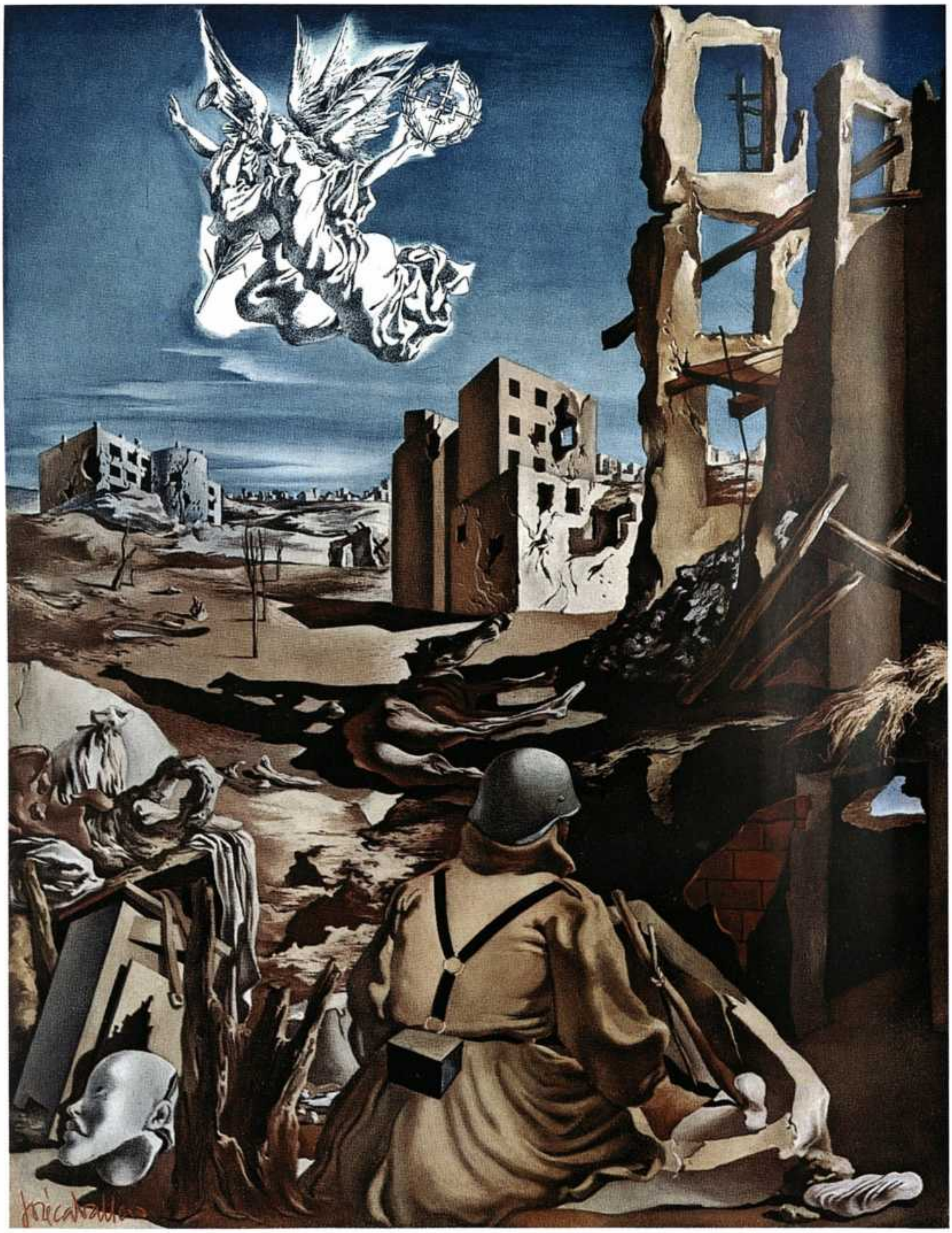


National University, Madrid, bombed 1936. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

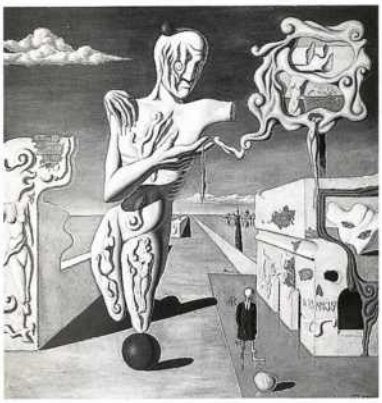
4

SURREALISM'S PUBLIC AWAKENING IN SPAIN: POLITICS AND PICTURES IN REPUBLICAN AND FASCIST SPAIN

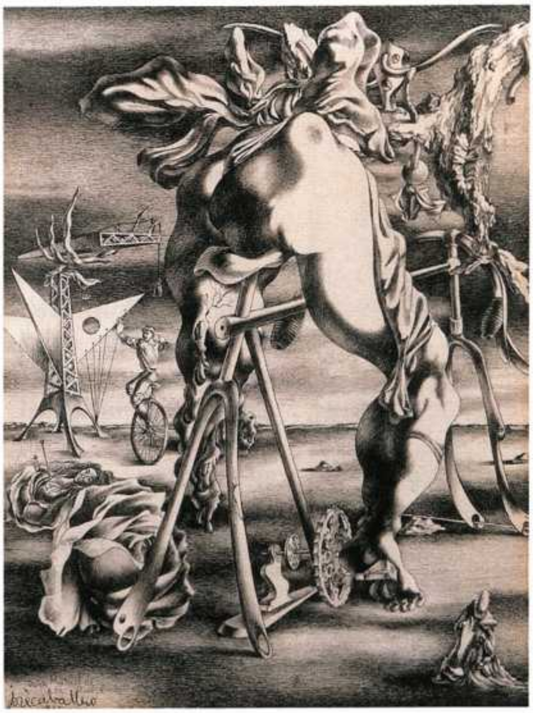
In 1939 the Andalusian painter José Caballero produced an illustration for a commemorative book that imaged the desolation of Spain's ruined landscape in the midst of its civil war (fig. 55). The hunched figure of the soldier in the foreground, the dead horse, and the empty windows of the building shells, framing nothing, suggest that Caballero was strongly influenced by the iconography of Salvador Dalí. In itself, such an influence is far from unusual in Surrealist painting; its instances abound within Spain (fig. 56). Even within Caballero's own imagery, the Dalinian references had manifested themselves at several important earlier moments, in images such as *The Rose and the Velocipede* and *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* (figs. 57 and 58). The first, dated 1935, is reminiscent of Dalí's *The Enigma of William Tell* (see fig. 35); as in Dalí's disturbing image of an almost naked Lenin, the buttocks of the monstrous figure protrude offensively toward the viewer. Propped up on a decrepit bicycle lodged in a desolate landscape, the giant body dwarfs a fleeing monocyclist about to crash into a Dalí-like "apparatus" – a visually destabilizing maneuver Caballero obviously culled from Dalí's psychically disturbing wastelands. *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie*, of 1935–7, quotes Dalí even more literally, replicating the bandaged bowler-hatted gentleman of a 1927 Dalí collage (fig. 59).[1] Dalí, as the youngest of the Spanish painters involved with French Surrealism and the one most often and most spectacularly in the Spanish public eye, was almost legendary within Spain's avant-garde circles.[2] What gives one pause, however, is the particular Dalí painting that Caballero quoted here and the journal in which Caballero published his own image: the soldier's bowed, lifeless pose is strikingly reminiscent of Dalí's figure of the wetnurse propped up on the beach in *The Weaning of Furniture-*



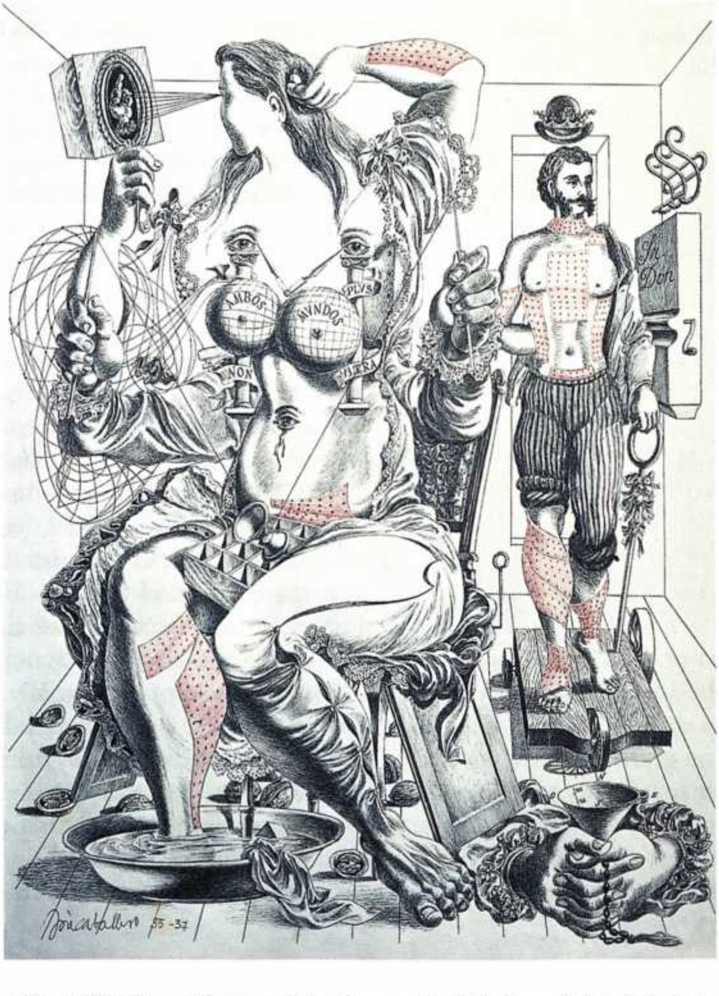
55 José Caballero, illustration for *Laureados de España*, 1940



56 (*above*): Angel Planells, Sad Midday, 1932. Oil on canvas. 101 × 95 cm. Chicago, The Art Institute of Chicago



57 (*right*) José Caballero, *The Rose and the Velocípedo ("La rosa y el volocipedo")* 1935. Madrid, private collection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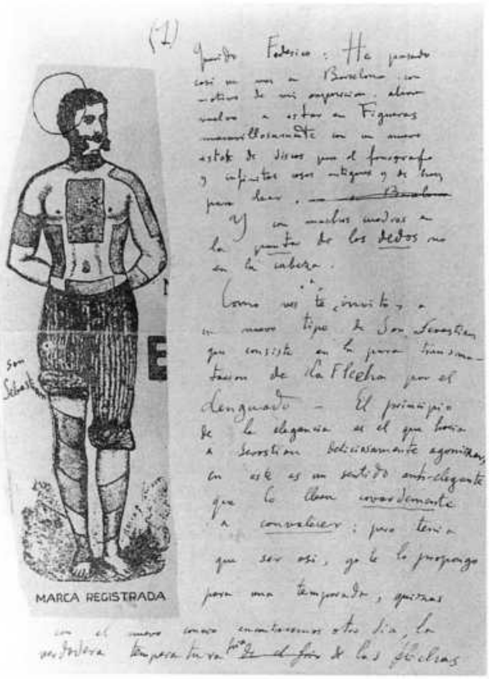
58 José Caballero, *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie ("Enfermedades de la burguesía")*, 1935–7. Pen and ink. 62 × 46 cm. Madrid, private collection.



59 Salvador Dalí, collaged image on a letter from Dalí to Lorca, 1927. Letter no. XIX, 1 Madrid, Fundación Federico García Lorca

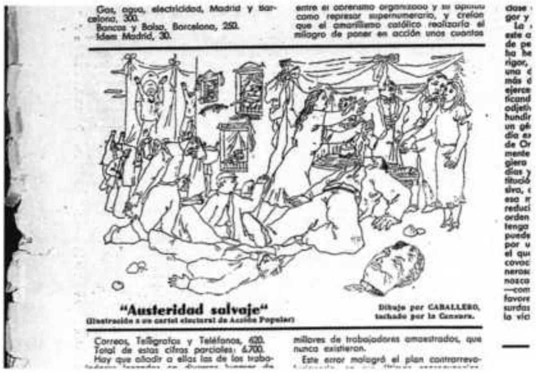
Nutrition (fig. 31).[3] In Dalí's image, the night-table standing in front of her has been cut out of her own body. A similar night-table is buried under the rubble to the soldier's left in Caballero's image, and the nurse's crutch has metamorphosed under Caballero's brush into a now useless gun rest. The framing effect produced by the cutout of the nurse's body has been regularized in the Caballero image into repeated empty windows of shattered buildings, while the cut-out itself has mutated into an ammunitions box. Other quotations – particularly the rotting horse in the middle distance and the breastlike cloth package just above the night-table (purloined from Dalí's 1934 *The Specter of Sex Appeal*) – underscore Caballero's stylistic debt to the Catalan painter but none are so forthright or ubiquitous as the quotations from *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition.*

The connections do not stop at the level of formal borrowing, however. More disturbing altogether is the fact that by now a large part of *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*'s reputation – and that of Dalí as well – hinged on the scandal of the wetnurse's Nazi swastika armband (even though, that is, the Surrealists forced him to paint it out[4]) and that Caballero's image was printed in *Laureados de España 1936–1939*, the lavish volume produced under Franco's right-wing military regime in Spain lauding the victorious party's fallen war heroes. Caballero was by now on the payroll of what were arguably the most widely read publications of fascist aesthetics in Spain, regularly producing images in which Surrealist visual shock tactics were used to address the Franquist agenda concerning the Spanish Civil War and the establishment of its power.[5]

THE POLITICAL CONFUSIONS OF SPANISH SURREALISM

Caballero had come into contact with both Dalí and Surrealism through his apprenticeship with Dalí's long-time friend Federico García Lorca, as a member of Lorca's traveling theater group La Barraca. The group, a pet project of Lorca's funded by the Republican government, was a star attraction in the Republic's program to provide a broad-based cultural education to its people, and the young Andalusian painter joined it in 1934. Critics – and the artist himself – have long taken Caballero's association with his famous mentor as an indication of his leftist sympathies, and seen his Surrealist aesthetics as part and parcel of those political tendencies.[6] Drawings such as *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* and *Savage Austerity*, which criticized the government repression of the October 1934 insurrection in the Asturias and Catalonia, or *The Last Transit Car*, produced in 1936 at the outset of the civil war, seem superficially to support this view (figs. 58, 60 and 61). *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* takes up the familiar Surrealist theme of the moral corruption of the middle class, while *Savage Austerity* fell under government censorship in 1935 for its unambiguous condemnation of the Republic's brutal reprisals. *The Last Transit Car* harshly condemns wartime atrocities: violence erupts in the midst of the quotidian life of Spain's modern cities, throwing everything into panicked disarray. A soldier bayonets a bowler-hatted bourgeois gentleman; a peasant woman shrouds her face as she mourns her murdered child; a headless worker strains heroically to escape the torture inflicted by his own journeyman's tools which have taken on a vicious life of their own. A circus artist bleeds to death on her trapeze, and a sewing machine placed incongruously next to the transit car refers to both Lautréamont's famous proto-Surrealist image and the complete disruption of daily Spanish life.

Yet, in a bitter but politically confused commentary on the cause of all this havoc, *The Last Transit Car* includes three giant hands in the communist closed-fist salute, the fascist salute, and a bourgeois gentleman's hand grasping a walking stick, finger pointed directly at the viewer. Fascism, communism, and capitalism, the drawing says, all colluded in perpetrating the Spanish Civil War. The drawing's political inconsistencies are echoed by those of *Savage Austerity*, which the artist produced not for the left but for the proto-fascist organization Acción Popular.[7] In hindsight, the upheaval pictured in *The Last Transit Car* seems prophetic of the political and social turmoil about to descend on Caballero's world. Within a year, Lorca was dead, murdered by Franco's fascists at the outset of the civil war and his body thrown into an anonymous grave. Caballero, in contrast, soon began working for the Franco regime's Departamento de Plástica, where he was charged with censorship duties and with producing fascist propaganda.[8] He was also responsible for disseminating fascist cultural values through a wide range of activities, including overseeing the work of other artists, surveying cultural exhibitions, and illustrating fascist magazines such as *Arriba*, *Sí*, and the lavish *Vértice*.[9]



Gas, agua, electricidad, Madrid y Barcelona, 300.
Bancos y Bolsa, Barcelona, 250.
Idem Madrid, 30.

entre el obrerismo organizado y su opinión como represor supernumerario, y creían que el amarillismo católico realizaría el milagro de poner en acción unos cuantos

"Austeridad salvaje"
(Ilustración a un cartel electoral de Acción Popular)

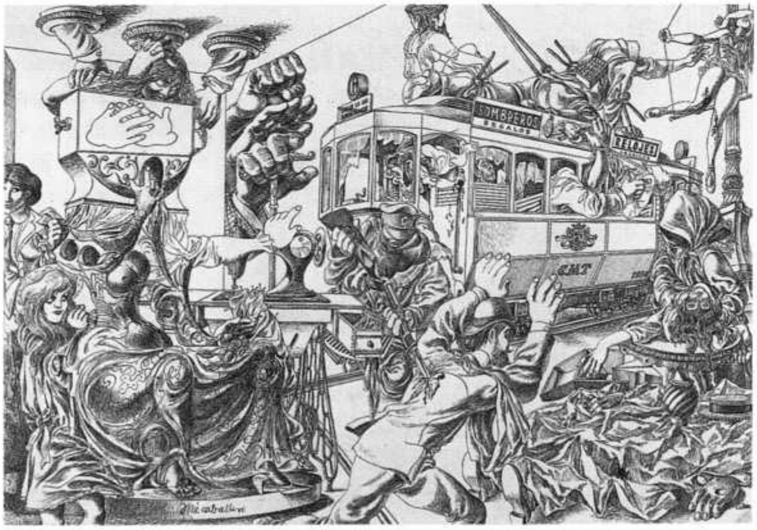
Dibujo por CABALLERO, tachado por la Censura.

Correos, Telégrafos y Teléfonos, 620.
Total de estas cifras parciales: 4.700.
Hay que añadir a ellas las de los trabajadores

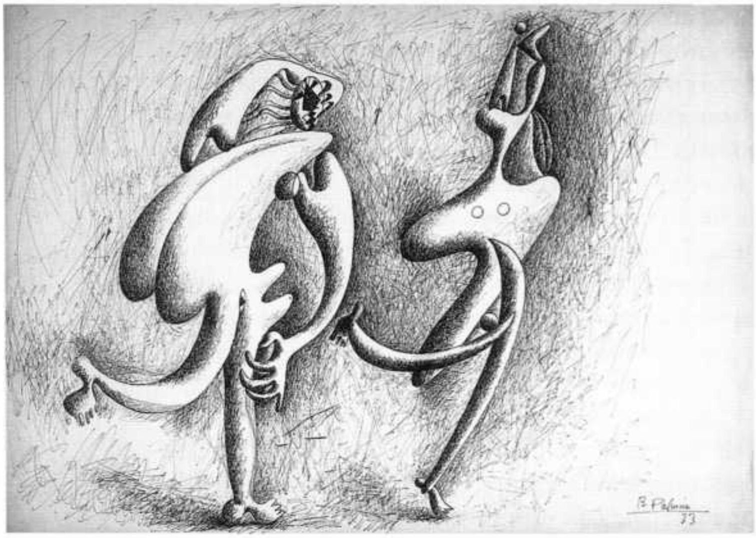
millares de trabajadores amaestrados, que nunca existieron.
Este error malogró el plan contrarrevo-

60: José Caballero, *Savage Austerity* (*Austeridad salvaje*), 1935, illustrated in *Línea*

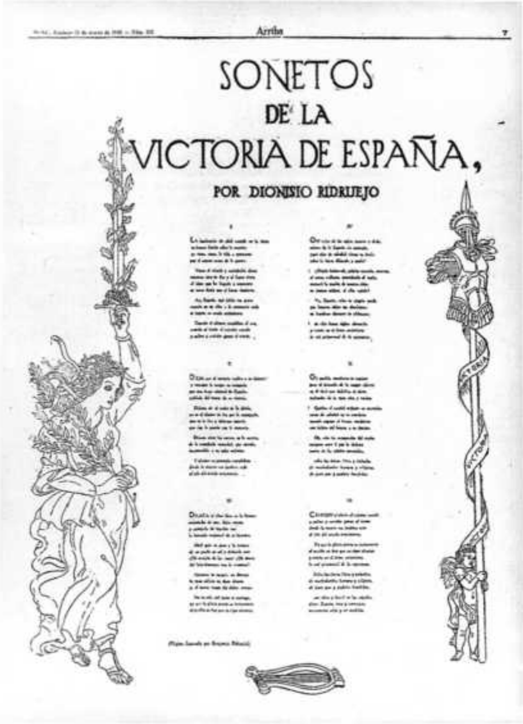
Unlike other artists, however, such as Benjamín Palencia who gave up a Surrealist-influenced imagery in favor of a more conventional realism under the pressure of Franco's victory (figs. 62 and 63), Caballero continued to utilize "surrealist" stylistics in the context of fascist publications for several more years.[10] Surrealism, it seems, could serve to convey whatever political message one wanted, communist, liberalist, or fascist; art had no inherent politics and the same stylistics could be called up for shockingly blunt changes in political orientation. In making such an unsettling charge – one that seems to argue against Surrealism's most deeply held beliefs in a representational politics – I am not suggesting that stylistic concerns have no fixed relationship to political praxis. Rather, I want to argue that those relationships always need to be understood with regard to their historical context. It is only by examining the context



61: José Caballero, *The Last Transit Car* (*"El último tranvía"*), 1936. Pen and ink. 30 × 42.5 cm. Madrid, private collection



62: Benjamín Palencia, *Composition*, 1933. Pen and ink. 51 × 73 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía



Arriba

SONETOS
DE LA
VICTORIA DE ESPAÑA,
POR DIONISIO RIDRUEJO

63: Benjamín Palencia, illustration for Dionisio Ridruejo's "Sonetos de la Victoria de España," *Arriba*, 31 March 1940

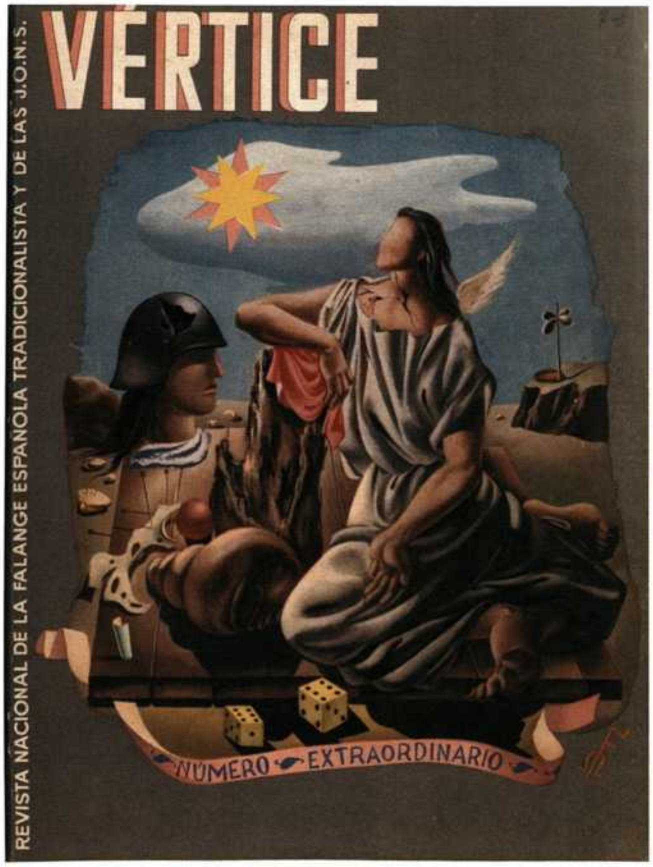
in which Caballero's Surrealism evolved and functioned that one can relate his stylistic consistencies to his wild political swings.

When confronted in the 1980s with increasing evidence of his collaboration with Franco's fascist cultural policies, Caballero at first tried to suppress its traces but just before his death in 1991 he issued a statement offering a more complex view of his situation during the civil war.[11] He claimed that he was "too marked by my friendships in Madrid and many considered me too leftist" to be safe from a fate similar to Lorca's. Caballero had been exceedingly close to many in Lorca's circle, including the leftist poets Pablo Neruda and Rafael Alberti, and Fernando de los Ríos, Minister of Culture in Azaña's government and the official sponsor of La Barraca. Caballero recalled, however, that he had had the good fortune to earn the patronage within the Falangist Party of a high-level, old-guard fascist, the poet and propagandist Dionisio Ridruejo, who arranged his participation in *Vértice*, *Laureados*, and other projects.[12] "I did a few drawings and covers for books," wrote Caballero, "trying to avoid any which had political significance. I also did a few magazine illustrations and a few covers for *Vértice*, the popular journal of that moment, in which I tried to wrap into the Surrealism any intentionality in more or less conventional symbolisms."[13] His statement indicates that he had felt himself in imminent danger of assassination, caught as he had been by the outbreak of the civil war in Andalusia, a zone which fell almost immediately to Franco's troops. Caballero's having found himself in his hometown of Huelva at the outset of the civil war made it almost impossible for him to emigrate; to reach non-Nationalist territory where he might have gained passage out of Spain would have been extremely dangerous, and became all but impossible after Huelva was called up for Nationalist service in 1937. He was well known enough to have been closely watched. When called up for service, Caballero first managed to join the mapmaking sector, thus avoiding any actual fighting. Accepting Ridruejo's patronage and working for the fascists after the end of the war had been, he let one know in 1991, a means of simply staying alive. Caballero successfully evaded the fate of other socialists and Surrealist sympathizers such as Domingo López Torres. A writer and critic, López Torres was a founding member of the important Tenerifan journal *Gaceta de arte*, in which throughout the 1930s he published highly insightful essays on Surrealism's political aesthetics.[14] In 1937, as a result of his staunch leftist political views, he was first imprisoned, then wrapped in a canvas bag by fascists and thrown into the ocean to drown. From this point of view, Caballero's political about-face seems indeed to have been a tactic of sheer survival, rather than a reprehensible act of treachery toward his former friends.

His testimony suggests that Caballero also evaded the opposite fate of the Surrealist artists Adriano del Valle and Alfonso Buñuel (brother of the filmmaker and friend of Caballero), both of whom had become well known before the civil war for their use of Max Ernst-like collage techniques, or that of López Torres's co-editor at *Gaceta de arte*, the writer Agustín Espinosa. Buñuel fought in the Falangist ranks, while Espinosa and Valle became confirmed fascists.[15] Espinosa, whose surrealist book *Crimen*, a hallucinatory novel about the subversive violence of passion let loose against bourgeois convention, was published in 1934 and who in 1935 had been part of the committee to publish the *Second International Bulletin of Surrealism* in Tenerife, started conspicuously wearing the fascist blue shirt almost immediately after the start of the war. He soon accepted a university post from Franco's authorities. Before the Spanish Civil War, del Valle was not much interested in politics but the war converted him into one of the most well-known Franquist poets. His first act after the war was to impound the entire library of José Bergamín's Christian leftist magazine *Cruz y raya*. One might be tempted then to say that, for Caballero, Surrealism went from being a means of expressing outspokenly leftist attitudes before the Spanish Civil War to a way of cloaking those same sentiments in enough visual confusion so as to make them unintelligible to the average (fascist) viewer. Surrealism – so goes the painter's argument – allowed him to keep on being a leftist in a situation where such sentiments, if expressed openly, would almost surely have cost him his life.

It is, however, still hard to overlook the fact that Caballero did not emigrate as did enormous numbers of leftists after Franco's 1939 victory. The Surrealist painter and sculptor Alberto left Madrid for the Soviet Union; the Catalan Surrealist painter Remedios Varo fled with Benjamin Péret to Mexico. The Canarian Surrealist Oscar Domínguez also emigrated, as did Neruda, Rafael Alberti, Josep Renau, and Surrealist painters José Moreno Villa and Esteban Francés. The highly innovative painter Maruja Mallo, a member of Spanish surrealist circles since her early acquaintance with Caballero, Lorca, Dalí, Alberti, and Luis Buñuel in Madrid, testified publicly to fascist war atrocities in Galicia, then emigrated in February 1937 through Portugal to Argentina to escape Franquist retaliation.[16] Many of these artists continued their anti-Franquist activities in exile.[17] Neither did Caballero choose the path of Miró or Planells, who remained in Spain but kept a relative anonymity. Although Miró returned to Spain in 1940, he was forced to live in secrecy for several years because of his Republican sympathies. He moved with his family to Palma de Mallorca to avoid Barcelona where he was too well known, and did not exhibit in Spain again until 1949. Planells suffered complete obscurity for the rest of his life in order to remain in his home country.[18]

Nor did Caballero follow the example of Benjamín Palencia in deciding to forego surrealist imagery altogether when working for Franco's Ministry of Culture, as Palencia's 1940 illustration for Dionisio Ridruejo's "Sonetos de la Victoria de España" shows (see fig. 63).[19] In fact, Caballero kept up his friendship with del Valle, illustrating the latter's *Cuadernos* after the end of the civil war, toured fascist Italy in 1940, and, as noted earlier, was the premier artist featured a year before in the publication honoring the fascist war dead, *Laureados de España, 1936–1939*.[20] It was for this journal that Caballero specifically reworked Dalí's controversial exploration of the fascist persona, *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, into a tribute to Falangist soldiers. He also published two drawings in 1941 and 1947 in the fascist magazine *Arriba* of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the founder of the FE, suggesting that he maintained an active (although perhaps increasingly nostalgic[21]) association with fascist ideologies for at least a decade.[22] Above all, it is difficult to discount the fact that Caballero worked prominently on the staff of the best-known of fascist cultural publications rather than opting for the less conspicuous role he claims he tried to achieve. His staff position at the glossy magazine *Vértice*, for example, was closely linked to his tenure at the Departamento de la Plástica, a subsection of the Jefatura Nacional de Propaganda headed by Dionisio Ridruejo.[23] In these various capacities, Caballero formed part of a "liberal falangist" cultural arm that attempted (at least until 1941) to integrate Franquist fascism with a variety of modernist aesthetics, different from the more conservative academic naturalism preferred by the Ministry of Education that priviledged Catholic and military iconography (see fig. 64).[24]


VÉRTICE
REVISTA NACIONAL DE LA FALANGE ESPAÑOLA TRADICIONALISTA Y DE LAS J.O.N.S.
NÚMERO EXTRAORDINARIO

64: José Caballero, cover for *Vértice*, 1939

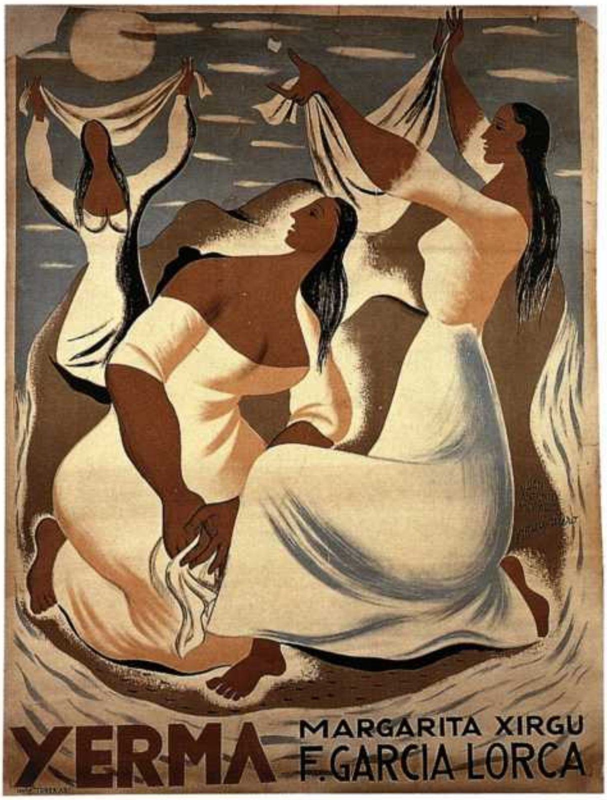
The wildly varied political uses to which Surrealism was put by Caballero raise serious questions as to what Surrealism was in Spain, how the painter conceptualized it, and how closely (if at all) his view echoed that of French Surrealism's leftist aesthetics. Spain's original encounter with Surrealism occurred under circumstances that fostered its formulation as an aesthetic indicator of modernism rather than as a revolutionary tool for social change. Like many other avant-garde artists of the period, Spanish surrealists were fascinated with modern culture – especially with technologies such as the automobile, the phonograph, and the mass media – and often reveled in its bourgeois aspects rather than critiquing them.[25]

It was not until the advent of the Second Republic that Spanish Surrealism began to make serious strides toward politicization. In this, Spanish Surrealism encountered the same difficulties as other Spanish avant-gardes, all of which were suddenly faced in 1931 with the problem of inventing a politically committed aesthetic language that would not devolve into mere propaganda.[26] Indeed, the enormous prestige of Socialist Realism and the Soviet Union, as well as Spain's unique history of avant-gardism, made bringing together a vanguard politics with an avant-garde aesthetics in Spain exceedingly difficult.[27] In the hands of Caballero (and almost all other Spanish surrealist enthusiasts who did not emigrate to France), Surrealism generally had politics imposed upon it by circumstances; only in rare instances did it actively seek a concrete and consistent political identity.[28] In many cases the Spanish avant-garde merely "imported" certain surrealist precepts piecemeal – primarily visual rather than ethical or political – from the French movement.[29] Those artists who developed what the art historian Jaime Brihuega has described as an aesthetic "maturity or rigor" with regard to Surrealism, tended to leave Spain for Paris, thus cutting off any active involvement in the Spanish avant-garde.[30] In particular, Spanish surrealists found it difficult to reconcile French Surrealism's political commitment to freedom of thought with the mass action necessary to throw off Spain's "inveterate historical misery." Surrealism functioned instead, argues Brihuega, as a "floating reality" easily coopted for any political or ideological use – including, as I argue here, fascism.[31] In addition, the French surrealist battles concerning ideological purity, centered on Breton, were largely reversed in Spain: despite obvious stylistic similarities, Spanish artists, poets, and critics tended to deny any relationship to French Surrealism, in particular to the Parisian reliance on automatism.[32]

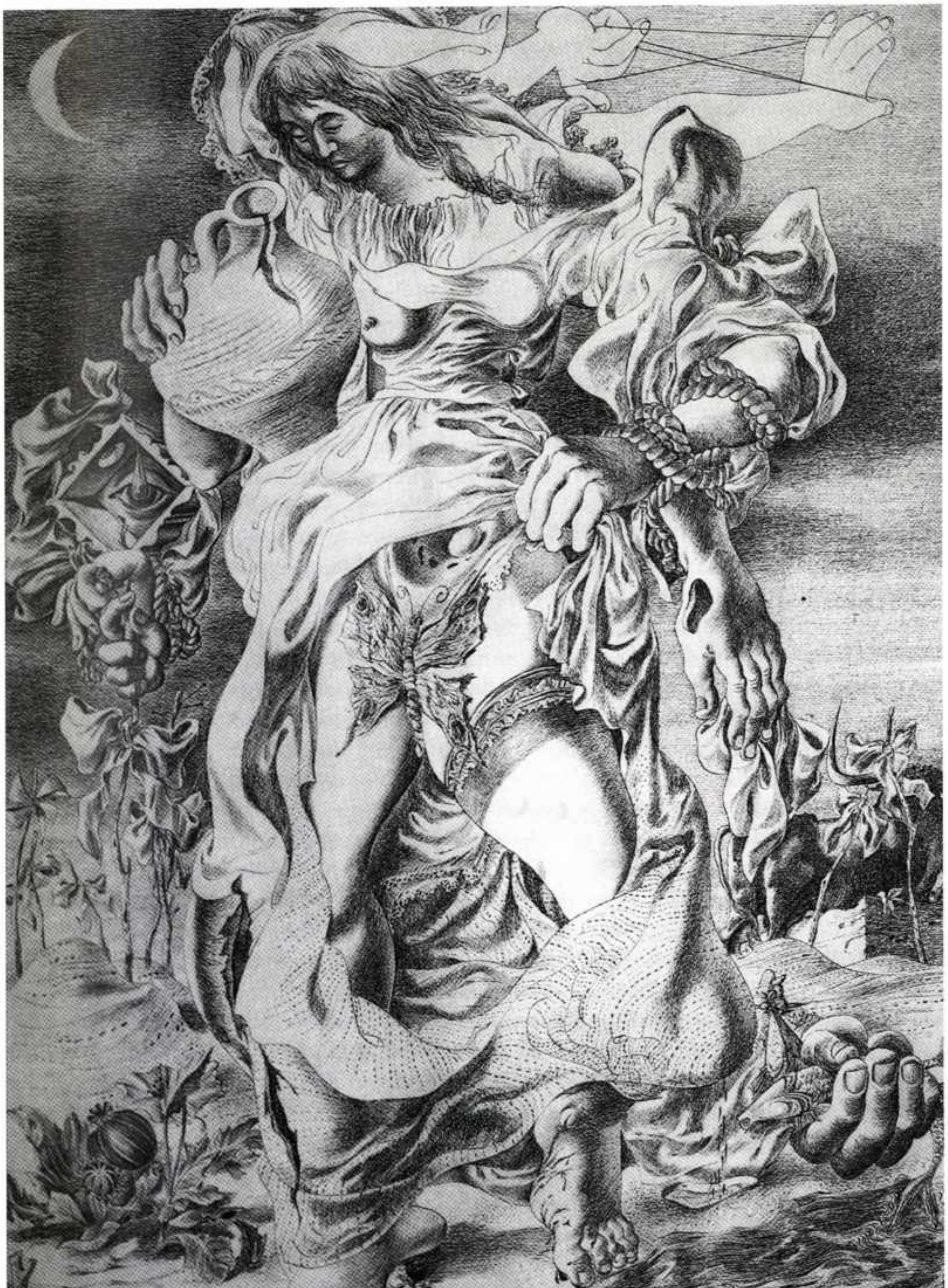
Thus the artistic production of Caballero signals the shock of impact that Spanish Surrealism felt when it began to test its possibilities – and limitations – as a socially responsible art form during the years of the Republic. On the one hand, Surrealism participated in the tremendous prestige conferred upon socially committed intellectuals by the Republic – a role that Gramsci compared to those of the philosophes of 1789 or the Russian intelligentsia of 1917.[33] On the other, it also encountered the myriad difficulties of producing a visual language adequate to Spain's social upheavals. As the Republic came further under the onslaught of the extreme right, degenerating to war in 1936, surrealist efforts to bridge politics and aesthetics were affected by the increasingly intimate relationship between culture and propaganda, such that artistic activity was almost invariably judged by its direct links to political activism. For all avant-gardes, this meant negotiating three main ideological currents, seemingly opposed but which were united during the Second Republic under the so-called Frente Cultural: the bourgeois-Republican cultural experience; the Soviet model, at this juncture committed to Stalin's strategic support of bourgeois nation-states against fascism; and the socialist and anarchist cultural platforms.[34] For Spanish Surrealism, the fairly abrupt move from the elite enclaves of a relatively hermetic avant-garde to the public scrutiny demanded by the Republic and the Spanish Civil War proved a precarious trajectory. In investigating Caballero's production within the framework of these issues, it is crucial to interpret how the painter's images were read, that is, to determine how the notion of a politics – fascist, Republican, socialist, communist, or liberalist – might have been understood by Caballero's public to be embedded in content and form.

THE REPUBLICAN YEARS: CABALLERO, LORCA, AND LA BARRACA

In 1934, Caballero designed a poster announcing the opening of Lorca's new play, *Yerma* (fig. 65).[35] It is a celebratory image picturing the ritual of women's communal work in the countryside of Andalusia, where the play is set. The women are drawn with a weighty, simple grace to emphasize their elegant stature, without succumbing to the conservative classicizing realism then popular in many cultural circles. Caballero's line contours the women's hips, chests, and arms, as though movement rather than speech were their mode of conveying news; it is through the gesture of uplifted hands rather than voice, for instance, that the women communicate across the space of the barren landscape. The far woman's gesture turns into a motion almost of ritual supplication, as she raises her piece of white cloth in an arc above her head to mimic instinctively the moon's rounded shape. There is little in this image to indicate any specific claims to Surrealism yet in early 1939, as the Spanish Civil War drew to its tragic close, Caballero drew another image of *Yerma* that manifests a much greater kinship to Surrealism's visual oddities and shock tactics (see fig. 66).[36] The woman is now alone in the Andalusian landscape, carrying her water jug to the river to fill. Her figure splits into another, featureless



65: José Caballero, Poster for Lorca's play, *Yerma*, 1934. Gouache on paper, 29 × 23 cm. Col. Fundación Federico García Lorca



66: José Caballero, *Yerma*, 1939. Pen and ink. 68 × 47 cm. Madrid, private collection woman turned toward the crescent moon and engaged in a children's string game of chance. A second pair of hands emerge as well from the woman's body, to drop symbolic bits of feminine ribbon to the ground and to hold a box containing a solitary pierced eye. The woman herself lifts up her skirt to reveal a butterfly nestling where her legs converge, while her stomach is carved into a hollow containing an infertile egg. The ground is littered with symbolic pomegranates and dead fish held by yet another disembodied hand.

I think of the later version of *Yerma* as a culminating moment in Caballero's aesthetic production, and as a visual hingepiece for his political reasoning. It marks the conclusion of a long series of pen drawings begun in 1933, through which his odd juxtaposition of symbolic elements reached its most powerful expression. It is in these drawings that Caballero found his most imaginative solutions to pictorial and thematic problems, and the 1939 *Yerma* registers a poignant representation of tragedy in both symbolic and real human experience.[37] The drawing refers to the misfortune of the play's main character, Yerma, whose name indexes her condition: she is barren, unable to have the child that would give meaning to her life. She is condemned to her situation by a rigid social hierarchy, which forbids her seeking a new husband and yet judges her solely in terms of her success as a mother and wife. The drawing, like the play, contains a message implicitly critical of the rigidities of conservative Catholic Spain, making it an image that would have been highly dangerous to publish in 1939. Andalusia, Caballero's home territory, had fallen early to the fascists in 1937 and Franco's right-wing Catholic nationalism was well received by the intensely religious region.[38] Lorca's play itself was dogged from the start by events presaging the Spanish Civil War; it received harsh criticism in the conservative press and its performance generated widespread right-wing antagonism. This was especially the case in Lorca's home city of Granada, not far from Caballero's Huelva.[39] Lorca's theater company held close ties to the liberal members of the Republican government (his lead actress, Margarita Xirgu, was a close friend of the Republican president Manuel Azaña[40]) but after 1934 this government itself became more and more unstable as it attempted to maneuver between extreme right- and left-wing pressures.

The dangers of showing the 1939 *Yerma* at the time of its production meant that it remained unpublished in Caballero's private collection until 1990.[41] Yet while it is easily possible to describe the drawing as a social critique aimed at the conservative and fascist elements of Spanish society, it is notable that it was produced in the same year as Caballero's drawing for *Laureados de España*; between them, the two works mark the depth of Caballero's political ambivalence (see fig. 55). Furthermore, *Yerma* couches resistance in terms of muted individual suffering rather than organized opposition to the injustices to which it alludes. The woman stands alone at the edge of the river, no longer accompanied by her companions from the earlier poster. The cracked jar she holds indicates that her quest for life-giving water will go unfulfilled, and, despite the delicate and beautiful butterfly at her sex, that she will remain as barren as the landscape. Her only escape is to dream toward the moon, a solution which throws her into madness and murder, but leaves the social system intact. The drawing, made after Lorca's death, is a private work of mourning for the poet. The pomegranates (*granadas* in Spanish) refer to the site of Lorca's birth and death, while the dying fish allude to his assassination by suggesting the treacherously false illusion of fertility offered by the Andalusian river.[42] The path of private mourning rather than public outrage seems to have been the one Caballero preferred in dealing with the wreckage of the civil war; his best work escapes into a private world.

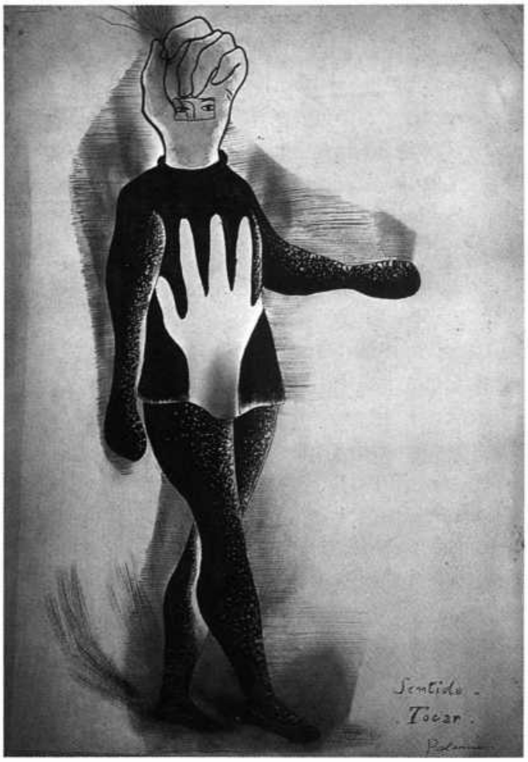
The trajectory from one version of *Yerma* to the next shows Caballero increasingly using a surrealizing aesthetics of dream-like imagery and visual incongruities to come to grips with an intense set of personal and political experiences occasioned by the upheavals in 1930s Spain. His artistic experience and access to Surrealism were formulated from the start by his contact with

Lorca, with La Barraca, and with the cultural ideologies of the Second Republic. His friendship with Lorca began in Madrid in 1932, when Caballero arrived there to further his studies.[43] The painter was an inexperienced, precociously talented sixteen year old, while the poet was already internationally respected, and the influence of the charismatic older man over the younger was said to be almost overwhelming.[44] Caballero's politicization was therefore a process mediated through an intense personal allegiance to Lorca – a circumstance that deeply affected the painter's (in)ability to articulate a consistent political vision. His loyalty was largely to Lorca himself rather than to his Republican ideals.[45] Thus Caballero identified with the pre-Republican, private Lorca of the Generación del '27 over the Lorca of La Barraca's Republican ideals.[46]

The chaos of the war years and Caballero's personal attachment to Lorca have meant that no written statements have come to light concerning his views on the ideological nature of his aesthetics during this period.[47] Yet Caballero's artistic education occurred during his apprenticeship under Lorca in La Barraca and in relation to the politicization of the Spanish avant-gardes throughout the years of the Republic. I look, therefore, at the poet's production in relation to La Barraca's social mandate under the Republican government, so as to determine something of the context within which the painter was working. On April 14, 1931 the Second Spanish Republic was voted into being. In June of 1932 Caballero received his artistic baptism by fire when he showed two paintings and twenty drawings alongside eight "Surrealist" drawings by Lorca at the Ateneo Popular de Huelva; the public scandal caused by the Surrealist imagery forced the Ateneo to take down the show after only one day.[48] On July 10, 1932 Teatro Universitario – La Barraca left on its first tour, funded by a grant from the new government,[49] and in 1933 Lorca incorporated Caballero into La Barraca, putting him to work designing posters, costumes, and sets.[50] In 1934, in addition to designing the poster for Lorca's *Yerma*, Caballero invented a forest of pins for the Barcelona opening of *Bodas de Sangre*. Lorca, captivated by the young artist's talents, asked him to do the illustrations in 1935 for his commemorative poem "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," published by Bergamín's magazine *Cruz y raya*.[51] Caballero's scenery designs for *Bernarda Alba* were never realized due to the outbreak of war in 1936. As these events show, Caballero's ties to the Lorca of La Barraca were strong, sustained over a critical period in the painter's development.

La Barraca proved controversial from the start. Rather than structuring it as a vehicle for his previous, more hermetic work, Lorca used it to mix the avant-garde with the traditional. The choice of plays, largely from such Spanish masters as Calderón, Cervantes, Tirso de Molina, and Lope de Vega, was combined with innovative acting, scenery, and costuming (such as Palencia's costume for Calderón's *La vida es sueño*; fig. 67 and 67a) in order to introduce its audiences to avant-garde alternatives to traditional realist interpretations. The troupe's immediate successes with audiences comprised both of urban elites and of peasants and rural bourgeoisie were offset by political difficulties with both the monarchist right and the anarchist left.[52] The antagonism arose from the nature of the traveling theater's enterprise, which was conceptualized as an effort to forge a unified Spain, bridging class differences through promoting the popularization of Spain's own cultural heritage of classic seventeenth-century theater.[53] The right, wanting to maintain the class status quo, objected strenuously to La Barraca's popularizing ideologies, while the anarchist left saw them as a detrimentally utopian effort to smooth over class conflict.[54]

Both President Azaña and Fernando de los Ríos, the Republic's Minister of Culture, enthusiastically supported La Barraca from the beginning, as the group exemplified the government's ideals concerning the spread of culture, education, and a Spanish national identity. Openly anti-clerical, La Barraca antagonized the Catholic right, while its non-Marxist, liberalist character exposed its ties to a reformist rather than revolutionary government.[55] The Republican



67: Benjamín Palencia, *Sense: Touch* (*Sentido Tocar*) costume design for Calderon's play, *La vida es sueño*, 1932. Photo courtesy of the Fundación Benjamin Palencia, Madrid

government's main political body, the PSOE, relied on a dual-pronged structure separating leadership from mass support, and La Barraca's official status as a favored project of the Ministry of Culture thus meant that it was allied with the leadership rather than the rank and file.[56] From this problematic position, La Barraca's attempts at radical theatrical innovations were compromised by its basically reformist political backing.[57] Its last performance, in 1936 of Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna*,[58] offers both a glimpse of the troupe's controversial politics in its foregrounding of Lope's subtheme of peasant resistance to abusive landlords and a hint of the limits of those polemics. The actors were costumed in peasant clothing of the 1930s to emphasize the contemporary validity of the play's message of peasant exploitation. In directing the play, Lorca also deliberately suppressed all historical references to the fifteenth-century monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand, whom the right lauded as champions of "law and order," Catholicism, and Spanish unity.[59] In so doing, he refused the traditional theatrical figure of the king as a symbol of justice. In tune with his own growing sense of nihilism, Lorca also changed the ending of the play in refutation of the theatrical "relief" provided by Lope's theme of justice and salvation, and commented on La Barraca's version of the ending by saying, "After the death of the gentleman, everything ends. After death, nothing."[60]

Fuenteovejuna's message concerning social justice was ominously clear, yet the play had only been included in the troupe's repertoire after criticism by La Barraca's student committee that it needed to pay less attention to purely artistic matters and more to the social mandates of its own enterprise.[61] Lorca, it seems, had to be reminded of his public duties. Even toward the end of its term, La Barraca had not entirely overcome the stigma of the pre-Republican avant-garde's lack of interest in politics, from which Lorca was by no means exempt. The writer Ramiro Ledesma Ramos had derisively summed this up in 1930 in response to a *La Gaceta literaria* questionnaire by saying that "the avant-garde never concerned itself with things political . . . Political dedication did not tolerate the essential frivolity which characterized the avant-garde youngsters. On the other hand, neither was the avant-garde oriented toward a subversion of moribund moral values, instead conforming its revolution . . . to talking about sports and aping Yankee preferences in suits."[62] The essential point for the pre-Republican avant-garde generation was simply to be new, as the literary figure César Arconada's unintentionally shocking comment from 1928 indicates: "A young person can be communist, fascist; anything other than keep up old liberal ideas."[63] In 1933, two years into the Republic and the year Caballero joined La Barraca, Lorca still maintained a clear separation between politics and artistic pursuits. Commenting disapprovingly on Alberti's conversion to communism, the poet remarked incisively that "the artist, and particularly the poet, is always an anarchist [Lorca here meant to suggest non-conformist individualism], and can only listen to the voices that rise up from within his own being, three imperious voices: the voice of Death, with all its presentiments; the voice of Love and the voice of Art."[64]

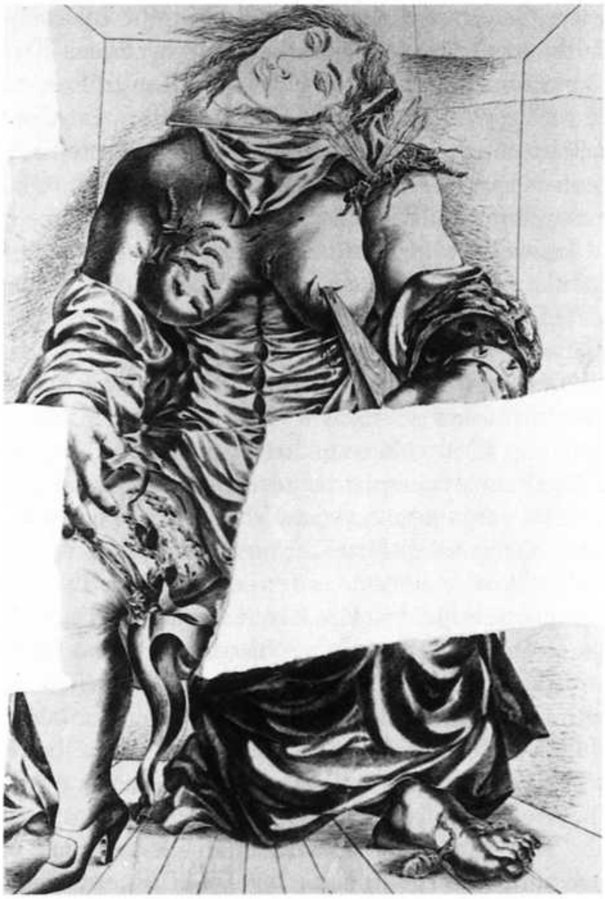
By 1935, however, Lorca had come around to a more openly socialist attitude to aesthetic production; in a September interview in the Trotskyist paper *L'Hora* he criticized fascism, spoke admiringly of the Soviet Union, and repeated his claim that theater had a social mission to

67a: Benjamín Palencia, stage and costume designs for Calderon's play, *La vida es sueño*, 1932. Photo courtesy of the Fundación Benjamin Palencia, Madrid

"educate the masses." He also condemned capitalism by recalling the horrific scenes of poverty he had witnessed in New York after the 1929 Wall Street Crash.[65] In 1936 he signed a petition published in the Communist paper *Mundo Obrero* in support of electing Popular Front candidates[66] and he read his poems, including the "Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard," to the Madrid Workers' Club. This latter gesture was taken as a clear criticism of right-wing repression of workers' agitation for better work conditions.[67] In April 1936 *La Voz* interviewed the poet, who argued in an even more radical tone that theater had an absolute duty to immerse itself in the problems assailing humanity. Although Lorca still seemed uninterested in distinguishing clearly between types of communism (praising Stalin's Soviet Union to a Trotskyist paper may have rubbed some the wrong way, and Lorca still claimed that his "true intention" lay in his "impossible" and "unplayable" theater rather than in producing "teatro de las masas"[68]), the poet had come quite a distance from his apolitical individualism of earlier years.

Alongside Lorca, Caballero also produced works during this period that demonstrate a shift toward socially conscious critiques and art-making practices. His *Savage Austerity* (1935) and *The Last Transit Car* (1936) both exhibit visually a strong sympathy with the plight of the worker during a period when Spain's chances of a true proletarian revolution were sharply undermined (see figs. 60 and 61). The 1935 image depicts the wholesale slaughter of workers as members of the bourgeoisie stand idly apart, while in the second drawing the headless worker being cut to pieces by his own tools seems to be struggling to escape the scene below him of another worker being strangled by a disembodied arm. Yet Caballero was far from replicating even Lorca's somewhat disordered socialist leanings; as noted before, he produced *Savage Austerity* as an election poster for Acción Popular, the core of the extreme right-wing coalition CEDA led by José María Gil Robles.[69] Thus its message of governmental repression of the 1934 October Uprising would almost certainly have been an attempt to gain the support of the working class for the CEDA's bid to oust the leftist-centrist elements of the government.[70] *The Last Transit Car*, positing yet a different political stand, includes two hands in the poses of the communist and fascist salutes as the symbolic perpetrators of the scene's chaotic violence. A third hand, that of the cane-wielding bourgeois gentleman, points menacingly out toward the viewer, as if to suggest that the pictured chaos was about to descend on the viewer. Caballero, although not yet manifesting clear fascist sympathies, seems far from repeating Lorca's increasing investment in socialism. The irrational chaos of Caballero's drawing has affected all levels of society; in addition to the tortured workers and the bourgeois being stabbed as he flees, another dandy lies dead, shrouded and pinioned under a marble table to the right. To the left, a schoolgirl plunges a knife into the back of a mechanical seamstress. *The Last Transit Car* thus depicts all social classes – from bourgeois to worker to peasant – as victims of a militaristic terror. But Caballero's efforts to determine the perpetrators of the chaos he images are not made from a socialist perspective; the worker's agony is ambiguously attributed to the unruliness of his own tools, whereas the bourgeois's death is ascribed directly to a bayonet-wielding soldier. In fact, judging from the various critiques invoked, the painter's political allegiances swung wildly during the years 1934 to 1936, from the moderate liberalism of the Republican government under Azaña to the extreme conservatism of the CEDA, which suggests the lack of a clear political commitment commented upon acidly by Ramiro Ledesma Ramos.[71] In fact, these examples resonate strongly with César Arconada's astonishing claim quoted earlier that what mattered most for contemporary Spanish artists was not a soundly argued political position so much as an avant-garde stylistics – any avant-garde, without regard to its political affiliation. For Surrealism, this type of political fluctuation posited the use of any surrealist stylistics as a much more complex and contradictory problem with regard to politics than the French movement would have wanted to allow.

In a 1957 interview Caballero himself called his version of Surrealism "poetic," rather than invoking either Marx or Freud, as had his French counterparts.[72] It is difficult to judge exactly what Caballero meant by that word, or in what ways the distance of two decades, a civil war, and a military dictatorship would have colored his testimony. By 1957, almost twenty years into Franco's dictatorship, the artist used the term "poetic" Surrealism nebulously to describe an artistic production against the Freudian invocation of scientific knowledge, against Marxist rationalism and historical materialism; that is to say, against anything that could be pinned down as having specific political connotations. Surrealism, for Caballero, had become a purely private affair used to describe the nether regions of his personal life with his wife María Fernanda.[73] Caballero's prewar imagery, by contrast, openly employs sexual perversion as social critique, despite his later refusal of Marx and his claim that he had not read Freud until well after the war.[74] His *Sweet Pleasures of Sadism* ironically examines the "sweet pleasures" of masochistic self-wounding, transforming the woman's painful gesture of self-mutilation into a commentary on social behavior (fig. 68). Her body putrefies, exuding maggots, while her head, severed and placed on a square plane as though she were a female John the Baptist, suggests that she is the sacrificial victim of the whims of her own body. Drawn in 1934, her decaying body and self-inflicted wounds hint at the growing internal strife of Spain, culminating that year in the violently suppressed October insurrection in the Asturias.[75] Caballero's invocation of the Marquis de Sade to describe the decrepitude of this giant body (so monumental that it barely fits in its room) indicates a familiarity – although a somewhat skewed one – with French Surrealism's view of Sade as a sexually subversive, politically revolutionary figure. Sadism, although invoked in the title and linked to social critique, is confused with masochism. This confusion suggests at once a familiarity with surrealist tactics, cult figures, and politics and yet begins to reveal the superficiality of Caballero's knowledge of the French movement. A look at two other drawings, *The Rose and the Velocipede* (1935) and *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* (1935–7), further shows the discrepancy between Caballero's facility with surrealist stylistics and his unwillingness to take up French surrealist politics.



68: José Caballero, *Sweet Pleasures of Sadism* (*Los dulces placeres del sadismo*), 1934. Pen and ink. 63 × 40.5 cm. Madrid, private collection

That Caballero was at least outwardly familiar with certain aspects of French Surrealism, despite never having any sustained first-hand contact with the Parisian group, is evident in his inventive reworking of the stylistic techniques of Dalí and Ernst in the service of visualizing sexuality as a social critique of the bourgeoisie. In *The Rose and the Velocipede* giant buttocks fill the frame, distorted Dalí-like all out of proportion to the other objects that fill the landscape (see fig. 57). His invocation of sexual fetishism in this manner shows how closely Caballero studied Dalí's aesthetic production; he referred to the Catalan's notorious painting of Lenin's deformed body, *The Enigma of William Tell* (1933), not only in his presentation of the central figure's giant distorted buttocks but also in the spatial disorientation produced by the radical shifts in size between the monstrously sexualized body on its bicycle and the other objects in the picture (see fig. 35). Caballero also included an Eiffel Tower-turned-apparatus reminiscent of Dalí's 1927 pictures *Apparatus and Hand* and *Honey is Sweeter than Blood* (see figs. 37 and 38). Objects representing bourgeois leisure such as the bicycle and the Eiffel Tower seem to engender fetishistic freaks, frightening a middle-class unicyclist into fleeing from one monstrosity to another.

Diseases of the Bourgeoisie shows Caballero combining the collage techniques of Ernst's *Femme 100 têtes* with the meticulous execution of Dalí's hyperrealist technique, in order to bring a Dalinian critique of sexuality together with an Ernstian critique of the fetishistic nightmare of commodities (see fig. 58). Much like Ernst in his collages, Caballero envisions the afflictions of the middle class through a chaotic eruption of unrelated objects organized within a conventionally perspectival space.[76] Ernst's images depend upon a certain viewer nostalgia for pre-First World War images of social decorum and tranquillity to lull the viewer into an unsuspecting state of mind, before exposing a nightmarish world in which the objects of bourgeois life fly totally out of the control of their human makers. In Caballero's *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* the woman's human identity is replaced by those objects, leaving her at once faceless and paradoxically prone to narcissistic preening in front of a hand mirror. Her body sprouts eyes, which have absented themselves from their usual biological placement to stare directly out at the viewer, attached strangely to a partially hidden masculine profile, and an extra pair of arms which play at a frivolous children's game. Behind her a bourgeois gentleman, quoted directly from Dalí's use of commercial advertisement cutouts (see fig. 59), rides a toy cart down the length of the room seemingly unaffected by the multitude of red plaster bandages covering his body. Caballero slips further from an Ernstian to a Dalínian mode by referring to collage techniques through meticulous drawing rather than through actual cutouts.

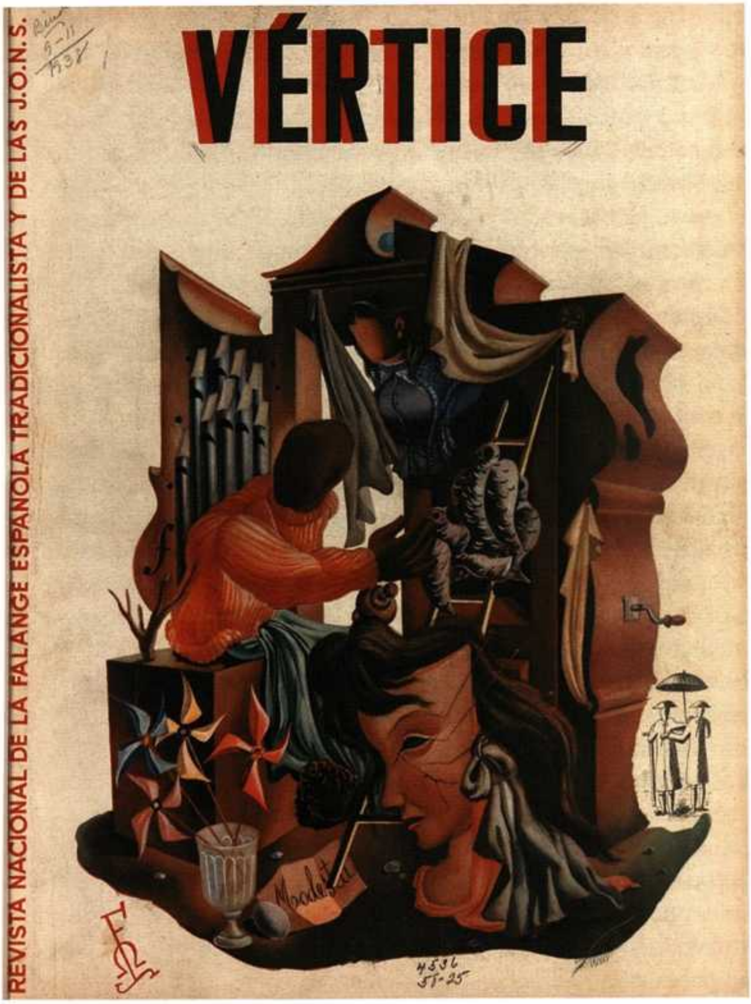
Diseases of the Bourgeoisie engages in a visual clutter typical of Caballero's drawings, meant to mimic social chaos. He images the jumble of objects, which inadequately takes the place of complex human identities, largely as a curse but also as a phenomenon characterizing modern life to which Caballero maintains a highly ambivalent relationship. His visual fragmenting of the human persona into a multitude of disparate commodities and body parts reads as a critique of the effect of things on identities and personal relationships. Yet juxtaposed against this is the fascination Caballero clearly feels not only by modern culture but also by his own consummate artistic ability to create (pictorial) order out of chaos, to manufacture relationships between things, and to construct meaning out of confusion. Instead of a surrealist rupturing of a seamless reality, Caballero's production slides into validating existing hierarchies of social values in order to maintain them intact. He often uses his aesthetic praxis to reimpose an order upon a social realm disintegrating into civil war, and to shore up the viewer's desire to find significance in a world turned upside down. Thus Caballero twists the same pictorial attitude to the plethora of commodities found in *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie* toward sympathizing with rather than criticizing the bourgeoisie in *The Last Transit Car*.[77] Caballero's production, in fact, demonstrates how surrealizing techniques could be turned on their heads, drained of any subversive or critical content.

THE CIVIL WAR YEARS AND AFTER

In order to situate José Caballero's aesthetic response to the Spanish Civil War, I now return to his 1939 version of *Yerma* (see fig. 66). The drawing's sophistication and intricacy reveal the care Caballero took over it and the importance it held for him. *Yerma*'s evocation of the barrenness of the Spanish landscape, visualized through the themes of Lorca's play, would have read at the time of its production as a direct reference to the Spanish Civil War. The deep pathos of Yerma's character in the play arises out of the agonizing conflict between her unfulfilled wish to create a new life both physically and symbolically (by having a baby) and her profound embeddedness in a traditional culture terribly resistant to any kind of change. Caught between the stifling social binds of traditional Catholic Spain and her sense that the only meaning to her life would come through having a child, Yerma finds no escape except through a murder which is at the same moment a form of suicide: crying "I myself have killed my child," she kills her husband, the emblem of her impossible predicament and the only person capable of giving her children. Her catastrophic story, including its dual homicide–suicide end, was taken at the time as a critique of Spanish society's inability to find a peaceful path to modernism from Catholic traditions stemming back to the Inquisition. As the social tensions of the mid-1930s degenerated into civil war, Lorca's play was seen as a direct criticism of the Franquists, who based their version of a Spanish national identity largely on traditional Catholicism.[78] After fierce resistance early in the war, most of Andalusia – including Caballero's hometown of Huelva – had fallen to the fascists by September 1936. In Granada, Lorca himself was shot and dumped in an anonymous grave in August 1936. Thus to image *Yerma* in 1939 from within fascist-held territory, as did Caballero, would have been extremely dangerous. Adding to this, Caballero's drawing emphasizes precisely those Lorcan themes that would have been most risky, building them into a powerful image of despair. Rather than picturing a still-hopeful Yerma together with the other women of her community (who urged her to alternative solutions) as he did in his 1934 poster, the painter isolated her in the parched Andalusian landscape at the point of her lapse into madness. The landscape, one of the harshest in Spain, takes on a mythic status in the drawing, in which the traditional Andalusian themes of the bull, the pomegranate, the trickle of water through bone-dry earth come to represent the whole of Spain. Significantly, *Yerma* is the only drawing of Caballero's series not to visualize Spain through bourgeois themes, urban life, and the paraphernalia of commodity culture. The figure of Yerma herself is drawn in characteristic Caballeran style, the theme of multiple hands, worn, cracked, and rotted through, betraying the hardships of life that the woman's countenance will not reveal. Her intimate facial expression, looking down at her own fruitless belly, contrasts with her other ghostly, faceless profile turned wistfully toward the moon.

Yerma offers a powerful, pathos-ridden critique of Spain in 1939. It strongly suggests Caballero's deep despair over the bloodbath and the murder of his mentor Lorca. Its deep pathos becomes even more compelling when read in the light of official reports of wartime atrocities in Andalusia and elsewhere.[79] The medium of pen on paper (as opposed to the more permanent and public nature of oil on canvas), as well as the fact that the drawing was not published until 1990, makes it a private, even intimate expression of mourning and trauma that contrasts sharply with his more public production of this period. Its engagement with surrealist imagery is one of describing individual suffering rather than inciting organized resistance – something that isolates it ideologically from his more public aesthetic production after 1936 under Franco's regime.

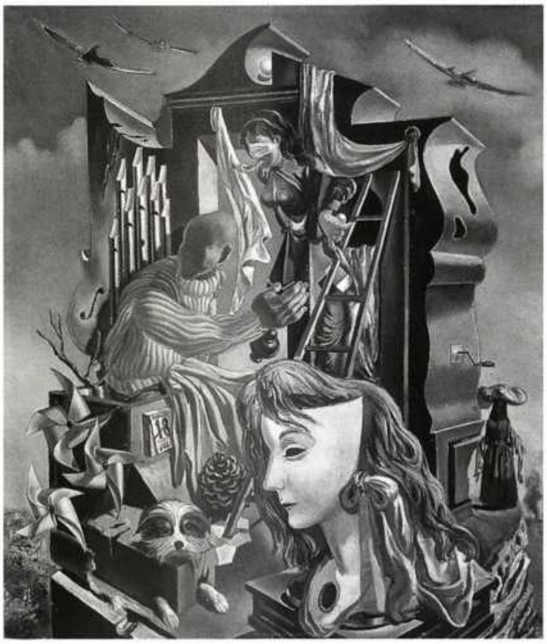
The discrepancy between Caballero's public and private production is important. One way of describing Caballero's public artistic persona is to examine the distance between two paintings: *The Broken Organ*, made in 1938 to illustrate the cover of *Vértice*, and a second version of the same subject, *Appointed Date* (*Fecha Determinada*) painted over the course of two decades from 1945 to 1967 (figs. 69 and 70). The first version, *Broken Organ*, shows a chaotic jumble of objects thrown together. As is often the case in Caballero's pictures, each object resonates with significance whose meaning is all the more intriguing for being veiled under the oddity of its relationship to the other objects in the frame. Playful children's whirligigs coexist alongside a cracked porcelain doll's head, a faceless man in a fisherman's sweater, and an equally faceless woman leaning out of a large pipe organ. The woman's name "Modesta" enigmatically appears on a scrap of paper pinned to the ground by a cross, as though at once a private memory and a tombstone inscription. In the background, a strangely dressed bourgeois pair stands under an umbrella. The organ that gathers all these objects within its enframing space is disjointedly put


VÉRTICE
REVISTA NACIONAL DE LA FALANGE ESPAÑOLA TRADICIONALISTA Y DE LAS J.O.N.S.
Modesta

69: José Caballero, *The Broken Organ* (*El órgano roto*), cover of *Vértice*, 1938. Photo courtesy of Widener Library, Harvard University

together, its crank ridiculously tiny and misplaced. Its pipes are surrounded by a ring of holes which might be air vents or, equally, bullet holes. The "broken" condition of the organ is a clear allegory for the ruin of Spain through civil warfare but Caballero deliberately refuses to spell out any more clearly the source or extent of the catastrophe.[80] Spain's disaster registers only vaguely through the lack of identity indicated by the faceless figures or in the cracks of the doll's head.

The second version, *Appointed Date* (*Fecha Determinada*), although begun while Caballero was still heavily involved in the cultural programs of Franco's regime, speaks much more directly of the Spanish Civil War. Caballero includes a calendar turned to the "fecha determinada" of Franco's attempted coup d'état, July 18, 1937.[81] The woman emerging from the pipe organ is now blindfolded, becoming a quirky allegory of Justice; the man remains faceless but his gesture now seems more clearly to indicate flight from an unnamed but omnipresent danger. Unmarked fighter planes now appear in the sky, like birds of prey. In the background, the

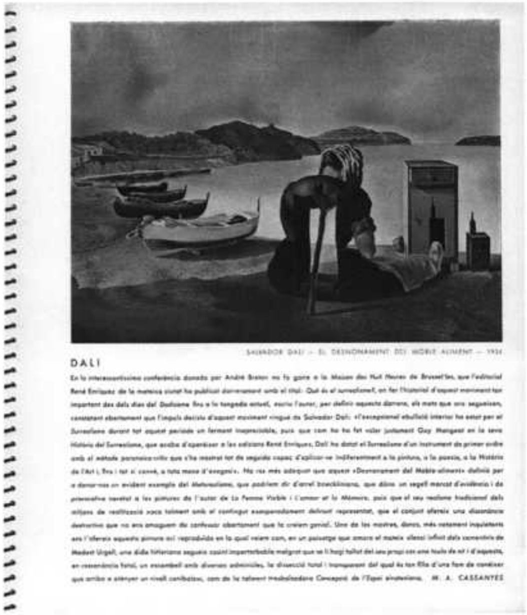


70: José Caballero, *Appointed Date* (*Fecha determinada*), 1945–67. Oil on canvas. 100 × 85cm. Photo courtesy of the Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid

bourgeois couple has been replaced by a traditional Spanish religious symbol of human tragedy, a black-robed mother carrying her dead son. Yet although by that time Caballero was more willing to risk explicit reference to the civil war, his attitude to it remained fatalistic; the painting's title indicates his sense that the bloodshed was unavoidable, as does his use of the Catholic symbolism of Christ's sacrificial death for the sins of humanity. While Caballero refers to the Spanish Civil War explicitly, on other levels he seems to retreat from the realm of the political to the realm of the personal, reinforcing rather than undermining their separation. He includes an image of his pet dog, and replaces the broken doll's face with a portrait of his wife, María Fernanda.[82] Their iconographic symbolism reads as markedly less invested with cultural tradition than the calendar, fighter planes, or pietà, and their inclusion drags at the intricate interreferencing of those more culturally accessible images. While this in itself is not enough to substantiate my claims about the artist's retreat into the personal as a refuge from the public realm, the point can be better driven home by comparing this usage to Dalí's invocation of his wife Gala as the highly "visible" focal point for a whole range of subversive practises embedded in the praxis of representation itself.[83] Whereas Gala for Dalí represented a mechanism for forcing the private realm of sexuality and the public realm of the political into seditious conjunction, María Fernanda represented for Caballero a means of escaping that very issue. While Dalí employed Gala as a central catalyst for expanding the theoretical parameters of his paranoiac-critic method, Caballero resolutely maintained his wife's image apart from any such theoretical incursions.

The two versions of the *Vértice* image (with the 1939 *Yerma* in the middle) demarcate something of the personal and artistic nightmare which the Spanish Civil War brought on for Caballero. The paintings suggest the vacillations he went through in securing his artistic and personal identity in the face of a conflict that demanded deeply rooted (if not necessarily well articulated) aesthetic and personal commitments. Relying on the account of Surrealism he had developed under the Republic in order to maneuver through the war's labyrinthine and life-threatening paths proved tricky indeed. Caballero's Surrealism, which he had never conceptualized in radical political terms and which he had imbued with what political and public consciousness it possessed under the auspices of a beleaguered bourgeois government, was hard pressed to provide any means of subverting fascist readings when direct iconographical references became too dangerous.

Caballero's fatalistic attitude to the Spanish Civil War and his use of Surrealism to retreat into his private world once again bring up questions about the effectiveness he much later claimed for surrealist stylistics in resisting fascism: "I tried to wrap into the Surrealism any intentionality in more or less conventional symbolisms."[84] This statement suggests that Caballero felt it was possible to utilize "conventional" symbolisms in a surrealist manner that, through its very form, would keep those symbolic references from remaining imprisoned in


SALVADOR DALI — EL DESNONAMENT DEL MOBLE ALIMENT — 1934
DALI
M. A. CASSANYES

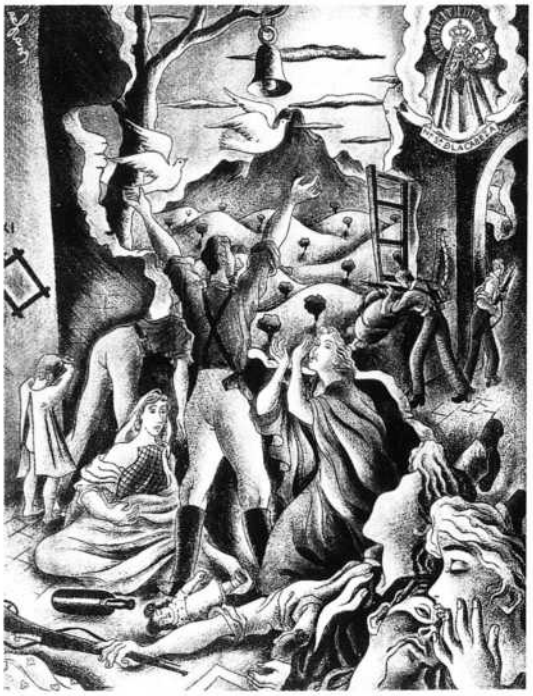
71: Salvador Dalí, *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, in *D'Aci i d'allà*, 1934

any fascist web of signification. The question arises: what, at this point, did Caballero think "surrealist" formal procedures were? The painter had developed a repertoire of formal and iconographic devices, as I have demonstrated for *Yerma*, *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie*, and his other surrealizing drawings, that indicates a familiarity with surrealist investigations of sexuality and the unconscious as sites for social critique through representation. He also clearly found intriguing Surrealism's technique of odd juxtaposition of objects to render conventional notions of reality strange. Yet there is no strong sign that Caballero ever adopted the mainstay of surrealist practise – automatism – as a representational ideology. As I indicated in the previous chapter, Spanish Surrealism as a whole distanced itself from taking automatism as a foundational principle and Caballero was no exception.[85]

While he rejected automatism, however, Caballero did embrace many of Dalí's stylistic and iconographic tropes. Is it possible, then, to find any sophisticated political usage of Dalí's paranoiac-critic method in the Andalusian painter's works? Returning to the first of Caballero's two illustrations for *Laureados de España 1936–1939*, one finds a potent example of the benefits, and pitfalls, of this borrowing (see fig. 55). This image shows a version of the "unknown soldier" martyred at his gunpost. Although no other human figures are shown (discounting the wreath-toting angels), the massive destruction of the surrounding city and landscape indicates that intensive and prolonged fighting has taken place that has required the absolute dedication of its participants. Here Caballero's stylistic trademark, the faceless figure, has been rallied in the service of fascist propaganda, not to indicate insecurities about identity (as is the case in *Diseases of the Bourgeoisie*, for example) but, rather, to suggest total allegiance to Franquist ideologies. Yet this overt reading becomes thoroughly complicated on remembering that Caballero borrowed heavily from Dalí. Dalisms are everywhere, from the putrefying horse in the middleground, to the lumpish cloth bags in the left foreground (similar to the "breasts" of the central figure in *The Specter of Sex Appeal* of 1934), to the sharp perspectival recession across a barren, detail-less landscape. The most striking appropriation is still Caballero's use of Dalí's *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*, published in the December 1934 issue of *D'aci i d'allà* (fig. 71). As I pointed out earlier, Caballero has lifted wholesale the slumped body of Dalí's wetnurse with her crutch, clothing it in soldier's garb and placing it next to a gun-rest "crutch" made of bundled sticks. Although the soldier's body does not manifest literally the hole cut out of the nursemaid's body, it is still there, displaced onto the ammunition "box" that the soldier wears across his back. Caballero could not, however, resist including in his *Laureados* image, to the soldier's left, the night-table cut out of the wetnurse's body. The windowless buildings repeat continuously the theme of the framing Dalínian hole across the entire scene of destruction, shifting the sexualized meaning it takes up in *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition* (and nominally in the soldier's ammunition case) to a more conventional notion of lifeless desolation.

While I claimed in Chapter 3 that there is a strong argument to be made for Dalí's painting as a powerful critique of fascism, the issue is far different in the instance of Caballero's image. To hope that a Dalínian-based criticism of fascism could be read as such when included in a fascist magazine for a right-wing public is a vain hope indeed. It becomes even more tenuous when one realizes that Caballero merely appropriated Dalí's iconography, not his representational praxis. The borrowed iconographic elements remain just that – borrowed. Having been only minimally processed through Caballero's own aesthetic, psychic, and experiential filters, these elements resonate hardly at all with the representational tactics of resistance (the paranoiac-critic method in particular) in which Dalí embedded them. Dalí's paranoiac-critic method employs, in fact, a praxis which runs seemingly against Caballero's: whereas Caballero depends on the specific iconographic meaning of (Dalínian) objects to carry whatever subversive intent the painting might hold, Dalí argues for an endless number of possible significations attachable to a single formal configuration, the number of significations limited only by the viewer's ability to imagine them. Dalí's method depended upon an "active process of thought" which would "systematize confusion and to contribute to the total discrediting of the world of reality."[86] There is no suggestion anywhere, either within the *Laureados* picture or within Caballero's larger practice, that he was attempting to appropriate that concept of activity. Nor is there the sense that Caballero grasped Dalí's point about the sliding of signification between signifier and signified, rather than its fixation, as what was important.[87]

Caballero's iconographic obscurantism and political ambivilences also influenced other artists working under Franco who wished to avoid the stifling traditionalism insisted upon in other sectors. Domingo Viladomat, Juan Antonio Acha, and José Romero Escassi all show signs of having studied Caballero's aesthetics closely; the work of all three contains stylistic motifs such as the faceless figure or the enlarged hand derived from Caballero (fig. 72). There is also the sense that these artists have gained their understanding of Dalí through Caballero's Dalinian uses of desolate landscapes, sharply receding perspective, and strange architectural formations, which are all reminiscent of Dalí's buildings and rock formations. All three artists were heavily involved not only in the *Laureados* project but also in attempting to bring Franco's cultural programs aesthetically up to date.[88] The stylistic borrowing from Caballero retains little of the artist's iconographic obscurantism and none of his political ambivalences, however, opting instead for a decidedly more straightforwardly right-wing subject matter, in which there is no room for doubt about the symbolism of, for example, the fallen statue or weeping figure in Vilodmat's *Laureados* picture, or the broken arm of the angel in Escassi's illustration.[89]



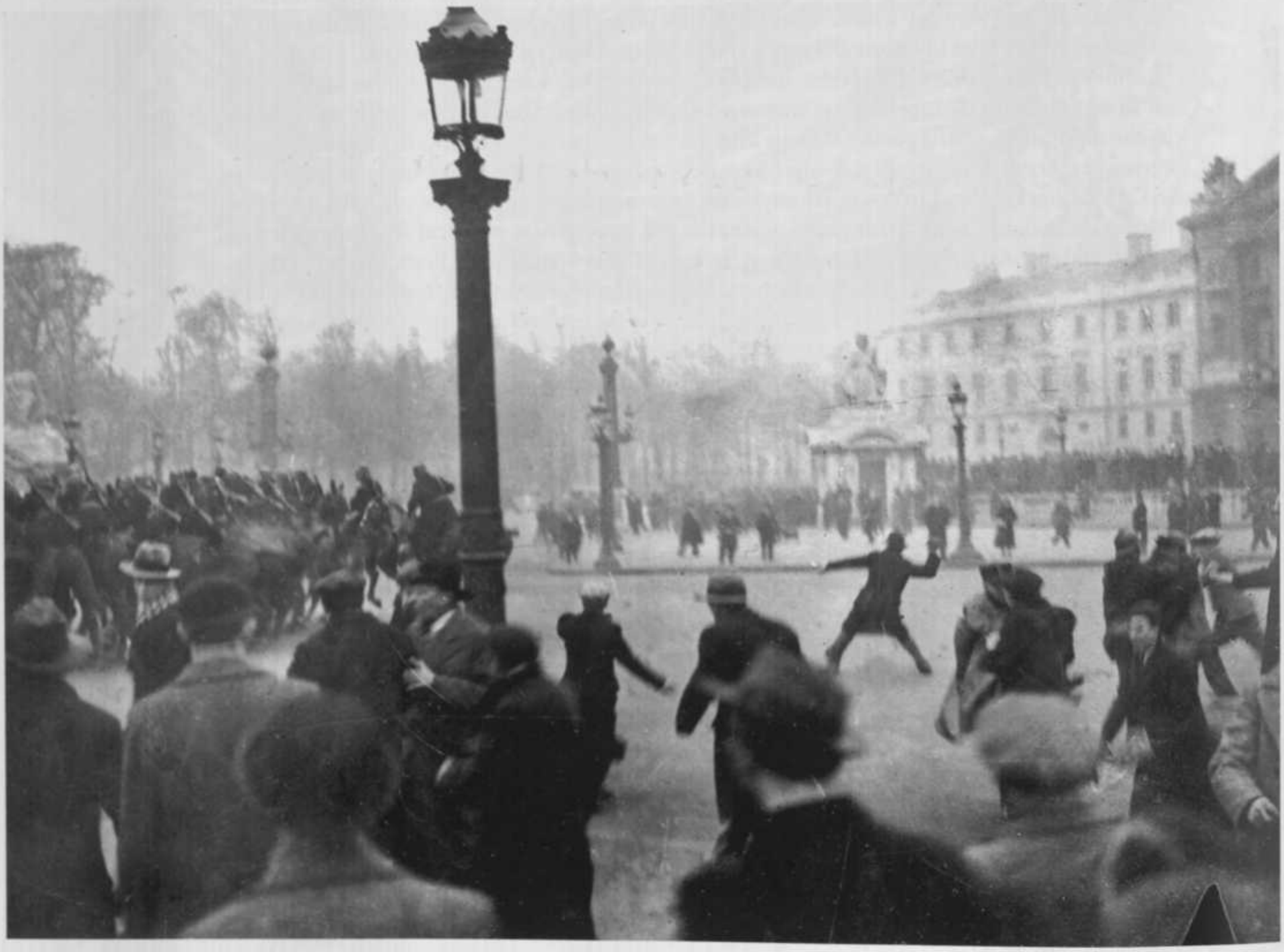
72: Juan Antonio Acha, illustration for *Laureados de España*, 1940. Photo courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid

The split evident here between the private poetic language of the later *Yerma* and the public attitude that characterizes *Appointed Date* resonates with other aspects of Caballero's production during the war years and first decade of the Franco dictatorship. *The Broken Organ* as well as the elements of *Appointed Date* most directly referring to the war were produced while Caballero was heavily involved in the Franco regime's cultural programs.[90] Sometime at the end of 1939 he joined the Departamento de Plástica, headed by Juan Cabanas, and was put in charge of the censorship bureau within the department. In 1941 Caballero and several others were transferred to the Sección de Organización de Actos Públicos y Plástica and then in 1951 he was also employed in the Sección de Arquitectura y Actos Públicos del Ministerio de Información y Turismo.[91] The Departamento de Plástica was in large part controlled by *falangistas liberales* characterized by their

favorable attitude to intellectuals, their Ortega y Gasset inheritance, and their willingness to accept past Republican culture (after a certain screening process).[92] This group was in the minority, though, soon to be eliminated; the majority were anti-intellectual, anti-Ortegan, intolerant, and *revanchista*.[93] The modernists predominated during the war until 1941 but soon came under the pressure of the more conservative Falangists.[94] Caballero's production mirrored this shift when in the 1940s he completed works for the more conservative, traditionalist *Arriba España*, including two realist portraits of the Falange's founder, José Antonio Primo de Rivera.[95] This, along with evidence that as censor he purged any image not realist or naturalist while continuing to employ a surrealizing stylistics himself, deepens one's sense of the split in his aesthetic and moral ideologies. It was a split only tenuously, if ever, overcome.

It comes as no surprise that, under the pressure of Franco's regime, Caballero maintained such an acute distinction between private and public. Despite that regime's early association with the modernist aesthetics of German and Italian fascism and its support of home-grown theorists like Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Franco soon began to privilege his more conservative, Catholic backers and to downplay anything experimental or new in the cultural field. Since "new" was associated with avant-garde aesthetics no matter what political stripe they carried (one remembers Arconada's statement), it is logical that Caballero's Franquist supervisors would have scrutinized his surrealist aesthetics quite intensely. Since neither he nor his fellow artists ever developed the sort of deeply rooted sense of the connection between Surrealism and a leftist political culture one finds in France, there was really nothing he could fall back on other than the type of forlorn private anguish seen in the 1939 *Yerma*. What is striking is that it was only in the margins – geographical and ideological – that Spanish Surrealism ever attained a level of public political critique similar to that in France, and that it did so at enormous risk.[96] This suggests that in order to maintain a consistent, long-term public critique, Surrealism as an aesthetic movement needed to be solidly allied with other political movements or cultures. That is, it needed to have, as it did in France, a strong sense of the trajectory from private to public, from individual to societal, across boundaries of nation and class. It only adds to the tragedy of the Spanish Civil War that Surrealism in Spain never fully attained these goals.

Detail of Figure 55



Fascist riots, 6 February 1934, Paris. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

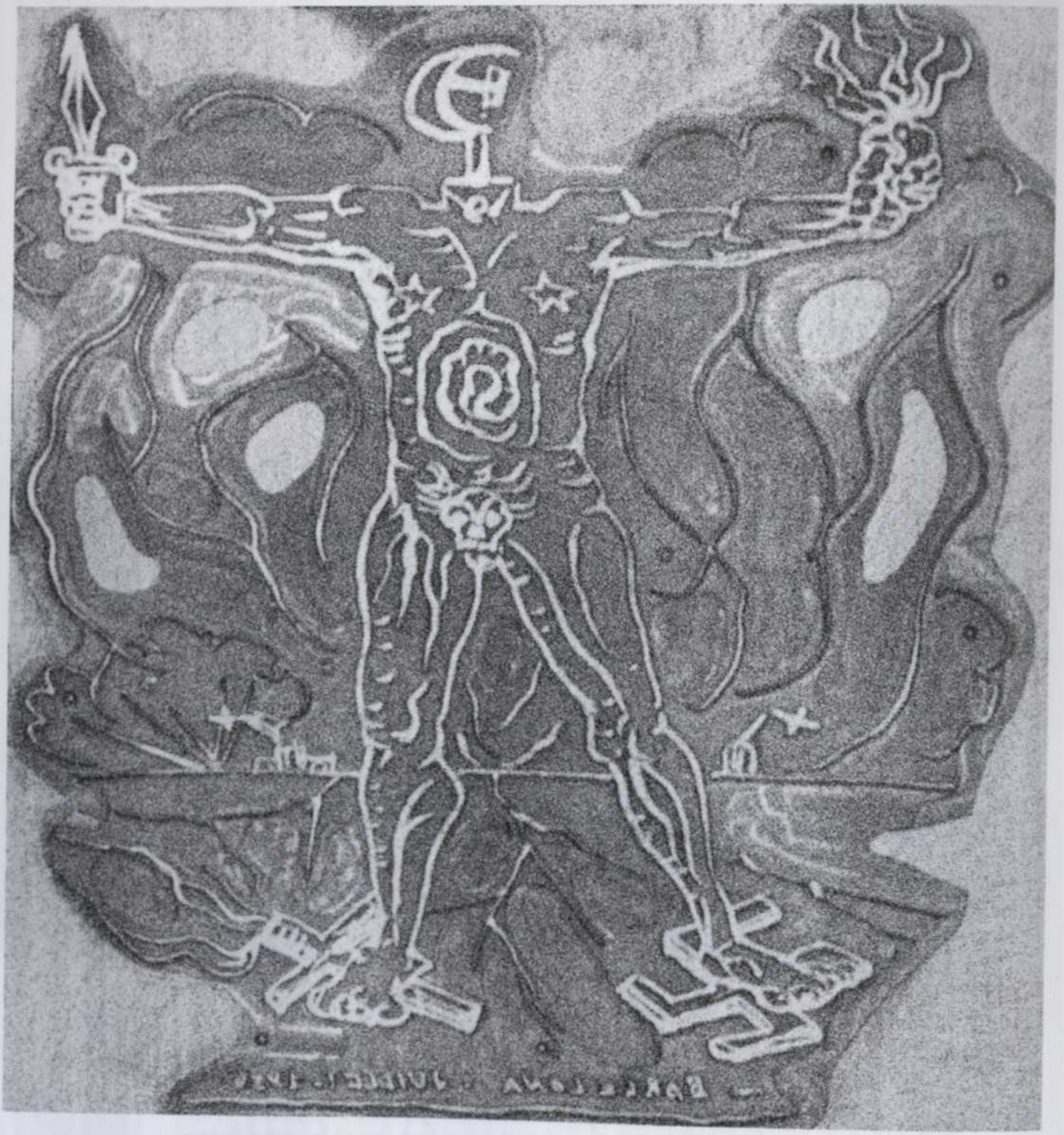
5

THE BARCELONA *ACÉPHALE*: SPAIN AND THE POLITICS OF VIOLENCE IN THE WORK OF ANDRÉ MASSON

At the outset of the Spanish Civil War, the self-styled "rebel Surrealist" André Masson produced an untitled drawing, which he subsequently converted into a cliché-zinc plate ready for printing (fig. 73). The plate shows a powerful male figure towering against the backdrop of a bombarded city, arms outstretched to clench a dagger in one hand and a flaming heart in the other. "Headed" by the communist hammer and sickle, he crushes a swastika and a crucifix beneath his feet. Other symbols mark his body as a sacred site of eerie and ferocious power: stars stud his chest, his entrails form a labyrinth, and a human skull replaces his penis to conflate the powers of death with those of life. The figure seems to stride forward out of a cloud of smoke and flame, as though risen out of the very ashes of the city burning behind him. The words "Barcelona Juillet 1936" running along the bottom of the picture key the viewer in geographically and temporally, to show that this terrifying figure with his strange mix of mythic and political symbols garners his immense force from the circumstances of the Spanish Civil War.

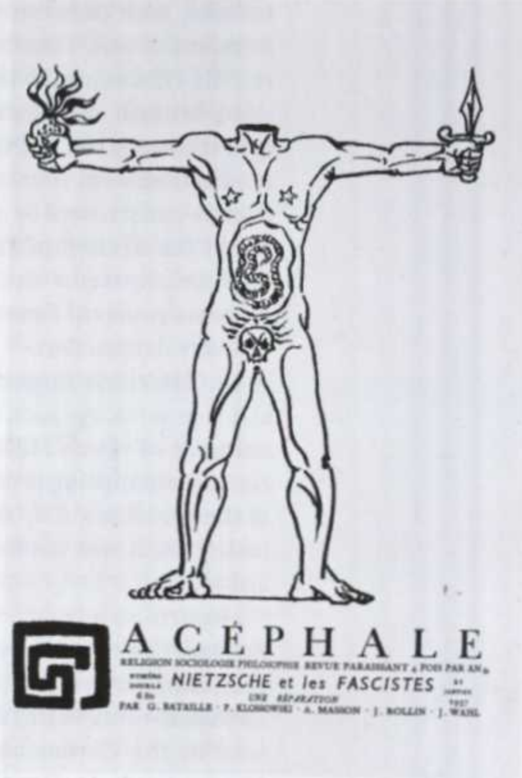
BARCELONA, 1936

The Barcelona *Acéphale*, as I shall call it, thus presents a highly particular pictorial strategy with which to confront the Spanish Civil War. It pinpoints Masson's personal connection to Spain and to the war itself. The artist's encounter with Spain hinged on several important factors which affected from the start how he experienced the country. He was in Paris in 1934 during



73: André Masson, untitled (the Barcelona *Acéphale*) (1936) Cliché-zinc plate. Photo courtesy of Françoise Levaillant the fascist riots of February 6, a double showing of violence on the part of French fascists and a repressive government, which seems to have shaken him considerably.[1] He fled Paris for Spain, in a self-imposed exile from fascism and a search for mythic renewal: "Events in France are disagreeable to me. I think of leaving. It is a flight. . . . Oh yes, a tendancy toward exile. A break. The need to break routine, to break habits. To start again. As in the Egyptian myths, where the body was sewn into a cow's skin so that it would be born again."[2]

The February riots triggered in Masson the fear of being swept up in social conflict similar to that which had cost him his mental and physical health in the First World War, yet his self-"exile" to Spain proved to be anything but an escape.[3] Unaware of the mounting tension between Spanish leftists and right-wing proto-fascists, Masson and his wife Rose Maklès were caught in street fighting in Barcelona during the 1934 October insurrection in Catalonia and the Asturias. After two weeks, the army brutally crushed the revolt and the Madrid government began heavy reprisals.[4] Still not convinced of the seriousness of the Spanish situation, the Massons decided to remain in Catalonia, where they received visits from Bataille and Leiris in 1935. On July 17, 1936 Franco attempted a military coup d'état, meeting with unexpectedly fierce armed opposition, and the next day the civil war officially began. On July 20, President Lluís Companys of the Catalan Generalitat proposed to the anarchists the formation of the Comitè Central de Milícies Antifeixistes (CCMA, Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias); it organized resistance to the fascists and effectively became Catalonia's center of power. Masson, unable to maintain his previous attitude of non-involvement, offered his services to the Committee in August and set to work designing insignia for various international brigades.[5] At the end of 1936, suffering from nervous collapse due to the war, he fled Spain with his family for southern France, carrying with him a single portfolio of drawings and only one painting.[6]


ACÉPHALE
RELIGION SOCIOLOGIE PHILOSOPHIE REVUE PARAISSANT 4 FOIS PAR AN
NIETZSCHE et les FASCISTES
UNE RÉPARATION
PAR G. BATAILLE · P. KLOSSOWSKI · A. MASSON · J. ROLLIN · J. WAHL

74: André Masson, *Acéphale*, no. 2 (January 1937)

The Barcelona *Acéphale* also, it is obvious, makes direct connections between Masson's Spanish Civil War experiences and the journal *Acéphale*, the brainchild of Masson's close friend Bataille. The journal, produced between 1936 and 1939, was sustained largely by the energy of Bataille but included significant input from Masson and others. Bataille himself emphasized Masson's crucial contribution in the very first essay, and the artist's drawing of an acephalic man became the journal's signature (fig. 74). *Acéphale* sought to bring a revitalized Nietzschean philosophy to bear on the political situation of 1930s Europe, as a means of counteracting the viciousness of fascism and Stalinism on the one hand, and the deadening mediocrity of the Popular Front on the other. While this Nietzschean philosophy addresses many issues, what I am specifically interested in is the attitude to violence in relation to human subjectivity that Masson and Bataille developed jointly in the figure of *Acéphale*. Throughout this chapter I explore how this might be understood as a political strategy, particularly as both men sought to turn a radical theory of the decentered self into a political opposition to fascism. I compare this attitude with Masson's other Spanish Civil War production and with the Barcelona *Acéphale*. The Barcelona *Acéphale* directly reproduces the figure Masson designed for the journal's front cover in its upright and tensed position, adding to it the symbolic forms of the cross, swastika, and communist hammer and sickle and placing it in the context of a burning Barcelona at war. Thus the communist symbol provides the "head" that will purportedly motivate the Nietzschean body to defeat the dual enemy of fascism and Catholicism securely pinioned beneath the figure's feet. The Barcelona *Acéphale* invokes communism as a bulwark against the clerical and fascist threat, bringing the visual rhetoric of organized resistance into conjunction with *Acéphale*'s language of ritualized self-annihilation. The boldness of such a claim is underscored by the clarity of the picture's structure, by the assurance of its etched line, and by the strident monumentality of the figure itself. The *Acéphale* body with its communist head towers over a scene of aerial bombing in the background, seemingly born out of the immense sweep of flames from the burning city, as if gaining vitality and purpose of will from that very destruction.

The Barcelona *Acéphale* thus marks a deliberate effort to modify Nietzsche with communism and vice versa. As such, it is part of Masson's longer project to rethink Marxism outside the stalemate to which Stalin and the Popular Front governments had brought it. Breton and others were attempting to do the same from within orthodox Surrealism but Masson's production of the Barcelona *Acéphale* indicates his distance from his former Surrealist colleague; in the mid-1930s, it was not Breton but Bataille with whom Masson discussed his political concerns and ideas.

Frequently, however, Masson's politics are read solely as a reflection of Bataille's, and his *Acéphale* drawings are seen as merely "illustrating" – rather than complementing, expanding, generating, or even contradicting – Bataille's texts.[7] From a certain point of view, this is understandable: both shared a deep disillusionment with Marxism, especially in the form put forward by the Communist Party. In June 1936, just before the start of the Spanish Civil War, Masson wrote to Daniel-Henri Kahnweiler: "I am above all a man for whom the world has more than just a Marxist or nationalist meaning. And in art, I will always remain obstinately revolutionary!"[8] Bataille shared this view. Both men found Marxism's emphasis on rationalism suspect; they deplored Stalin's perversion of revolutionary politics; and they objected to the French Front Populaire's mealy-mouthed response to its Spanish counterpart's pleas for help to combat fascism. Masson's oft-expressed distaste for card-carrying politics was, if anything, more extreme than Bataille's; the latter continued to write actively during the 1930s for Marxist or Marxist-friendly publications, including Boris Souveraine's *La Critique sociale* and the Contre-Attaque group.

Masson and Bataille also shared an interest in myth and ritual sacrifice, which had already resulted in the 1936 book *Sacrifices*, for which Bataille contributed the text while Masson provided the images. This interest signaled their conviction that neither capitalism nor Marxism offered sufficient address to humanity's spiritual side; but they also sought to counter the Nazis' powerful ability to tap into a warped spiritualism so as to organize mass social violence. To this end, Masson and Bataille investigated such non-redemptive ritual sacrifices as that of the Minotaur, as a means of characterizing the violence inherent in human subjectivity in non-utilitarian, non-fascist forms. Against the hierarchical structure of organized political parties and governments (Nazi Germany being the extreme), they investigated myth to formulate a non-hierarchical and subversive political structure. Against homogeneous society, or what Bataille derisively described as a "productive society, namely, useful society" in which "each man is worth what he produces," he and Masson looked to ritual sacrifice in order to conceptualize a "useless," non-cooptable energy.[9] Masson himself would not have denied his closeness to Bataille during the 1930s and it is a connection I trace through *Acéphale* and its successor, *Miroir de la tauromachie*, especially as these publications spring from Masson's Spanish experience.[10]

Nevertheless, there are indications that Masson was not entirely content with Bataille's political approach. Masson's anti-Marxist attitude softened considerably after August 1936, when he began producing work directly under the auspices of at least two widely different political parties: he worked for the anarchist government in Barcelona but also designed, among other things, an insignia for an Irish communist fighting brigade.[11] He began drawing political caricatures ferociously criticizing Franco's coup d'état and the Spanish Catholic Church. These drawings display a much more conventional political attitude than *Acéphale*, with a standard opposition of good and evil. Unlike *Acéphale*, who embodies all moral positions but chooses none, the Spanish Civil War drawings place both artist and viewer firmly on the side of the Spanish Republic (that is, on the side of good), while Franco, his troops, and his clerical backers in the Catholic Church personify evil. These drawings also pay visual tribute to Goya, rather than the Nietzschean *Acéphale*, with specific political consequences which I discuss further on.

The discrepancy between *Acéphale* and the Spanish Civil War drawings thus raises the question of political effectiveness: why, having developed an Acéphalean politics, did Masson suddenly reject it when faced with the civil war itself? What do the Spanish Civil War drawings say about the possibility and impossibility of equivocation – or, alternatively, the necessity for unambiguous action – in the face of fascism? What did Masson imagine to be the effective spheres for *Acéphale* versus the drawings and was there any overlap? And so on. Even in the Barcelona *Acéphale* itself, Masson paradoxically affirms and undermines the notion of politics embedded in the figure of *Acéphale*. In fact, the Barcelona *Acéphale* sets forth a disturbingly different concept of political resistance to totalitarianism, of political activity, and of the invocation of mythic symbolism from the more purely Nietzschean *Acéphale* – an issue to which I return.

In the end, the Barcelona *Acéphale* was never published, leading one to wonder exactly why not.[12] Did Masson – or his prospective publishers – suddenly get cold feet? Did they hesitate over the appropriateness of the symbolic juncture between Nietzsche and communism? Did they feel insecure about the mediation between *Acéphale*'s invocations of myth, sacrifice, and Nietzschean anti-reason on the one hand and the rationalist economics and strategic politics advocated by the Communist Party on the other? It is tempting to read the Barcelona *Acéphale*'s unpublished status as a sign of the limits or failure of the image itself. Although the evidence for such a reading is inconclusive, one can nevertheless think of the picture as embodying precisely the doubts and uncertainties faced by Masson and other artists in 1936. This picture in particular registers the eruption into Masson's Acéphalean politics of the civil war's real events, along with all their moral and political confusions.

MASSON, BATAILLE, AND *ACÉPHALE* (1936–9)

Masson had talked with Bataille, Leiris, and others about forming an "orphic and nietzschean" secret society since 1925[13] but it was not until 1936, in response to the failures of the organized left in both Spain and France to keep fascism at bay, that such a secret society came into being.[14] The journal *Acéphale* was its public front. Masson theorized *Acéphale* in tandem with Bataille, who noted the significance of the geographical "birthplace" of the journal: the Masson household in Tossa de Mar, Catalonia.[15] *Acéphale* published only four issues sporadically from 1936 to 1939 before disappearing. Despite its strange existence as the public voice of a very unpublic group, the journal counted upon some of the most innovative minds of the period, including Masson, Bataille, Roger Caillois, Pierre Klossowski, Jean Wahl, Jean Rollin, and the

Asturies
CATALUNYA

74a: Popular Front demonstration, Barcelona 1936. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

Martiniquan intellectual Jules-Marcel Monnerot. (Leiris must also have been involved in discussions over what direction *Acéphale* would take but differences of opinion with Bataille meant that he did not join the group.[16])

Acéphale was in part a response to the failure of Contre-Attaque, the collaborative effort of French leftist intellectuals in 1935 to combat fascism after the riots of February 1934.[17] In October of 1935, Breton and Bataille brought together their constituencies to form Contre-Attaque in an effort to create a viable public platform for concrete political action bridging ideological differences among the left. (Masson, who had already gone into exile in Spain, did not join.) The organization never lived up to its ideal, however, and succumbed in March 1936 to a rhetoric verging on leftist dogmatism and a Popular Front idealism that ignored class differences.[18]

Acéphale was also a response to the failures (as its members saw it) of Marxism. On the level of practical politics, the Soviet Union maintained iron control over its various national parties, including the Parti Communiste Français, whose leader Maurice Thorez was firmly in collaboration with the Comintern. The 1935 Franco-Soviet alliance, followed closely by the Comintern's support of the Popular Front coalition, meant that class struggle and workers' rights were put on hold in favor of an alliance with the social democrats and a policy of national security against the right. The Popular Front itself soon drifted into mediocrity, caught in parliamentary political struggles, while the PCF remained faithful to Moscow despite growing evidence of Stalinist atrocities (figure 74a). On a philosophical level, *Acéphale* spurned Marxism's fundamentally phenomenological bent, its emphasis on conscious will and utilitarian production to the exclusion of the irrational, the deliriously spiritual, or the excessive in human existence.[19]

It is no surprise that Masson was not involved in the predominantly Marxist Contre-Attaque, despite the group's efforts to include non-Marxists. In 1925 he agreed publicly with orthodox Surrealism's endorsement of the Communist Party's Marxist-Leninism, although he modified this considerably in a private letter to Leiris.[20] By the moment of Contre-Attaque a decade later, the artist had long since deserted Breton's camp and was thoroughly disillusioned with existing Marxist discourse. In a 1935 letter to Bataille, Masson's tone was predictably hostile:

> The question is: 1 – Yes or No, are there irrational elements in the human spirit? 2 – Are these irrational elements inseparable from all human life? When one responds in the affirmative, as I do, one is thereby obliged to *detest Marxism* since its bases are solely rationalist and utilitarian and because it obstinately rejects all that is not [rationalist].[21]

Masson, like Bataille, criticized extant interpretations of Marxism for their insensitivity to certain factors in human subjectivity ("human spirit" or "human life" in Masson's words), in particular to the psychic, the non-rational, and the non-utilitarian. Marxism's inability to address these aspects of subject formation, Masson complained, directly undermined its efficacy as a political theory of mass organization. Indeed, until 1936 Masson was much more categorical and belligerent in his distaste for all flavors of Marxism than Bataille. Not until the Spanish Civil War broke out did he once again come to distinguish between different Marxist ideologies and factions, or consider them as practical political strategies (figure 74b).

Acéphale was also in part a response to Bataille's recognition of his own dangerous flirtation with the Nazi use of mass violence to promote its fascist political agenda.[22] This unfortunate tendency was most evident in his 1935 speech "Front populaire dans la rue," given at a Contre-Attaque meeting, in which Bataille argued for the liberation of "contagious emotion" that would turn the "hesitating man into a frenzied being," freeing up the "brutal convulsion of the masses."[23] He addressed his comments to France's new Front Populaire coalition, warning its members against furthering the "boredom" inflicted by fascism and communism on the working masses. But the speech came too close for comfort to advocating the conjunction of organized political systems with the tendency to spontaneous violence of the masses that characterized Nazi tactics. *Acéphale*, as the voice of a secret society without mass public intentions, was a counter-proposal to the failings of Bataille's previous attitude to organized violence. Its contributors sought to set in motion the revolutionary violence of human passions, but outside of – indeed, against – any organized political activities. Its own leaderless configuration ("headless," as Masson's drawing envisions) sought to undermine any attempts to coopt those orgiastic, destructive passions for organized political use as the Nazis had already begun to do.[24]

74b: Arms distribution to Republican troups. Photo courtesy of Roger-Viollet, Paris

Masson's drawing on the cover gives key indications of how *Acéphale* imagined its political venture (see fig. 74). Standing solitary, monumental and headless, the powerful male figure encourages thoughts on how the individual human body should be conceptualized, and what philosophical positions should guide its social and political actions. Philosophical addresses to human subjectivity and the physical body are intertwined in the *Acéphale*: he dominates almost the whole of the title page, a symbol of ecstatic male virility and passion whose feet are planted firmly on the earth, arms outstretched to hold two sacred objects in his hands. The line which Masson uses to draw the *Acéphale* connotes strength, firmness, even aggression. It is a pen mark that genders, using masculinity to indicate power. Yet gender and maleness are never straightforward: the moment Masson inscribes *Acéphale* with traditional masculine authority, he undercuts that authority through decapitation. Power eminates not from the head, the traditional seat of reason, but from escaping that tradition entirely through beheading. Decapitation thus signals not the end of life but a new vigor.[25] Bataille writes in *Acéphale*'s first essay:

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> Human life is exhausted from serving as the head of, or the reason for, the universe. . . . Man has escaped from his head just as the condemned man has escaped from his prison. He has found beyond himself not God, who is the prohibition against crime, but a being who is unaware of prohibition.[26]

Masson's drawing encapsulates this sense of man's death; it is a death that occurs through forces that move him beyond the constraints of reason and consciousness, a death that paradoxically unleashes power. Masson's figure is not only headless but godless and valueless as well; he is a sacred being who encompasses Bataille's fervent statement in the journal's opening essay that "We are ferociously religious" while adamantly denying the possibility of linking that sentiment to any single absolute value such as "God." *Acéphale* is a deliberately decapitated being who rejects all attempts at hierarchical authority as well as the moral values that accompany such authority.[27] Thus he delineates a philosophical position in which "the highest values are devalued," in which no material or moral goal can be set up as that which defines human existence.[28] *Acéphale*, continues Bataille, is

> made of innocence and crime; he holds a steel weapon in his left hand, flames like those of a Sacred Heart in his right. He reunites in the same eruption Birth and Death. He is not a man. He is not a god either. He is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words as a monster.[29]

Taken with Masson's image, this passage begins to indicate how *Acéphale* exemplifies the ecstatic release of power through a violent annihilation of the self. Death occurs at the same moment as Birth. And paradoxically, the labyrinth of *Acéphale*'s own entrails becomes the space where self-loss leads to self-discovery. However, it is an ecstatic and overwhelming discovery of the self as other: "I discover myself as him, in other words as a monster." Other and self are conflated in Masson's *Acéphale* to become the solitary, virile figure of towering and monstrous proportions. *Acéphale* violently negates conventional boundaries of the self imposed by homogeneous society, and thus challenges traditional hierarchies of authority that structure society and existence, and our experience of them, into a unified, organic whole. Against the hierarchizing of experience that characterizes this society, *Acéphale* proposes an investment in what Michel Foucault (taking his cue from Bataille) calls the "limit-experience" of excess, the incomprehensible impossible that lies beyond the possible.[30] It is for this reason that Bataille writes of *Acéphale* as paradoxically "made of innocence and crime"; *Acéphale* is a figure that exists beyond moral codes, or in Nietzsche's famous phrase, "beyond good and evil."[31]

Nietzsche, rather than Marx, is clearly the philosophical keystone here. *Acéphale* follows Nietzsche in proclaiming the death of God, as well as the German philosopher's dream of liberating the power of spiritual ecstasy from the chains of conventional morality. He provided the model for *Acéphale*'s exploration of religious ecstasy without a central focus whose power occurs through the deliberate sacrifice of its "head" or leader.[32] *Acéphale* also utilized a Nietzschean framework for conceptualizing violence as inherent to the human condition. Related to this is Nietzsche's notion of force, which *Acéphale* configures as a violence that originates not in morality but exists entirely apart from moral preoccupations.

Much has been written on Bataille's debt to Nietzsche, although next to nothing on Masson's similar debt.[33] Writers have paid particular attention to how Bataille's central themes – the sacred, violence, excess, *dépense* (waste or expenditure that opposes capitalist production and use value), of debasement – are prefigured in Nietzsche's works, and that Bataille paid special attention to *The Will to Power, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Gay Science*.[34] Indeed, the *Acéphale* group dedicated the entire second issue of the journal to rescuing Nietzsche from Nazi attempts at cooptation (see fig. 74). The point of this chapter is not to determine how faithfully *Acéphale* interprets Nietzsche's ideas; it would be a nigh impossible task to pin down a secure relationship between the journal and such a difficult and unsystematic thinker as Nietzsche. Nor am I concerned with rehearsing the many aspects of Bataille's Nietzschean vision. However, I am interested in tracking how the figure of *Acéphale* develops a Nietzschean concept of violence in relation to human subjectivity, and how both Masson and Bataille conceptualized this as a political strategy. This is important for any understanding not only of *Acéphale* but also of Masson's other Spanish Civil War drawings and of the Barcelona *Acéphale*.

Acéphale represents an attempt to define violence outside the normative polarity of good versus evil, and apart from what Bataille saw to be a misguided positivist interpretation of the Hegelian master–slave dialectic of dominant and dominated.[35] To define violence in normative terms is to assign a morality to it and to articulate seemingly fixed subject positions in terms of that morality. Delimiting violence in terms of good and evil thus poses several problems: in determining these moral positions, to what logic do we appeal apart from the hazardously flawed pseudo-logics of personal opinion or common sense? And what are we to do when the boundaries between moral positions become unfixed, confounded, indistinguishable? In the 1930s Bataille in particular was anxious to avoid defining Nazi violence as somehow completely other to leftist resistance to it. Leo Bersani has argued along these lines that:

> For Bataille, a false perspective on Nazism gives an account of it . . . cut off from the desiring energies that produced it . . . In its avoidance of this reifying seriousness about History and Politics, Bataille's art of vertiginous replications is designed to make us feel that we are already everywhere in history, and that an ethos of political engagement is grounded in the illusion that we have not produced the violence against which we struggle.[36]

To claim that fascist violence was incomprehensibly different from the political engagement of the left, as many did, was in Bataille's mind to risk radically misunderstanding the source of that violence and its inherence in all politics, no matter what the ideological stripe. As both Bataille and Masson recognized, it is impossible to rid society of violence altogether, since it is inherent in the makeup of the human subject. Such observations in turn affect our concept of politics. The question for *Acéphale* became, therefore, not how to exorcize violence *per se* but rather how to reformulate its underlying suppositions differently from those of fascism. In its attempt to resolve this dilemma, *Acéphale* defines violence apart from moral judgment and outside pragmatic terms of its use-value. *Acéphale* would practice a completely "useless" violence against the pragmatics of Nazi deathcamps, institutionalized racism, and military strategies. Nevertheless, it would be a "useless," anti-pragmatic violence that would acknowledge the intensity of human existence.

Instead of a violence turned out toward society, Masson's drawing of *Acéphale* gives us a violence turned inward on the individual self.[37] Instead of conceptualizing violence as purely functional and destructive, *Acéphale* imagines it, disengaged from all externally oriented practical usage, as rejuvenating the individual. Bataille terms such a force "sacred," to be activated secretly in the realms of ritual and myth; Masson images a lone, virile figure brandishing sacred objects, and whose own torso is made up of the pre-Christian signs of the labyrinth and the human skull.[38] The skull, replacing the penis, refigures male sexuality in terms of decapitation and death, while the labyrinth symbolizes non-directive forces whose power cannot be brought into the service of a hierarchical, homogeneous political system.[39] Masson thus visually confounds the high with the low, linear structures of power with the twisted logic of the labyrinth, reason with sexuality and base bodily functions. In *Acéphale* he images destruction and debasement as the bodily site of renewed power. They become the source for a sacred violence that takes the individual beyond the bounds of mundane, daily life into the realm of extremes, of excess at the limit of sensation and experience. Visually, these concepts lie at the heart of the seeming paradox of how *Acéphale* is drawn; headlessness does not prevent – rather it inspires – the power and supreme confidence of the bold line delineating his body. And sacred violence is something that undermines the illusion of a coherent sense of the self. Masson, by means of that crucial decapitation, images the self in terms of its destruction, in terms of its impossibility.

Another way of looking at *Acéphale*'s Nietzschean concepts of violence and the sacred in relation to human subjectivity and human action is through Bataille's notion of experience in the 1930s. Julia Kristeva, contrasting Bataille's vision with Catholicism, has written that "the weakness of Christianity, according to Bataille, is its inability to disengage the non-discursive operations from discourse itself, its confusion of *experience* with *discourse*, and thus its reduction to the possibilities of discourse what largely exceeds it."[40] Bataille, as Kristeva notes, insists on defining experience as something that exceeds discourse. He does so in order to retain in that definition a sense of the impossible and the excessive, something that cannot be brought into the service of discourse, that is, made practical and mundane. In this, Bataille defines an aspect of human subjectivity similar to Masson's sense of the "irrational" in the "human spirit" that I noted earlier.[41]

Foucault, discussing this same notion of the excessive in experience, has contrasted Bataille and Nietzsche with phenomenology:

> The phenomenologist's experience is basically a way of organizing the perception [*regard réflexif*] of any aspect of daily, lived experience in its transitory form. Nietzsche [and] Bataille . . . on the contrary, try through experience to reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme. They attempt to gather the maximum amount of intensity and impossibility at the same time. The work of the phenomenologist, however, essentially consists of unfolding the entire field of possibilities connected to daily experience.[42]

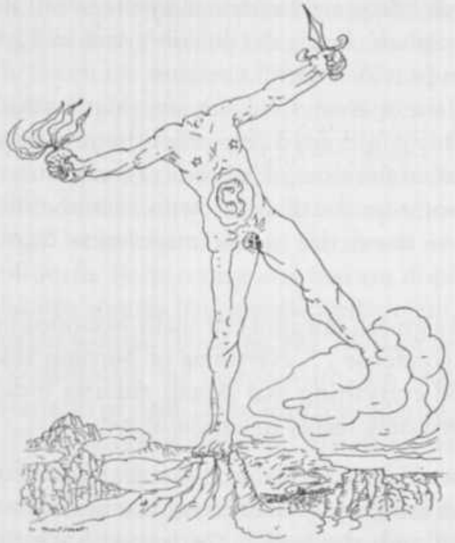
The distinctions Foucault sees between Bataille and Nietzsche on the one hand and phenomonologists on the other are further based in two distinct modes of conceptualizing human subjectivity. Phenomenology, according to Foucault, makes the mistake of attempting

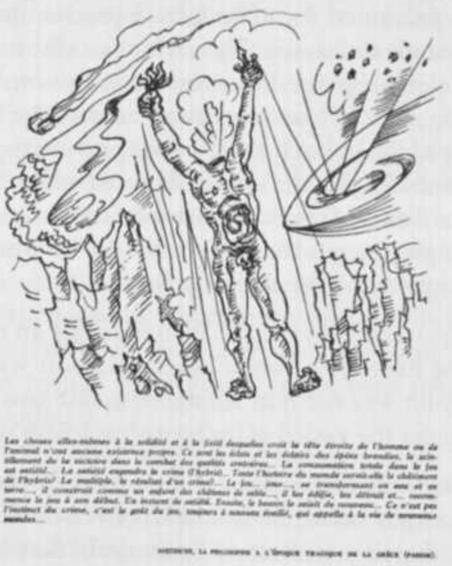
> to grasp the significance of daily experience in order to reaffirm the fundamental character of the subject, of the self, of its transcendental functions. On the contrary, experience according to Nietzsche . . . and Bataille has rather the task of "tearing" the subject from itself in such a way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely "other" than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation.[43]

For Nietzsche and Bataille subjectivity, and by consequence human experience, is constituted through vertiginous violence that constantly sunders any illusion of organized coherency. But it is a violence in relation to the human body that has a far different political goal from that of fascism (or, for that matter, Marxism).

To press this point home, *Acéphale*'s editorial board dedicated the January 1937 issue to rescuing Nietzsche from Nazi cooptation, but for a purpose beyond anything offered by existing political configurations of either right or left.[44] This issue focused on Nietzsche's mobilization of the human will and aggressive instincts in the service of breaking down existing homogeneous structures of power. Bataille had previously described such structures as having "as a goal always to deprive the universe in which we live as much as possible of all sources of excitation, and to develop a servile human species capable only of producing [*fabrication*], of rational consumation and of conserving the fruits of production [*produits*]."[45]

Dullness, utility, servility, and boredom were anathemas for *Acéphale*, which embodied instead the self-shattering power of limit-experience. Masson's series of three *Acéphale* drawings, produced for the Nietzsche issue, makes specific links from this sense of the self-annihilating Nietzschean subject to Masson's personal limit-experiences and to Spain. In the first image *Acéphale* strides across the the Spanish mountain range of Montserrat, the landscape of which seems to feed the sacred figure its enormous power (fig. 75); in the following two *Acéphale* is at the center of a whirling cosmos of clouds, stars, and Montserrat's craggy mountain peaks. Underneath the second is a quotation from Nietzsche that questions human belief in the "fixity" and "solidity" of "things," including the belief in the coherent human self (fig. 76). Masson drew the images after spending a terrifying, hallucinatory night on Montserrat in 1936. Caught between the abyss at the mountain's edge and what he perceived as the abyss of the starred sky opening above, the painter suffered a crisis of nerves, a relapse into his mental illness of the First World War.[46] His vertiginous experience of that double void, sensed by him as a terrifying personal powerlessness, embodied that transformatory "impossibility of living" that Foucault has described. In the three Montserrat drawings Masson converted the intensity of that experience into the source of *Acéphale*'s ecstatic power.





75 (*above left*): André Masson, *Acéphale /Montserrat*, no. 2 (January 1937)

76 (*above right*): Masson, *Acéphale /Cosmos*, no. 2 (January 1937)

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For Masson and Bataille one of the functions of violence, channeled through myth, was to upset the mundane and everyday. It was to challenge, as a political act, the "solidity" of "things" and the fixity of meaning. This had been a preoccupation of Masson's for several years, as a 1929 *Documents* essay by Carl Einstein shows. For Masson, wrote Einstein:

> One thing is important: to shake what is called reality by means of nonadapted hallucinations so as to alter the value hierarchies of the real. Hallucinatory forces create a breach in the order of mechanistic processes; they introduce blocs of "a-causality" in this reality which had been absurdly given as such. The uninterrupted fabric of this reality is torn, and one inhabits the tension of dualisms.[47]

Masson's Montserrat drawings place that tearing of the fabric of reality in the physical territory of Spain, and turn it into a metaphor for the tearing of the self. Montserrat, in fact, had functioned continually since pre-Christian times as a sacred site, one of those places that "put us in contact with the most deeply intimate elements that, on ordinary occasions, are the most murky if not totally obscured," as Michel Leiris wrote in 1938.[48]

MIROIR DE LA TAUROMACHIE (1938)

As a trained anthropologist, Leiris apparently found Bataille's often wildly ahistorical, nonanthropological approach to the material in *Acéphale* off-putting enough not to join the group.[49] Nevertheless he agreed with Masson and Bataille that ritual and myth, along with what they accounted for in the human psyche, had not been adequately addressed by the left in its resistance to fascism. Thus, while he did not join *Acéphale*, Leiris did publish a text in 1938 under its auspices: *Miroir de la tauromachie*.[50] Masson provided the illustrations.

Miroir de la tauromachie appeared at the height of the Spanish Civil War, after Masson had escaped Spain back to France. He and Leiris had already conferred a year earlier about the use of the bullfight (the *corrida*) as a metaphor for the war, at the time of Masson's 1937 exhibition at the Galerie Simon. Masson showed, among other works on the theme of Spain, several of his bullfight images. As Leiris noted in his review of the show, the *corrida* images were direct metaphors for the conflict in Spain:

> in marking on the invitation so tragic an inaugural sign [an enraged bull fatally wounded by the matador's sword], André Masson wanted to condense . . . everything of burning that Spain was for him during these last two years and everything that [Spain] endures today under the sword of the boorish soldiers who succeed only feebly in lunging at it.[51]

Miroir de la tauromachie continues this metaphoric association indirectly. Although it does not specifically name the Spanish Civil War, it nevertheless brings *Acéphale*'s investment in violence and morality to bear on Spain and "that bestial half-god, the bull."[52] The text grounds the Acéphalean critique in a more tightly anthropological investigation of the bullfight's ritualized contest between man and animal; in so doing, it claims the *corrida* as a mirror of contemporary Spanish societal conflicts. Like *Acéphale*, *Miroir* utilizes a reworked, revitalized notion of male power to challenge traditional masculine warfare and political conflict. And like *Acéphale*, *Miroir* moves "beyond good and evil" to consider the ways in which seemingly polarized aspects of existence intertwine and inform each other.

Nevertheless, *Miroir* and *Acéphale* offer widely different proposals concerning two central issues. First, against *Acéphale*'s conceptualization of violence as a Nietzschean tool for undermining conventional moral polarities, *Miroir* investigates violence in ritualized form as a safety valve for avoiding more destructive explosions of violence such as warfare. Thus whereas *Acéphale* sought to release an amoral violence into society as a means of undoing conventional moral and political hierarchies, *Miroir* sought to reintroduce violence in the form of ritual, so as to cordon off the violent nature of men into a space where it could be contemplated, understood, and thus neutralized.

Second, *Miroir* emphasizes the communal nature of social interaction, over *Acéphale*'s insistence on the solitary. Thus although the Spanish *corrida* can be understood as a battle between man and his animal nature – in essence a solitary battle of man with himself – *Miroir* also understands it as a community of actors, including the picador, his horse, other toreros, and the central figures of the matador and the bull.[53] Eroticism pervades the interaction between the participants but it is an eroticism nuanced with destruction: it enacts the death of the bull-god. Yet, unlike *Acéphale*'s Nietzschean rebirth of the individual through the excess of death, *Miroir* documents the mythic renewal of community through ritual.

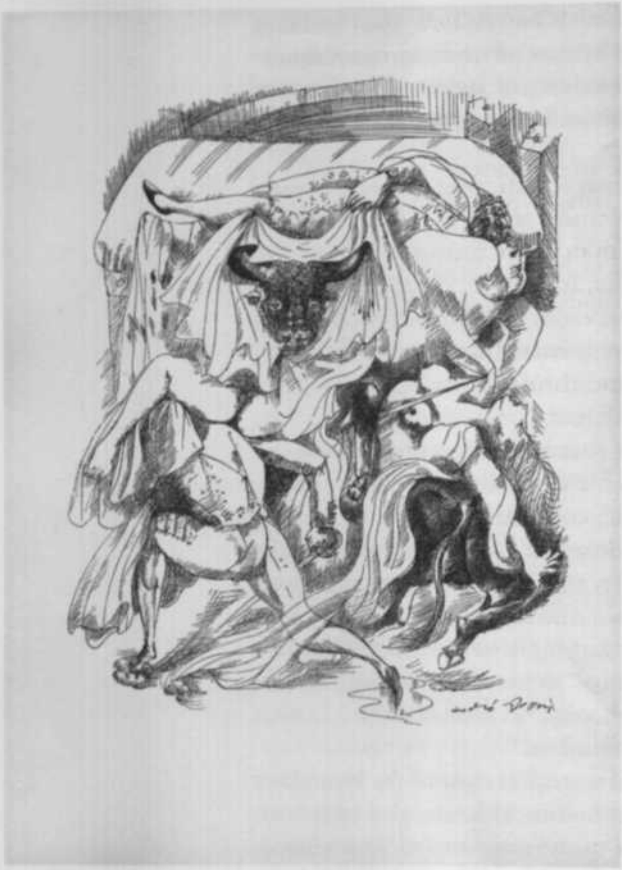
These discrepancies between *Acéphale* and *Miroir* occur not just in the texts but also in the marked differences in the visual program Masson developed for each. In *Miroir de la tauromachie*, Leiris argues that ritual releases myth into the public, communal sphere of society, where the function of myth is to resolve the unbearable paradoxes of human existence: "Like all mythic translations of our inner structure that move us because they enlighten us about ourselves at the same time that they resolve our contradictions in one single accord . . ."[54] Leiris distinguishes myth from positivist religions according to their varying treatments of that most powerful of human paradoxes, the interrelation of life and death: "To incorporate death in life, to make it in some way voluptuous" is the function of myth, whereas "to banish death . . . such is the servile occupation of most philosophers and makers of religion."[55]

Masson's *Miroir* drawings evoke the eroticism of this ritual transgression of the boundary between life and death.[56] In the first image he offers a welter of bodies, disentangled only with difficulty to reveal a torero stretched above the bull, while a nude woman lies, eyes closed, draped over the animal's back (fig. 77). The torero's pose might be of death or merely of sleep, with his arm gently resting across his chest. Or it might be a reflection of the sexual ecstasy of the woman below. A matador escapes, sword drawn, to the left under the woman's outstretched leg. The bull himself looks alertly out at us, the central force who has caused the various states of death, sleep, ecstasy, and fear on display. In the second drawing, the physical joining of the figures is again both ecstatic and violent, effected through the bloody touch of the bull's horn to the woman's body (fig. 78). Masson described this as "confronter la femme au taureau."[57] By "confronting the woman with the bull," Masson brings the gendered erotic back into the scenario of battle, from which modernity had excluded it.[58]

Like *Acéphale*, therefore, *Miroir* refuses the conventional separation of life and death; both texts argue that to maintain a false polarity between the two essential states of human existence is to condemn humanity to a spiritless drudgery. Unlike *Acéphale*, however, *Miroir* argues that rituals dissipate the violence inherent in human social structures. They "effect a purge," Leiris writes, "absorbing those onslaughts of feverish excitement without their having . . . either to become dangerously explosive or to borrow a utilitarian or rational disguise and become, in this way too, harmful to the very possibility of practical justice and reason."[59] Thus in Leiris's argument, rituals allow societies to regulate or even avoid conflict.[60]

In the enactment of ritual tragedy, what Leiris calls the "voluptuousness" of incorporating death into life performs a specific function. It defines a different kind of limit-experience from those described in *Acéphale*, one centered on aesthetics:

> No doubt it is reasonable to say of any valid aesthetic activity that it possesses . . . its share of tragedy (the true artist's obligation to be "authentic," engaging himself unreservedly in what



77: André Masson, page from *Miroir de la tauromachie*, 1938

he creates, with the understanding that to bring it to completion without recourse to any shortcuts or tricks is a vital necessity for him – as for the matador who finds the right spot for the final stab and, poised in between the two horns, sinks the sword in all the way). From this perspective, the tauromachy can be regarded as a sport augmented by an art in which the tragic, made explicit as it were, is particularly affecting.[61]

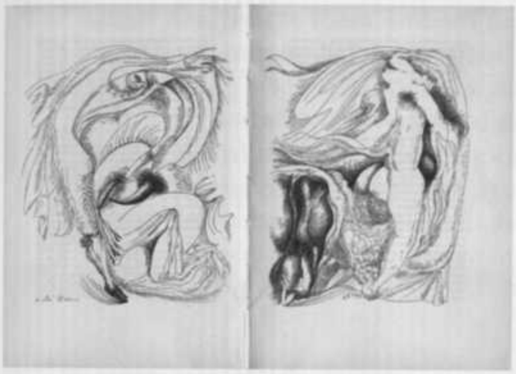
Furthermore, the "authenticity" or "art" of bullfighting – its limit-experience – comes in large part from the homoerotic, tension-ridden ideal: the joining of man with bull.[62] From the *corrida* Leiris extracts a (gendered) definition of beauty that originates in antagonistic confrontation and the necessary bringing together of opposites whose total convergence can only result in destruction. Perfection only exists through the incorporation of imperfection, and the stake in that process of incorporation is death:

> In these bullfighting maneuvers, the torero, with his calculated movements, his skill, his technique, ultimately represents a superhuman, geometric beauty... This would still be just a contrast, an opposition, if the pass didn't also present itself as a kind of tangency or convergence immediately followed by a divergence (the bull nears the torero, then man and beast are separated, the cape pointing the bull to the "exit") – or rather not even quite in this manner but in such a way that the contact, at the very instant it is just about to happen, is just barely avoided, by means of a deviation imposed upon the bull's trajectory or by an evasion on the man's part – a slight swerve, a mere slant of his body, a kind of twist that he makes his coldly geometric beauty undergo, as if he had no other means of avoiding the bull's evil power than partly to incorporate it, stamping his person with something slightly sinister – something from the wrong, the twisted side of things, not the right.[63]

In the *corrida* the moment of union between man and bull is also the moment of destruction. Leiris describes this imperiled yet erotic joining:

> Just as in bullfighting the magic of the pass has to do with that quasi-tangency, that almost-contact of the man with the exterior danger concentrated in the horns, so the overwhelming value of the act of love comes from its being the way a thinking subject, at least for a short lapse of time, can feel materially joined to the world, whose sum and summit is one single living creature. In the bullfight, this very world represents an immediate danger – whence the impossibility, on pain of death, of a complete fusion – and in love one discovers a similar impossibility.[64]

Throughout, Masson infuses the eroticism in the *Miroir* drawings with a sense of being at once dreamlike and tinged with death. The matador of his first image lies prone, perhaps dead (see fig. 77). His pose is replicated by a bare-breasted woman directly below; her head is thrown back, her hair drags on the ground, and her arm extends outward to signal erotic abandon. The

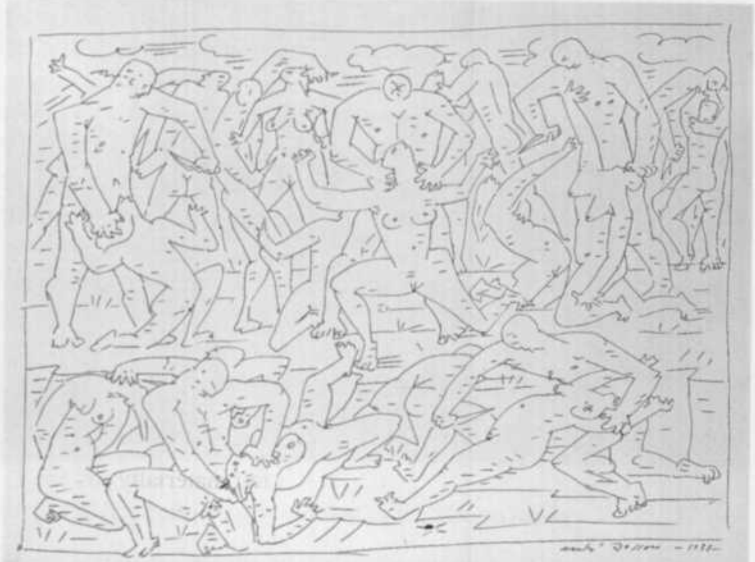


78: André Masson, page spread from *Miroir de la tauromachie*, 1938

next drawing repeats her ecstatic form, but this time melds it directly with the matador's lower body to frame that of the bull (see fig. 78). In this drawing as in all the others, figures interpenetrate to suggest both sexual interaction and violent physical wounding. Masson's pictures aim at subverting the modern vocabulary that relegates violence, social conflict, and the political to one sphere, the erotic and the aesthetic to another. Pointedly, however, this subversion occurs largely around the wounding of the female body, rather than the wounding of the torero or the bull as is the usual case in bullfighting.

In so doing, Masson's *Miroir* drawings resonate less with the decapitated virility of *Acéphale* than with his earlier series, *Massacres*. Dating mainly from the years 1932 to 1934, the massacre drawings visualize with the repetitiousness of a nightmare the ritual slaying of women by virile men (fig. 79).[65] The scenes show panoramic landscapes filled with figures drawn in a vividly jagged, harsh outline. Men raise daggers to bring them down upon their female victims; the women, mesmerized, offer only token resistance, beseeching their attackers for mercy with outstretched arms. The close positioning of bodies together and the confounding of bodily difference through similarity of visual description, suggest a disturbingly sensual side to these scenes of ritual misogynistic violence.[66] In the *Massacres*, Masson visualizes combat and mass annihilation of women as analogous to eroticism and amorous embrace, and defines "love" in terms of hatred, violence, and death. Masson's eroticization of warfare thus becomes an admission – perhaps even an advocation – of the complicity of the sensual with death and male violence.

Such interpretations are upsetting. They are disturbing because of the frankness of their display, because of their painfully orgiastic quality. Masson seems to find in the *Massacres* something of the same opposition between man/self and bull/other that he located in the bullfights; here it is a violently enacted gender opposition in which women are the losers, rather than a human/animal opposition in which the bull dies. Despite the troubling nature of these drawings, however, there is a point at which Masson seems intent on dragging the imagery out of its misogyny to another level of interpretation. The figures are drawn with a rapidity reminiscent of Masson's earlier "automatic" drawings, with little distinguishing detail, each figure sketched in outline to capture the essential murderous gesture, or the base emotional response of fear and debilitating terror. The lack of detail gives one little



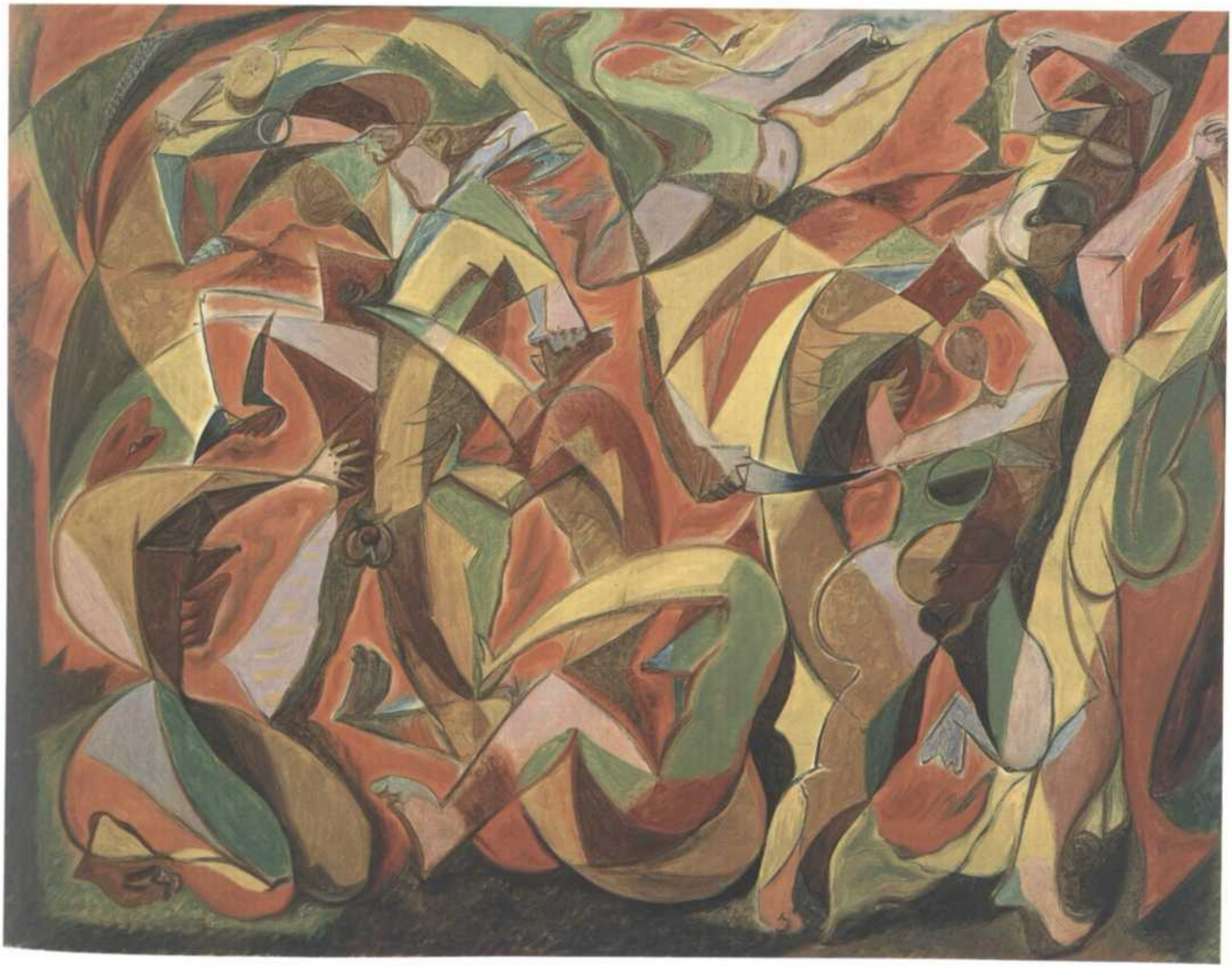
79: André Masson, *Massacre*, 1933. Ink on paper. 38 × 53 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson family means of distinguishing between one body and the next; the line melds attacker and victim together, as too the knife is joined to the attacker's hand. Bodies are unindividualized and blank of defining characteristics apart from an intentionally rough acknowledgment of gender. In the painted massacres, it is even more difficult to distinguish between the assassin and his victim, as the intersecting planes of color confuse the boundaries between male and female bodies, between body and space, or between body and weapon (fig. 80). In fact, Masson seems to have needed to call up a gendered violence in order to rework the energies it loosens away from a strict equation with gendered bodies, toward a more generalized concept of violence as limit-experience.

Against the clarity and distinctness of line in *Acéphale*, in both the *Massacres* series and *Miroir* one finds a profusion of tangled lines that seem to form a web across the page surface. And while *Acéphale* is a single, imposing figure who emanates a powerful virility, both the *Miroir* and the *Massacres* images present a tumble of bodies, often difficult to distiguish from each other. Each series explores the intimate relationship between violent conflict and eroticism, and marks what Masson saw as a particularly visual quality that such a conjunction had.[67]

The visual confusion of bodies in Masson's *Miroir* drawings stands in stark contrast to the lone figure of *Acéphale*. A kind of soft-edged, thick sensuality permeates all the *Miroir* images, in which male and female bodies intertwine with each other and with the bull. Unlike *Acéphale*, whose eroticism is a solitary, purely masculine "surhomme" affair, the various bodies in *Miroir* show both masculine and feminine traits, animal and human. In fact, there is a sense of deep interaction between multiple beings that pervades both the *Miroir* images and text. This sense of a community of participants in the ritual enactment of social violence is a far different proposal from *Acéphale*'s. The drama of the bullfight defines a limit-experience turned outward rather than inward. The bullfight, for both Leiris and Masson, is a vital point of connection between myth and social structure. The *corrida* is not invested in a Nietzschean version of the "death of god" that undoes social hierarchies, to leave humanity "straying as through an infinite nothing."[68] Rather, it is based on a long history of public sacrifices of the god-hero, of religious rituals of martyrdom, in which the death of the hero is a prerequisite for the rejuvenation or rebirth of the rest of the community, along with the renewal of its laws and customs. The *corrida* enacts a public sacrifice in which the "god" (the bull) retains his privileged status within the social through his death: "All [of the bullfighter's] movements are technical or ceremonial preparations for the public death of the hero, who is none other than that bestial half-god, the bull."[69] Yet, as Masson points out, the death of the hero has no meaning if the killer does not also run a risk: "I [find] it normal that it is not always the bull who dies. In that, it reflects human sacrifices. The sacrificer [can] become the sacrificed. It is that which gives the *corrida* its entire value."[70] Thus the violence of the *corrida* is far from the anti-pragmatic or "useless" force envisioned in *Acéphale*. Instead, it embodies the pragmatic value of a "return" of the hero's qualities and energies to the community, effected through sacrifice; it thus has the further practical value of syphoning off any tendency to engage in massive warfare to this single ritualized combat.

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR DRAWINGS (1936–9)

Acéphale and *Miroir* present two different proposals for a theory of violence in relation to society and to a concept of the self. But what of practice? What of Masson's images directly addressing the Spanish Civil War? Before coming back to the etching with which I began this chapter, the Barcelona *Acéphale*, I want to make a detour through a consideration of Masson's other civil



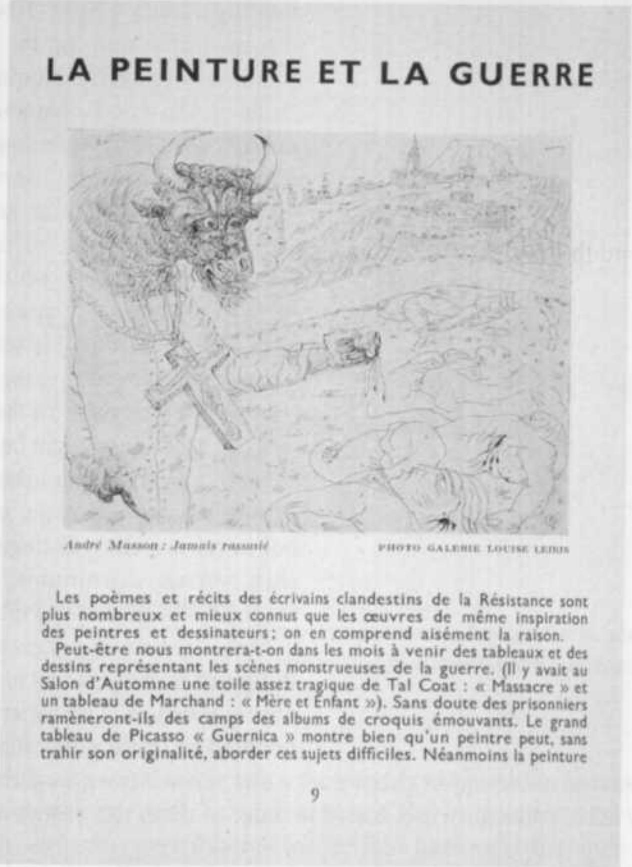
80: André Masson, *Massacre*, 1931. Oil on canvas. 120 × 160 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson family war drawings. While in Spain, and continuing throughout the war, Masson drew a series of anti-fascist political caricatures. Like the Barcelona *Acéphale*, but unlike *Acéphale* or *Miroir*, these drawings adamantly take sides in the war's political and military battles. They ferociously condemn the violence loosed on the Spanish Republic by Franco and his supporters, and consistently place it within the wider context of the rise of fascism throughout Europe. Far from advocating the Nietzschean violence "beyond good and evil" seen in *Acéphale*, these images go in the opposite direction to maintain strict distinctions between "good" Republican resistance tactics and the "evil" fascist slaughter of innocents.

The civil war images attest to Masson's drift away from *Acéphale* toward a more traditional definition of social violence. This in turn indicates a more conventional notion of political engagement on the artist's part, one distinct from Bataille's (nevertheless, he maintained a working friendship with Bataille and other members of the Collège de Sociologie) A symptom of this was Masson's reengagement with established political parties and groups, all of whom maintained a deliberately public profile, the opposite of what one sees with *Acéphale*. In tracking where the civil war drawings were published (to which I shall turn), one finds the artist engaging variously with Trotskyists, members of the French Communist Party, and Christian Socialists. He reopened a collaborative friendship with Breton and the Surrealists and at the same time became a leader in the Fédération Internationale de l'Art Révolutionnaire Indépendant (FIARI).

Another sign that Masson was developing an alternative political practice to that of *Acéphale* can be seen in the drawings themselves. A certain number rely on traditional paradigms of political caricature. They take as their subject matter identifiable actors in the historical drama of the Spanish Civil War and the spread of fascism – Franco, Mussolini, Robert Brasillach's fascist newspaper *Je Suis Partout*, among others – distorting their features until they become monsters in order to pinpoint each one's particular hellish attributes. The drawings also capitalize on the evocative power of certain symbols, especially the swastika and the crucifix, to condemn their users. Masson's trademark dry, jagged drawing style, with its ability to provoke in the viewer an uncanny disgust, is often at its best here as the artist metamorphoses Catholic bishops into human skulls thirsting for blood, capitalist investment bankers into grimacing umbrellas with chicken claws, Nazi soldiers into offal-eating insects, and Popular Front diplomats into farting buttocks. Masson deliberately drags the high and mighty through the muck of the human body's own refuse and decay, to equate their petty, sub-human qualities with their voracious politics.[71]

A second range of pictures relies on Masson's long history of mythic imagery. Some drawings re-key certain myths such as the Minotaur in order to condemn Franco, his troops, and his allies in the Church. *A Satisfied Curate* is typical in this regard, showing the Minotaur engaged in his bloodthirsty ritual of ripping hearts out of living victims (fig. 81). The beast-god glowers over a contemporary Spanish landscape rather than an ancient Mediterranean one, and his victims are the Spanish people rather than young virgins. By hanging the symbol of a crucified ass on a thick cord around the Minotaur's neck, Masson "christianizes" the animal in a barbed comment on the role of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Civil War. This drawing and others take much of their visual iconography from Masson's earlier work, including *Sacrifices*. Yet this is a use of myth that ironically twists the sacrificial death of the hero into just the opposite of the traditional mythic renewal or rebirth of the greater community. If Masson viewed the First World War as pure shock, in these drawings he depicts the Spanish Civil War as wanton slaughter.

Another range of pictures blames no one in particular for the catastrophe but instead seeks to understand the tragic nature of violence *per se*. Thus for instance in *Not Enough Earth* the



LA PEINTURE ET LA GUERRE

André Masson : Jamais rassasié PHOTO GALERIE LOUISE LEIRIS

Les poèmes et récits des écrivains clandestins de la Résistance sont plus nombreux et mieux connus que les œuvres de même inspiration des peintres et dessinateurs ; on en comprend aisément la raison.

Peut-être nous montrera-t-on dans les mois à venir des tableaux et des dessins représentant les scènes monstrueuses de la guerre. (Il y avait au Salon d'Automne une toile assez tragique de Tal Coat : « Massacre » et un tableau de Marchand : « Mère et Enfant »). Sans doute des prisonniers ramèneront-ils des camps des albums de croquis émouvants. Le grand tableau de Picasso « Guernica » montre bien qu'un peintre peut, sans trahir son originalité, aborder ces sujets difficiles. Néanmoins la peinture

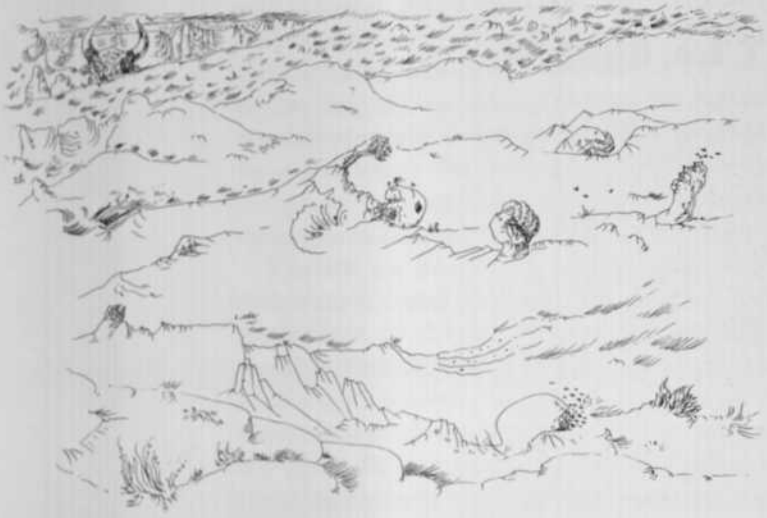
9

81: André Masson, *A Satisfied Curate* (*Un curé satisfait*), 1936 reproduced (misnamed) in *Le Spectateur des Arts* no. 1, Paris: December 1944:9

great bull contemplating the disastrous battlefield from a distance serves to raise the entire scene up from the misfortune of the individual event to the level of grand tragedy (fig. 82). Spain's landscape becomes the terrestrial symbol for the primordial sufferings of the Spanish people. Its dry, barren surface incorporates the bodies of the dead until they are indistinguishable from its rocky forms, transforming the sufferings of individuals into a metaphor for the suffering of the country itself. In this configuration of Spain, Franco does not belong and his armies are not Spanish but merely some foreign invading element.

The artist himself recalled in 1957 that the caricatures "made sparks," and that no French publisher would touch them during the Spanish Civil War largely because of their anti-clerical content.[72] Indeed, the political implications of Masson's caricatures were strong enough to provoke the wrath of the Church and French conservatives even as late as 1944: when two such images were published in *Le Spectateur des arts*, their anti-clerical tone provoked the immediate closing of the journal (fig. 83 and see fig. 81).[73] There is more evidence, which I shall discuss, to indicate a fear of censorship in other venues in which Masson did manage to publish certain of these political caricatures.

This censorship suggests that, on the one hand, the Spanish Civil War drawings seemed politically viable as an aggressive critique of the right, in ways that the *Acéphale* and *Miroir*



82: André Masson, *Not Enough Earth* (*Pas assez de terrez*), 1936, Pen and ink. 48 × 66 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson Family

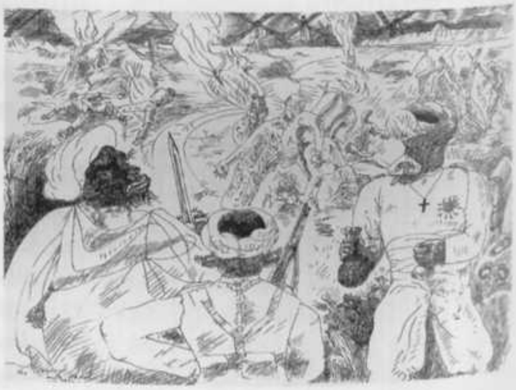
drawings did not. Nevertheless, while unequivocally naming the enemy, the drawings never explicitly critique varieties of leftist ideology. Instead, Masson seems to have embraced all leftist ideologies uncritically – a surprising turn for someone earlier so adamantly anti-Stalinist as to have given up on Marxism entirely.[74] This is evident in the drawings themselves, which do not advocate specific political affiliation. Indeed, Masson seems to go out of his way to suppress any hints of such, equating the victims of the fascist attacks simply with the Spanish countryside. At best they might be described as peasants (rather than the urban working class or Republican bourgeoisie, military, or others) but never are they distinguished as, say, anarchist versus communist, Trotskyist versus Stalinist, PSOE versus POUM, and so on.

Masson's unwillingness to critique the left at this point is also evident in where the drawings were published. The variety of ideologies represented by these publications and their editors suggests that Masson was interested in them during this period more for their public nature than for their particular leftist political stripe. Listed in order of date, the venues were as follows:

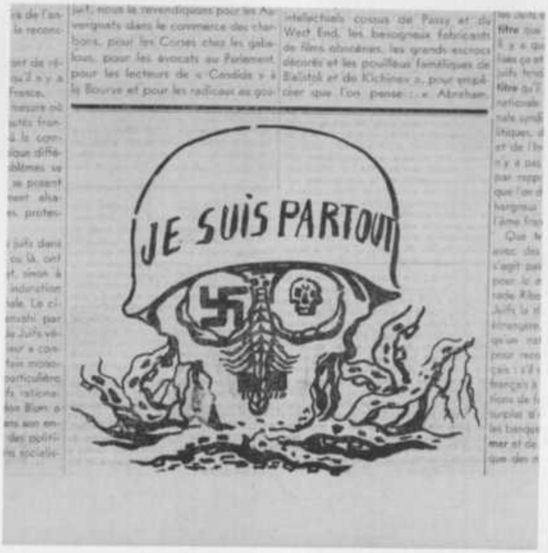
Le Voltigeur français (1938–9). This was a short-lived Christian–Socialist newspaper operated under a pseudonym by Masson's acquaintance Emmanuel Mounier.[75] Masson's six caricatures appear without his signature, a hint that he or Mounier might have been wary of censorship. The particular drawings criticized fascism both inside and outside France – for instance Brasillach's fascist paper *Je suis partout* or the proto-Vichy politics of the journalist Adolphe-Benoist Prudhomme (fig. 84).[76] Others criticized English corporate ties to fascism, and the French government for making promises it had no intention of keeping.

Solidarité (Paris, 1938). Eluard edited this collection of prints by well-known artists in order to raise money for the anti-fascist struggle. Masson contributed an etching of a monstrous bird rising out of the landscape, destroying itself with its own swastika claw. One remembers Eluard's controversial support of the Stalinist PCF, which raises the question of why Masson dropped his avowed hatred of Stalinists enough to participate in the publication.[77]

Clé (Paris, February 1939). This was the French edition of the journal for the FIARI. Breton began *Clé*

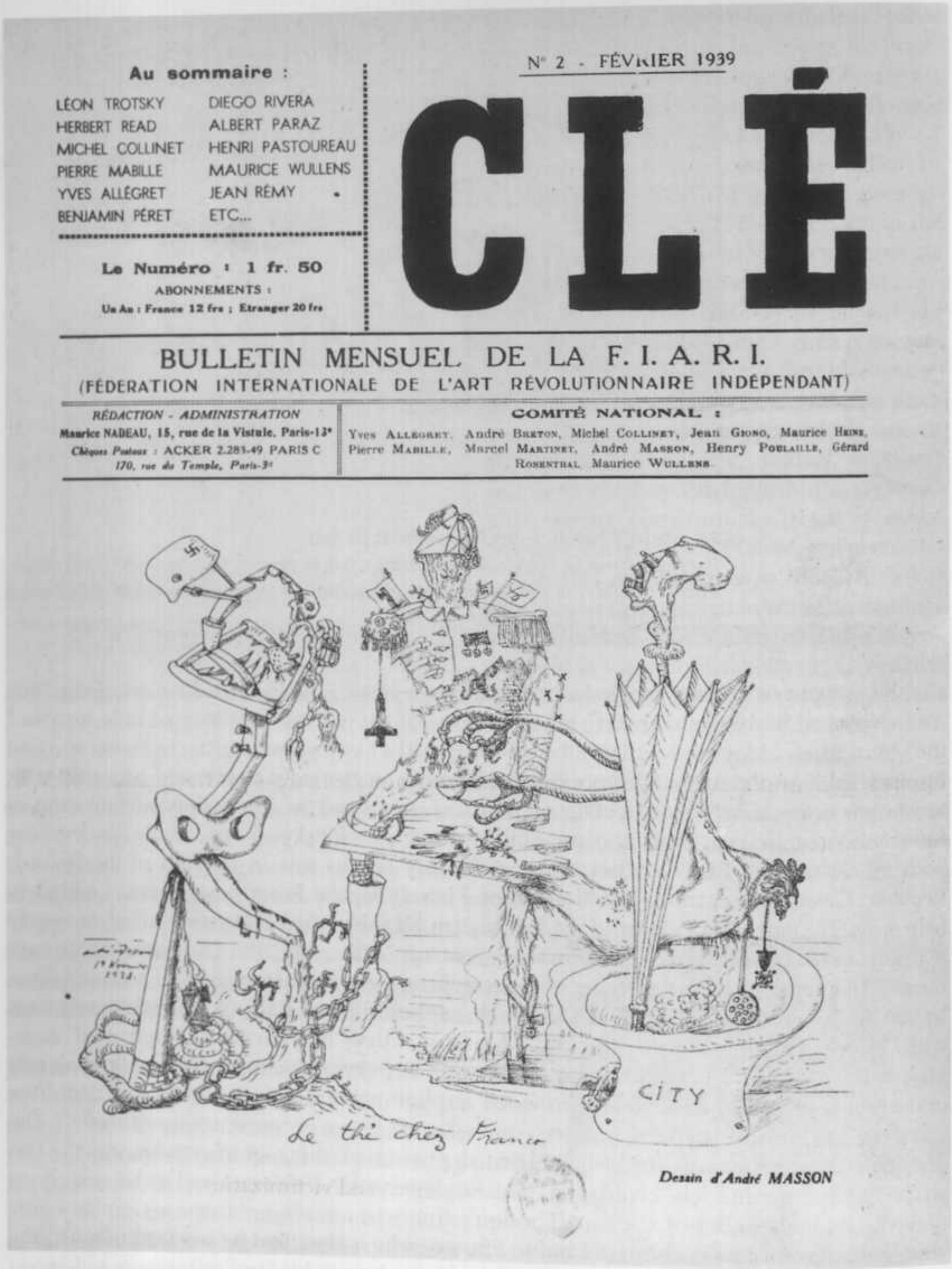


83: André Masson, *The Regulars* (*Los Regulares*), 1937. Pen and ink. 49 × 67 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson Family



84: André Masson, *I Am Everywhere*, (*Je Suis Partout*) from *Le Voltigeur français* no. 7–8. 1939. Photo courtesy of the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam

after his 1938 visit to Trotsky in Mexico, when the two wrote FIARI's founding manifesto, "For An Independent Revolutionary Art"; other versions of the journal were started in Mexico and the United States.[78] Masson was a member of the FIARI's national committee in France and had his name listed on the journal's front cover. Although purportedly concerned primarily with artistic production, *Clé* focused heavily on political events and the increasing militarization of Europe. It was anti-fascist but also anti-Stalinist and pro-Trotskyist, repeatedly condemning both the Communist Party's attacks against Trostky and its role in the fall of the Spanish Republic. *Clé* was also extremely critical of the French Popular Front government's refusal to help Spain. The journal condemned the fighting on all sides, whether Axis or Allied, as merely two sides of the same capitalist nightmare, intent on "deliver[ing] the proletariat to its enemies."[79] This politics, similar to those of Contre-Attaque, were exemplified in Masson's illustration on the second, final issue of *Clé*, which explicitly linked English financial investment with Franco and the Nazis (fig. 85). Masson knew that Britain's policy of non-intervention had helped undermine any chance of a Republican victory in Spain. Britain's role in the Non-Intervention Pact, in fact, provided implicit political support for Franco that often translated into explicit financial support, which *Tea at Franco's* comments upon acidly.[80] The drawing ironically contrasts the "civilized" British custom of taking afternoon tea with the fascist politics that sustain such "civilization." The English banker, emblematized by his ubiquitous umbrella, sits in the toilet of the City (London's financial center); he drops a scorpion-sugar cube into a cup of tea he is about to hand to Franco, who is identified by his famous mustache and pointed cap. The Nazi insect-soldier is already consuming his "tea" of entrails and excrement. The Spanish dictator's decaying body, chained to the Nazi soldier, covers its open sores with the ragged and useless display of his fancy uniform. The Nazi is a death trap of pointed spikes and excrement-oozing bones, alarmingly reminiscent of Giacometti's sculpture *Woman with her Throat Cut* (fig. 86).



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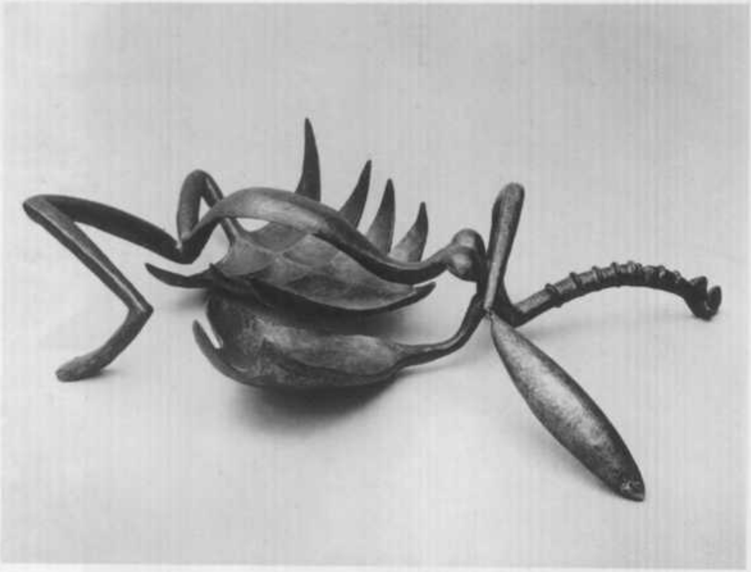
Dessin d'André MASSON

85: *Clé*, no. 2, February 1939 with André Masson's drawing, *Tea At Franco's* (*Le Té Chez Franco*) Photo courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France

A monograph, André Masson (1940). This monograph illustrated four drawings, including *Not Enough Earth*, but another, *They Understand Each Other Well*, was viciously anti-clerical (fig. 87). In the center of a hideous pile of human corpses, a cadaverous ass wearing a bishop's miter embraces two other grinning figures. To the left, a Moroccan mercenary soldier has taken on the shape of a bull who snorts with glee at the carnage; to the right, a Franquist military officer grimaces as his face putrifies into open sores before our eyes. Masson draws this unholy trio with a characteristic scratchy line whose very dryness evokes the spiritual decrepitude at the root of this horrific abuse of power. The publisher seems to have been worried about censorship; while individual authors signed their names to the essays, the publisher's name was not included.[81] The monograph included a disparate collection of authors, from Bataille to Péret, Eluard to Breton, and outside surrealist circles altogether.

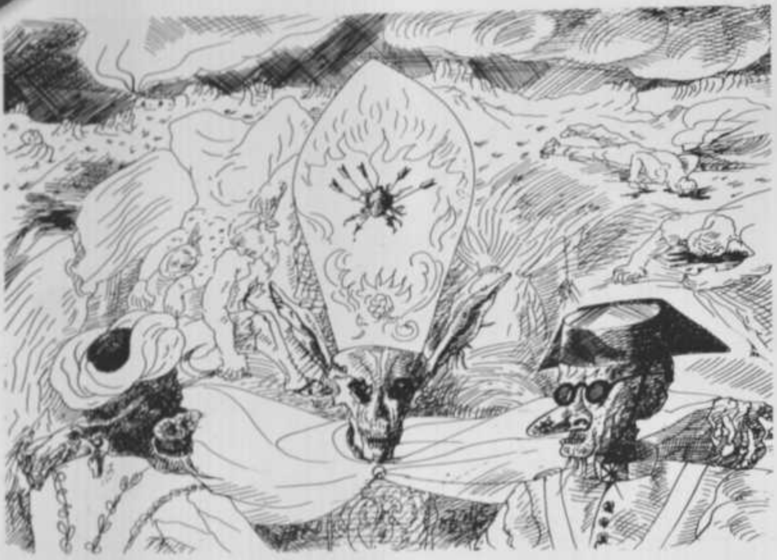


86: Alberto Giacometti, *Woman With Her Throat Cut*, 1932. Bronze. 22 × 87.5 × 53.5 cm. Photo courtesy of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

Le Spectateur des arts (Paris, December 1944). An anonymous article, probably written by the journal's editor Georges Limbour, describes the two drawings by Masson as having been inspired by the artist's hatred of Hitler and Mussolini, and the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. These were *A Satisfied Curate* and *The Regulars* (see figs. 81 and 83). It described the drawings: "Mercenaries, their generals, dictators, the Church elite, monks and nuns, all are represented here under the most hideous traits, never satisfied in their gluttony for power, gold and blood."[82] With this text and Masson's pictures, it seems small wonder that the journal was closed down after only one issue.

This hodge-podge of publications, often with competing political viewpoints, indicates that by the late 1930s Masson was much more interested simply in getting his critique of the right out in a public forum than he was in continuing his previous critique of the left. This, combined with the general refusal of his Spanish Civil War drawings to investigate various leftist ideologies, marks a problematic aspect of these images: it lets certain leftist individuals and political organizations off the hook without holding them to account for any adverse political choices.

Another problematic aspect looms particularly in those drawings based on mythic imagery, such as *Not Enough Earth* (see fig. 82). In these Masson endorses a view of Spain that sees it as a country with a profound tendency to violence, death, and victimization spanning from the Inquisition to the Napoleonic invasions to the civil war itself.[83] To put it another way, there is a view that Masson's drawings become troublesome in the manner in which they suggest, through the conjunction of the mythic with reality, that Spain somehow already contained within its cultural antecedents the bases for the immense slaughter being carried out within its territories.[84] Spain as Masson imagines it for the viewer, can come to seem a country somehow more prone than others – France in particular – to large-scale violence, not perhaps able to "cope" with it so much as to conceive of it, to possess already in its cultural history the means by



87: André Masson, *They Understand Each Other Well*, 1936. Pen and ink. 48 × 68 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson Family

which to name such a catastrophe. How is one otherwise to understand the slippage from Masson's mythic images to pictures such as *Not Enough Earth*, in which the timeless space of myth has suddenly solidified into the historical specificity of the Spanish Civil War? What is one to do with the uneasy sense in these images that Spain is living out its mythic destiny? How is one to respond to the feeling that wartime Spain seems to slide too easily into representational modes, such as the *Sacrifices* or the *Massacres*, that Masson had already created before war began? How does Masson account for the transition between the staccato line developed in the *Massacres* series to signify instinctive, unthought actions rapidly carried out, and the way that same blunt line signifies when here applied to real events? This view of Spain as inherently prone to such monumentally violent tragedy comes unfortunately close to the view – pervasive in France during the 1930s – of Spain as other to the supposed rationalism of France. It was an attitude that had obvious material consequences in terms of the Blum Popular Front government's refusal to aid its beleaguered Republican neighbor.

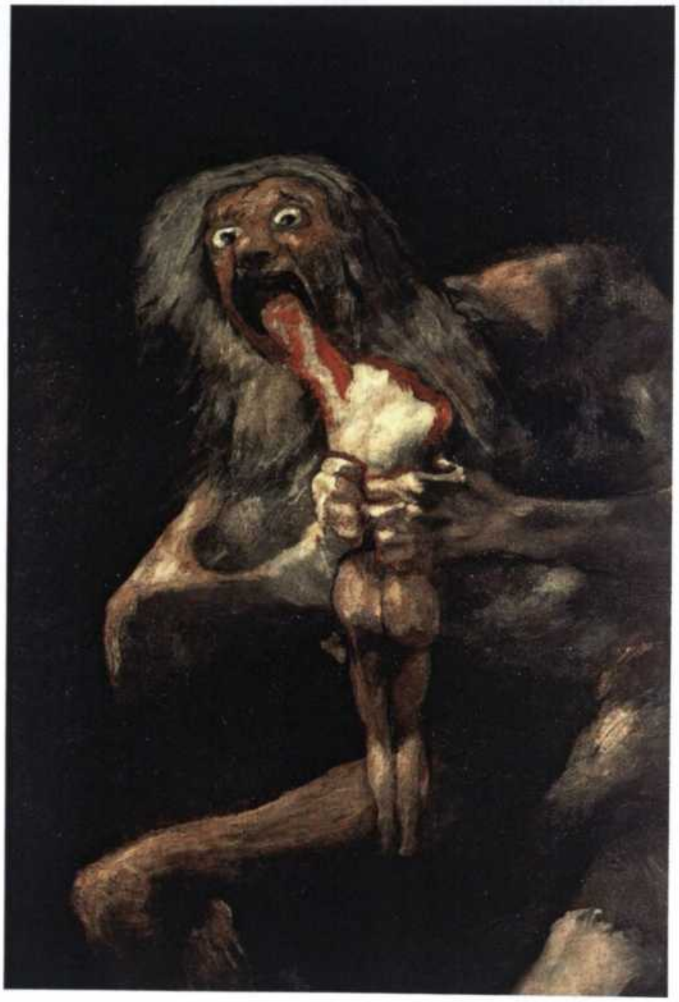
These are serious accusations. Yet there is an aspect of Masson's drawings that at least partially counterbalances these problems: the homage Masson pays to Goya. Like many artists with Republican sympathies, Masson saw in Goya's *Disasters of War* a precedent for a leftist, non-Marxist visual language with which to address the civil war.[85] Indeed, as the following words from the Republican cultural and political critic José Bergamín show, Goya was a reference point for the whole of the Republican left during the Spanish Civil War:

> "They Shall Not Pass." These words seem to be Goya's; words that, with neither sight nor pulse, with neither pen nor ink, [yet] with an overpowering will from a powerful yet invisible hand that . . . goes so far as to engrave them with his blood; [these words] he has left us, written forever in our luminous and dark sky of Madrid.[86]

Masson refers to Goya both implicitly and explicitly. Like Goya in *Saturn Devouring his Children* (fig. 88), Masson shows us the gods we ourselves have created as they eat living human flesh in pictures such as *A Satisfied Curate* (see fig. 82). Priests betray their holy calling to reveal their base, selfish desires as they preside over wholesale slaughter in a repetition of the Catholic Church's role in repression during Goya's lifetime (figs. 89 and 90). A shrouded figure of Death offers a "communion" of poison to a Christian soldier so enthralled that he does not recognize the source of his own demise (fig. 91). This Masson drawing directly refers to Goya's *Absurdity of Fear*, in which a faceless Death throws all and sundry into a mindless panic (fig. 92).

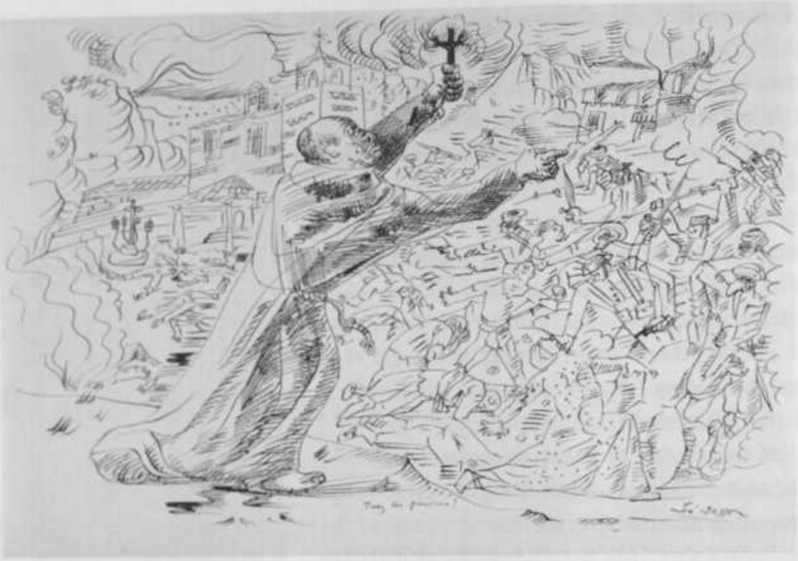
Masson's homage to Goya involved more than mere references to style. He understood one of Goya's great lessons: that the terrifying power of the *Disasters of War* comes largely from the series' open recognition of its equivocal engagement in the same violence it condemns. Masson learned the lesson; the visual – indeed eroticized – fascination the viewer feels when looking at Goya's depictions of war's horrors implicates the viewer in those very acts of violence one censures. In fact, the other of the violence portrayed infects the self – oneself the viewer; one becomes "made of innocence and crime" in a manner not unrelated to Masson's *Acéphale*. The shock of the *Disasters of War* comes not just through the subject matter but through the way in which that subject matter is etched into the plate and printed onto the paper. It comes from the way in which representation's power to evoke a likeness is tainted by the way in which it participates in that conjuring process. This dilemma is sharpened even further through the gross contrast between the vividness of Goya's imagery and the bluntness of his subtitles. In the *Disasters of War*, words seem incapable of conveying the full significance of the events; images must take up the burden of describing a horror that exceeds language. Elie Faure, writing for the 1938 exhibition "Peintures de Goya des collections de France," organized in homage to the Spanish Republic, elucidated Goya's dilemma:

> War as seen by a great man, no doubt, but a man above all. There is no doubt that a constant sadism dominates [the painting], that he takes pleasure in evoking, in the midst of the horror, of the smell of carrion and blood that permeates everything, women's bellies extended in a call to love, parted knees, fleshy thighs, proffered breasts, and beautiful plump bodies that make desire flow from the tight breasts to the upturned chins. There is no doubt that he enjoys violated women, that his holy anger is mixed with, even exacerbated by sensuality, that he lived those five or six cruel years in a kind of hallucination of the basest but also the most troubling things, breathing in blood, drinking in desire from the lips of women whose lust is stirred up by war. . . . He conjures up out of nowhere an inconceivable army of sadists and executioners, piling on everywhere theatrical dread and horror.[87]



88: Francisco Goya, *Saturn Devouring His Children*, 1820–23. Oil plaster remounted on canvas. 146 × 83 cm. Madrid, Museo del Prado. Photo courtesy of SCALA/Art Resource, NY

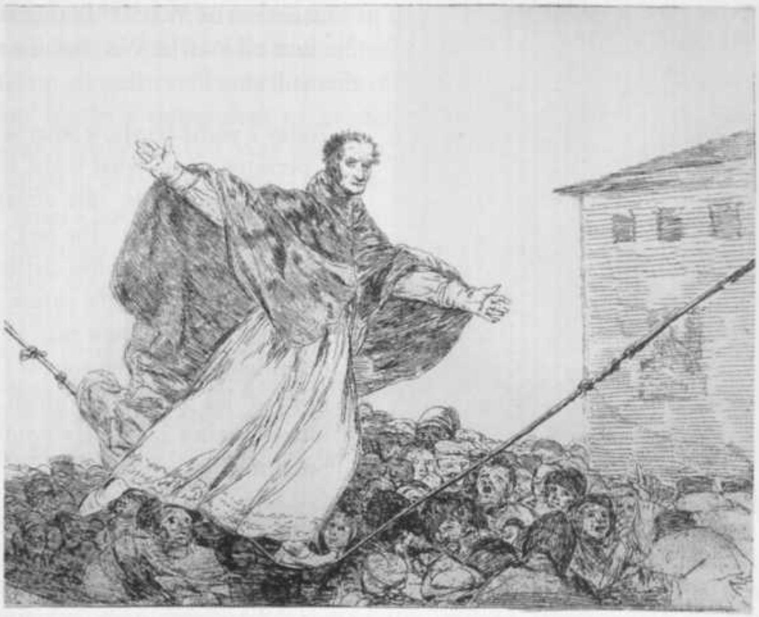
Faure's critique leads to the heart of how Goya used his equivocation to bring about the power of his imagery: Goya's was a masculine perspective that understood warfare as also a gendered battle of sexual conquest. But war in Goya's eyes was not a polarized conflict resulting in the dominant and the dominated; rather, he envisioned the ambiguous way in which power over women (power over the other) necessarily involves recognizing how that power simultaneously turns back on the self/male artist. And in Goya's terms, power was explicitly visual as well as violently physical. Faure was, of course, not alone in comprehending the unique force of Goya's work. Yet Masson understood more than most that the force of Goya's imagery comes precisely from the anxiety-ridden tension between the beguiling sensuality of the imaging process and the horror of what was being represented.



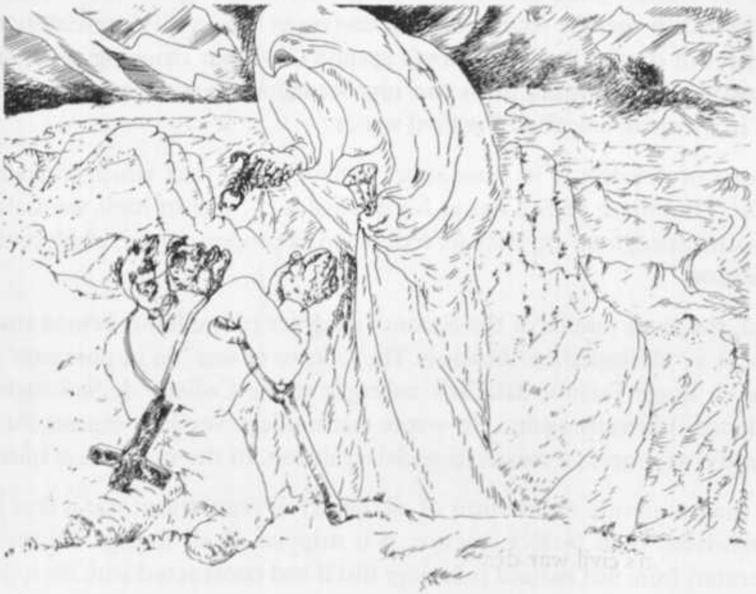
89: André Masson, *Kill The Poor!* (*Tuez les Pauvres!*), ca. 1936/7 . Pen and ink. 47 × 67 cm. Hamburg, Kunstahalle Hamburg. Photo courtesy of Art Resource, New York/Bildarchiv Preussischen Kulturbesitz

The appropriation of Goya by the Republican left during the war was a dual-edged sword, however. By the late 1930s Goya had become something of a trope – even a cliché – for artists siding with the Republican cause. Citing Goya's reputation as a liberal leftist while quoting aesthetic references to his art allowed the whole range of Republican political points of view – Stalinist, Trotskyist, liberal, anarchist – to slide over their real political differences into a false sense of solidarity which ultimately broke apart with tragic results.[88] This inability or refusal to come to grips with these differences cost Republican Spaniards much blood; it can arguably be said that it cost them the war. Masson's Spanish Civil War drawings get caught in this predicament because of the way in which they never quite capture that apocalyptic vision one finds in Goya. Masson's Franco remains a buffoon rather than a terrifying menace; his bloodthirsty Minotaur has a certain derisory cartoon quality about it. The irony that Goya builds into his image *May the Cord Break* is blunted in Masson's analogous image, *Kill the Poor* (see figs. 89 and 90). In Masson's drawings there is the decided sense that right and wrong are still on opposite sides; normative structures of belief and meaning still remain more or less intact. Goya, by contrast, had lost all such faith in humanity's ability to distinguish between good and evil. For Goya, past structures of belief had ended in absolute catastrophe, to be replaced not with another set of meanings but, rather, with the growing sense that there simply was no meaning. It is because of these discrepancies between Goya and Masson that I disagree with Leiris's assessment of Masson's civil war drawings that claims they "attain the same mythical level as his other drawings."[89]

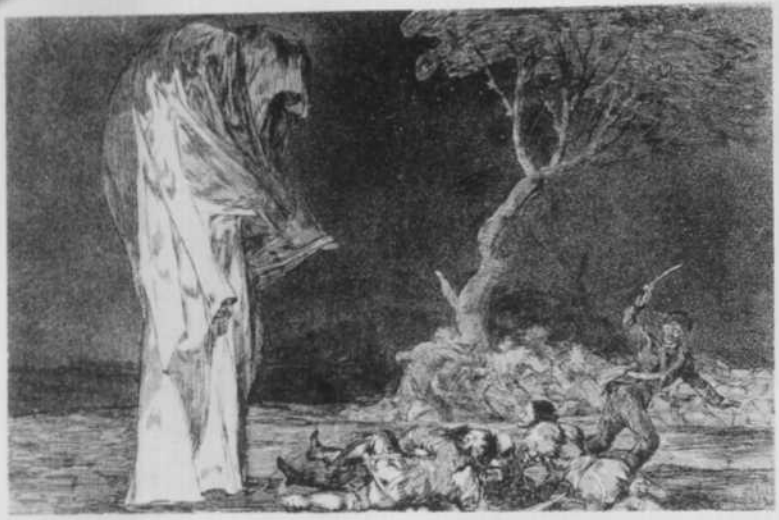
This seems far from *Acéphale* and from the Nietzschean theory of non-utilitarian violence advocated by Bataille. The Masson of the Spanish Civil War drawings displays an inherent belief in the moral authority of an unquestioned left, along with a horror of war's violence, that contrasts oddly with the views of certain of his compatriots. It is certainly far removed from Bataille's 1939 celebration of war in the essays "The Practice of Joy Before Death" and



90: Francisco Goya, *May the Cord Break* (*¡Que se rompe la cuerda!*) from *Disasters of War*, 1810–15; published in 1863. Etching and aquatint. 17.8 × 22.1 cm. Photo courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España



91: André Masson, *The New Host* (*La nouvelle hostie*), 1936. Pen and ink. 49 × 64 cm. Paris, Galerie Leiris. Photo courtesy of the Masson Family



92: Francisco Goya, *Absurdity of Fear (Disparate de Miedo)* 1816–23; published in 1864. Etching and aquatint. 24.5 × 35.7 cm. Photo courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España.

"Discussion of War."[90] Writing at the outset of the Second World War, Bataille made a claim that still shocks:

> Today I want to show what is most human – perhaps even what is the summit of the human mind – in this apparently insupportable situation. The fact of the uncertainty in which we live clarifies more than obscures, perhaps, the nature of things. I'm inclined to show how man ventures to fulfill himself when he accepts the incompletion of all things in which he lives, no longer seeing in them a point of reference but a motive of glory.[91]

In Bataille's mind, war – not social revolution – clarifies existence for humanity by allowing it to avoid the trap of a false sense of significance. War strips away humanity's ability to find that meaning in self-destruction which revolutionary ideologies purport to offer. The disorientation produced by war reveals the ultimate "non-meaning" of human existence.[92]

Bataille thus argued for combat-as-clarification. Yet the difference between clarification and endorsement of warfare is an issue, at once volatile and vague, that has lost none of its urgency.[93] How much does the recognition of warfare as modernity's revelatory moment slide into valorization of conflict itself? Masson's Spanish Civil War drawings seem much closer to André Chamson, who, returning from the 1937 Second Writers' Congress for the Defense of Culture held in Valencia, described the civil war as:

> the technique of slaughter in its pure state, without any of that which generally serves as its justification. That which Franco has at his disposal is . . . war in itself, war isolated from any national justification, from any excuse, reduced to its proper nature, which consists of killing and destruction.[94]

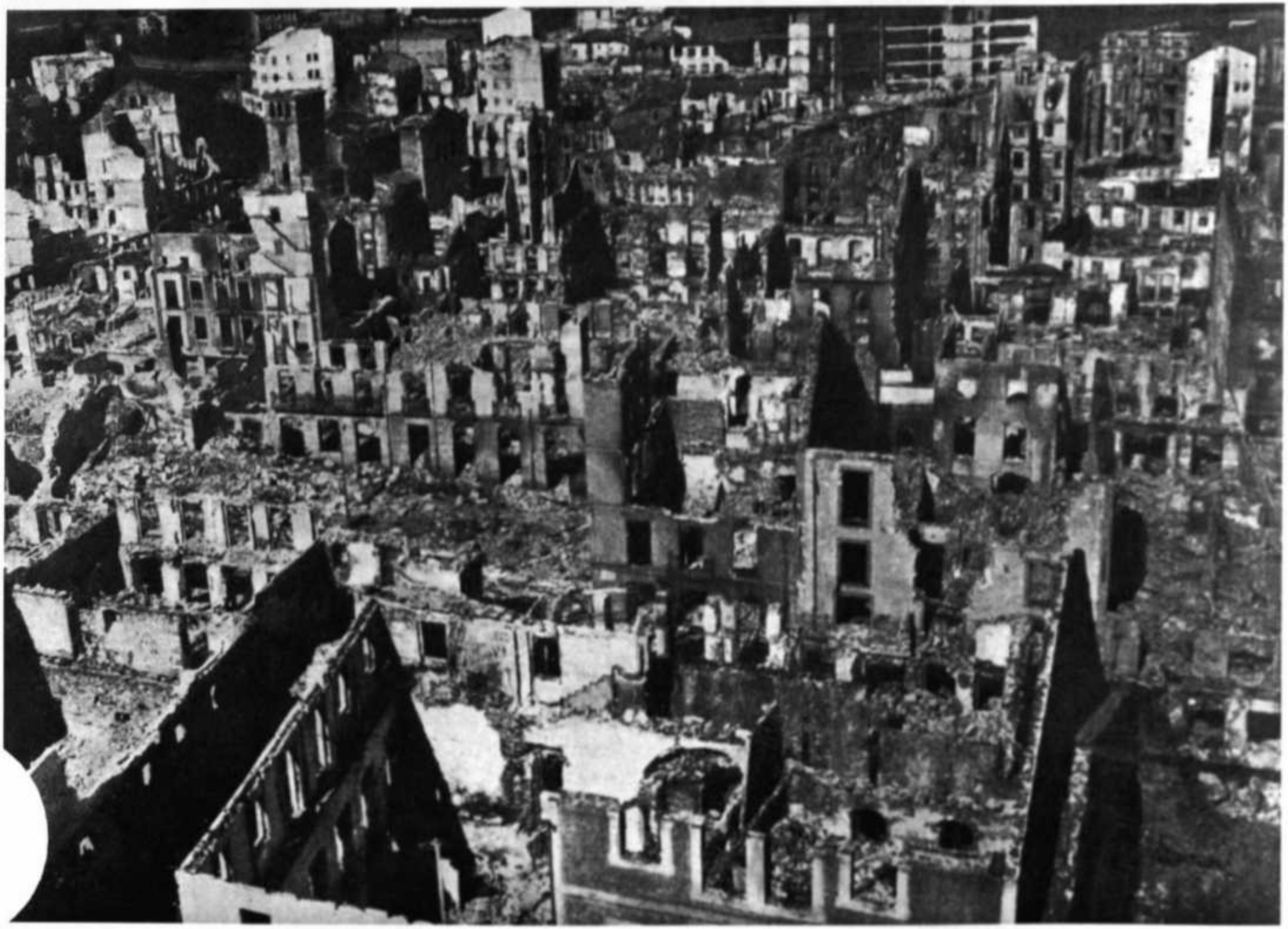
For Chamson, the sheer volume of the Spanish slaughter propelled it beyond any possible historical, political, or ideological justification. The violence of war "in its pure state" produced the epitomy of evil. Roger Caillois, Bataille's colleague at the Collège de Sociologie, understood wartime violence differently again. He wrote that modern warfare exposes the hypocrisy of efforts to "justify" violence as a means to social regulation. In the massacre of unarmed peoples,

> one notes the progressive elimination of all chivalry or regulation. War is thus in a way purified and rendered in its perfect essence. It is stripped of all foreign influences to its true being, liberated from that bastard marriage that it had contracted with the spirit of play and competition."[95]

War, for Caillois, was no longer circumscribed by rules or limited territorially – circumscriptions that tended to maintain the fiction (to which Chamson still subscribed) that warfare was somehow other to quotidian existence. The *champ de bataille* now took up the space of entire nations, becoming, at least for Caillois, the modern replacement for the pre-modern *fête* or ritual sacrifice.[96]

Masson never celebrated modern warfare in the way that Caillois often verged on doing.[97] After the Second World War, Bataille himself turned away from extolling war toward a distrust of political action altogether: "Inner experience is the opposite of action. Nothing more," he wrote, "'Action' is utterly dependent on project."[98] Nevertheless, the question of the tension between Masson's Spanish Civil War drawings and the *Acéphale* project still remains, most keenly exemplified in the peculiarities of the Barcelona *Acéphale* (see fig. 73). The strangeness of this image raises a host of disturbing questions concerning political effectiveness in the face of violence – questions which continue to press upon us. Is it possible, for instance, to reconcile the "headless" *Acéphale*'s refusal of political and social hierarchies with the overriding insistence on centralized authority emblematized in 1936 by the hammer and sickle? Can one maintain the constant devaluation of all moral judgments and the destabilizing of all structures while at the same time constructing effective political movements and institutions? What is the practical difference between the revolutionary annihilation of the self described by *Acéphale* and the exhortation to self-sacrifice as self-fulfillment symbolized by the swastika and the crucifix?

Masson continued throughout the whole of the Spanish Civil War and Second World War to confront these difficult questions. In essence, he continued to struggle with the central issue that neither he nor Bataille ever resolved: how to turn the Acéphalean theory of subjectivity based on an unceasing rending of the self, on the violent incorporation into the self of the other, into a tool for political action when such action needed concrete, unambiguous results. In other words, Masson continued to probe how to turn a theory of the decentered self into an unambiguous resistance to fascism.

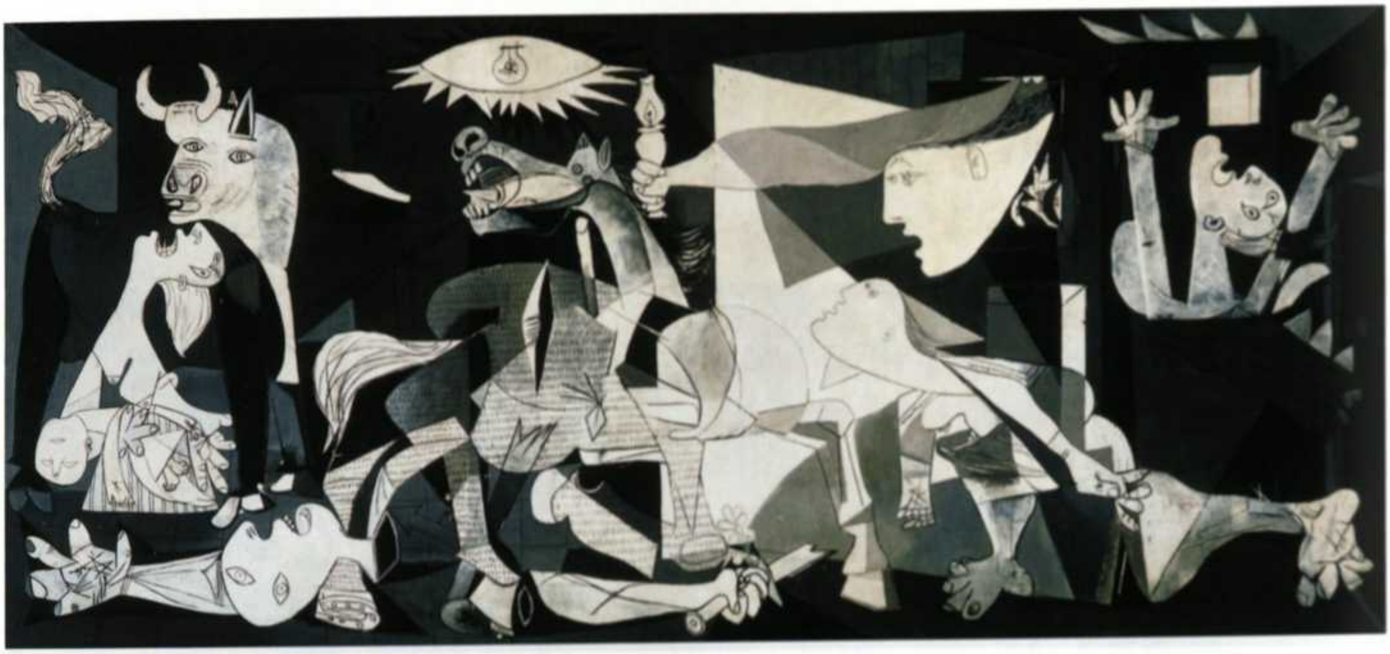


Guernica destroyed, 1937

6

THE BODY AS A POLITICAL METAPHOR: PICASSO AND THE PERFORMANCE OF *GUERNICA*

Guernica. This painting more than any other image of this period has come to stand for the specific horrors of the Spanish Civil War and for the catastrophe of warfare in general (fig. 93). Its use of Spanish cultural motifs – in particular the bullfight – and its overt reference to one of the war's most ferocious slaughters meant that from the moment of its inception it would be taken as representing Spain at its most tragic, heroic, and universal. Yet how Picasso conceptualized *Guernica*, and the efforts that he made to ensure that it would take hold in the public's mind, are issues almost as obscure as the canvas itself is famous. This dilemma has made *Guernica* a painting that has generated innumerable scholarly and critical narratives. While it is possible to believe that the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica on April 26, 1937 outraged Picasso more than any previous incident in the civil war, it is not self-evident that this particular incident and not another would have caused the artist to produce the imagery found in *Guernica.*[1] The event of the bombing itself neither provides a precise account of the kinds of figuration, pictorial elements, and composition utilized nor gives an explanation for the seeming unconnectedness to what is portrayed on the canvas. The destruction of the non-combatant civilian town, in violation of the European Non-Intervention Committee codes, was horrific and certainly provides a complete justification for *Guernica.*[2] Yet it alone does not furnish enough of a detailed connection between world events and artistic production to account for the specific form *Guernica* took. Nor, after Hiroshima and Auschwitz, does the bombing of Guernica provide in itself an adequate explanation of the painting's continued power to evoke the horrors of war.



93: Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937. Oil on canvas. 3.45 × 7.7 m. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

A POINT OF BEGINNING

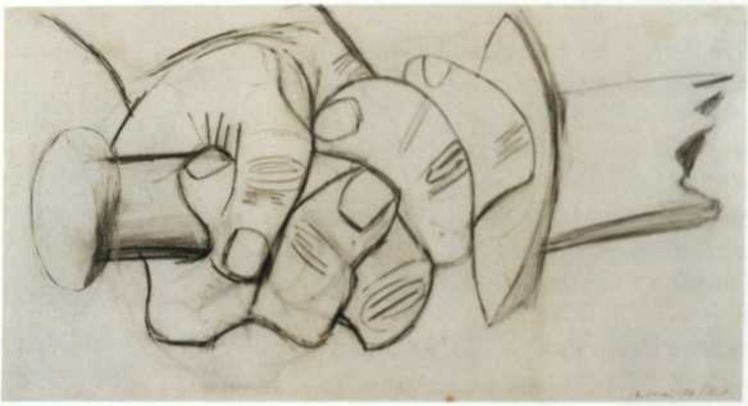
Let me turn, then, to the painting itself for a possible explanation. A massive panorama of terror framed by screaming women at either edge, *Guernica* is punctuated horizontally by faces and bodies – animal and human – strewn across a starkly lit space. Interiors and exteriors of burning buildings collapse visually into one other, flattened into a shallow proscenium that gives the viewer nowhere to turn from the drastically illuminated horror before one's eyes. A mortally wounded horse stumbles in panic over the body of a dead warrior; a bull, alert but confused, swings his massive head; two other women rush onto the scene. The human degenerates into the animal realm of unreasoning instinct, yet blind instinct cannot rise to overcome the threat. The shrieks of the hysterical mother holding her dead child culminate in her pointed tongue, as though the entire weight of her agony has been compacted into that infinitesimal tip, with the unbearable density of a cosmic black hole. Her abjection is repeated and magnified in the scream of the horse, whose shattered body drags the cool detachment of Picasso's Cubism and post-cubist classicism into the anguished realm of overwhelming fear.

Let me go further, beyond merely recounting *Guernica*'s subject matter. The painting's power clearly emanates not simply from what it portrays but how it does so. *Guernica*'s form conditions one's reading of its content in ways that refer back over the course of thirty years to the pictorial lessons of *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*; but here, Cubism's tactics of aesthetic annihilation, rather than acting as a ferocious comment on the commodification of vision and bodies, are reformulated as a horrific metaphor for the physical annihilation of life.[3] The painting fixes one within a photographic black and white, like a camera's flash, that indelibly sears reality as image on the retina of one's eyes. Space and light fracture such that it is impossible to tell if one is inside or outside – a physical confusion of location that sets the stage for the devastation splayed out to view. Bodies are caught in that fragmentation, invaded by it, contorted into impossible shapes because of it. The running woman to the right of the horse is suddenly pinioned into place by a guillotine-shaped black triangle – the shadow cast by the window above, which mutates into the planar forms of her body. The bare overhead lightbulb, with its absurd caricature of spreading rays, becomes the pictorial apex of a triangular swath of visual fragmentation located dead center in the painting. The horse, pierced by its glare as much as by the spear in his side, embodies his own dismemberment in planar splinters and convulsions.

Readings such as mine can provide useful insight into the painting, and indeed many have. Yet even the best accounts have fallen short, I argue, not because they elide some essential feature within the painting but because they remain resolutely tied to the finished canvas itself, without attending adequately enough to the process through which Picasso produced *Guernica.* The painting, while it clearly corresponds to a direct reflection on events, needs a deeper and, in the end, a far different sort of interpretation in order to plumb fully the complexity of its impact.

The difficulties of providing an adequate explanation of *Guernica*'s singular power have been confronted from many different perspectives.[4] Most accounts, including the seminal work of Herschel Chipp, reasonably assume that the painting was a direct response to the dual injunctions of the bombing of Guernica and the commission given Picasso by the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair in Paris of that same year. In January 1937 Picasso had been commissioned by a delegation from the Spanish Republican government to paint a monumental work for the Pavilion (the commission is discussed in the next section). By late April he was still undecided as to how to procede when, as Chipp claims, "the shock that with overpowering urgency was to call into being the painting, with its cry of outrage and horror, came from . . . the brutal terror bombing of the peaceful Basque town of Guernica."[5] This line of argument, while certainly compelling, presumes a necessary correlation between a particular historical incident and a specific set of pictorial practices, as though Picasso had been waiting precisely for an event such as the Guernica bombing to spark his genius. Such explanations take as their starting point the viewer's relationship to the end product of Picasso's efforts – the painting itself.

I suggest, however, a different starting point: on May 1, five days after the bombing, Picasso made the first of his famous series of sketches for *Guernica* – forty-five in total, they mark an alternative point for beginning any analysis of the final mural. Indeed, my own thinking about how Picasso responded to the conjuncture of *Guernica*'s various mandates began not with the finished painting but with a sketch made on May 13 – that of the warrior's sword hand (fig. 94). I have long been intrigued by a number of visual ploys in that sketch and puzzled by the fact that most of them do not appear anywhere in the final canvas. In the sketch a muscular, masculine hand clutches the haft of a sword that has been broken off at the hilt in the heat of battle. So fiercely does the hand close upon the sword that the fingers seem to multiply in a last desperate effort not to loosen the grip; the thumb bends over to meet a finger that has split itself into twin components, locking an ambiguous third finger under it in the process. Anatomical logic breaks down under a powerful last effort to avoid disaster. The artist's pencil marks thicken around the points of greatest stress, so that the blunt edge of a fingernail or the rugged outline of a knuckle conveys the immense physical pressure born of anguish and brought to bear on that now useless weapon. The joints of the fingers bulge up into three-dimensional architectonic forms. Even the sword metamorphoses out of visual "mistakes" reused to transmit a sense of three-dimensional weight. Picasso gives both the sword and the hand substance through a visible build-up of lines worked over, shifted, partially erased, allowed to accumulate, as though the surface of the paper itself were the site of badly healed wounds or visual scars, and the pencil marks were themselves the fateful maneuverings of a sharpened weapon. The collusion hinted at here between the desperate strength of will with which the hand grasps the sword and Picasso's own grip on the pencil becomes even more suggestively autobiographical



94: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 24. *Hand of Warrior with Broken Sword*, 13 May 1937. Pencil on paper. 24.1 × 45.4 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

in the light of the plaster cast the artist made from his own hand in 1937, clenched into a fist echoing the pose of the sword hand (fig. 95). The mark of the pencil becomes a weapon: representation commensurate with battleground; artist corresponds to warrior. The body – here, the artist's own – becomes a crucial site for these interpretations.

Only the barest traces of this origin are left in the final image of the warrior's hand (see fig. 93). Anatomy has reasserted itself; there are only the usual thumb and four fingers, curving quietly in toward each other. The lines have smoothed themselves into regular contours, and the sword butt has resolved itself into a conventional circular form. The hand now seems a lifeless thing, the power of its previous struggle submerged. The body, multiplying, surging forth, illustrative of struggles both physical and representational in the original sketch, has been forcibly repressed, channeled into the meager outlet of that deadened hand. If it were not for the existence of the preliminary sketch, we might never have known that such a struggle had ever occurred. The change from preliminary sketch to the final version on the canvas has the effect of further flattening the body of the warrior in a way that resonates not only pictorially, as a reformulation of Picasso's own cubist heritage, but also in terms of meaning, as the repression of physical struggle and the privileging of psychic terror. This shift is what has puzzled me: why was Picasso interested, indeed obsessed, with working out detailed renderings of individual figures only to abandon the majority of his visual explorations in the final canvas? This maneuver, highly suggestive of Freud's theory of repression, indicates the close relationship between Picasso and those renegade Freudianists, the Surrealists. What exactly did Picasso take from the Surrealists? Can the "repression" of the preliminary sketches be seen to function similarly to the repressive mechanisms of the Freudian unconscious or are there other issues at stake? The event of the bombing of Guernica was clearly a far different issue for the painter from the event of painting *Guernica*; but how did the artist envision his own relationship to the canvas? To the event of the bombing itself?

These questions open a Pandora's box of issues about the function of representation in the picture that has come to signify more than any other in the twentieth century not only Spain's tragic civil war but the horrors of war generally. In particular, this painting has been taken by most critics (me included) to register Picasso's political commitment against fascism. Yet the issue of Picasso's politics is by no means a straightforward one, and in studying the trajectory from the preliminary sketches to the final painting, I have begun to think that for Picasso himself the end product might have mattered very little

95: Pablo Picasso, plaster cast of Picasso's hand, 1937. Paris, Musée Picasso in comparison with the journey toward it (although he clearly realized that the end product would matter very much to the general viewing public). That is, Picasso's politics do not reside openly, unambiguously, in the final picture; they rest elsewhere. My purpose here is the demonstration of this claim.

Picasso's political praxis of representation, configured in the image of *Guernica*, imagined Spain not as the geographical site of terrible political and military conflicts, or as a stable national entity, or even as a specific historical moment (not, for example, Republican versus Nationalist Spain[6]). Rather, Spain offered Picasso something more than just a subject matter; it provided a framework for a highly particular conjunction of performative spaces or performative constraints that supplied him with the conditions for the production of this particular picture. These constraints functioned on multiple levels but conceptualizations of the body were foremost among them – of the artist's body, of the body wounded in war, ritualized combat, or personal strife, of the sexualized or politicized body, of the body as indicator of unconscious desires. The body also became the point through which Picasso filtered the powerful tradition of the visual spectacle in Spanish culture, a tradition that, from the Inquisition to Goya to the bullfight, had long been associated with the display of human passion and suffering.

It will be part of my argument to show that Surrealism provided Picasso with a means of organizing these ideas. Although Picasso never joined the surrealist movement, he nevertheless found it more compelling than other contemporary avant-gardes in its insistence on representations of sexuality and the body as mechanisms for understanding the construction of meaning within a wider social context. He was especially attracted to Surrealism's view of the metaphoric relationship between the disruptive aspects of sexuality and transgressive possibilities in language, and in the movement's refusal of the split between the rational and the irrational imposed by capitalist society. Picasso utilized these aspects of Surrealism to develop a powerful imagery in which layers of private meaning were built up and made to stand for a range of issues well beyond the personal. He also used them to conceptualize what might be called *Guernica*'s "unconscious" – the traces of its own having been "performed" or produced. In so doing he made the violence and confusion of private sexuality into a mode for coming to grips with the violence and confusion (ideological or physical) of the world at large.

For Picasso, then, *Guernica* was the culmination of a series of aesthetic decisions layered one upon the other to produce the final image. (For his audiences, the situation has been quite different: *Guernica* has come to symbolize any situation – not just the Spanish Civil War – where the strong prey unjustly upon the weak.[7]) In producing *Guernica*, Picasso's investment in the process of representation privileges that process itself as a political praxis. The artist meant this "performing" of *Guernica* to be read – through the traces of its occurrence left in the canvas, in the sketches that accompany the painting, and in Dora Maar's photographs of Picasso painting – as an essential part of the image's significance.

MANDATES FOR PAINTING *GUERNICA*

To what was Picasso responding when he painted *Guernica*? I mean to use this question to elicit a sense of the cultural and political atmospheres in which Picasso worked and which provided some of the boundaries for his pictorial choices in the painting of *Guernica*. The mandates were specific in many ways – legal, ideological, technical, historical – but visually they were general, with no clear injunction regarding subject matter or form.[8] The pictorial choices the artist made, in contrast, were highly specific; yet it is not possible to posit any direct correlation between their specificity and the visual imprecision of the injunctions to which he was responding. *Guernica* thus mediated between specificities of different sorts, transforming the exigencies of one in relation to the dictates of another. Here I sketch out what I find to be the most significant injunctions to which Picasso was responding, but they will become more detailed in what follows. None offers a direct path to the forms of the painting itself, but together they describe a crucial node of discourses within which Picasso made his pictorial choices. How he responded will be the subject of the rest of this chapter.

THE COMMISSION ITSELF

The Spanish Pavilion, designed to represent the Spanish Republic at the 1937 Paris World's Fair, was first and foremost a propagandistic effort in favor of Spain's legitimately elected government.[9] Its mission was in part a gathering of forces, bringing together the various Spanish constituencies that supported the Republican government. The Pavilion was also meant to show that "business was as usual" despite the havoc being wrought by the civil war, and thus that the Republic was confident both of eventual victory and of the support of the world community. That the government continued to concern itself with cultural enterprises was a large part of this ploy. The Spanish ambassador to France, Luis Araquistáin, outlined the Pavilion's purpose in a letter to his ministry:

> It would seem a good idea to participate in the exposition and to take those steps necessary for it immediately, thus giving the impression of security and that the Government continues to work on such things. In the worst case, if it is not easy for private exhibitors to participate, it would always be possible to build a pavilion, low in cost but pleasing, and exhibit works of art, propaganda, etc.[10]

The Pavilion's cultural committee first approached Picasso to paint a mural for the Pavilion in January 1937.[11] The painter's initial response to the commission was to read the delegates a poem later titled *Dream and Lie of Franco* and to show them early states of the two etchings of the same name (figs. 96 and 97). The poem and the etchings were a harsh criticism of the Nationalist dictator and of the civil war he had unleashed, which suggests that at this point both the committee and Picasso were thinking primarily of producing anti-Franco, pro-Republic propaganda. The painter obviously felt that the overtly partisan message of *Dream and Lie of Franco* was an appropriate starting point for thinking about ways of participating in the Pavilion. Later, however, Picasso altered this candidly politicized position; in April 1937 he proposed the seemingly apolitical theme of the artist's studio for the mural (fig. 98),[12] and then again on May 1, less than a week after the bombing of Guernica, he began yet a third proposal for participation in the Pavilion, this one brought to completion and installed.[13] These fluctuations in Picasso's proposals for the mural indicate that *Guernica*'s genesis did not spring primarily from the particulars of the Pavilion commission. In fact, the Pavilion's overtly propagandistic aim proved for the artist to be at once a stimulus and a hindrance; the drama of the civil war provided the note of urgency, while the Pavilion's placement at the World's Fair set the Western world as Picasso's stage. But the Pavilion's leitmotif of culture in the service of Republican politics also seemed at first to unsettle Picasso, causing him to swing wildly from his first proposal to his second. Only with the third and final proposal did he find a productive middleground between the overtly political and the adamantly apolitical.

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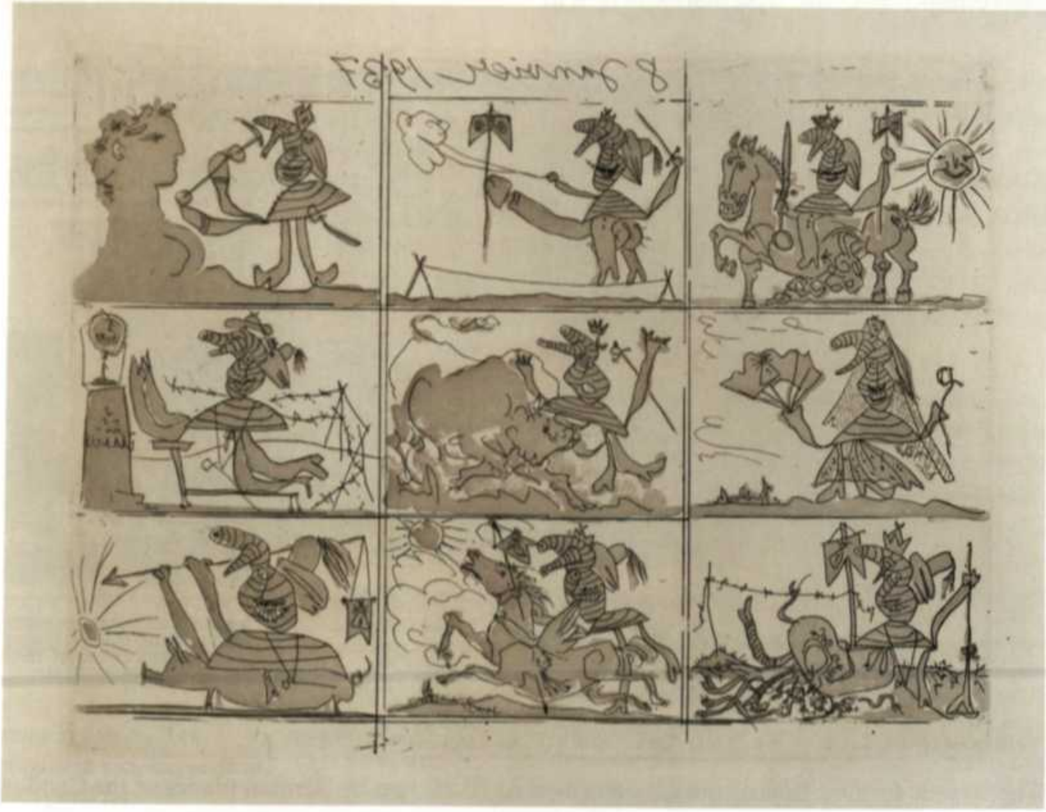
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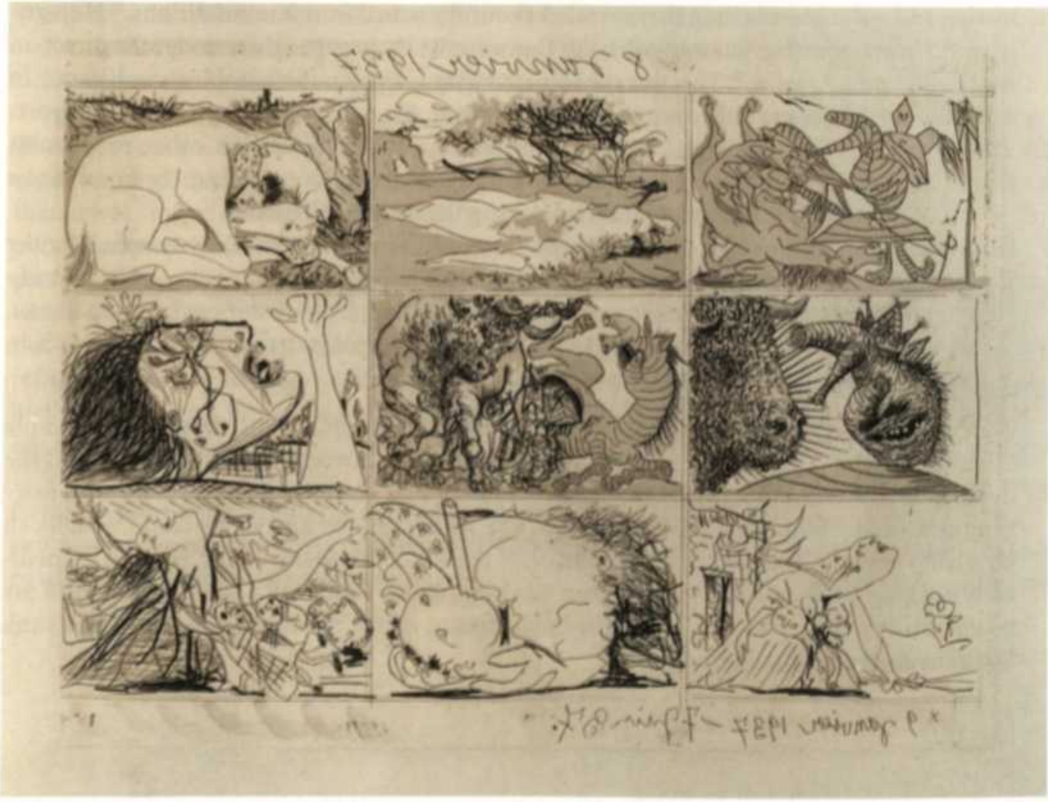
96: Pablo Picasso, *Dream and Lie of Franco* (*Sueño y mentira de Franco*), 8 January 1937. Etching and aquatint. 31.4 × 42.1 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia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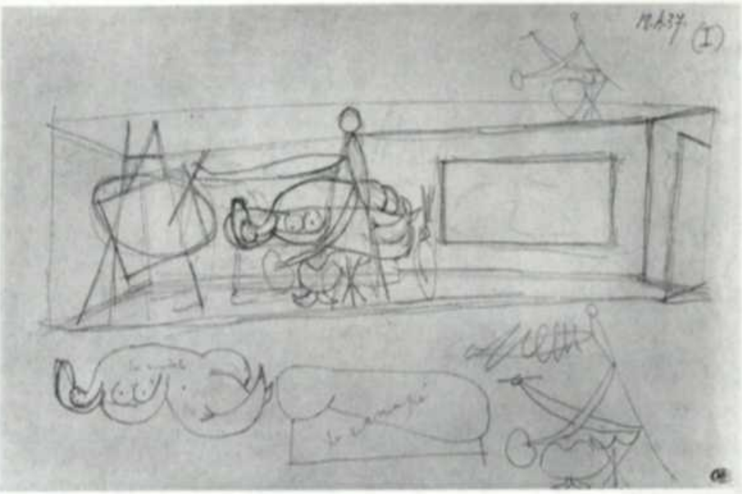
97: Pablo Picasso, *Dream and Lie of Franco* (*Sueño y mentira de Franco*), 9 January–7 June 1937. Etching and aquatint. 31.4 × 42.1 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia



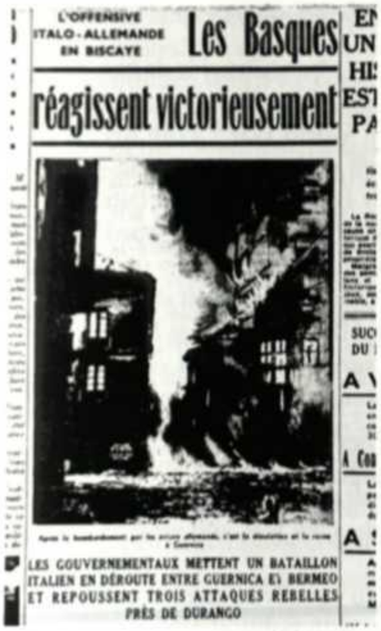
98: Pablo Picasso, *The Studio 1*, 18 April 1937. Pencil on paper. 18 × 28 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso (M.P. 1178)

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND THE FASCIST ATTACK ON GUERNICA

The Basque town of Guernica was bombed on April 26, 1937 by German planes of the Condor Legion acting in alliance with General Franco's Nationalist military offensive. The town, little more than a village, was ill-prepared for the bombing and was heavily damaged: in less than four hours, 1654 people were killed.[14] Picasso, in Paris, was forced to rely on wildly speculative reports of the bombing and the war, which ultimately told more about the politicking of media reporting and governments than they revealed about the actual frontline conditions.[15] He regularly read *L'Humanité* (fig. 98a and 98b), the Communist Party paper then under the direction of his friend Louis Aragon.[16] This was the sole newspaper to keep the bombing consistently in its headlines; other papers either kept the story in low profile or dropped it quickly. The reports in *L'Humanité* did not, perhaps, adhere to the facts as closely as certain other eye-witness accounts but they nonetheless provided invaluable incentive for considering the bombing as representative of fascist atrocities committed during the Spanish Civil War.[17]

Picasso's interest in the war had already been shaped by several factors. Two months after the civil war began, he had enthusiastically accepted the honorary directorship of the Prado Museum in Madrid offered him in the name of the Frente Popular government by Josep Renau, Director General de Bellas Artes.[18] In part, this allowed him, in a statement dated May 1937, to counter accusations that he favored the Franquists in the conflict:

> The Spanish struggle is the fight of reaction against the people, against freedom. My whole life as an artist has been nothing more than a continuous struggle against reaction and the death of art. How could anybody think for a moment that I could be in agreement with reaction and death? When the rebellion began, the legally elected and democratic republican government of Spain appointed me director of the Prado Museum, a post which I immediately accepted. In the panel on which I am working, which I shall call *Guernica*, and in all my recent works of art, I clearly express my abhorrence of the military caste which has sunk Spain in an ocean of pain and death.[19]



L'OFFENSIVE
ITALO-ALLEMANDE
EN BISCAYE

Les Basques
réagissent victorieusement

LES GOUVERNEMENTAUX METTENT UN BATAILLON ITALIEN EN DÉROUTE ENTRE GUERNICA ET BERMEO ET REPOUSSENT TROIS ATTAQUES REBELLES PRÈS DE DURANGO

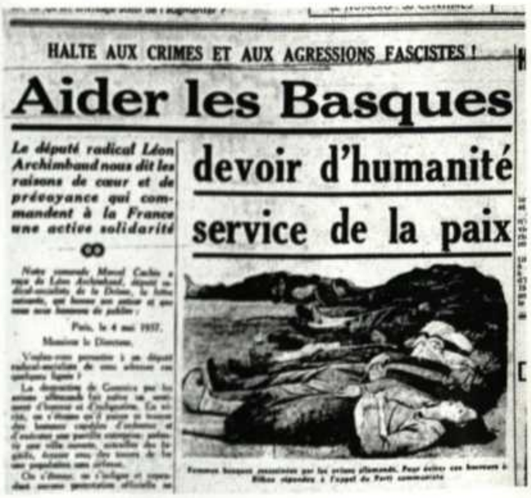
98a: Guernica in flames, "Les Basques réagissent victorieusement," *L'Humanité* , April 1937

In the same statement, Picasso also plunged into the media war over the destruction of Spain's artistic heritage. Franquists, taking advantage of wartime confusion, repeatedly accused the Republicans of systematically destroying cultural property, while Republicans pointed to the November 1936 fascist bombing of the Prado and other Franquist atrocities.[20] Picasso clearly understood the powerful symbolic role that culture played in the Spanish Civil War, equating Spain's artistic patrimony with Republican nationalism:

> The ridiculous story which the fascist propagandists have circulated throughout the world has been exposed completely many times by the great number of artists and intellectuals who have visited Spain lately. All have agreed on the great respect which the Spanish people in arms have displayed for their immense artistic treasures and the zeal which they have exhibited in saving the great store of pictures, religious paintings, and tapestries from fascist incendiary bombs.
>
> Everyone is acquainted with the barbarous bombardment of the Prado Museum by rebel airplanes, and everyone also knows how the militiamen succeeded in saving the art treasures at the risk of their lives. There are no doubts possible here. On the one hand, the rebels throw incendiary bombs on museums. On the other, the people place in security the objectives of these bombs, the works of art. In Salamanca, Milan Astray cries out, "Death to intelligence." In Granada, García Lorca is assassinated.
>
> In the whole world, the purest representatives of universal culture join with the Spanish people. In Valencia, I investigated the state of pictures saved from the Prado, and the world should know that the Spanish people have saved Spanish art.

These are passion-filled words. The commission, the reality of the civil war, and the artist's rousing statements provide in and of themselves only a partial account, however, of why he chose to paint *Guernica.* In fact, Picasso was at first reluctant to take on the project. Although in January 1937 he had already indicated that he would donate the *Dream and Lie of Franco* etchings to the embattled Spanish Republican government in order to raise aid for refugees, and despite his anger at the bombings of Madrid and his birthplace Málaga, he would not at first commit himself to painting the mural.[21]

To the specific, if partial, explanations of the war and the Pavilion commission should be added the more general (yet no less provocative) mandates of Surrealism and Picasso's previous history of treating politics in representation.



HALTE AUX CRIMES ET AUX AGRESSIONS FASCISTES !

Aider les Basques

devoir d'humanité

service de la paix

Le député radical Léon Archimbaud nous dit les raisons de cœur et de prévoyance qui commandent à la France une active solidarité

98b: Dead victims of Guernica bombing, "Aider les Basques," *L'Humanité*, April 1937

* * *

Picasso's Own Fluctuating History of Thinking Politics Through Representation

The artist's involvement with politics has a long history now beginning to be reasonably documented, that spans from his Blue period and cubist connections to anarchist thought, to his ideologically provocative efforts to revitalize classicism after the First World War.[22] With his growing closeness to the Surrealists, he again began to surround himself with a politically radical group of friends in the mid-1920s. In so doing, Picasso not only began to favor certain interpretations of Marxism over anarchism and other political ideologies but also developed this political sensibility within Surrealism's orbit. He was well aware of Surrealism's highly particular take on Marxism, along with all the internal squabbles and fits over what Marxist strategies and aesthetics ought to be. His friendships with people such as Paul Eluard and Dora Maar during the 1930s added a personal side to his professional interest in surrealist political views, and with them he must have discussed aesthetics in relation to communism, Surrealism, and what to do about the Spanish Civil War. It thus seems no coincidence that Eluard's turn to a more overtly politicized poetry in 1936 preceded the production of Picasso's *Dream and Lie of Franco* by only a few weeks (see figs. 96 and 97).[23] The two etchings denouncing the Spanish military dictator were the painter's most direct political response to the civil war, and were to be sold in aid of the Spanish refugee relief fund.

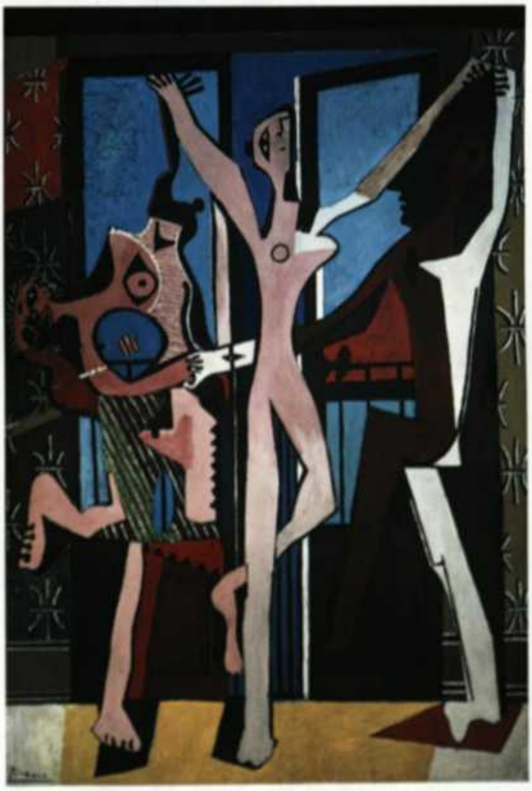
Yet, while Picasso had a strong history of political interest, he had an equally strong history of refusing to acknowledge such involvement, either through affiliation with political parties or through overt political iconography in his art.[24] This is certainly the case with *Guernica*, in which such iconography emerges briefly in the sketches only to be almost unrecognizably transformed in the final canvas. Picasso knew well, I shall argue, that for a work of art to retain a political impact beyond the flash of mere propaganda, any notion of politics had to be located as much if not more in the act of representation itself than in a specific content.

SURREALISM

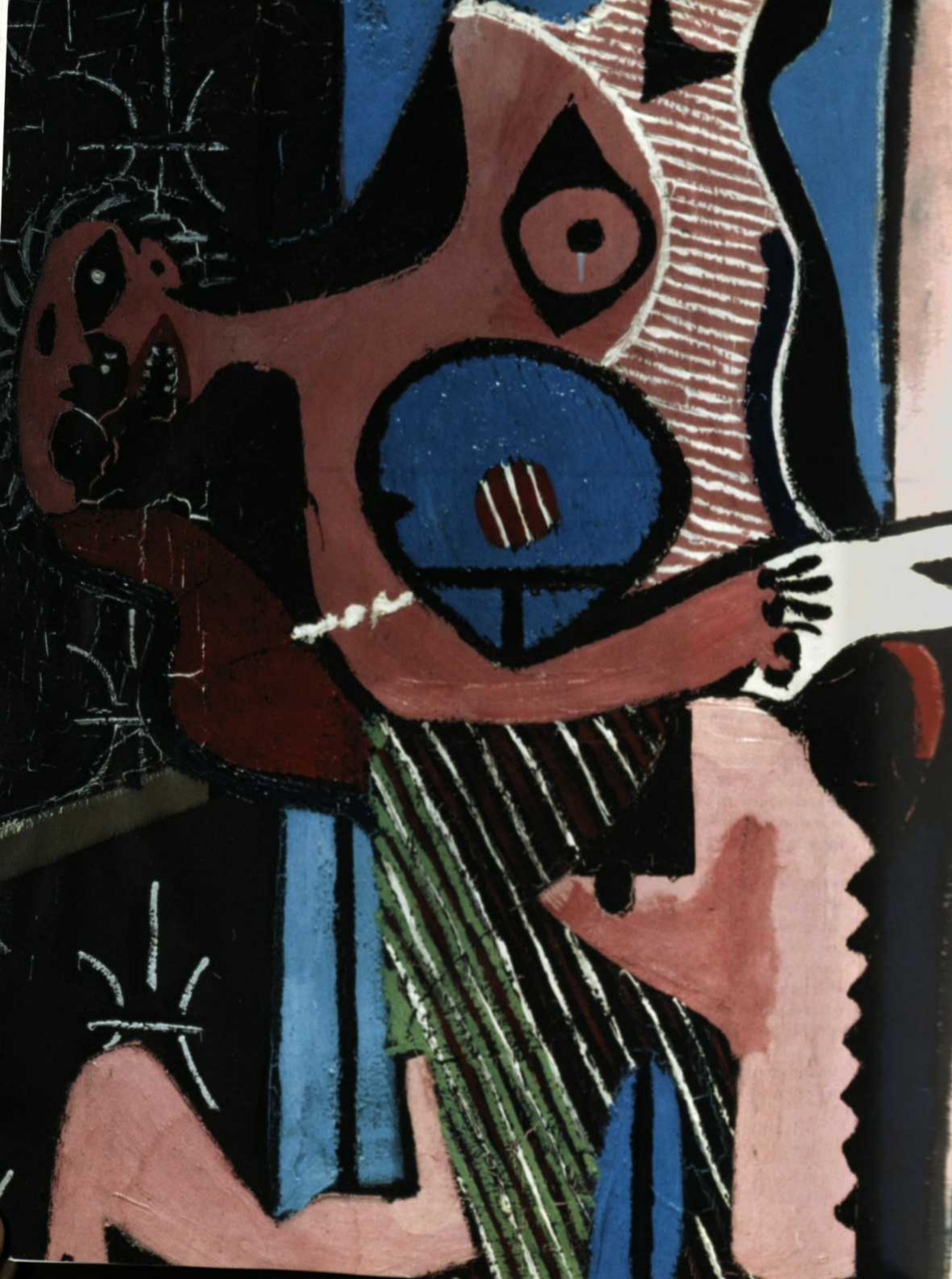
From Surrealism's earliest beginnings, both orthodox and dissident members continually worshipped Picasso. The 1922 manifesto, "Clairement," specifically separated Picasso (and Surrealism) from other artists who had "sold out."[25] In 1924, Breton caused an uproar by shouting "long live the genius" before being thrown out of the premiere of the ballet *Mercure* for which Picasso had designed costumes and decor. In the First Surrealist Manifesto, Breton called Picasso "by far the most pure" Surrealist, and in his crucial 1924 essay "Le Surréalisme et la peinture," reserved his most unabashed praise for him. Bataille dedicated an entire 1930 issue of *Documents* to him; in 1933 Picasso was invited to design the first cover of the magazine *Minotaure*.[26]

In part, this Picasso-worship was simply an opportunistic strategy for surrealist self-aggrandizement. By actively contradicting *L'Esprit nouveau*'s claim to Picasso as a full member of the *rappel à l'ordre*'s conservative rationalism on the one hand, or establishment disdain in the 1920s that Picasso was a "has-been" on the other, the Surrealists found they could generate considerable controversy.[27] This allowed them to position themselves center-stage in debates about the newest and latest avant-garde trends. Critics began to pay serious attention to them; they ceased being viewed as mere hangers-on to established avant-garde movements. But the Surrealists also really meant what they said; they earnestly believed that Picasso's work had "liberated painting from the conventions of representation," thus making possible "the most scintillating fantasy."[28] They argued that Picasso had opened up those key terms in picture-making – representation and reality – to new and fruitful scrutiny. That is, after Cubism, painting was no longer constrained to provide a mimetic illusion of reality. Instead it could represent an equivalent sign for reality, in order to critique both human experience and the language through which we conceptualize it.

Picasso, in turn, responded to this adulation by allowing himself to be placed at the forefront of the movement. Although never an official member, he nevertheless gave both orthodox and dissident Surrealism the use of his works and name.[29] Like the Surrealists, Picasso recognized the mutual benefits of such an alliance, which in the mid-1920s helped rescue him from the stigma of having becoming boringly bourgeois.[30] However, by the 1925 painting of *La Danse*, first reproduced in *La Révolution surréaliste*, Picasso had clearly become intrigued with Surrealism as more than just a means of self-advertising (fig. 99). The frantic distortions of the two female bodies, unlike the emotional calm and neoclassical lines of his current style, mark the painter's growing fascination with Surrealism's insistence on the human body as a register of psychic terrors and desires. The strange shadow-like configuration of the figure on the right gives the scene an even more ominous tone. Picasso developed the two stylistic strands of Surrealism and neoclassicism in his work throughout the 1920s and '30s, but increasingly pushed the neoclassical line into dialectical conflict with the Surrealist. By 1937 he had developed a method of crashing the two styles into each other in order to contrast the rational seren-



99: Pablo Picasso, *The Dance/ The Three Dancers*, 1925. Oil on canvas. 2.15 × 1.42 m. London, Tate Modern Gallery



ity of the neoclassical with the irrational violence of the Surrealist. In *Guernica*, this visual tactic took on particular political meaning.

Tracking exactly how this happened, and what uses Picasso made of other surrealist practices in formulating *Guernica* is no straightforward matter. In a general way, Picasso saw in Surrealism something close to the thoughts he had been formulating since the early years of the century about the workings of representation. Like the Surrealists, he recognized that lived reality could not be separated from the representational procedures used to articulate it, but that those representational strategies were never congruent with the surface appearance of that reality. The lack of transparency between representation and reality makes bringing the two into some kind of alignment a disruptive, problematic enterprise. The Surrealists conceptualized this troublesome relation as the site for social action and revolutionary change. They advocated a metaphoric relationship between sexual transgression and the violation of visual and linguistic traditions, and sought to situate transgressive behavior in the practice of representation itself. Given this, their work focused heavily on the body (especially the female body) as a highly charged erotic field and a never neutral object of representation.[31] There is much in the production of *Guernica* to suggest that Picasso was thinking along similar lines, for example in the gender transformations of the bull and falling woman, evident in the sketches, or in the gradual incorporation of a female toreador into the figure of the fallen warrior (which I discuss in later sections of this chapter).

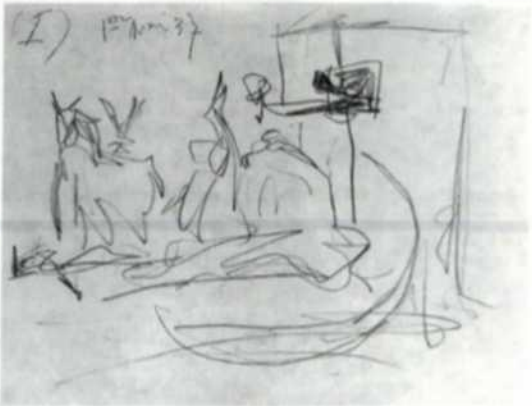
The body as the object of representational strategies was only one aspect of Picasso's interest. There are also parallels in *Guernica* with the surrealist view of the body as mediator, between the conscious and the unconscious, between the public and the private, and between the differing worlds of external and internal reality. In part, what Picasso and Surrealism had in common was the sense of the body as an active participant in representation – as the solicitor, intermediary, and organizer of otherwise mute, obscure, or seemingly unconnected visual elements. Surrealist practice generally imagined the active body as that of the (male) artist, consigning the corporeal object of representation (usually female) too often to a passive role. Picasso unhinged the gendering of that relationship, however, to conceptualize representational activity as a more mutual enterprise.

There are also similarities to be found around the notion of "document"; neither Picasso nor the Surrealists understood the term in anything like a straightforward way. Surrealism had thought long and hard about how to record the factual status of the marvelous, of the unconscious, and of madness. As is well known, the movement reworked Freud's theories of dream interpretation and the function of memory, developing a variety of mechanisms for documenting the supposedly undocumentable "reality" beyond mundane, visible experience. These ranged from automatic writing (the most famous) and surrealist photography to the purportedly non-fictional character of Breton's 1928 novel *Nadja*, among other practices. Each technique recorded the traces of something that never appeared directly in the final product, tracking its aura or an evocation rather than the thing itself.[32] Each evoked a memory (or, in Freud's terms, a "memory-trace") of the original as a means of registering its existence, but did so in the absence of the thing itself. It is precisely on these corresponding strategies of surrealist "documentation" that *Guernica* presented the traces of its own production in the final canvas.

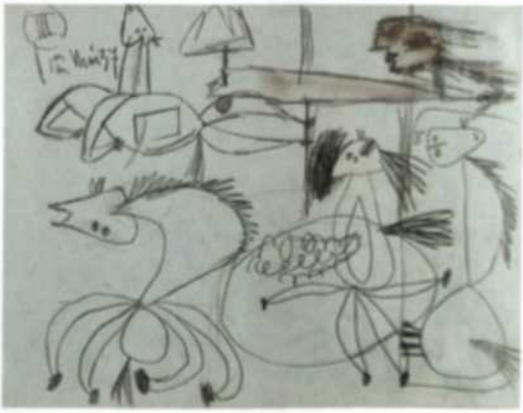
THE ARTIST'S STUDIO

Picasso's original idea for the Pavilion mural had nothing to do with the military struggle being enacted in Spain but instead consisted of at least fourteen sketches made in April 1937 on the theme of the artist's studio.[33] The first sketch, modifying this familiar motif in Picasso's oeuvre, shows the central figure of an artist (of indeterminate gender) whose elongated painting arm underscores the horizontal line of the canvas (see fig. 98). This figure provides the conceptual and formal link between the reclining female model (also in the center) and the easel to the left. In a suggestive *croquis* to the lower right, Picasso has scratched out the elongated arm, transferring the paintbrush to a lower, more virile arm-phallus that crosses the painter's palette arm. Nothing, it seems, could be further from the confused scene of destruction in *Guernica* than this contemplative and personal vision of artistic creation.

Picasso, however, did not forget the theme of the elongated, outstretched arm.[34] He returned to it as a defining compositional mechanism in the form of the woman holding the lantern from the very start of *Guernica*'s preliminary sketches. In *Sketch I*, the arm takes its place, and by *Sketch III* it has accumulated a sense of deep urgency as the woman strains out of the window, her hair streaking back, to thrust the lantern onto the scene of destruction (figs. 100 and 101).[35] In the final version of the canvas, this urgency is consolidated by placing the woman's arm over her head, as though, not believing her eyes, she holds the lantern higher to dispel the nightmare that confronts her. Her arm returns to its original shaping – an attenuated oblong with a sharp point at the moment of connection to her body.



100: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 1, *Compositional Study*, 1 May 1937. Pencil on paper. 21 × 27 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

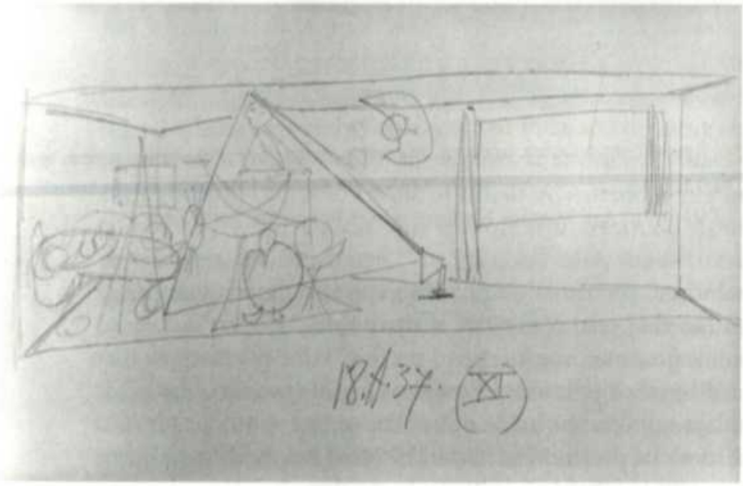


101: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 3, *Compositonal Study*, 1 May 1937. Pencil on paper. 21 × 27 cm. (Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

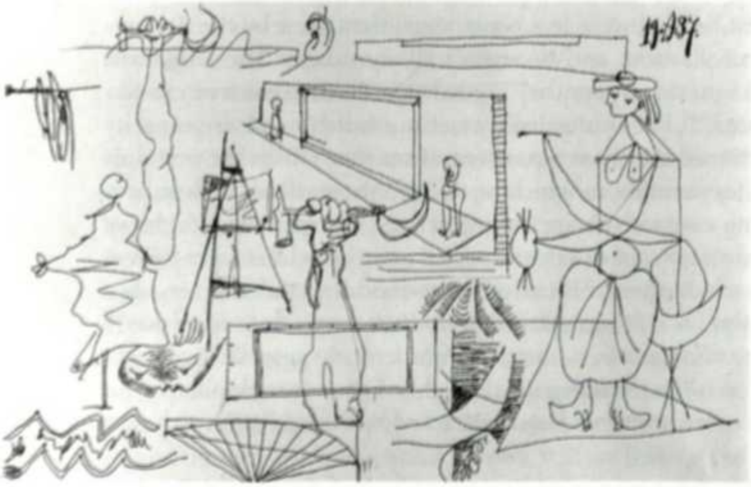
Other formal elements were also lifted from the *Studio* series to *Guernica*'s final composition. The window behind the painter in *Studio XI* becomes the window out of which the woman with the lantern leans; the triangular space demarcated by Picasso as the area to be filled by the painter's body has been kept as the formal stabilizing mechanism that determines the placement of the central figures (fig. 102). The motif of the lantern itself is derived from the studio lamps that illuminate both model and canvas for the painter's work, and the spatial configuration of the studio's long rectangular interior itself reappears in the final canvas. These elements borrowed from the first mural proposal give *Guernica* much of its formal strength.

None, however, retains such symbolic or visual power in the transformation as the painter's arm holding its brush in the act of creation, metamorphosed into the woman's arm elevating the lamp to illuminate the catastrophe. It is this issue that I shall explore here. On the one hand, the arm marks a correlation between the creative act of painting and the revelatory act of illumination. On the other, it becomes a metaphor for the negative aspects of representation: the woman's lantern illuminates a scene of unbounded agony, while the painter's hand creates an image of apocalyptic despair. Thus the theme of creation fuses dialectically with its opposite – destruction – and the artist becomes in a way responsible for that fusion. The image of artistic production as a metaphor for creation is not new and neither was it new in Picasso's work. Many writers have commented upon the iconography of this theme in Picasso's oeuvre, or have interpreted it through recourse to autobiography.[36] Here I consider two aspects: first, the interactive, performative nature of it, in which the metaphor lies less in what is imaged than in how it is imaged; and second, the links made among creation, destruction, and visual representation.

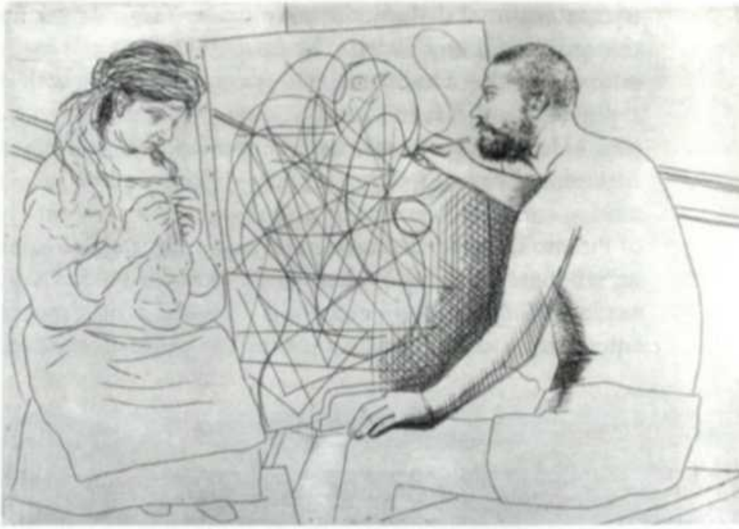
Picasso often conceptualized artistic production as a performative field in which the boundaries between individual identities are loosened in favor of a more communal, interactive identity, and *Guernica* is no exception. Picasso's artist– model pictures all depend upon a field of interaction between two people, one engaged in the "active" operation of looking while the other is "passively" being looked at. Often these roles are taken up respectively by male artist and female model but this is by no means always the case. In several instances, as in the drawing *Studio XIV*, the artist is gendered female, which complicates any attempt to interpret male versus female roles conventionally as active versus passive (fig. 103). Even more intriguing are those moments where the seeming passivity of the model provokes the artist into tumultuous action. In a 1931 etching for Balzac's *Le chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, Picasso produces a wild tangle of vibrant lines on his canvas, shockingly at odds with the dowdiness of the model in front of him (fig. 104). In fact, it is the model who seems to incite the representational hurricane on the easel, as though some turbulent internal essence is flowing from the depths of her being through the artist's brush onto the canvas.[37] The upper-left frame of Plate I in *Dream and Lie of Franco* makes use of the same idea in the context of the Spanish Civil War (see fig. 96). Here, the mere existence of the model (transformed into an allegory of Beauty) drives Franco to a frenzy of destruc-



102: Pablo Picasso, *The Studio XI*, 18 April 1937. Pencil on paper. 18 × 28 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso



103: Pablo Picasso, *The Studio XIV*, 19 April 1937. Pen and ink on paper. 18 × 28 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso (M.P. 1190)



104: Pablo Picasso, illustration for Balzac's *Le chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, 1927. Etching. 19.4 × 27.9 cm. Paris, Museé Picasso (M. P. 3552) Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York

tion in an ironic parody of the sculptor's métier.

In Picasso's work, then, the model can often be understood as an active rather than passive source of creative energy, and the artist as a receptive visual conductor of the current of energy that flows from her.[38] The artist's state reminds one, in fact, of the passivity that the Surrealists tried to attain during sessions of automatic writing or drawing, so as to allow the unconscious to flow through their pens uninhibited. While I think it pushes the analogy too far to claim that the Picassian artist's model is thus the equivalent of the unconscious or that the artist is entirely passive, the parallels are nonetheless suggestive. Indeed, surrealist automatism specifically critiques more conventional notions of artistic creation that center creative activity solely on the conscious "genius" of the (male) artist. Instead, it proposes a concept of performative production that envisions the artist as the physical medium through which flow less tangible sources of psychic and sexual power. Automatism, in this way, takes the artist out of the center spotlight (at least in theory[39]), in order to focus on the mode of production itself. The artist becomes merely one player, positioned in relation to others, within a field of aesthetic formation. It is this emphasis on the production of visual meaning rather than on the end result, and on production as an interactive rather than individual affair, that resonates with *Guernica*.

The Surrealists, like Picasso, also accorded women a privileged place within this concept of production. Women, in the surrealist lexicon, were less constrained than men by the deadening forces of rationalism, Western civilization, and bourgeois family values. The Surrealists considered women to be closer to the psychic forces they argued were essential to true creativity, and were therefore more "liberated."[40] They accorded women a productive, active capacity for which the male artist often functioned simply as a passive transmitter. This is the principle Breton claimed for his novel *Nadja*, for example, in which he rejected the status of author, professing instead to be merely reporting a narrative of actions generated out of Nadja's flights of imagination. At key moments, Picasso's concept of creation in his artist–model images follows a similar pattern. It is thus possible to conceive of Picasso's artist–model relationship less as a matter of domination and submission (as it is too often described in the Picasso literature[41]) than as a field of interactive power – often gentle, sometimes murderously aggressive on both sides – whose intent is to generate pictorial meaning. In the light of the examples above, his dowdy, knitting model and his motionless statue of Beauty attacked by Franco begin to have a distinctly surrealist flavor.

Through this lens, the relationship between the preliminary *Studio* sketches and the final painting of *Guernica* takes on greater complexity. The *Studio* sketches no longer seem merely a dead end rejected by Picasso or simply a visual scrapbook from which certain formal motifs were transferred to the final canvas stripped of their original meaning.[42] For example, the motif of the painter's arm taken from the *Studio* sketches is less a reference point for the subject matter of *Guernica* than a visual and symbolic key to how the painting was generated. This particular motif imbricates Picasso's notion of aesthetic creation bound up in the artist's studio into the concepts of looking and illumination in *Guernica*. Looking, in *Guernica*, is dually attached to the artist-creator (Picasso) studying his subject and to the distressed woman holding the lantern over that scene of disaster. The studio motif serves to define the conditions of looking and representation under which the painter was able to rework the individual development of a picture (complete with all its "haphazard" visual twists) into a broader critique of how things take on meaning, whether those things be pictures, human lives, or their destruction.[43] In the particular case of *Guernica*, the supposedly random visual transference of the original motif of the painter's arm provides a significant mode through which Picasso managed to bring the heavily inscribed theme of creation and its Janus face – destruction – to bear upon the issue of the Spanish Civil War.

The relationship to surrealist practices in this regard is, to be sure, oblique rather than direct. Indeed, Surrealism functions here less as an immediate influence than as a means of confirming an otherwise overly vague sense of Picasso's thinking about the term "creation" with respect to *Guernica*. It helps delineate a particular sense of the performative nature of the painting's construction – Picasso's sense of this as an interactive, rather than one-sided, affair. For Picasso as well as for Surrealism, this was often understood around an interaction between genders, between men and women.[44] In Picasso's case, the performative nature of artistic production thus garners complexity and force, as it reformulates conventional stereotypes of the female model as "passive" and the male artist as "active." Clearly in the final version of *Guernica*, there is no female model. The artist-creator figure of the *Studio* sketches has been kept; but it is radically transformed into the severely mutated form of the terrified woman with the lantern. Creation has metamorphosed into illuminating disaster, and the painting's subject matter has taken a somber turn away from the artist–model theme. Nevertheless, considering the performative nature of aesthetic production from this angle gives one new insight into the ways in which the artist's enterprise of looking is actively bound up with what is being looked at. The object of vision is understood to have a dynamism all its own, recast and retransmitted by the artist. It is this aspect, loosed from the gendered exploration accorded it in artist–model series or in Surrealism, that one finds in *Guernica*. A this point the artist's job of looking and representing comes together with disaster. When what the artist is addressing as his immediate object of vision is the disaster of war, his representational abilities are thereby acutely affected.

Seeing, in Spanish culture, has a history of functioning as an apocalyptic act associated with disaster. One of the painters Picasso most respected, Goya, invoked vision as the only means of coping with the horror of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, when language no longer proved capable of encompassing it. This is the case, for instance, in his series the *Disasters of War*; Goya inscribed one of the plates with the blunt and completely inadequate phrase "I Saw This" as the only possible linguistic response to the human destruction he so exactingly detailed visually. Here, language throws the burden of representation back onto vision, and vision admirably, horrifically lives up to the task. The act of visual representation itself, under Goya's touch, took on a politicized force in circumstances where no other mode of action was possible. The *Disasters of War* gave witness to the Napoleonic war, embedding its testimonial in the praxis of representation itself. *Guernica* follows suit in linking the act of seeing to the scene of catastrophe through the act of representing. It is no surprise, therefore, that Picasso retained the original motif of the artist's hand in the final canvas specifically as the hand holding the lantern to illuminate the destruction for the viewers' eyes.

PICASSO'S SKETCHES, DORA MAAR'S PHOTOGRAPHS

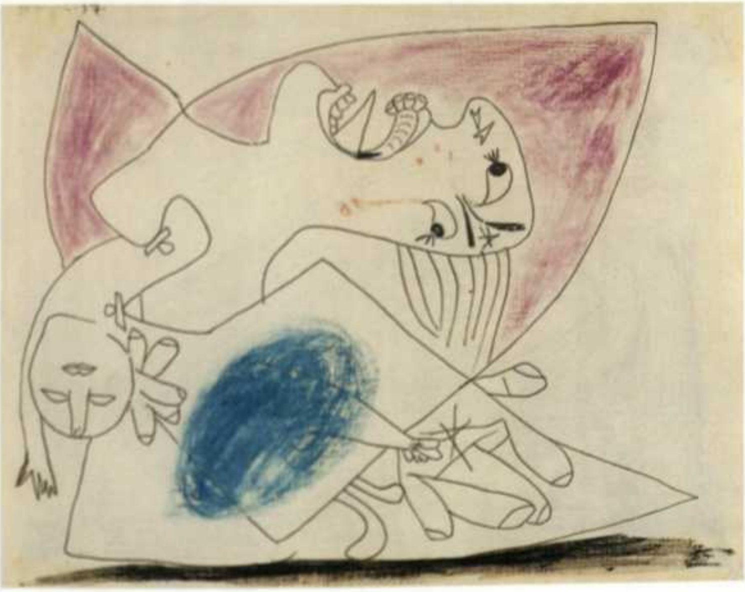
During the painting of *Guernica*, Picasso was particularly close to the surrealist photographer Dora Maar, his lover at the time, and to Eluard who had introduced the two in 1935.[45] Maar and Eluard visited Picasso almost daily as he worked on *Guernica*, while Maar photographed the canvas's stages of development. These pictures tempt one into wondering what conversations went on in the studio at the Rue des Grands-Augustins. All three people, deeply affected by Spain's war, must have discussed politics and its relationship to art.[46] They must have talked about when was a suitable moment for Picasso to stop painting and Maar to start photographing, how Picasso would respond to the Spanish Pavilion commission, the relationship of Eluard's surrealist poetics to the canvas, and whether Surrealism's various political strategies were appropriate. No details of these conversations remain; all that is left of this month leading up to the final painting are the sketches and photographs and the mural itself.[47] Yet these can provide a crucial point of entry into thinking about how Picasso responded to his mandates. The fact that he numbered the sketches closely – not only listing the day they were produced but also even their order within the day – indicates that he meant them literally to document the progression of his ideas. He continually lent the sketches for *Guernica*, such that they almost invariably accompanied the painting on its international travels after the closure of the Spanish Pavilion.[48] Picasso and Maar agreed to photograph *Guernica*'s progress and Picasso also approved publication of those photographs along with the sketches in a special 1937 issue of *Cahiers d'art*.[49]

It is not unusual either for such a painting to have numerous preliminary drawings or for its stages to be photographed. Picasso's own history of employing these tactics is well known.[50] Yet the fact that Picasso recorded *Guernica*'s production so carefully – not only down to the order within the day that each sketch was made but also by authorizing the *Cahiers d'art* publication of Maar's photographs and the sketches while the painting was on public view at the World's Fair – indicates the increased importance he attached to documenting the sequence of his visual thoughts. Indeed, this shift attests to Picasso's rethinking of this traditional artistic practice in the light of contemporary debates on the concept and functions of documentation. Numbering, the use of dates, and the photographing of the painting's different aspects recall those tactics established by certain social institutions – news reports, police surveillance, legal or bureaucratic records, and scientific experiments among them – meant to pin down an image's relationship to a reality. Picasso's use of such techniques represents part of his effort to put *Guernica* on the same level of reportage as the news of the bombing itself. This effort is also evident elsewhere: many of the painting's observers have remarked on the reverberations between its black and white tonalities and the black-and-white photography of contemporary news reportage, claiming a deliberate association between Picasso's version and the supposedly factual recording of civil war events.[51]

This interpretation seems true enough, but to stop at this level of metaphor is to underestimate Picasso's documentary intentions. At issue is a process of documentation made familiar through such social institutions – how it is done, its various techniques, its underlying ideology that reality can be recorded through facts – but not with the same goal. The sketches and photographs offer a particular view into the process through which *Guernica* was produced, a view that is only partial but nevertheless key to understanding the painting.[52] Their goal was to register not the bombing of the town, or even the civil war itself, but, rather, a particular response to these circumstances. (Already one begins to see connections to surrealist notions of documentary, in which a response to an event or thing is what is recorded, rather than the thing itself. I return to this idea later.) That Picasso conceived the preliminary sketches as recording a response to the bombing (rather than documenting the bombing itself) shifts the significance of the final canvas: it signifies as a product of that documentation as much as a response to the bombing. That is, the painting has as its "subject" both its own process of creation and the horrors of war, and not to its detriment. Picasso's insistence on the sketches allows the painting to carry this dual level of subject matter so that each reinforces the other. *Guernica* is a painting about war and human destruction, but it is just as much a painting about painting – about representation and the process of creation. The sketches and photographs track the details of this visualization, and therefore of representation itself. They note the speed with which ideas occurred to Picasso; they give significance to the dating and sequencing of the images. Above all, the sketches and photographs give value to the order in which ideas unfolded. Modes of visual concentration are traced out in them, registering where Picasso's mind dwelt on a specific problem, as for instance in his need to set in place the theme of the bull and the horse before moving on to the issue of the weeping woman.

The insistent repetition of the latter theme in sketches and paintings made well after the canvas had been installed in the Spanish Pavilion marks its importance to the overall meaning of *Guernica*.[53] It gives the solitary figure of the grief-stricken woman a special poignancy, as if a single painting of her could contain neither the depth nor the extent of her sorrow. Through close attention to the use of line and color, Picasso instilled in this series of screaming women a strong sense of personal agony, as though he could plumb agony's emotional depths through tracing out with his pencil its effects on the bodies of the women. In the sketch *Mother with Dead Child II*, he added color in rough patches that relate emotively rather than physically to the figures (fig. 105). Picasso's scribble of blue means to replicate through gesture and hue the instinctual reactions of a woman beyond reason, for whom reason has proven a useless weapon against the horror of war. He magnifies this use of color in the following sketch, keeping the blue patch centralized in the female body such that the blue itself becomes a metaphor for hysteria born of terror (fig. 106). He details and intensifies the surrounding environment, opposing the yellowish flames belching a thick black smoke behind the woman to an ominous black hole toward which she is forced to flee. Although color is rejected in the final painting, through it Picasso developed an intensity of emotion in the sketches of the female figures. There is a pointed kind of homage being paid to the profundity of such grief, in which Picasso seeks not to assuage it but to recognize it, honor it, give it dignity through the empathetic touch of his brush. The line in this image as well gets thickened and more insistent, rejecting the still delicate neoclassical line of the previous figure in favor of a more urgent expressivity.[54]

Guernica's sketches therefore not only seek to evaluate the order of the physical marks put down on paper or canvas but also boldly demand to be taken as authenticating something much more elusive – the powerful emotions and thoughts undergone by the painter throughout that production. They rest as the physical guarantee, the material product of

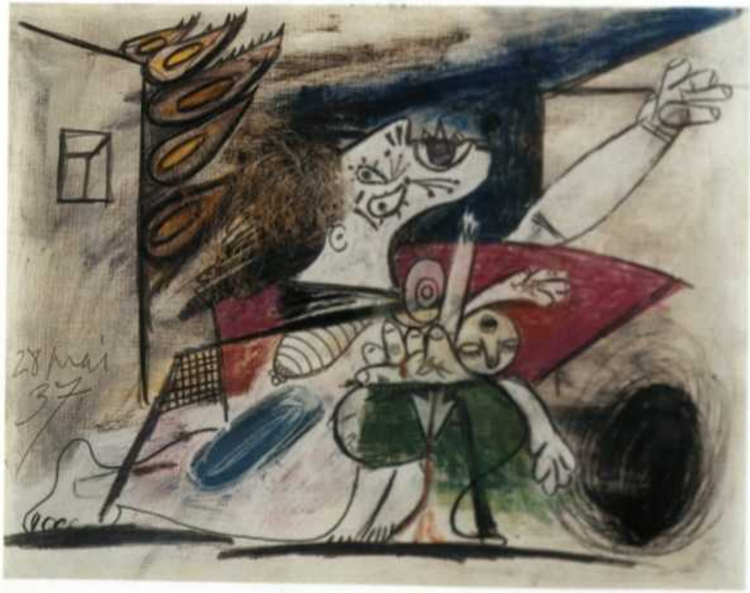


105: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 36: *Mother with Dead Child II*, 28 May 1937. Pencil, color crayons and gouache on paper. 23.5 × 29.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia the specific reality of the painter's process of aesthetic production. As such, both sketches and photographs contradict documentary conventions as much as invoke them; they themselves are made up of cryptic visual associations, the pictorial results of intentions both conscious and unconscious, and (in the case of the sketches) chance marks of pencil on paper.[55] They value the "evidence" of the fortuitous and the haphazard as much as they do the intentional and the verifiable. They resonate with conventional techniques of documentation but also with that technique – automatism – developed by the Surrealists to document the obscure reaches of the human mind.

Picasso's prolonged proximity to Surrealism meant that he was familiar with automatism and with the Freudian critique of psychic rationalism it proposed. While Picasso remained dubious about automatism's claim to escape the "logic" of the waking world, he found its conceptual framework useful in documenting the seemingly undocumentable: the twists and turns involved in conferring meaning on a set of images. Christian Zervos, the editor of *Cahiers d'art*, gave a passionate account at the time *Guernica* was on view in Paris, which goes to the heart of how automatism might be at issue in the painting:

> The artist's imprecations, translated here into visible sensations . . . , produce extreme tension and provoke a flow of feeling that reaches the depths of human pain. The viewers . . . are no longer conscious of the fact that what disturbs them, makes them indignant and overwhelms them is a pictorial phenomenon. Transformed into affective appreciation, the painting provokes a profound instinctive reaction, reduced by habit to a kind of automatism. The signs that cover its surface become active; they make us live the time we attempt to escape through countless detours. By living in time, we become more responsive to evil actions and open ourselves to the gnawing obsession that ends up uncovering our conscience.[56]

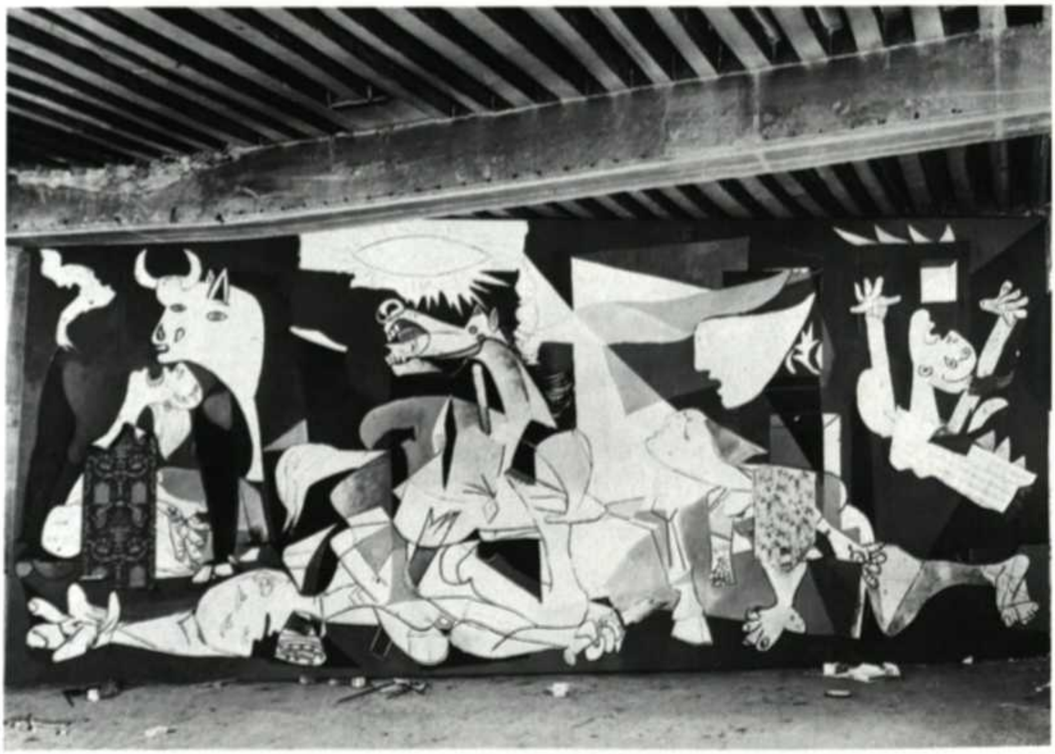
This is a difficult passage to unravel but well worth the effort. Zervos's invocation of the surrealist term "automatism" suggests that *Guernica*'s imagery in no way attempts to convey mimetically to the audience the events of the bombing (that is clear enough). Rather, *Guernica*'s capacity to address the catastrophe of the civil war to such effect comes through Picasso's ability to force the viewer to undergo a real-time emotional trajectory similar to that experienced by the painting's figures. Through this process and the "flow of feeling" it drags up, it becomes impossible for the viewer to avoid confronting "evil actions." That is, the process that one undergoes in viewing the work – Zervos qualifies it as "a kind of automatism" – is what gives the painting its powerful ability to convince one of the desperation of the situation and of the need to do something to change it. This viewing process, Zervos suggests, is both akin to and put into motion by Picasso's own procedure of painting.



106: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 37: *Mother with Dead Child IV*, 28 May 1937. Pencil, color crayons and gouache on paper. 23.5 × 29.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

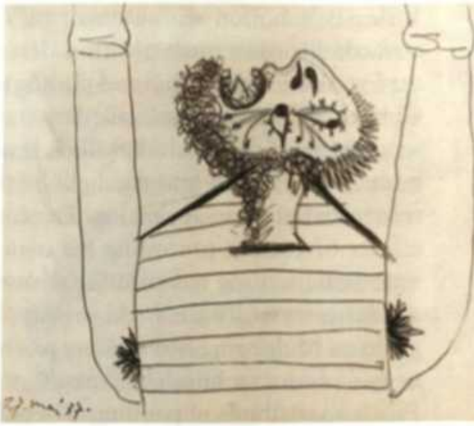
Zervos's notion of "automatism," although flowery and imprecise, nevertheless usefully embeds Picasso's process within that surrealist concept. This link is intriguing and demands exploration. The sketches and photographs record something of the mechanism through which *Guernica*'s final form was called up out of Picasso's enormous repertoire of images. They reveal something of the means by which images, silted up with signification over decades of use and reuse, were forced into the light with all the visual contortions of dreams and nightmares remembered upon awakening. The canvas itself might be said therefore to register the residual effects of Picasso processing his own storehouse of images, much as the Surrealists claimed automatic writing recorded the distorted traces of the unconscious. It shows only what managed, however distorted and impacted, to press through the onslaught of the artist's physical gestures of drawing and erasing, painting, and repainting. From this point of view, the sketches and photographs can be thought of as documenting the press of images through the sieve of Picasso's methods of painting. They do so by tracking what got taken out as well as what was left in the final image.

This can be seen, for example, in the stripes on the skirt of the woman falling from the burning building in the final canvas. They add a visual focus to her figure that helps anchor the right edge of the composition. Without the sketches and photographs, however, one would never know that this visual turn had been built up both out of a number of purely formal investigations and out of pictorial references in part personal, in part symbolic. Maar's photograph of *State VII* of the final canvas records Picasso's addition of large strips of wallpaper to the canvas as variational devices (fig. 107). These strips were clearly never meant to remain as part of the final composition but seemed necessary nonetheless as aids to the artist's thinking, perhaps to pull him out of a mental block.[57] The piece of paper collaged onto the falling woman's cloth-

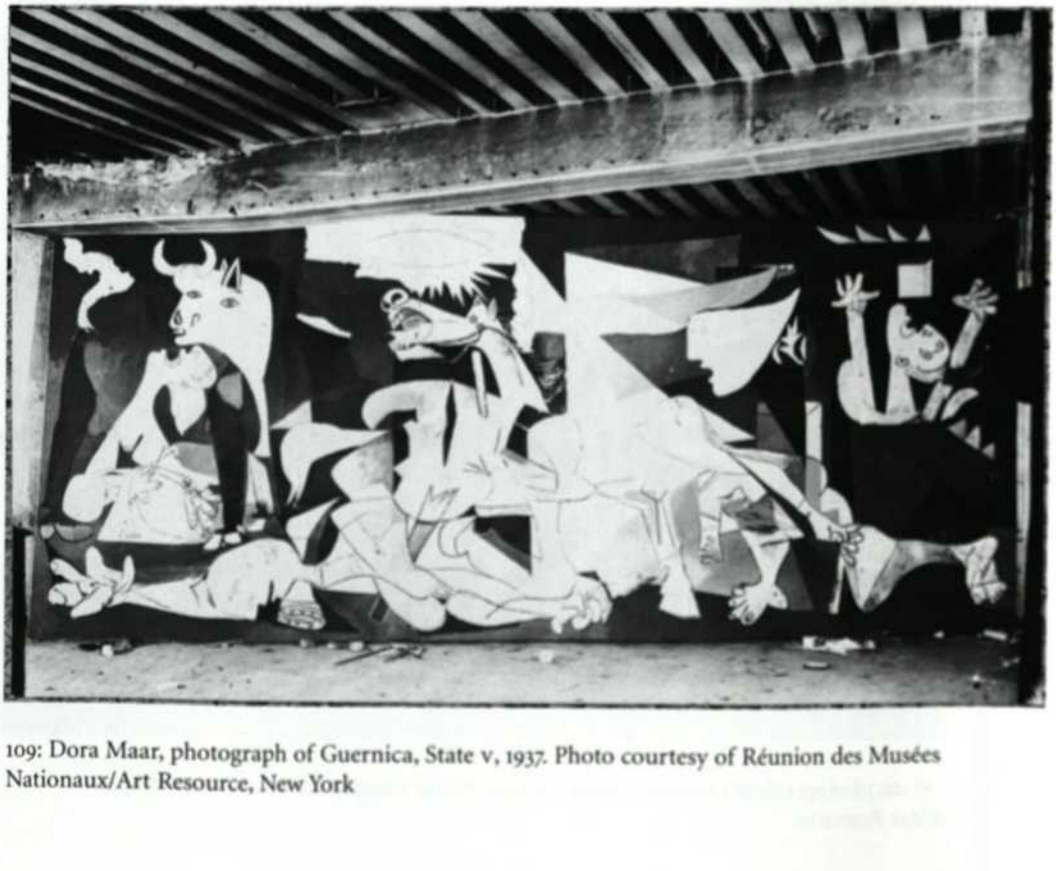


107: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State VII, 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource ing tilts its pattern of checks in the same diagonal direction as the lines on her skirt in the finished canvas, and causes the entire rectangle of her body to leap forward visually. Its tablecloth checks also give her a faint air of domesticity that contrasts shockingly with her terrifying predicament.

The lines on the woman's skirt, as well as her upthrust arms and open-mouthed scream, are suggestive of another sketch of a frightened sailor (fig. 108). Compositionally, Picasso used the sketch to strengthen and clarify his previously somewhat muddled rendering of the woman by *State V* (fig. 109),[58] yet the oddity of utilizing a strongly masculine figure to clarify an extremely feminine one requires more explaining than a purely visual account will give. The figure of the sailor has a long history in Picasso's work, reaching back thirty years to that other great picture of human and representational anguish, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. There, as Leo Steinberg argues, the sailor played a curiously meek and sexually ambiguous role in the studies for the painting.[59] In the study for *Guernica*, he once again images a powerlessness that belies his male physique. Here too, the sailor eventually leaves the visual stage to make way for a female figure, as though Picasso were recalling his use of the figure in the *Demoiselles* as a transitional device needed to condense both representational and emotive force. The sailor, notably, was in some



108: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 35: *Falling Man*, 27
1937. Pencil and gouache on paper. 23.5 × 29.2
Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina
Sofía



109: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State v, 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York measure also a convention of self-portraiture in the painter's oeuvre; in 1945 Picasso replied half-jokingly to Jerome Seckler's question as to why he painted himself as a sailor that it was because he "always [wore] a sailor shirt."[60] This suggests a level of personal involvement in the painting of the falling woman's figure – Picasso's mode of shifting it from the level of performance to the levels of style and content – that once again used the figure of the sailor to compact a frenzy of emotion into the right-hand edge of the canvas.

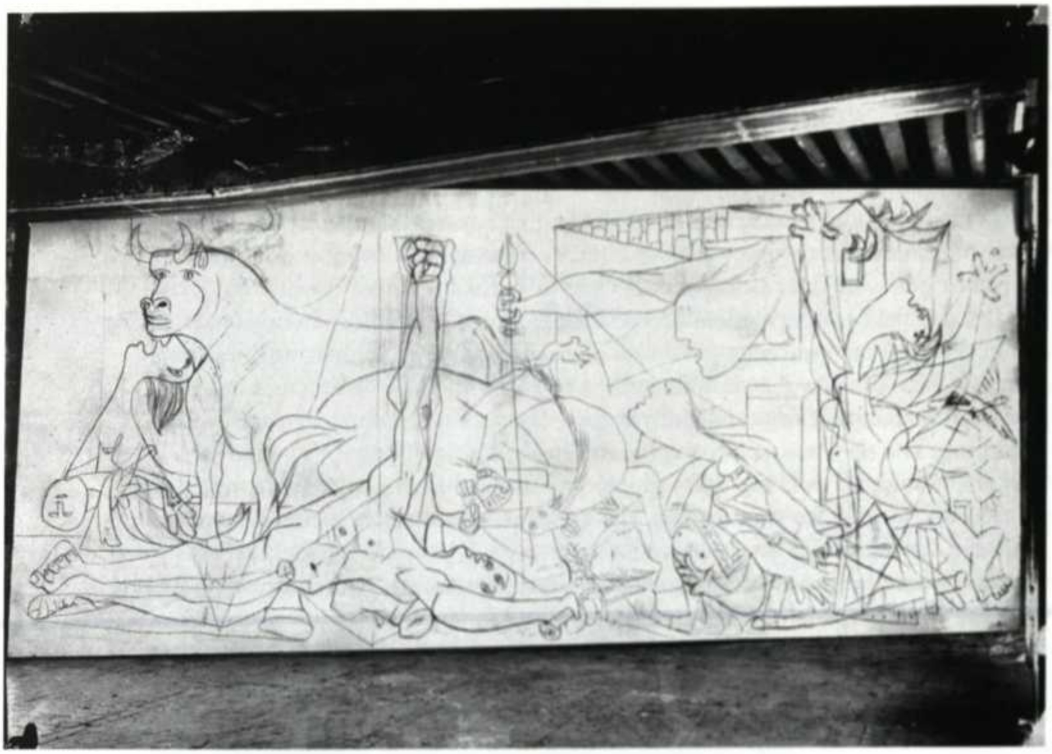
Thus, not only is the sequential production of the preliminary sketches important but so too is their appearance in *Cahiers d'art* along with Dora Maar's photographs. What is documented in them is, to a great extent, what does not appear in *Guernica*'s final version (or what is at most merely hinted at). Picasso deliberately made the correlation between what is seen in one instance and what is seen in the other an indirect one.[61] What does not get shown is, then, as important as what does; the gaps between one sketch and another, between one photograph and another, and especially between preparatory materials and the final canvas, can tell much about Picasso's procedures of painting. The sketches, photographs, and final painting present points at which Picasso rested, where he stopped working. They give moments at which a particular representational issue was resolved, at least for that instant. The gaps between them, however, demarcate precisely the moments during which the artist was in the process of considering the next representational dilemma, where he resumed working. The gaps, therefore, are in some sense the most potently packed with meaning, precisely at instants one can never see.

In 1935 Picasso had commented to Zervos that "it would be very interesting to preserve photographically, not the stages, but the metamorphoses of a picture. Possibly one might then discover the path followed by the brain in materializing a dream."[62] From his cubist period onward, he had often had various stages in the development of a picture photographed. This was the first time that he connected that procedure with Surrealism's interest in dreams and psychic processes, tempting one to think that he was influenced in this by Dora Maar. He must have talked with her about surrealist photography's efforts to document the physical surface of objects, so as to suggest the invisible beyond the visible. They must have discussed how photography could show perceptible reality opening up onto some other realm. Two years later, Maar's photographs of *Guernica* seem to do just that. They show something of the metamorphosis of *Guernica* – a metamorphosis all but invisible in the final painting. In that way they function like Freud's "manifest content of dreams," that is, like the tangible but cryptic traces of a hidden reality."[63]

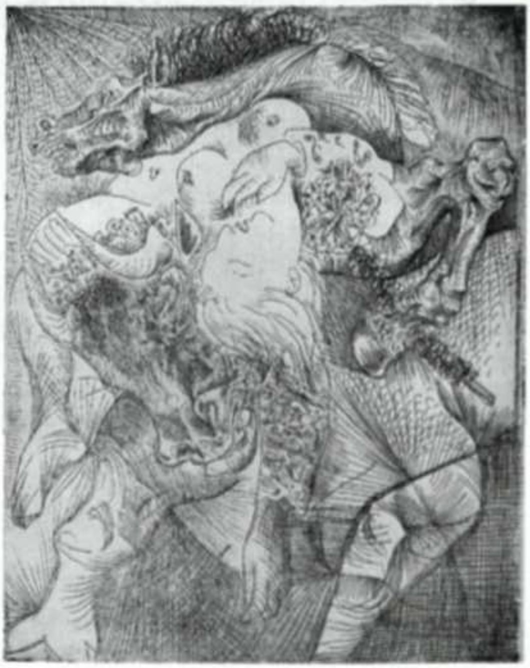
Dreams are peculiar things. As the Surrealists knew, it was in studying them that Freud discovered that memory is located not in the conscious but rather in the unconscious mind.[64] Dreams function to bridge unconscious with conscious, bringing into the conscious mind certain desires and memories buried in the unconscious. There are suggestive parallels in this to *Guernica*. To some degree, the painting's preparatory images function similarly to dreams, documenting the distorted surge of images up from the mind's unconscious where memories occur. And the canvas records the final result of this process. Like dreams, *Guernica* is thus impacted with the murky power of desires and emotions that seem to outweigh by far the imagery depicted.

THE PRIVATE BODY MADE PUBLIC

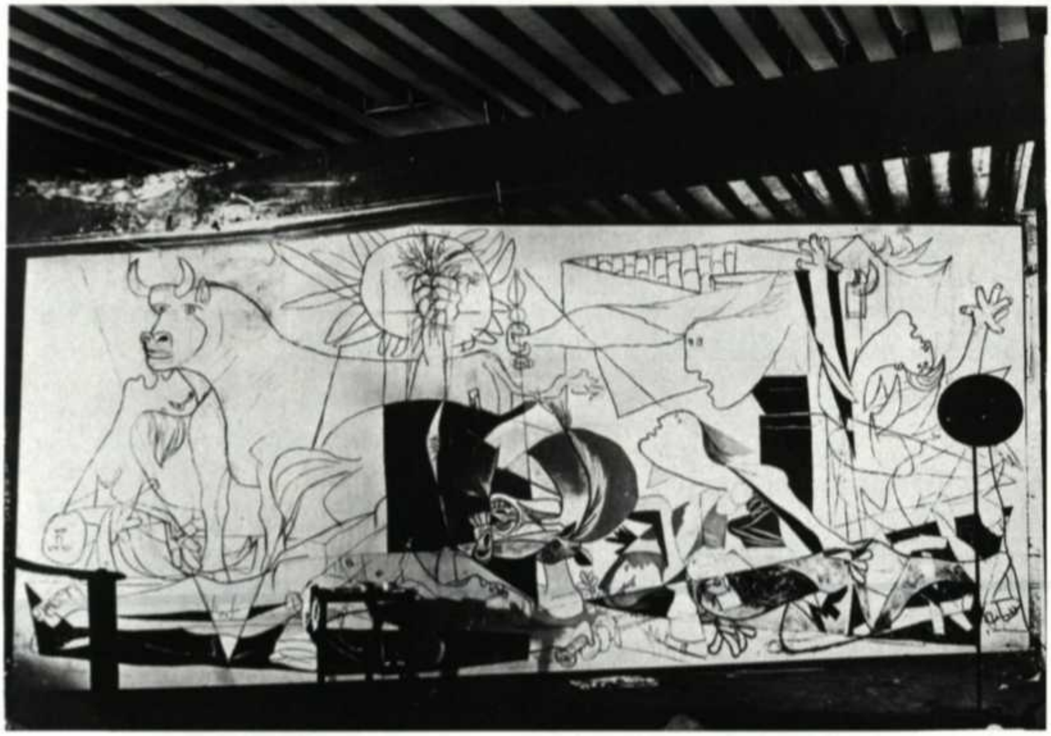
In *State IIa* of the final canvas there appears a female figure fallen under the hoof of the wounded horse, who forms a visual counterpoint to the fallen warrior whose sword hand she almost crosses (fig. 110). She wears a decorated costume reminiscent of a Spanish matador's, and her serene features recall Picasso's etching of June 1934 titled *Woman Bullfighter* (fig. 111). By *State*



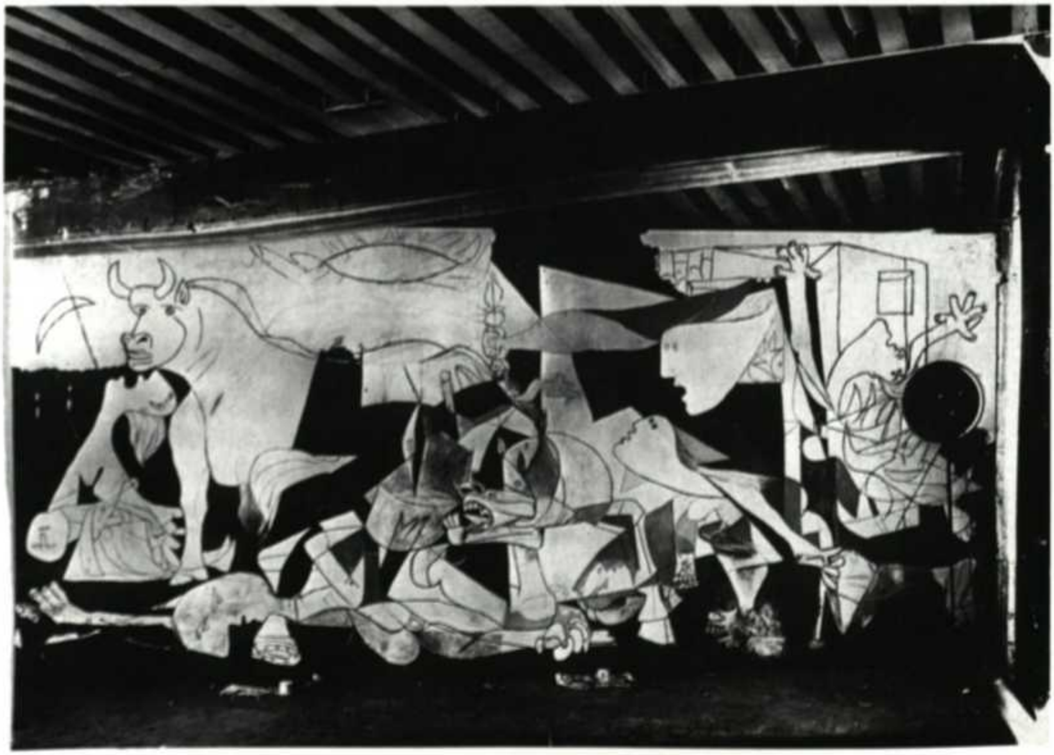
110: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State 11a, 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York



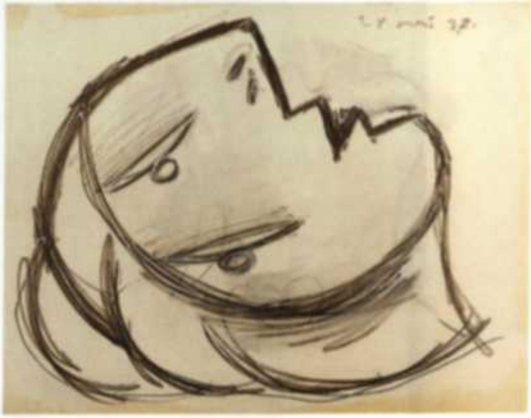
111: Picasso, *Woman Bullfighter*, 20 June 1934. Etching. 29.7 × 23.6 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris



112: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State III, 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris/Art Resource, New York

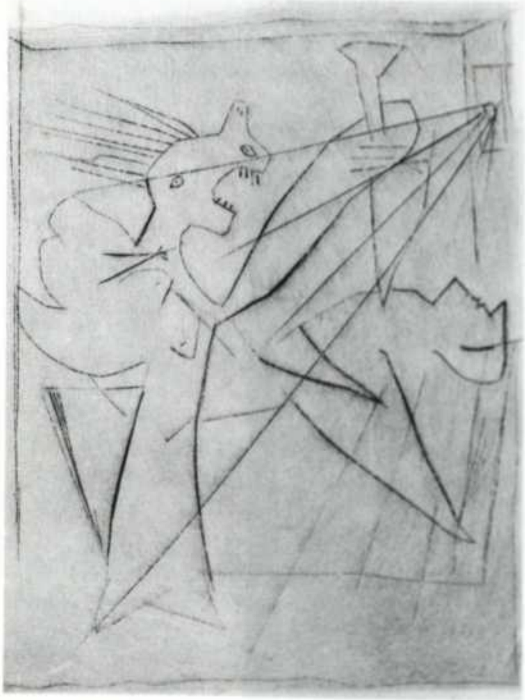


113: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State IV, 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York



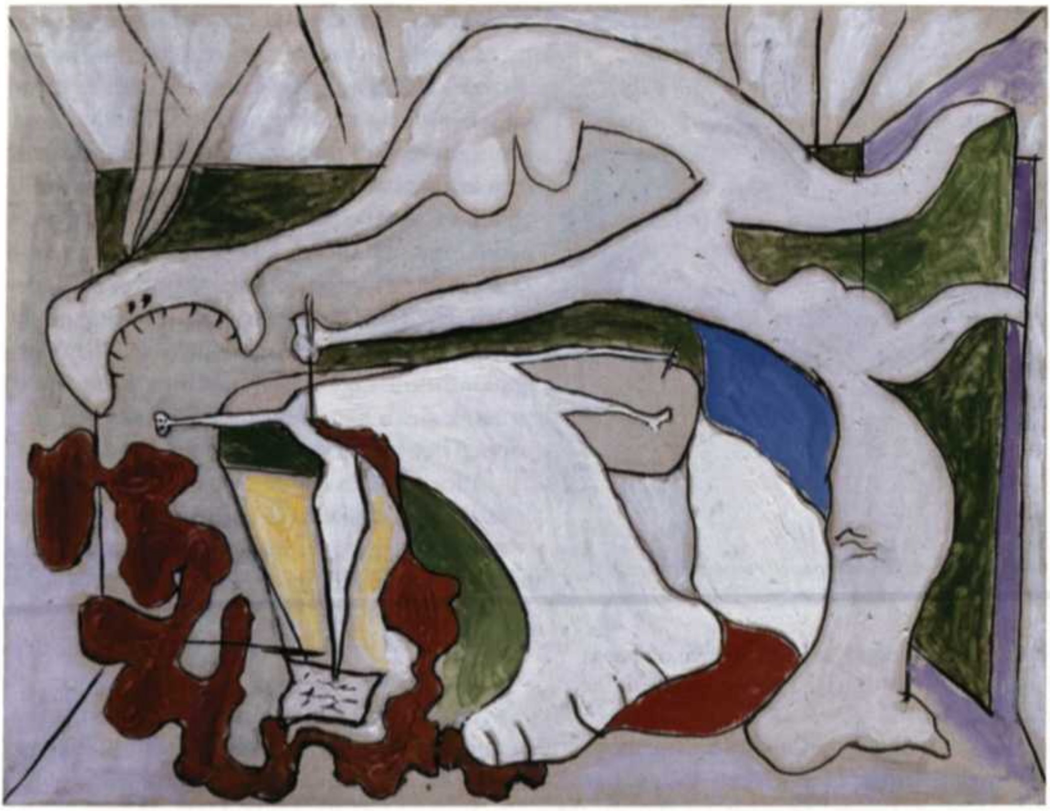
114: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 33: *Head of Fallen Figure*, 24 May 1937. Pencil and gouache on paper. 23.5 × 29.2 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

III her eyes are open, glassed over in pain or death, although the lines of her face retain their calm neoclassical perfection (fig. 112). By the fourth state, her body has been truncated and she has become genderless (fig. 113) and then in *State V* she disappears entirely (see fig. 109). Writers have noted this figure's resemblance to Picasso's many images of his lover Marie-Thérèse Walter's gentle, neoclassical profile and have remarked on the feminine characteristics of the study for it (fig. 114).[65] Her presence in the preparatory stages of the painting, and the marked difference in her emotional tone from the other weeping or fleeing women, demonstrate Picasso maneuvering a dynamic balance between distinct emotional responses in composing the final canvas. The tension between "masculine" heroic repose and a "feminized" hysterical unreason was later figured through other characters – the bull and the fallen warrior as opposed to the horse and the screaming women – but here they are brought together in a single figure. The female torero's presence as the gendered object of violence is an important – if elliptical – focal point for bringing the two themes of sexuality and brutality into the painting. Sexuality, one begins to see, enters the painting not as an abstract concept but through the artist's personal memories of a particular woman – his lover. But the image at no point rests on the level of the personal or autobiographical. Instead, through it one can track the trajectory from private moments of intense emotion to public allegories of terror, pain, and tragedy. The discrepancy between pictorial moments of public bravado and those of private despair to be found in the work of other artists in the face of the Spanish Civil War is not seen here.[66] Rather, one is witness to a mode through which an intensely private iconography is reworked to provide the visual underpinnings for Picasso's most public work of this period. This dialectical tension between private and public subject matter, between feminine and masculine, proved a significant performative mechanism for Picasso.



115: Pablo Picasso, *Death of Marat*, 21 July 1934. Drypoint. 19 × 14 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris

In order to trace this procedure, I turn to an earlier image in which a similar fallen female figure appears, also the subject of extreme violence (fig. 115). This small drypoint of July 21, 1934, titled *Death of Marat*, shows a prone figure with feminine neoclassical features closely similar to those of the fallen female torero of *Guernica* (fig. 114 and see fig. 112).[67] This implies that the figure is female despite the title which suggests otherwise, as I discuss further on. Another monstrous female figure, teeth bared in a scream of demented rage, stabs her with an enormous butcher knife. This was not the first time Picasso had visualized this scene; at least three other instances of it appear in his oeuvre: two drawings made earlier in the month and the 1931 painting *Woman with Stiletto*, also

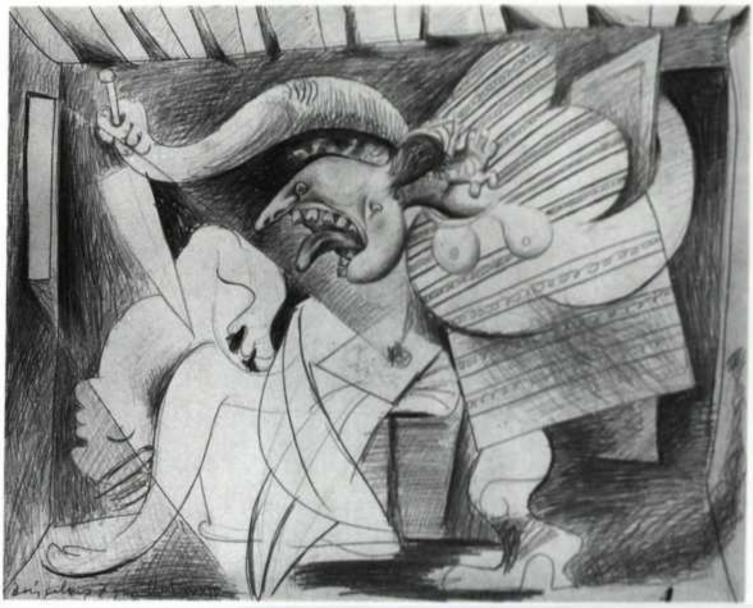


116: Picasso, *Woman with Stiletto/ Death of Marat*, 1931. Oil on canvas. 45.3 × 60 cm Paris, Musée Picasso. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York

titled *Death of Marat* (fig. 116). Later authors have speculated that these images relate to some incident, real or fabricated, from the artist's private life.[68] During this period, Picasso was experiencing great difficulty managing between his jealous and volatile wife Olga Koklova, and his lover Marie-Thérèse. In a July 7, 1934 drawing, the attacker is portrayed with dark hair similar to Olga's, while her victim has the classical features long associated with Marie-Thérèse (fig. 117).

The suggestion that these pictures image a violent confrontation between the two women is far from absurd. Yet the adoption of the title *Death of Marat*, an overt reference to Jacques-Louis David's remarkable portrait of the French revolutionary hero-martyr, immediately drags the image out of the confines of the purely personal to set up a correlation between a private incident and the public realm of politics. Citing David's portrait of Marat effectively recalls that earlier instance of the private being made over into the public through representation; in 1793 the public image of France could no longer be visualized in the heroic terms of a perfect male body answering the call of civic duty.[69] David had substituted the body of Marat – alone, debilitated, and doomed to an unheroic death at the hands of a demented woman – for that of Brutus or the Horatii as the political body of France. Picasso made a similar move; his drawing, like David's portrait, garners its intensity largely from negotiating between these different realms; the private and the public interpenetrate, becoming signifiers for each other.

Picasso's Davidian reference in the tiny etching sets up another level of mediation, in the realm of gender (see fig. 115). David's painting does not portray Marat's female murderer,



117: Pablo Picasso, *The Murder*, Boisgeloup 7 July 1934. Pencil on paper. 39.8 × 50.4 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso (M.P. 1135). Photo courtesy of the Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris

Charlotte Corday, and Marat himself remains resolutely masculine if not conventionally heroic. Picasso, however, brought the figure of Corday into the scenario, to embody all the deranged fury that the Surrealists consistently associated with women and madness.[70] The neoclassical victim, meanwhile, takes on a dual masculine/feminine character through its association with both Marat and Marie-Thérèse. In so doing, Picasso elaborates on the more muted sexual undercurrents of David's painting, bringing them out into the open and using them as a focal point for the transference between private and public realms.

Picasso echoes David's powerful but equivocal visual balance between the open, rationalist purity of public heroism and the obscure violence of the private and the sexualized, finding in it a visual equivalent for the violence of modern life in general. In the drypoint *Death of Marat* the two aspects are assigned different stylistics – the controlled, quietly jubilant line describing the classical figure is counterposed to the wildly erratic line of the rampaging figure (see fig. 115). These two versions of drawn line meet, as it were, through the point of the knife. Here, Picasso brings together two visual modes he had been developing for several years; he counterposes the classicizing figuration of his *rappel à l'ordre* period with a more surrealist figuration in which his use of an erratic, illogical line is meant to signal the intensity of irrational human passions. The classical style exists in parallel with a malevolently demented surrealist deformation of the figure, in which that female figure is distorted through its own sexual anguish. In *Death of Marat* the visual attention Picasso pays to the woman raging in sexual jealousy functions as one side of a dialectic between good and evil in which the artist could not – and did not want to – choose sides. She is a fascinating figure whose energy overwhelms her classically drawn victim. The savageness of her rampage serves as a device to avoid the sentimentality of conventional moralizing, a mechanism to outstrip human suffering rather than ignore or assuage it. Picasso's use of it in tandem with the classical figure points to a deep mistrust of all conventional reconciliations of good and evil. Rather than the customary rendering of these moral attributes as polar opposites, he views them as implicated in one another, such that "evil" is in some sense provoked, even produced, by "good."

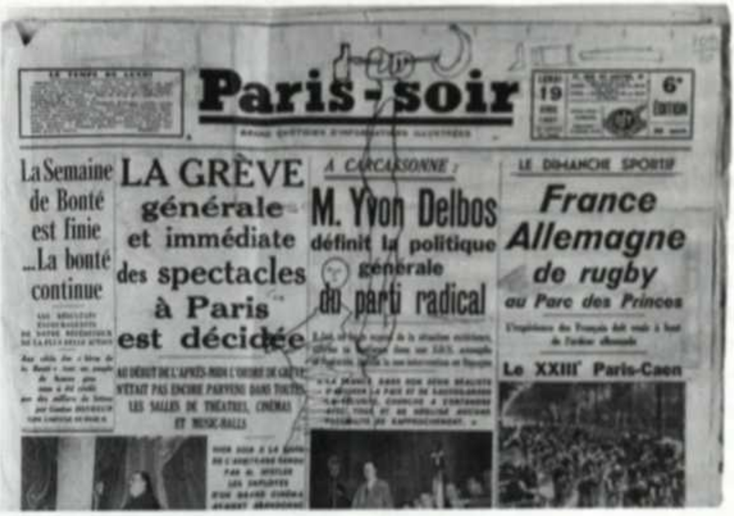
That said, it is hard not to read this equation of femininity with murderous hysteria as deeply misogynist. Picasso nevertheless reverses this stereotypical gendering in another image – Plate I of the *Dream and Lie of Franco* etchings – in such a way as to give his harsh condemnation of Franco an added edge. The image of the murderous tension between the women in Picasso's life, transformed into an updated version of David's revolutionary tribute, here takes a third, even more overtly politicized form. In the upper left section of Plate I, the Charlotte Corday figure from the *Death of Marat* has mutated into a caricature of General Franco viciously hacking with a pick-ax at a feminine personification of Beauty (see fig. 96). Her serenity has driven the Nationalist dictator mad, provoking him into a comic fury of cruelty. Franco is pictured there as an oversexed male polyp, whose destructive zeal has gone far beyond the bounds of rational military strategy into crazed psychic unreason. The misogyny of the *Death of Marat* is turned into a critique of the madness of fascist aggression as a peculiarly masculine disorder. Picasso, in a highly surrealist move, uses the heated, perverse intimacy of private sexuality to generate a means of describing Franco's rationale for engaging in a major civil war.

In both *Death of Marat* and *Dream and Lie of Franco*, the neoclassical figure and the distorted, enraged figure exist in a dialectical tension with each other; the one gains its meaning through confronting its opposite and vice versa. By the time Picasso produced *Guernica*, however, the two forms of imaging the human body are no longer locked into this intimate, Hegelian interdependency. Picasso excludes the figure of the murderous woman altogether, leaving only the fallen neoclassical figure. Loosed from its earlier pictorial moorings, it nevertheless carries within it the residues of this long pictorial history. Although it buries the overt political resonance of *Dream and Lie of Franco*, it still keeps the peculiar double gendering of *Death of Marat* and *Woman Bullfighter*. The prone neoclassical figure thus contains the suggestion of several different contexts for social violence – sexual jealousy, Jacobin, fascist, Spanish – which lift it to the level of an allegorical symbol for the competing aspects of good and evil in human nature.[71] Picasso then, to a large extent, transferred these attributes to the figure of the fallen warrior by eliminating the neoclassical female figure after *State IV*.

THE SIGN OF POLITICS

On April 19, the day after having sketched out several ideas for the Pavilion mural on the theme of the artist's studio, Picasso drew a final set of notations for the mural's composition and placement (see fig. 103). Appearing in the *Studio XIV* sketch are thoughts on the positioning and size of the mural, and a further *croquis* of an artist with brush raised toward the canvas, this time gendered female. In the center of the page, running across the images of the mural, is an important new addition, that of an upraised arm holding a combined hammer and sickle. This relating of such an overtly politicized symbol to the performative aspects of painting – the easel, the painter in the act of creating, and so on – is, of course, important; the communist symbol lies squarely in the center of the page, drawn with an authority that makes it a focal point for examining the other drawn elements.[72] The motif is repeated to the left as an elongated arm attached to a hastily drawn body, and this version replicates almost line for line a rapid sketch drawn by Picasso on top of a *Paris-soir* article of that same day arguing against French intervention in Spain (fig. 118).

The sudden appearance of this political motif in the *Studio XIV* sketch suggests that it was provoked by Picasso's exasperation with the Non-Interventionist politics of France's Foreign Minister Yvon Delbos, whose words *Paris-soir* quoted.[73] Graffiti-like in its defacement of the offending text, the drawing hints strongly that Picasso was as opinionated in his politics as anyone. In fact, he himself deliberately violated Non-Intervention policies by donating large sums of money to the Republican cause.[74] Its disappearance after this single sketch has largely been taken as an argument for it being merely a momentary burst of outrage, affecting only slightly the artist's thoughts on the mural's composition. Indeed, Chipp claims that "Picasso's use of the communist salute in his drawings of April 19 was only a temporary reaction to the words of appeasement by Delbos, one that was not sustained in further images."[75] He is right to signal the suddenness of the motif's appearance, as an indication that Picasso was being forced by the Spanish Civil War out of one visual mode into another. However, Chipp's characterization of that pictorial move as a "temporary reaction" that was "not sustained" is incorrect. The

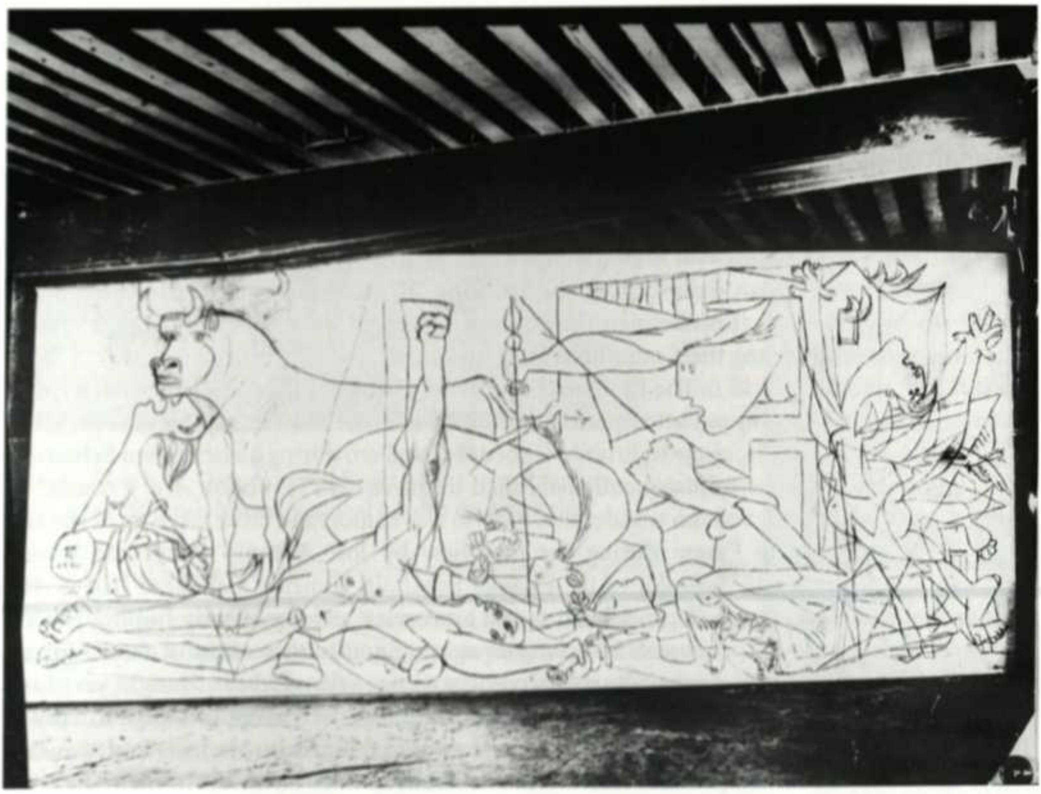

Paris-soir
19
6e
Édition
La Semaine de Bonté est finie ...La bonté continue
LA GRÈVE générale et immédiate des spectacles à Paris est décidée
AU DÉBUT DE L'APRÈS-MIDI L'ORDRE DE GRÈVE N'ÉTAIT PAS ENCORE PARVENU DANS TOUTES LES SALLES DE THÉATRES, CINÉMAS ET MUSIC-HALLS
A CARCASSONNE :
M. Yvon Delbos définit la politique générale du parti radical
LE DIMANCHE SPORTIF
France Allemagne de rugby au Parc des Princes
Le XXIIIe Paris-Caen

118: Pablo Picasso, *Personage holding a hammer and sickle*, sketch on front page of Paris-soir, 9 April 1937. Pencil, pen and ink on newspaper. 60 × 43 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso (M.P. 1177). Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux, Paris

upraised arm, although perhaps noted down in a moment of ire, was transferred faithfully to early versions of the final canvas, a maneuver that signals the motif's importance to Picasso (fig. 119). The specific spatial relationship between the painter's arm and the communist salute, modified only slightly, was maintained in the final canvas.

Yet Picasso elected not to include the communist hammer and sickle in these early versions, substituting the politically more generalized symbol of a victor's wreath. By *State III*, the arm had itself undergone a further metamorphosis into the horse's open wound (see fig. 112). This radical alteration from the overtly propagandistic to the more subtly allegorical nevertheless does not prove that Picasso had not invested in the symbol. Rather, he utilized the literal sign of politics as a pictorial matrix through which he developed another, ultimately richer, set of visual symbols. It served the artist as an important performative mode through which a politics might be embedded in the act of seeing and in the related act of painting.

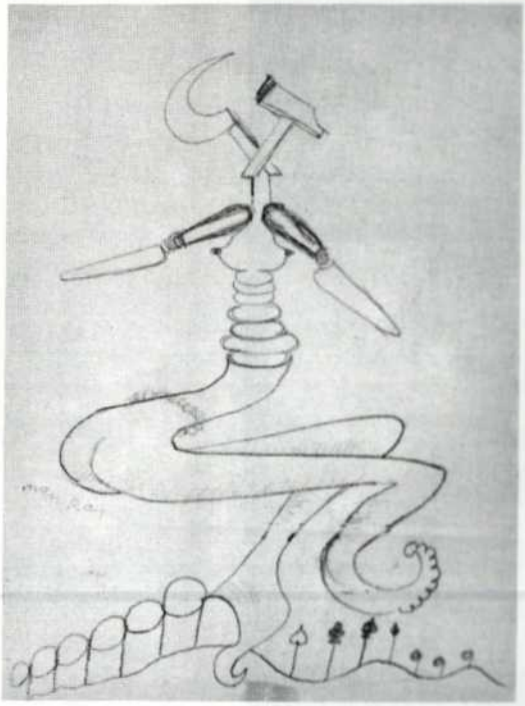
This was not the first time the communist symbol had appeared in Picasso's works. Sidra Stich has pointed out the use in 1936 of the same curiously combined hammer–sickle form in a preliminary sketch for Romain Rolland's play *Quatorze juillet*.[76] The play was to have been performed at a special ceremony to commemorate Bastille Day and the first anniversary of the French Popular Front. Stich notes that the idea might have been suggested to Picasso by a photograph on the front page of *L'Humanité* of the same day (June 13, 1936) in celebration of the end of a widespread strike in favor of the workers and unions. Picasso must have invented the peculiar symbol at least a year earlier, however, and shown it to members of the surrealist movement: Breton mentioned the device specifically in a May 1935 interview with Domingo López Torres for the Spanish socialist magazine *Indice*, praising it for the manner in which it reduced the communist motif to its essence – an instrument whose power is recognized on the level of sign rather than as a faithful replica of reality.[77] Picasso had also experimented with the device in the more quixotic venue of a surrealist *cadavre exquis* drawing (fig. 120) done in 1936 with Man Ray and Eluard and his daughter Cécile, in which a similar version "heads" a bizarre



119: Dora Maar, photograph of Guernica, State 1, 11 May 1937. Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York

"body" composed of kitchen utensils and serpentine limbs.[78] These examples show Picasso testing the symbol in various contexts, yet none contains the sustained force of its use in *Guernica*'s production and none ends up as part of any finished composition. Picasso, it seems, needed a particular combination of circumstances and pictorial injunctions to carry out a deep investigation of the symbol's potential within his own artistic practise.

The Spanish Pavilion commission gave him this opportunity. In part, he saw it as a chance to consider how his growing commitment to a communist politics might be put into action on a heroic scale. The sheer size of the commissioned painting, and its extremely public location representing Spain's beleagured Popular Front government at the World's Fair, called for some form of leftist history painting. It was also a moment that must have put pressure on Picasso to clarify his somewhat vaguely stated political attitudes: was he still partisan to anarchism as he was in his Blue Period days or did he now subscribe to communism? Was he a proponent of Breton's Trotskyism or of Eluard's Communist Party views? What did he think of the Popular Front governments in France and Spain? Or might he even have secret ties to Franco's fascist party? As Picasso was certainly aware, questions such as these were rampant. His connection with Surrealism had revitalized a certain public view of him as an artist with leftist political views, however indirectly they might be expressed.[79] The Surrealists themselves were undergoing splits within their ranks as to what the correct sort of politics was. Aragon had defected to Stalinism in 1932, while Breton and Péret publicly sided with Trotsky during the Moscow Trials of 1936. Contre Attaque's efforts to bring together Surrealists and non-Surrealists,



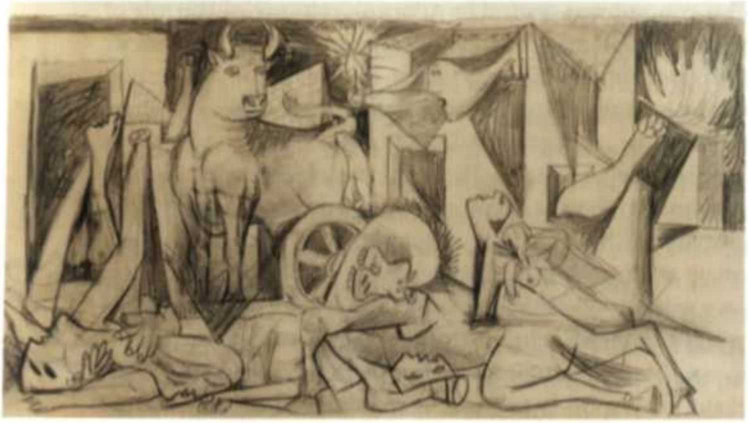
120: Man Ray, Paul Eluard, Cécile Eluard, and Pablo Picasso, untitled cadavre exquis drawing, 1936. London, private collection. Photo courtesy of Christie's, London

Marxists and non-Marxists, had ended in failure.[80] Eluard had signed a congratulatory telegram to the USSR over its role in the Spanish Civil War, further alienating him from Breton and Péret, who held Stalin responsible for undermining the true Spanish revolution.[81] Picasso, whose friendship with Eluard lasted beyond the 1938 rupture with Breton until the poet's death, was caught up in the tumultuous political schisms of the day. Whereas his relations with Breton were cordial but distant, the painter saw Eluard almost daily during the painting of *Guernica*. Later, Picasso explicitly underlined the political nature of their friendship upon joining the Communist Party in 1944.[82]

The Pavilion commission also gave Picasso a chance to counteract attempts to coopt him for fascist ends. In 1934 he gave an interview to Ernesto Giménez Caballero during a visit to San Sebastián, subsequently published in the writer's 1935 book *Arte y estado*.[83] It is no wonder that Picasso was rumored to favor fascism, as the two were during the interview by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of the Falange Española. Giménez Caballero had been a self-proclaimed fascist since 1928 and was clearly hoping to gain Picasso's favor in propagating a Spanish version of fascist avant-garde culture.[84] According to the writer, Picasso thought very little of the abilities of the Republican government to safeguard any of his paintings should they be exhibited in Madrid, and was displeased with what he considered to be an insult to his reputation and talents. Although this rancor between the painter and the Republic seems to have disappeared the instant the Spanish Civil War began, Picasso was dogged by continued rumors of collaboration with fascists until he joined the Communist Party.[85]

While this contextualization of Picasso's political attitudes in 1937 helps to define the politics of *Guernica*, it helps only to a limited extent. Picasso's Communist Party leanings, for instance, seem quite out of tune with the painting's distinctly non-Socialist Realist figuration. It also seems impossible to make any direct equation between *Guernica*'s meaning and the hammer and sickle symbolism in the sketches. Without further probing into Picasso's methods, the *Paris-soir* drawing and its *Studio XIV* counterpart still appear to be just what Chipp has said they are – a transitory flash of anger never worked into the complex fabric of pictorial and metaphoric meanings of the final canvas. In what follows, I shall counter this view.

In the two days between the compositional sketch of May 9 (see fig. 121) and *State I* of the final canvas of May 11 (see fig. 119), Picasso inserted the critical element of the fallen warrior's central upraised arm with its fist clenched in the leftist salute. The upraised arm, replicating the gesture of the *Studio XIV* sketch, pinions the center of the canvas in a gesture of hope and strength that contradicts the broken sword of the fallen warrior. It is echoed visually (although not emotionally) by the woman's lantern and balanced by the bull's massive head. In between *State II* and *State III*, Picasso enclosed a symbolic sheaf of wheat in the fist, and encircled it with a victory wreath.[86] Yet already by *State III* he had brought the horse's body forward to cover and eventually eliminate the upraised arm from the painting (see fig. 112). As many writers have pointed out, the arm is subsumed into the horse's body, leaving as its only trace the fatal wound in the animal's side. The victory wreath itself is transformed into the stark oblong field of light



121: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 15: *Compositional Study*, 9 May 1937. Pencil on paper. 24.1 × 45.4 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

from a single burning lightbulb. With this change, the painting's symbolism shifts radically from an image of hope to a potent image of nightmarish confusion and despair.

Typical of interpretations of this shift, Chipp states: "Picasso was surely aware of the [political] implications of giving this gesture a prominent location in his painting. But it soon disappeared from the canvas, replaced by images of a wholly different order of meaning." The horse's wound is "only a remnant" of the arm, "left over" after Picasso changed the canvas's design, argues Chipp, who leaves the issue at that.[87] The choice to retain a visual trace of the shift from a symbolism of hope to one of fatal wounding is not, however, as off-hand as Chipp suggests. Instead, the shift contains several levels of Picasso's thinking vis-à-vis the overall tone of the painting. In part, the metamorphosis of arm into wound records a level of purely visual thinking (not necessarily conscious) by the artist but he also seems to have recognized that, if kept as it was, the positive symbolism of the clenched fist would have the eventual effect of draining the picture's power rather than augmenting it. To leave the upraised fist in the final version would have been to suggest too literal a relationship between the social realm and the realm of art, reducing *Guernica* to the level of political propaganda.

Yet Picasso deliberately chose not to rid the final painting of that symbol; he intentionally retained the pictorial connection between arm and wound in order to set it up as both a visual and a symbolic relationship. Leaving the visual trace of the upraised arm in the painting allows the viewer a means of tracking the development of *Guernica* out of the original politicized motif. In this manner, that transformed bit of canvas nudges the viewer toward considering how such a meaning came about, in all its complexity and ambivalence, without the danger of falling into propaganda. Whereas the burdened political symbolism of the raised fist would have flattened out the relationship between social circumstance and pictorial concerns by offering the viewer a pre-packaged signification, its transformation into the horse's wound allows some of its original significance to come through, guided by Picasso's subsequent pictorial manipulations. An overt, unambiguous political symbol is thus worked into the fabric of another, different figure through a purely visual shift. The visual process involved in thinking how the original image of an arm might be worked into the horse's wound rather than effaced is a procedure with no explicit meaning other than purely visual. As such, it retains a crucial autonomy from the content of the picture, as well as from the intense political context in which it was being painted. Picasso, I argue, depended heavily upon just this relative independence of the purely visual as a mechanism for embedding a sophisticated level of meaning into the picture.

At issue here is a notion of artistic praxis in which the work of art retains a certain autonomy from the realm of social experience that propaganda does not. I invoke Theodor Adorno's use of "autonomy" here deliberately.[88] This concept was central to Adorno's critique of the role of art in effecting real social change. In his view, all artworks, politically committed, abstract, or otherwise, contain within them the "stigmata of capitalism"[89] – that is, all artworks in current society are produced in some relation to capitalism and are thus necessarily marked by it. As such, all works of art function as comments of one sort or another upon that society. Yet it is only those artworks that manage to retain some "autonomy" from the social realm that are able to offer any true critique of capitalism, through their resistance (however momentary) to commodification and to capitalism's inexorable push toward reification – that is, capitalism's push toward the "transformation of human relations into an appearance of relations between things."[90] In Adorno's view, what gives a work its relative autonomy (and it is an autonomy that is always compromised and partial, never complete) is its attention to the formal procedures of artmaking, as something separate from whatever content or subject matter it might treat. This relative autonomy from the social realm corresponds to the emphasis placed on the internal logic of picture-making ("immanence" or "in-itself" in Adorno's words[91]), on what makes a visual image function in ways that are different from other forms of communication or social action. A work of art has the capacity to visualize the dialectical play between the cognitive processes that went into imagining it, the labor of its creation, and the cognitive processes involved in looking at it. In so doing, it maintains a crucial balance between attending to the social realm and attending to the realm of purely visual structure, and this is where the critical power of art lies.[92] For Adorno, even in the extreme case of completely apolitical art, there is still evidence of social struggle within the logic of the artwork's formal makeup which ties it to the social and political realm. In contrast, works of art that are explicitly political ultimately fail to sustain a powerful social critique because they subordinate themselves to another, external logic. Even if critical of society, such works fall prey too easily to the very thing they protest against, becoming subsumed into the same "raw reality" they condemn."[93]

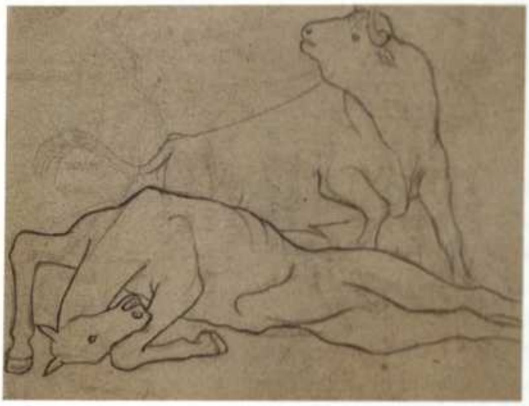
Picasso was well aware of this dynamic, especially while producing *Guernica*, when the political stakes for the painting were mounting daily. By mid-May 1937, Largo Caballero's more radical socialist government had been undermined and replaced by Negrín's more conservative socialism. With the collusion of the Spanish Communist Party, under orders from Stalin, Negrín's Frente Popular did all it could to assure the Non-Intervention governments that Spain would not go communist.[94] France had closed its border with Spain against refugees and had refused to send aid to the beleaguered Spanish Popular Front government. At the very moment that Picasso was painting the canvas, the Communist Party systematically destroyed the anarchist and Trotskyist groups in Spain, thus disastrously weakening leftist resistance against Franco. For Picasso to have left the upraised fist in *Guernica* would have embroiled the painting directly in these struggles within the Frente Popular and within the Spanish Pavilion itself. There is an argument – different from Chipp's – that claims that Picasso removed the communist symbol from *Guernica* so as to disassociate both himself and the painting from the nasty turn that Communist Party and French Popular Front politics had taken with regard to the Spanish Civil War.[95] Much as I would like to, I cannot agree with it. Picasso was too close to Eluard, himself openly supportive of the Communist Party role in Spain, to have been so overtly critical.[96] Even more than this, such an argument still places too much weight on Picasso's art as a direct, transparent response to political events – something Picasso had struggled against continually from his Blue Period through to *Guernica*.[97] That is, in eliminating the overtly propagandistic symbol of the upraised fist he meant not to signal a refusal of a certain politics so much as to indicate a deliberate mediation between social circumstances and aesthetic innovation.

For Picasso, therefore, going through these various pictorial maneuvers, and allowing traces of them to remain evident in the final version of the canvas, was crucial to working up *Guernica*'s power. The canvas, in fact, demonstrates one of orthodox Surrealism's central platforms, one that continually provoked the wrath of the Communist Party: in order for art to be political, it had to remain true to the principles of art. The following year, Breton boldly restated this principle in the 1938 manifesto "For an Independent Revolutionary Art" written with Trotsky, arguing that "art must, above all, be judged by its own laws, that is to say the laws of art."[98] For Picasso, this dilemma was nothing new. It certainly was not a problem he encountered merely because he had begun associating with the Surrealists. Yet the movement's continual struggle to maintain aesthetic freedom as a fundamental political principle – indeed as a political process in itself – coincided with Picasso's own history of thinking about this issue. And his daily conversations with Eluard and Maar must have reinforced his sense of this struggle in relation to the urgent task at hand.

There was a danger, however, in emphasizing so heavily the visual construction of an artwork, of which Picasso was aware: that it would be accused of elitism, of focusing on formal problems to the point of hermeticism, thus rendering it unintelligible to the majority of its viewers. *Guernica*, like Surrealism, came in for much criticism of this sort.[99] The painting ran a risk: by approaching the issue of the Spanish Civil War through a series of pictorial mediations rather than through direct address, it chanced being labeled irrelevant, elitist, a reinforcement of art's ivory tower enclave.[100] Yet as Adorno recognized, *Guernica*'s powerful critique comes in part from its delicate balance between a mimetic attention to social and political realities and its opposing effort to "make art commensurate with the disenchanted world" through its medium of expression.[101] Such a position of correspondence rather than mimesis rejects the unambiguous political position of Social Realism, which in the end can only function as a treacherously useless dispenser of solace. Much of *Guernica*'s greatness lies in its recognition of the dangers of both sides while still insisting on the dialectical relationship between painting's internal pictorial logic and its attention to social context.[102]

RITUAL PERFORMANCE: THE *CORRIDA*

Guernica marks a culminating moment in Picasso's long history of visualizing the Spanish bullfight, especially his highly eroticized depictions of the bull–horse struggle. In the *corrida*, the bull's encounter with the picador's mount is the initial drama of the entire spectacle. Maddened by small lances in his neck and the whirling capes of elusive toreros, the bull charges the first target within reach – the defenseless horse. While goring the horse, however, the bull suffers the long jabs of the picador's lance, which weaken the animal's great neck muscles in preparation for his final encounter with the matador. Picasso often envisioned the *corrida*'s opening ritual as a violent, erotic allegory of the struggle between the powerful and the weak, the impassioned aggressor and the abject, passive victim, in which the bull embodies rampant masculine power preying upon the doomed, feminized horse (fig. 122).[103] Picasso also often utilized the bull (or its conceptual cognate the minotaur) to represent public heroism, whether aesthetic or political. In Plate II of *Dream and Lie of Franco*, for instance, a bull unflinchingly confronts a spineless polyp wearing a confused and hideous grin (see fig. 97, sixth section). The message of the etched plate is unambiguous, with the polyp caricaturing Franco while the bull represents the shining bravery of the Spanish people.[104] In *Guernica* Picasso again employed the two bestial protagonists of horse and bull as central organizers of the mural's depiction of terror and



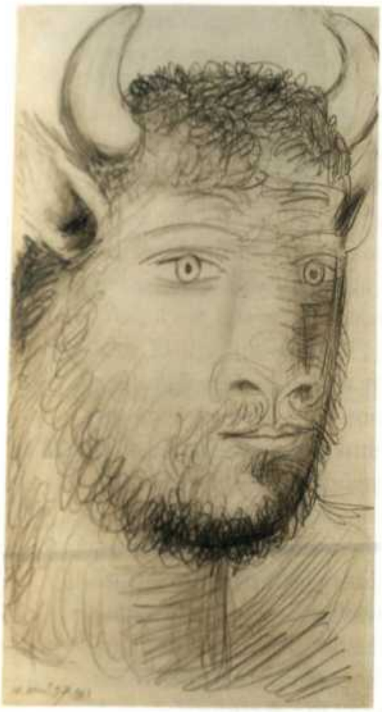
122: Pablo Picasso, *Corrida: bull and wounded horse*, 1923–4. Pencil on paper. 11.7 × 14.2 cm. Paris, Musée Picasso (MP 997) Photo courtesy of Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, New York

destruction, but with certain twists which suggest that his use of the bullfight imagery is a more complex affair than it might at first seem. The screaming horse continues to incarnate the mindless fear of contemptible, debased suffering. Yet its attacker is no longer the bull, now marginalized to the left edge of the canvas where he stands still formidable but bewildered and uncertain. The bull's customary foe, the toreador, has vanished, leaving him to face a much more nebulous menace whose devastating effects are visible in the jagged, ravaged figures strewn across the painting.

Picasso's use of the *corrida* to locate *Guernica*'s subject matter in relation to Spanish culture and national ritual has been much discussed, as has his evocation of the battle between man and animal as a metaphor for the struggle between rational and irrational forces.[105] All of these themes are intertwined with the artist's own identification with the virility of the bull, often seen as a metaphor for the power of aesthetic creation. I want to elaborate these issues through the notion of performance and Picasso's self-implication in the ritual of the bullfight. Picasso used his investment in the personal, the national, and the performative aspects of the *corrida* as a means to imagine the violence of warfare in terms other than the purely destructive. He reimagined those aspects as a politics of representation, in which the ritualized maneuvers between man and bull in the *corrida* could become a metaphor for the dialectical interconnection between life and death, between good and evil, and between heroism and abjection.

That Picasso's use of the *corrida* in *Guernica* and elsewhere held a political dimension, no one doubted. During the 1930s, the right and left alike recognized it as a nationalist metaphor both for Spain and for a politicized aesthetic practice, and they worried over the painter's allegiance like dogs fighting for a bone. In France both orthodox and dissident Surrealists were clearly intrigued by Picasso's personal investment in this vital icon of Spanish culture. It was no accident, therefore, that they looked to Picasso to design the first cover of the magazine *Minotaure* in 1933, and that he produced for it the figure of a heroic man-bull Minotaur with striking similarities to the *Guernica* sketch *Bull's Head with Human Face* (see fig. 123).[106] In Spain, writing in *Arte y estado*, Ernesto Giménez Caballero set out a fascist aesthetics that sought to claim Picasso as a foundational part of it. It was precisely through the painter's interest in the bullfight that Giménez Caballero declared that he could intuit Picasso's essential character – both Spanish and fascist. Relating his 1934 encounter with Picasso, he wrote, "The conversation began to center itself around the bulls. Picasso understood bulls like he understood painting. His epidermis, so French and internationalist, began bit by bit to disintegrate under the heat of our words and our topics. Slowly there began to appear in Picasso . . . the Iberian man."[107] Picasso's "baroque" sensibility, claimed Giménez Caballero, was marked by the profound passion, virile cruelty, and brute sexuality typical of the Spaniard and a primary ingredient in the fascist personality.[108]

Eugeni d'Ors, the former Catalan nationalist critic who by the mid-1930s had quit the leftist Catalanist movement for the imperialist promises of the Catholic right, had claimed in 1930 that "Picasso is not a Spanish painter."[109] D'Ors recognized that to call Picasso Spanish was to risk losing him to those other main contendors for a national imagery, the Republicans and the Nationalist fascists. The critic therefore tried to pull the painter's use of traditional Spanish imagery – especially the bullfight – away from its use as a rallying cry for either side and toward



123: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 19: *Bull's Head with Human Face*, 10 May 1937. Pencil. 45.4 × 24.1 cm. Madrid, Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía

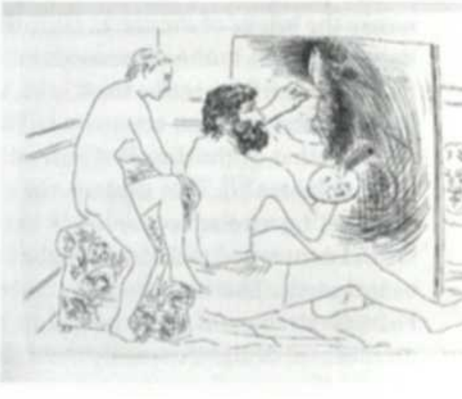
the expansionist nationalism of the conservative religious right: "Picasso will be the agile matador, charged with giving the death thrust to the bull of 'artistic nationalism,' after having barbed and paraded and incited it with a thousand maneuvers."[110] Picasso, according to d'Ors, utilized *corrida* imagery in the service of "the Mediterranean, your true Fatherland," rather than to bolster what d'Ors considered to be the hermeticism of standard Spanish nationalism (whether fascist or Republican).[111] He privileged the "geometry" of Picasso's neoclassicism – its orderliness and *arquitectura* – as the ideological opposite of what he considered to be the chaos and irrationality of leftist modes of representation. Picasso, claimed d'Ors, produced "works – cover your faces, anarchists and anarchizers! – situated within the most . . . pure of traditions."[112]

D'Ors sought to strip Picasso's bullfight imagery of its emotive, passionate aspects in order to claim him for the Catholic right. Against this, the Republicanist painter and writer Ramón Gaya, describing *Guernica* in 1937, reemphasized the turbulent expressivity of the bullfight imagery, which he called a "barbarous cubism" bent on destroying the false illusion of security offered by the quietly beautiful or the coldly analytic.[113] Unlike either D'Ors or Giménez Caballero, Gaya clearly sided with those leftists who viewed Picasso's *corrida* imagery as being in the service of the only true Spain, Republican Spain: "my homeland is destroyed and in it there are fewer toreadors, but Picasso is, continues effectively to be Spain."[114]

These key examples show that throughout the 1930s the political investment in *Guernica*'s *corrida* imagery was high. They also invoke the image of Picasso as performer. Yet certainly in the case of the right-wing critics, that notion remains a one-dimensional concept of performance as a heroic, masculine enterprise; the torero-performer, for these critics, maintains a conquering mentality that leaves no room for empathy with the conquered. There is, however, another view, which I find more compelling – that of the dissident Surrealist Leiris, who wrote that "Picasso is in effect the bull and the bullfighter."[115] This suggests that his investment in the *corrida* was never concerned with maintaining a polar opposition between victor and vanquished. Picasso, Leiris recognized, was instead concerned with the bullfight's dialectical nature (in which the picador and horse should be included). This idea can be pursued in several directions and I follow two in particular: first, Picasso's strategy of self-implication in *Guernica*'s imagery through the figure of the bull – by no means a straightforwardly masculine characterization – and second, the notion of the *corrida* itself as a performance organized around the concept of sacrifice. Picasso appropriates this performative mode in order to introduce the theme of abjection into *Guernica* as a political maneuver. Furthermore, he does so not merely on the obvious level of the death of the *corrida*'s participants but also on other deeper levels.

It has often been noted that there is no toreador in *Guernica*. The only figure able to claim that status – the fallen female figure reminiscent of *Woman Bullfighter* – disappears by *State V* (see fig. 109). Neither of the remaining figures of the bull and the picador's horse can be called heroic; the horse screams its death agony, while the bull turns confusedly about as though searching for a tangible adversary. This singular lack of a conventionally heroic figure contrasts sharply with the sketch of May 10, *Bull's Head with Human Face* (fig. 123). This drawing, in which the head of the bull covers the entire page, crowding the edges of the paper as though there were not space enough to contain its magnificence, is often taken to be of Picasso himself.[116] The unwavering stare of the eyes – a well-known characteristic of his self-portraits – supports this idea but Picasso has magnified the mythic and heroic characteristics of the bull well beyond the point of self-portraiture. The straight plunge of the nose to the flaring nostrils indicates a neoclassical grandeur echoed by the proud carriage and alert posture. The bull's fearless gaze implies a strength and virility corroborated by the upturned horns and thick pelt of fur covering his body, and he exudes a positive force not unlike Picasso's concept of the artist-hero (fig. 124). The human structure of the eyes, mouth, and muscular neck bridges the anthropologic and the animalic; indeed, taking Leiris's statement one step further, Picasso seems here to have incorporated himself, the bull, and the torero all into one virile figure (the alternative title, *Head of Man with Bull's Horns*, also suggests the complex melding of human and animal).

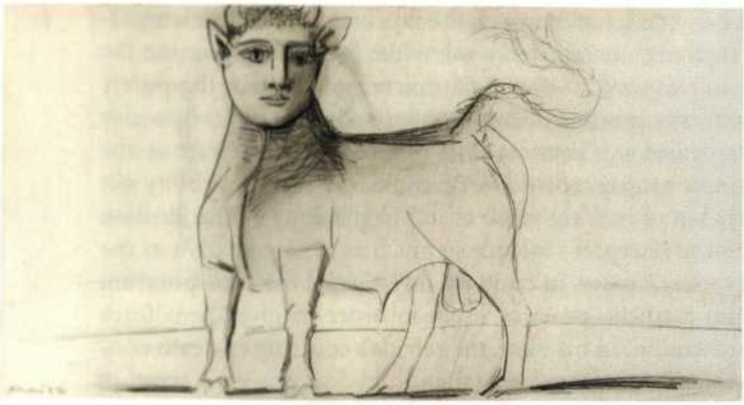
Although in this drawing Picasso decidedly genders the bull male, the following day he produced a sketch in which such a strict equation of heroism with masculinity is undermined (fig. 125). Here the bull is doubly gendered male and female. While its body remains resolutely male, the face exhibits the delicate, feminine characteristics of Dora Maar, his lover at the time. The bull retains the same neoclassical profile, but the eyes are larger, compassionate rather than challenging, and the mouth is more finely delineated. The thick fur has all but disappeared, and the horns have shrunk in size in relation to the animal's ears. Taken together, these two sketches suggest that Picasso once again elaborated one of *Guernica*'s main themes out of an autobiographical iconography but in no straightforward manner. In fact, Picasso's decision to condense his usual self-identification with the bull with the portrait of Maar suggests that the dual gendering was a key aspect of nuancing the bull's usual, more flat-footed heroic virility.



124: Pablo Picasso, from *Le chef d'oeuvre incon*
(*Honoré de Balzac*) 1931. Etching. 19.4 × 27.9 c
Paris, Musée Picasso. Photo courtesy Réunion
Musées Nationaux/Art Resource. New York

To elaborate my second concern – performance and sacrifice – I return to another Leiris essay, discussed in the preceding chapter, *Miroir de la tauromachie*, one of the best evocations of the bullfight ever written. Published a year after *Guernica* was painted, it was part of Leiris's larger attempt to harness the energy of ritual sacrifice for political purposes. Picasso must have been familiar with it, and the text resonates provocatively with *Guernica*'s production. In describing the unique pathos of the bullfight, Leiris stresses the importance of the performance, of the ritualized moves of the torero's body against that of the bull. Significantly, he not only compares it to aesthetic activity but does so specifically in terms of process rather than end result:

> Aesthetic activity . . . possesses . . . its share of tragedy (the true artist's obligation to be "authentic," engaging himself unreservedly in what he creates, with the understanding that to bring it to



125: Pablo Picasso, Sketch 22: *Bull with Human Head*, 11 May 1937. Pencil on paper. 24.1 × 45.4 cm. Paris, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

completion without recourse to any shortcuts or tricks is a vital necessity for him – as for the matador who finds the right spot for the final stab and, poised in between the two horns, sinks the sword in all the way).[117]

Actions in the *corrida* are layered in a strictly ordained pattern, the drama gaining momentum as it closes in on the final tragic thrust of the sword. Each action, each dramatic movement is judged by its necessity to the overall pattern, as one of many "'elegant solutions' applied to technical problems."[118] The construction of that pattern explicitly emphasizes the danger for both the torero (who continually hazards death) and the work itself "which is risked every second, and no sooner composed than disarranged again."[119] The piercing of the bullfighter's body would instantly bring about the destruction of the work of art itself. Inversely, the piercing of the bull's body is the culmination of that same artistic endeavor.

The dangerous interplay between bodies determines the aesthetic form of the *corrida* and leaves its ultimate mark in the swordthrust to the bull's heart. The manipulation of bodily wounds perpetrated, evaded, sequenced, and displayed is what defines the spectacle in the bullring. "Beauty," writes Leiris of this spectacle, "is comprised not simply by the joining of opposing elements, but by their very antagonism, by the altogether active way that the one tends to erupt in the other, making its mark like a wound, like devastation."[120] This sounds remarkably like a description not only for the overall making of *Guernica* but also for the specific way in which fragments of its making are left visible. In the painting as in the bullfight, harmony of parts is not the point; neither is the seamless joining of disparate elements. In the canvas, this is especially the case with the gaping laceration in the horse's side. Traditionally, it is the horse who claims the lowest rank in the hierarchy of the *corrida*, as merely the mount of the picadors, themselves second in prestige to the actual toreros. The horse is, as Leiris notes, "the guilty par excellence" whom "no grace will pardon" and whose wounding or death represents the bullfight at its most brutal and degrading.[121] *Guernica*'s dying horse metaphorizes this abjection in relation to warfare on two levels: first, as the central figure in the composition, it posits degradation – not heroism – as a central meaning of war; second (and this is where Leiris is most helpful), it does so directly through and against the partially erased heroic figure of the soldier's upraised arm. That stunted remnant of the soldier's defiant gesture, now incorporated as a death wound into the most debased figure in the painting, signals the horse's gashed side as both a physical and an ideological devastation of the most profound sort. In the end, it is the "antagonism" between heroicism and abjection, brought together into one visual moment, that gives the wounded horse its powerful significance. Or, as Leiris might say, its "beauty."

Picasso found in the *corrida* a performative mechanism through which the violence of warfare could be reformulated into something comprehensible, if not ameliorable. The bullfight could be used to set up an equation between its maneuvers, the flux and flow of human passions, and as Leiris describes it, "the rhythms – strong and weak values following one upon the other – of aesthetic productions."[122] In this way, an aspect of violence other than the purely destructive could be imagined and put into practice, if not to save its victims, at least to give their suffering a meaning otherwise denied it. *Guernica* thus offered to the viewers at the Spanish Pavilion something that the more propagandistic works could not – the possibility not of judging violence or its perpetrators but of making sense of it. The majority of the Pavilion artists, including even Miró, aimed not to interpret violence so much as to categorize it as the sole responsibility of the Nationalist forces. Picasso, in contrast, investigated the incorporation of violence, death, and abjection into aesthetic practice itself, in order to give them form and thereby open them to our comprehension. In his view, the *corrida*'s courting of death conveys an awareness of beauty, the acknowledgment of sexual and physical power, a sense of respect and compassion for one's opponent – values that he transferred to *Guernica*. The actual fascist bombing of the Basque town carried none of these. There was no forewarning, no ritual encounter in which the danger of death was shared by aggressor as well as victim. The attackers showed no respect for their target, herding their terrorized victims like sheep to a slaughter.

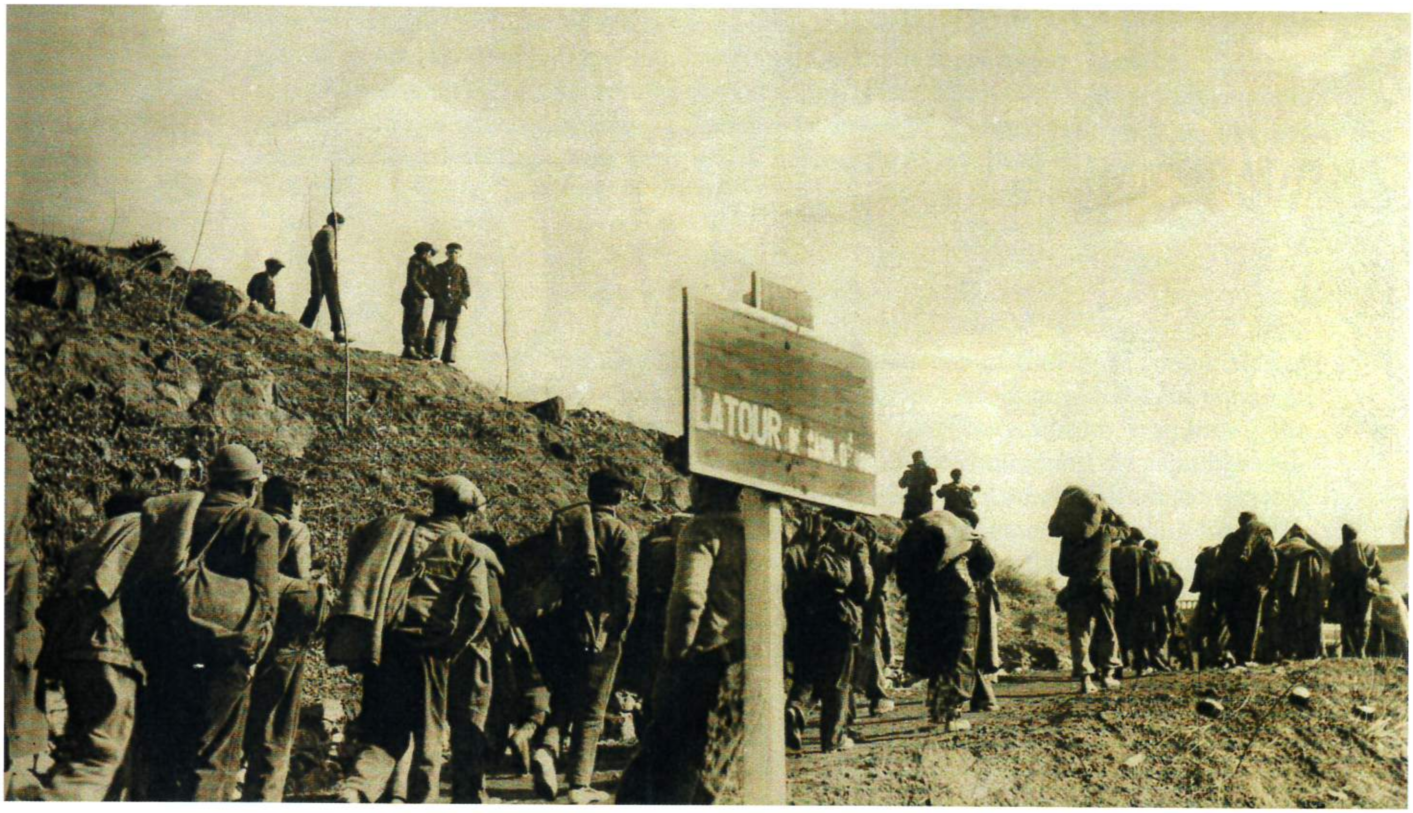
CONCLUSION

I have argued here for Picasso's having found in the production of *Guernica* a conjunction of circumstances that allowed him to bring together a range of performative tactics of representation into a singularly forceful image. *Guernica*'s power comes not just from its address to the subject of war's horrors or from its stylistic innovations. It also comes from the painting's ability to maneuver between the realm of real human experience and what it means to represent those experiences on a flat canvas. Thus the political circumstances of the Spanish Civil War were deeply important to the painting's production but as a catalyst for – not a producer of – organizing Picasso's notions of representation into their most potent visual form. Picasso's politics reside not strictly in his attention to the fact of Guernica's bombing or to the civil war itself but also in his mediations between the specificities of those issues and the specificities of the process of representation itself. *Guernica* is a painting that maneuvers between a mimetic attention to the world and a more aloof, autonomous mode concerned with its own internal mechanisms. It does so not in order to eradicate distance between them but, rather, to maintain them in dialectical tension.

Those mediations make up what I have called a praxis of representation that emphasized a series of performative modes conceptualized around the body. The artist's body could be made to stand metaphorically for the body lacerated in battle, personal conflict, or ritualized confrontation, for the sexual or the political. It could stand as the gauge of unconscious desires. Above all, the body could be revealed as the mechanism through which seeing might become in itself a political act. In all of this, Surrealism proved vital; it gave Picasso a means of tightening up, of fine-tuning a number of performative representational practices in which he had already been consistently engaged. The concept of automatism legitimated the notion of documenting those regions of the human mind and image-making capabilities conventionally considered closed to tangible certification. Automatism also authorized the artist's body as the site where such documentation could take place, as the mediator between different kinds of knowledge – visual and historical, impassioned and pragmatic, public and private. In so doing,

The Body as a Political Metaphor

Surrealism gave Picasso's pictorial praxis the added ideological weight of its conceptualization of representation as a subversive enterprise directed at radical social change. Picasso did not take up the revolutionary attitudes of the Surrealists, however, so much as rework them into a pointed critique of the political situation in Spain. Picasso's "performance" of *Guernica* was meant not to offer the false comfort that a picture might effect direct political change but to show that representation could offer a means of comprehending a situation of otherwise unfathomable suffering.



Refugees leaving Spain for France, 1939

7

OF APPLES AND GUNS

"It is not necessary to paint a man with a gun. An apple can be just as revolutionary."
Picasso (1946)[1]

One evening while writing this book, I was discussing it with a friend and trying very hard to get across to him what I felt to be the urgency of its topic. I described the organization of the chapters and why I had chosen to place Miró first and Picasso last. The responses to the Spanish Civil War of these two artists, more than any of the others, seemed to me to encapsulate the superhuman efforts to which war and human tragedy can push individual people. War stories, including those of the Spanish Civil War, often abound with ordinary individuals suddenly finding themselves capable of extraordinary insights, strength, or sacrifice because of the extremity of the situations they encounter (such stories also abound, needless to say, with the opposite). All the artists into whose lives and production I had peered in order to write this study seemed to me such individuals; but still, Miró and Picasso stood out from the rest. These two artists, it seemed to me, represented the greatest possibilities of what Surrealism and picture-making could do during the war – Miró for the brilliance of his "failure" in *The Reaper* and his other related responses, Picasso for the brilliance of his "success" in *Guernica.* I had chosen to place the chapter on Miró first, leaving the Picasso chapter for last, in order to maintain a sense throughout the entire book of painting's possibilities for "failure," "success," and everything in between. I wanted to pass on to my reader my own sense, gained through the process of writing this book, that one could learn as much about the human will and the human condition through painting that did not live up to its intentions as one could through images that purportedly did.

My friend, upon considering this idea, posed a question which has since never left my mind: what would happen, he asked, if I switched the order of the chapters to place Picasso first and Miró last? My response was immediate: it would make the book so depressing as to be unreadable. I could never do it. Ever since that evening, I have interrogated my innate sense that Miró had to come first and Picasso last. This self-examination seemed continually to come back to the issue of "failure" versus "success" and what those nebulous terms might mean in relation to painting's ability to image a certain politics. This book has presented a wide range of ways one might understand those terms. My goal in writing it has not been to advocate picture-making as some kind of substitute for other practices during wartime, political or otherwise; visual representation is only one strategy among many needed to confront such catastrophes as the Spanish Civil War. Nor has it been my intention to advocate one sort of picture-making over another. Choices in visual production are necessarily responses to particular conjunctions of historical, aesthetic, and social circumstances which may or may not be repeated at other times and places.

Nevertheless, it will have been evident to readers that I have judged *Guernica* to be more "successful" in its political strategies than the other images I discuss. None of these pictures – not even *Guernica* – stopped the war; none prevented the even greater catastrophe of the Second World War. Clearly this is not where any notion of success is to be found. On the contrary, I have found that what artworks do best is not to orchestrate directly the political outcome of events; for better or worse, it is people not pictures who start revolutions and wars. Instead, works of art allow insight into those events that would otherwise not be possible, and through this means decisively influence human will toward social change. In this study, I have taken it as my job to assess something of what those insights might be, how they were produced, and how they registered with contemporary audiences, especially at those points where one finds pictures expressing ideas, doubts, confusions, or opinions about politics and the Spanish Civil War that do not appear (or only appear much more covertly) in other forms of response such as literature, historical reconstructions, political party decisions, newsmedia accounts, governmental policy, and so on. In so doing, pictures rely on a complex dialectical maneuvering of a balance between their necessary relationship to the social realm and an attention to their own formal procedures of visual production. The best artworks do not jettison history, be that a history of factual circumstances, of ideologies, or of intellectual exploration such as Miró had undertaken during the 1920s. Their historical context is never abandoned, no matter how difficult it may be to look that history in the face, even if to do so seems to offer no immediate or practical answers. Neither do they subordinate the technical aspects of aesthetic form to that materialist analysis of history.[2] Instead, "successful" artworks place history under constant and critical scrutiny, such that the analysis of history occurs in dialectical relation to an examination of both the procedures of art-making and the procedures of viewing.

A work of art's mandate, in the face of cataclysms such as the Spanish Civil War, therefore, is to preclude false hope or, as Marx might have said, to preclude false consciousness.[3] It is not only to raise the dangerous questions banned by social repression but even more to reconstitute the cognitive and philosophical limits within which one formulates the questions in the first place. In Surrealism's case the best works understood the politics of an artwork to reside as much in examining the language structures used to articulate the values and actions of Western society, as in interrogating those values and actions themselves. For the Surrealists, precluding false consciousness meant insisting on defining a conjunction between the subterranean production of individual desire and desire as a fundamental element of social and political behavior. It further meant analyzing the intrinsic role of representation in structuring desire.

To declare this as art's mandate is to place upon it an enormous responsibility. This is certainly true when talking about Surrealism as a function of modernism and the avant-garde. I have registered throughout various ways in which Surrealism, along with the particular examples studied here, has been accused of elitism; to take for oneself the responsibility of addressing a cataclysmic social situation affecting huge numbers of people, while remaining an artform self-styled as oppositional (as did the artists I have treated here), is to tread an uncertain – not to say contradictory – path. The difficulty of reconciling different versions of what precluding false hope might look like is expressed in the variety of responses produced by the Surrealists themselves under the general rubric of their Marxist-Freudian leanings. To acknowledge this difficulty is once again to conjure up Adorno, who argued for the unique but precarious critical position of art with regard to the social milieu. For Adorno, art is the last refuge in an almost totally reified world; it is the only thing that has any hope of escaping being sucked into complicity with the merciless world it critiques. The price of this, however, is high: "In its relation to society art finds itself in a dilemma today," he writes. "If it lets go of autonomy it sells out to the established order, whereas if it tries to stay strictly within its autonomous confines it becomes equally co-optable, living a harmless life in its appointed niche."[4]

For Adorno, anything (including works of art) that even hints at a critical viewpoint is immediately marginalized in society, stripped of any power to effect real change. His view understands late capitalism to be a system that enforces a political order purged of all significant opposition and therefore of the possibility of real choice.[5] It is an apocalyptic view of totalitarianism that must have seemed not at all far-fetched to those on the left watching their world implode into the Second World War, and may not seem too absurd today as one experiences the ever more controlled organization of the world through global networks of multi-national corporations, international bureaucratic regulation, and media technologies. Adorno's pessimism concerning the immense power of capitalism to nullify through commodification even the most hostile forms of oppositional art – and the possibility for choice and concrete social change that such works embody – rings true; to quote another set of Marxist thinkers from the 1960s equally concerned with the culture industry: "politics, morality and culture are all in ruins – and have now reached the point of being marketed as such, as their own parody, the spectacle of decadence being the last desperate attempt to stabilise the decadence of the spectacle."[6]

However, as Fredric Jameson has argued, it is also a view that leads to a political deadend: "to question, as [Adorno] did, the very possibility of a successful political art was to confine Marxist aesthetics to more or less contemplative assessments of the available forms of bourgeois art."[7] While, like Adorno, Surrealism as a whole rejected the false optimism of Socialist Realism, the movement never succumbed entirely to the stifling, incapacitating pessimism of Adorno's argument. Indeed, in a general way, part of what I have tried to demonstrate in this book has been how an assessment of Surrealism's varying concepts of what political art might look like can be used to revise Adorno's notorious pessimism concerning "successful" political art without giving up his theoretical insights altogether. Largely, this has been a matter of developing the kind of "differential historical analysis of separate aesthetic forms" that is often lacking in Adorno's writing.[8] I have tried to do so in ways that explain something about the systemic logic of Western society in the first half of the twentieth century, rather than devolve into a sociological study that forfeits those wider explications through too hermetic a focus on particulars.

126: Photo of ruins reproduced in *Vértice*

Superficially, *The Reaper* did not "succeed." Neither, as I have argued, did most of the works discussed here; to have placed any of them as the concluding image of the book would have been to posit "failure" as the ultimate outcome of both art and history. Yet from another point of view, each and every one has fulfilled the solemn charge of art to offer insight into the vagaries of human action and experience. Indeed, much of Surrealism's project involved searching out concrete modes of mediating between sets of personally held political beliefs and the (political) intentions of works of art. It further involved negotiating such mediations in relation to concepts of "desire" and the human psyche within the broader social realm. That the movement as a whole maintained this process as an integral part of its tenets during a historical period in which the pressure to eliminate nuances of belief and action was extreme to the point of physical danger is something to be admired, despite whatever ideological waverings, treacheries, or confusions one might attribute to individual members. Thus, that Miró found it within himself as a Surrealist to produce a variety of complex responses to the Spanish Civil War is, I am convinced, extremely important. It points up how, through Surrealism, he was able to link the many levels on which he constructed nationalism and imagined their relevance for an audience – an issue, needless to say, of particular sensitivity during this period. It points to the way in which surrealist aesthetic production allowed him to do this with unusual flexibility, in a period which was ever more violently opposed to nuance, ambivalence, ambiguity, and complexity. This, it seems to me, is an achievement that should not be underrated.

I kept the Picasso chapter for last because it seemed to me that *Guernica* achieved, through the elaborations around one monumental public canvas, what all the others achieved in more fragmented form. The fits and starts, doubts, partial successes, and gaps of artists testing out various pictorial, political, and social ideologies that appear in other works also appear in *Guernica*; they are all there but linked through a process of visualization that capitalizes upon such purported weaknesses, rather than succumbing to them. *Guernica*'s greatness, indeed its "heroism," lies largely in its acknowledgment of what is generally considered most unheroic: confusion, panic, the abject, the terror of the unknown, bewilderment, chaos, ambiguity, and conflict. It is a work with an ability to recognize these, even act upon them, in ways largely forbidden by reality. It thus gives viewers a certain agency with regard to events such as the Spanish Civil War that has been denied in other areas such as military or political victory. Furthermore, it is a painting which manages to incorporate the elusive quality of memory into the work itself, and to bind that quality to an analysis of history. It is a painting which fulfills admirably Benjamin's call to "organize pessimism" such that one might learn something for the benefit of humanity from the somber history it treats.

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