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Deception as Aggression: Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou*

Against metonymy as the Foundation of the Conventional Cinema's System of Spatial Illusion

Surrealist writing offers many examples of conventional semantic linkages are replaced by alternative connections between signifiers. Michael Riffaterre noted that Surrealist images:

. . . substitute a 'structural' meaning for lexical meaning. They do not represent real relationships, and the words they bring together are homologous only because they occupy similar positions in their respective sequences. By grammatically joining the terms of a normal metaphor, connectives symbolize the implicit existence of points common to both the tenor and the vehicle. . . . Having become the formal substitute for synonymy, a connective metaphorically couples words that have no semantic relationship."

This is true, and deep, but one also should note that the cinema is a medium that operates by putting elements side by side and that creating sequences in which the juxtaposed elements have only formal connections with each other, and lack semantic connection, is a compositional method that accords with the cinema's nature. In refashioning poetic language so that the conjunctive assumed a predominant role, the Surrealists were actually reformulating poetic language so that it might take on characteristics of cinema. This conjunction, through its obvious violation of the semantic protocols that regulate juxtaposition, is a characteristically Surrealist construction. Moreover, there is a great irony in using this conjunction: emptying elements of any semantic significance and relating them simply by their formal similarities was the central trope of the absolute film – so this common device of the absolute film, which Surrealists despised, was actually also a Surrealist device. Dalí and Buñuel recognized that irony and had sport with it. Just as ironic is that the semantic irregularities of Surrealist art, which in some significant measure resist decoding, displace interest from the semantic to the syntactic plane, so the decoding takes place at the formal level. But this is just the sort of response the absolute film elicits. This construction highlighted that irony as well.

The Surrealist emphasis on association through the formal qualities of image/object, and the consequent underplaying of the semantic dimension of the syntagmatic chain, suggests again how important the cinema was to the Surrealists. It is easy for the cinema to emphasize the external, visual qualities of objects, and to allow representations' appearance to overwhelm semantic significance. It is therefore easy for cinema to lighten the semantic burden of the elements belonging to a syntagmatic chain – and that allows syntagmatic principles to have a greater role (compared with principles regulating its paradigmatic dimension) in giving the text its coherence. Often, the scripts were written not for the screen, but as testimony to cinema's influence on new literary forms. The cinema offered powerful poetic images divorced from the stultifying haut-bourgeois language of literature. And it did so by levelling the semantic difference between elements that are formally similar and by allowing coherence on the syntagmatic plane to become the principal determinant of a text's unity, displacing all consideration of coherence

on the paradigmatic plane.

Dalí and Buñuel's film provides an example of this sort of structure. The actions the shots depict seem irrational and the connections between shots to lack causal motivation, the backgrounds and the clothing the man wears also lack consistency: the man is not wearing a tie before he cuts the eye, but after he performs the action, he is wearing one (and, moreover, the tie is a striped tie, its stripes alluding to the slices in the eye), and the windows behind the man are sometimes have curtain on them and sometimes do not. The temporal references in the intertitles are also incoherent – the intertitles include “Il était une fois,” and, following it, “huit ans après. . .” – when is eight years after once upon a time? (Of course, this a temporal definiteness regarding an imaginary time is something much fiction, including cinematic fictions, offer, and that definiteness regarding the realm of fantasy would have interested Surrealists.) Furthermore, the action leaps in time, from post to prepubescent states, as the protagonist returns to a time sixteen years earlier, when he was school- aged: he maturational task then becomes of one leaving books (the realm of the imagination) and taking up a gun (claiming the phallus, a new instrument of fantasy”). The many inconsistencies of the cutting (these are indicated in our shot analysis) – inconsistencies of the type that we would classify as continuity errors in an ordinary feature film – impress upon the viewer that the filmmakers intended to create a work that occupied the space of montage, that is to say, the space of unconscious (which brings objects and events together in an irrational juxtaposition) rather than one that mirrored the qualities of external space. We shall say much more about these “inconsistencies” soon.

This last sort of inconsistency seems to me especially interesting. *Un Chien Andalou* is (deliberating) vexing text, because many of inconsistencies are hardly noticed by the average view. Let me list a few of them (and in the course of doing so, offer some comments on the images to suggest what a densely overdetermined text this film offers).

Shot 1 - white letters against black: “Il était une fois...”

Shot 2 - A man's hand, in close-up. The man is wearing a wrist watch on his left wrist; and with his left hand he grasps a strap attached to a door-knob; the other hand holds as straight-razors, which the man sharpens by rubbing it over the strap.

- In this shot, the left hand holds the knife at right angles to the window, suggesting that the person whom he is about to shave faces the window.
- There are no curtains on the window.

Shot 3 - the bust of a man occupies the left half of the frame; a cigarette hangs from his lips, smoke rises from the cigarette and from his mouth; his eyes are lowered (he looks down), he wears a collarless striped shirt that cuts down in a “V” around the neck; slight movement in his body (indicating that it is his hands doing the sharpening)

Shot 4 - Shot # 2 continues; the hand holding the strap removes it from the door knob, flipping it down out of view, then, grasped by the other hand, takes the straight-razor's handle and repositions it (turning it to a vertical position while the blade remains horizontal); he holds up his left thumb, and slides the blade across it with his right hand, slicing into its top. (This seems to be a bizarre means of checking that the razor is sharp.)

- Once again, there no curtains on the window
- Person appears to be facing window

Shot 5 - the bust of the man, still smoking; his upper lip rises slightly (as though reacting to the cut)

- The man with the razor now stands with his left shoulder toward the window
- There are curtains on the window

Shot 6 - the man stands on the left side of the frame beside the french door (we see his body from just above his knees to near the top of his head); a glow from behind the door illuminates the man; he exhales, examines the blade, then opens the French door and walks out

- The man is now wearing a white shirt

Shot 7 - the man comes through open door, and onto the balcony: the french doors are behind him, a plant on the right and a ledge across the lower part of the frame covers the bottom half of his body. He stands on the balcony, staring, taps the handle of the knife against his hand, and then stretches out his arms and leans against the ledge

Shot 8 - close-up, bust of the man, a bright light illuminates the side of his face and his shoulder; he tilts his head to look up, opens his mouth slightly, inhales (with the cigarette still dangling from his lips)

- The man is wearing the striped shirt in which we originally saw him
- There are no curtains on the window

Shot 9 - a glowing white full moon on the left side against a dark sky; a faint mist moves across the sky, from the right and toward the moon

Shot 10 - shot # 8 continues (bust of the man), he stares up as though in thought, puffing on his cigarette

Shot 11 - a woman's face fills the frame; on the left side we see a man's torso (he is wearing a tie) and a man's hand moves in on the right side, puts his thumb and index above and below the woman's right eye and pulls her right eye wide open; another hand comes in from the bottom, holding a blade. The hand obstructs the face as it move across it from the right

- The man is now wearing a striped tie.

Shot 12 - shot # 9 continues (full moon), a thin cloud moves across the moon, bisecting it

Shot 13 - large close-up of a blade slicing into an eye: the blade moves across the frame, and leaves the frame at the left; a transparent ooze is excreted from the cut

The conjunction of the shot of the cloud passing over the moon and the razor blade

passing over the eye is likewise overdetermined: first, the conjunction associates the idea of the man being turned into a woman (that explains why, when the thumb is cut, a woman appears on the balcony from nowhere) with the idea of the woman being turned into a slut. Second, cutting his thumb provides (oddly) the motivation for the man with the razor blade to glance at the moon: the motivation occurs through the genotext, for a French expression for “glancing [at the moon]” is “donner [la lune] un coup de l’oeil” – and this “coup de l’oeil” derives, by way of transformation, from “couper la pouce.” Having cut his thumb, he was determined to glance at the moon. An having glanced (“donné un coup de l’oeil”) at the moon he was determined to slice (couper) an eye (l’oeil). So there is a verbal as well as a visual motivation (in the association of formally similar elements) for the action. There is also a psychological motivation: the man’s glancing at the moon suggests that he is moonstruck – that he becomes crazed (as Pierre Batcheff does later in the film) . An expression for “being crazy” is “être dans la lune.” Alternatively, one could say “il est dans la lune,” since he looks at the moon – and that expression could be taken to mean to that he has become crazed. Further, the woman’s appearance out of nowhere also has a motivation in a transformations of the film’s genotext: to state that the woman has appeared out of nowhere, one could say that “elle a tombé de la lune.” But the conjunction of formally similar elements – of the shot of the cloud passing over the moon and the shot of the razor-blade drawn across the thumb – results in a violence perpetrated against the viewer, an assault on the viewer through his or her eyes. We have been had: the filmmakers have played a dirty trick on us (or, according to a French expression, they have played “un coup de vache” or “ils font une vacherie). We’ve been had – had in the eye, as one might put it in French “l’avoir dans l’oeil”).

Still, as violent as it is, the montage of the cloud crossing the moon and the razor slicing the eye conforms to principles of harmony that had been the basis of the artistic film as it existed before the Surrealist involvement in the medium, that is to say, the absolute film. In the preface for a film script he wrote shortly after working on *Un Chien andalou*, a preface that served as a theoretical justification for the unrealized project, Dalí alluded to the animus behind this attack on the *cinéma pur* – the attack takes the form of a short, critical history of the cinema that chronicles the decline of the cinema into the abysmal absolute film.

Contrary to current opinion, the cinema is infinitely poorer and more limited, as expression of the true functioning of thought, than writing, painting, sculpture and architecture. . . . The cinema is bound . . . by its very nature to the sensory, base and anecdotal fabric of phenomena, to abstraction, to rhythmical impressions; in other words, to harmony. And harmony, sublime product of abstraction, is, by definition, at the antipodes of the concrete and, consequently, of poetry.

The relation between the cloud crossing over the moon and the razor blade slicing the eye have a purely formal relationship, but lack any semantic relation: the emphasis on external form undoes the semantic links between the shots. It is characteristic of Surrealist writing that conventional semantic linkages are replaced by alternative connections between signifiers; Michael Riffaterre noted that Surrealist images:

. . . substitute a ‘structural’ meaning for lexical meaning. They do not represent real relationships, and the words they bring together are homologous only because they occupy similar positions in their respective sequences. By grammatically joining the terms of a normal metaphor, connectives symbolize the implicit existence of points

common to both the tenor and the vehicle. . . . Having become the formal substitute for synonymy, a connective metaphorically couples words that have no semantic relationship.”

The image of the eye being slit had deep meaning for the filmmakers. The stories of its conception are contradictory. Buñuel recounts in his autobiography that it occurred to him in a dream: “When I arrived to spend a few days at Dalí’s house in Figueras, I told him about a dream I’d had in which a long tapering cloud sliced the moon in half, like a razor blade slice through an eye.” Georges Bataille reports that Buñuel gave him a different account of its origin: “Buñuel himself told me that this episode was the invention of Dalí, to whom it was suggested directly by a real vision of a long and narrow cloud slicing the moon’s surface.” Dalí had used the image of a blade slicing an eye earlier: in a story of 1927, “Mon ami et la plage” he wrote, “My friend loves . . . the tenderness of gentle cuts of a scalpel on the curve of her pupils.” That remark suggests that drawing the razor over the eye has erotic implications, and those implications explain the connection with the soft wisps of the clouds caressing the moon.

There is more. Surrealists often produced images that were structured by a genotext. *Un chien andalou* carries this tendency to unprecedented levels. Just to mention a few of the phrases that have structured the images here: The scene provokes a degree of horror; but it has a larger significance within the film. French-speaking persons, watching the scene, might say to themselves “il s’a donné un coup de pouce” (He cut his thumb”). The remainder of the scene, and indeed much of the film, plays on the various transformations of this phrase and another genotext (which we shall identify presently): various transformations of the film’s genotexts, phrases formed by inverting the word-order or by substituting like-sounding terms for terms that appear in either of the genotexts, and even simple puns motivate the film’s actions. Take the phrase “coup la pouce”: “coup” is a homonym for “queue” (“tail”, but also slang for “penis”); “puce” means slut and “puelage” means hymen. “Coup” (“cut”) could refer both to the film’s montage and the physical cutting of human body – both are the major themes in this film. Cutting the thumb suggests castration, the transformation of the man into a woman (or into a girl-child). Slicing the eye, which leaves the eye with the liquids pouring out it, suggests piercing the hymen, and the transformation of the woman into a slut. The notion of the interchangeability of the sexes implied by the two actions reappears several times in the film: The image of the man’s hand caught in door suggests castration or the man being turned into an androgyne. The film also includes references to pre-pubescent states: a man tries to awaken the boy (i.e., the adult who, by castration, has been transformed into a boy) from the pre-pubescent state – when he pushes a buzzer, he shakes a thin long object (a cocktail shaker), in a gesture that suggests masturbation. The man wears women’s clothes and rides a bicycle while looking at himself from the window (he sees himself as a woman.).

Furthermore, the word “coup” is close in sound to the German word, “Kuh,” for cow – so the donkey on the grand piano resembles a cow (and it was a cow’s eye that was cut open at the beginning of the film, though there is no way that viewer could know this). An expression for murdering the French language is “parler français comme une vache espanol” – possibly Dalí and Buñuel might have identified themselves as the “vaches espanols.” Too, the French word for cow is “vache,” and “vache” is also a slang word for trollop as well as for a police officer – the latter an appropriate enough association, since the objects/persons the man pulls along on his piano are objects/persons that hamper him in the quest to freely express his sexual passions. The sexual ambiguity of a term that can refer both to a trollop and a police officer (when the film was made, almost all police officers would have been men) is also significant.

There is also a prehistory to the image of the eye being sliced.. J. Francisco Aranda

traces the image back to a poem by Juan Larrea. Buñuel probably knew of a similar motif in a utopian novel by Ramón Gómez de la Serna, *Cinelandia* (Buñuel was familiar with Gómez's work – he hoped to film *Caprichos*, a script of Gómez that the writer had based on six of his novellas and had planned to involve him as a script-writer in *Un Chien Andalou*) – *Cinelandia* contains passages that relate movie imagery, wounds (excising a birthmark is compared to ripping out an eye) and the moon.

A further implication of the scene: it affects us physically, as directly and corporeally as reports delivered through the sense of touch. In 1930-1, Salvador Dalí produced as splendid drawing, *Le cinéma tactile (Tactile Cinema)*, a proposal for a synaesthetic cinema, which shows to man in a movie theatre (though it resembles the two rows nearest to the movie screen in the old style of jumbo-jets, that still had projection screens) on the screen is torso of a woman with partly-uncovered hairy breasts, while in the seat backs, just where the trays on seats on aeroplanes are, is a board with cloth covered with hair, so the men in the seats can have the sensation of caressing the woman's breasts. The projected image also shows a man's hand, about to plunge a dagger into the woman's breasts.

Finally, Buñuel's was fascinated by Ejzenstejn's Sergej Ejzenštejn's *Bronenosets Potyomkin (Battleship Potemkin)*, in which a woman's eye is savaged by a sabre; Buñuel and Dalí here do a step further than the Soviet master in shock (that topic that Benjamin associated with Surrealism). Ejzenštejn, on seeing the film in Switzerland in August, 1929, declared that it revealed "the extent of the disintegration of bourgeois consciousness."

Let me summarize a few of the inconsistencies to among shots #2, 3, 4 and 8

- In shot 4, the man is standing with his left shoulder toward the window; he is positioned differently than in shot #2 – he is not facing the window as he was in shot #2
- In shots #5 and #3 there are curtains over the door, while in shots #2, 4 and 8 there are not; furthermore, in shot #11 the man is wearing a tie, in shots 2-10 he is not. etc.

These are just examples from the famous opening sequence, There are many, many other examples, throughout the film. Let me list a few of those that, once one has begun to notice the systematic use of spatial inconsistencies, are most striking. There is a scene with a woman sitting in a chair, looking at book that contains a reproduction of Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* (a painting for which Dali had an infatuation). The Surrealists took a great interest in Vermeer's painting. The script of the film describes shots 25 to 27 in this way: a girl "is reading a book attentively. Suddenly she shudders, listens curiously, and throws her book on a nearby sofa. The book stays open. On one of the pages is seen a reproduction of Vermeer's 'The Lacemaker.' The young girl is convinced that something is going on: she gets up, turns halfway from the camera, and walks rapidly to the window."

An exhibition of Vermeer's work, in 1921, at the Musée Jeu de Paume, ignited interest in the Dutch painter that proved remarkably long-lasting. Art journals and popular magazines carried numerous articles on the artist. Fernand Léger reports that Vermeer's painting motivated him to incorporate quotidian themes and everyday objects in his work. Marcel Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps perdu* includes several pages on his Vermeer. In fact, on going to visit the exhibition, Proust had crisis episode like that which befell Freud in Rome: "On the stairs of his home, seized by a terrifying giddiness, [Proust] swayed and paused, then pressed on. At the Jeu de Paume Vaudoyer had to take his arm and steer his tottering steps to the *View of Delft*." Later

he incorporated his experience into his description of the death of Bergotte. Just before expiring, Bergotte deliberates on the *View of Delft*, fixing on a bit of yellow wall lit by the sun: "He fixed his gaze, like a child intent on a yellow butterfly he wishes to capture, on the precious pieces of wall." Then, slightly later, Bergotte "fell onto a round sofa. . . . Another stroke sized him, he rolled off the sofa onto the floor, at which point all the visitors and attendants came running. He was dead." *The View of Delft* was his dying experience.

Among the Surrealists, Dalí was especially intrigued by Vermeer and the Vermeer phenomenon. Dalí had a special interest in Vermeer's *La Dentellière* (*The Lacemaker*), an interest chronicled in Robert Descharnes' film, *L'histoire prodigieuse de la dentellière et du rhinocéros* (*The Marvelous Adventures of the Lacemaker and the Rhinoceros*). A reproduction of the painting hung in Dalí's parents' home. During the 1930s, Dalí painted a number of works in which allusion to Vermeer and to paintings by Vermeer are central – these include: *Paysage avec éléments énigmatiques* (*Enigmatic Elements*, 1934), *Le Spectre de Vermeer de Delft* (*The Phantom of Vermeer of Delft*, 1934), *Le Spectre de Vermeer de Delft pouvant être utilisé comme table* (*The Phantom of Vermeer of Delft That Can Be Used as a Table*, 1934 – a work modeled on Vermeer's *The Artist in His Studio*). Dalí reworked Vermeer's *Woman Reading a Letter* in *L'image disparaît* (*The Image Disappears*, 1938) – in that work the woman's head is a triple image, depicting as well a man's eye and an oyster shell.

"Light-ideas," one of Dalí's polemical defences of his notion of paranoia-critique, contains an especially important reference to Vermeer: there Dalí states that the pearl "is none other than the very ghost of the skull, a skull which, at the end of its seething, aphrodisiacal decay, becomes round, clean and hairless, like the crystallized residue of this entire swampy, nourishing, magnificent, glutinous, obscure and greenish OYSTER OF DEATH. . . . The pearl is elevated to the highest position in the loftiest hierarchy of objective myth by Vermeer of Delft. It is an obsessive motif in the indefatigably complex, highly lucid and immemorial thinking of this painter who possessed 'the luminous sense of death.' . . . Vermeer is the authentic painter of ghosts. The woman trying on her pearl necklace before the mirror is the most authentically ghostly canvas to have ever been painted."

In the paintings of his Surrealist period, Dalí treated those elements of disparate appearance realistically, in manner that emphasized the character of each one of them: he rendered them with the precision of colour photographs, by making an exact copy of each from a document, a photograph, or the actual object. Dalí was interested in Vermeer's precision – Vermeer's work is often described as "photographic," as it is renowned for its inner luminosity and rich detail. These are qualities that Dalí brought to this work as well. Dalí pressed techniques that he drew from Vermeer into the service of painting, to increase the reality effect of his rendering (He often combined forms produced with techniques he drew from Vermeer with blurring shapes, created with means drawn from the Symbolist, Eugène Carrière. (1849-1906). Once he had rendered his protagonist with sufficient precision to endow them with individual character and emotional autonomy, he created the impression of communication between them by depicting them in space – most often in a landscape – which included all of them. Thus, he brought together, in the common space of the canvas, objects the bore no relation to one another or to the embracing environment – the effect is that of juxtaposing incongruous objects in a space alien to them all. This spatial obsession derives from the atmosphere of Cadaqués: the light there, t, due to the colour of the sky and of the sea, seems to suspend the course of time and allows the mind through the eye to glide easily from point to point. Buñuel's interest in Vermeer was likewise enduring. In 1954, he undertook to collaborate with Robert Descharnes on a film, on the theme of metamorphosis, to be called *L'histoire prodigieuse de la dentellière et*

du rhinocéros (*The Marvellous Adventures of the Lacemaker and the Rhinoceros*) – the film was to include a scene of Dalí in the Louvre copying Vermeer's *The Lacemaker*. In 1955, he painted *The Lacemaker* (*Copy of the painting by Vermeer van Delft*) and another, vastly more radical transformation of the same original, *Peinture paranoïaque-critique de la <<Dentellière>> de Vermeer* (*Paranoiac-Critical Painting of Vermeer's "Lacemaker"*) and in 1956, he glued a reproduction of the painting to a piece of toned paper – he explained the occasion: “On 17 December 1965, Dalí went to the Sorbonne in Paris in a white Rolles Royce filled with cauliflowers, there to lecture on “Phenomenological Aspects of the Paranoiac-Critical Methods” to an enthusiastic audience. He used the document illustrated here [the picture] to explain that Vermeer's “Lacemaker” attains the highest degree of biological dynamism than to the rhinoceros horns of which (in Dalí's opinion) the painting consists” On the piece of paper he wrote (in a wonderful mixture of idiolexical French and Spanish):

COMUNICATION SORBONE A PARIS: DECUVERTE DALIENE
DENTELIERE WERMER MAXIMUM DE DINAMISME BIOLOGIQUE PARCEQUE IL ET
FORME PAR LES CURBES LES PLUS VIOLENTES QUI EXISTEN CELLES DE LA SPIRALE
LOGARITMIQUE – DE MEME QUE LA CORNE DE RINOCEROS QUI ET LA “COURBE
LOGARITMIQUE LA PLUS PUISANTE, ET LES CURBES DU CHUFLEUR QUI SON LES
PLUS EXPLOXIVES QUI EXISTEN.” (Communication from the Sorbonne to Paris: A Dalian
Discovery: Vermeer's *Lacemaker* [exhibits] the maximum of biological dynamism because it so
form by the two most violent curves that exists, those of the logarithmic spiral – as much
because the rhinoceros' horn is the most potent logarithmic curve and curve of a cauliflower is
the most explosive that exists.)

In the entry for December 18, 1955 in *Diary of a Genius*, Dalí tells us that a rhinoceros' horn is the only naturally occurring curve that is perfectly logarithmic. He then tells us that he had recently dissected the rear end of a rhinoceros, and made an amazing discovery (the evidence of which he presented to the people attending his lecture in the form of a slide): that the form of rhinoceros' rear end is nothing but a folded up sunflower – the petals of a sunflower also form a logarithmic spiral, so a rhinoceros has a perfect logarithmic spiral on its nose and also in its behind. Dalí then went on to propose a series of equivalents: Mist (the distribution of water droplets) = *Lacemaker* = rhinoceros horn = subatomic particles (whose movements follow logarithmic trajectories) = distribution of petals of a sunflower = florets in a cauliflower = granularity of a sea urchin. (Both Vermeer's *Lacemaker* and sea urchin appear in *Un Chien Andalou*.)

In May 1955, Dalí painted a paranoiac-critical version of Vermeer's *Lacemaker* in the rhinoceros enclosure at Vincennes zoo. In 1955 he also produced his *Bust Rhinocérontique de la <<Dentellière>> de Vermeer* (*Rhinocerotioic Bust of Vermeer's "Lacemaker"*), the *Portait rhinocérontique de la <<Dentellière>> de Vermeer* (*Rhinocerotioic Portrait of Vermeer's "Lacemaker"*), the painting of which *L'histoire prodigieuse de la dentellière et du rhinocéros* recording him executing, and (in keeping with the geometric theme of the communication from the Sorbonne, *Figures rhinocérontiques* (*Rhinocerotioic Figures*), *Cornes bleues* (*Blue Horns: Design for a Scarf*) and *Sans titre* (*Histoire prodigieuse de la <<Dentellière>> de Vermeer*) (*Untitled (The Amazing Adventure of Vermeer's :Lacemaker"*)). In 1956, he worked the photographer, Philippe Halsman, to produce a double portrait, of a rhinoceros head in profile on the right and a black-robed and hatted Salvador Dalí, dressed and posed to resemble the rhinoceros. In 1959, he had a photograph made of him and Gala bathing with reproduction of

The Lacemaker.

Buñuel and Dalí's interest in Vermeer – interests that focused on the themes of death and transfiguration – suggest that the image of *The Lacemaker* in *Un Chien andalou* is to be taken as a foreboding image. The sequence, of the woman throwing the book down, as though she has been startled by something, followed by shot of what she sees through a window, viz., the cyclist riding down the street, and then falling of his bicycle, seems to reverse causality. But we can explain the order of the shots if, instead of seeing the woman's tossing down the book containing the reproduction of *The Lacemaker* as the effect of the cyclist's falling of his bicycle, we take that action as foretelling – and perhaps even causing – the cyclist's death: that is, as suggesting that the woman's interest in this death-haunted painter that causes the cyclist to fall off his bicycle and die.

Shot 29 - the woman stands up and walks out of the frame at the right

Shot 30 - the woman walks into the frame on the right and moves toward the left (the direction is changed from previous shot), she passes the door, the camera follows as she walks up to the window (in an earlier scene, the door was to the right of the window), grasps the curtain with one hand as she leans towards the window, suddenly she removes her hand and leans back with her mouth open, astonished by what she has seen.

- there are inconsistencies with her direction and the position of the door.
- the woman is wearing the same patterned dress and necklace as the woman whose eye was sliced earlier

Shot 31 - a high-angle shot of the cyclist riding down the street; the sidewalk forms a diagonal line toward the bottom of the frame; the camera moves with the cyclist as he passes a street lamp

- the cyclist should have passed the window in this scene in order for the woman to have seen him as passing by (as shot #30 suggests). But he is several paces up the street from where we would expect him to be.

Shot 32 - the woman with a vexed expression, leans to look out the window, again removes her hand and leans back in distress; she opens her mouth wide to make a quick remark (possibly "O, mon Dieu!")

Shot 33 - high-angle shot of the cyclist riding down the street. The bike veers towards the curb and topples over – the rider falls with the bike, partly over the sidewalk; he lies toward the bottom of the frame.

- The cyclist enters this scene from off screen, from further up the street from where shot #32 suggests he should be.

The action suggests that the bicyclist simply collapses when he reaches the woman's house. The suggestion of sexual exhaustion is unmistakable. That helps explain the fact that the

woman's excitement anticipates the cyclist's falling over. (The temporal anomaly here, while explicable, parallels the spatial anomalies we have commented on.)

Shot 34 - the woman, deep in thought (apparently undecided about what to do) takes a few steps away from the window, her hands clenched, annoyed, she says something as she moves back toward the window and leans to look out

Shot 35 - the cyclist lying on the street viewed from above – on the opposite side of the street than we was in shot # 33; he lies with his head toward the top of the frame, and, though pinned beneath the bike, he squirms.

- the fallen cyclist's position on the road is inconsistent with his position in shot #32. The angle from which the shot is taken implies that he is being viewed from the opposite side of the road, contradicting the idea that we are seeing the incident from the woman's point of view.

Shot 36 - the woman leans toward the window and looks out; annoyed, she clenches her fist and makes some remarks.

Shot 37 - wider view, the bed is on the left, the woman turns from the window and walks away toward the left; the camera follows her as she moves to a door near the bed, opens it and walks out

- The door was originally to the right of the window (shots 24, 30)
- This shot confirms that there are two doors in the room, opposite to each other
(cf. shots #. 24, 25, 30)

Shot 38 - close up of the cyclist, as though still mounted on toppled bicycle, not underneath it: his hands still grip the handles. He has toppled so that his head leans against the edge of the sidewalk, the eyes blink but his body is completely still

- The bicyclist is now quite still, while in shot # 35 he moved

A slightly later scene, the woman enters a bedroom

Shot 46 - the woman is at the side of the bed – she moves her hands along the bed one last time; the camera follows her as she walks around the bed and passes the window. She sits in a chair to the right of the bed, with her back turned to the camera. The door is behind her

- When we were first shown the room, there was no chair facing the bed; now there is.

Shot 47 - a view of the surface of the bed and the laid-out garments (raffled shirt front, striped box, stiff collar and striped tie), spread out as

they would be if the man wearing them were lying on the bed; all of a sudden (in a sort of jump-cut) the loose tie knots itself.

- There are a number of inconsistencies how the tie is arranged, but a jarring inconsistency between the end of shot 45 and the beginning of this scene: the tie was uncrossed at the beginning of this scene, while in shot #45 the ends were crossed over each other.

Shot 48 - medium view, from the side of the woman who sits in the chair and stares at the bed.

Shot 49 - the surface of the bed, with the garments laid out on it: the unknotted tie, with its ends crossed over one another, dissolves into a knotted tie (so the tie appears suddenly to form itself into a proper knot).

- The tie was knotted at the end of shot 47, but is unknotted at the beginning of this scene

Shot 50 - a three-quarters view of the bust of the woman in close-up: the woman stares to the left of the frame, attentively, quickly blinks her eyes and turns her head and body to look over to the right

Shot 51 - a man in a suit stands next to the door, holding his arm up. His left shoulder faces the door. He stares anxiously into his hand, his other arm bent behind, with the hand positioned to support his back.

Shot 52 - close-up of the man's palm (and the lower part of the sleeve of his suit jacket); ants crawl out from the centre of the palm.

It was Dalí who suggested the idea of the ants. The five-year-old Salvador Dalí had discovered ants crawling over the dead carcass of his pet bat. Ants are a common image in Dalí's paintings: they appear in both *Le Grand fourmilier* and in *Le Grand masturbateur* (*The Great Masturbator*, where a rotting stomach churns with ants). Dalí's painting *Le Jeu Lugubre* (*The Lugubrious Game*, 1929) associates ants with pubic hair, and *Combinaisons* (*Combinations – or The Complete Dalinian Phantasms: Ants, Keys, Nails*, 1931) juxtaposes ants in the pubic region with a key (an obvious phallic symbol). Ants appear as well in *L'accommodation du désir* (1929) there on a sea-shell (and so connected with a bony form, *Premier portrait de Gala* (*First Portrait of Gala*, 1931), *La rêve* (*The Dream*, 1931) *Visage aux Fourmis* (*Ant Face* – A drawing for the jacket of the exhibition catalogue for Dalí's exhibition at the Alex Reid and Lefevre Gallery in London, 1936) in which, as with *La rêve*, the ants crawl over a face without lips (much as the pubic hair grows over the face without a mouth in *Un Chien Andalou*), and *Les Fourmis* (*The Ants*, 1936-37). The first painting Dalí produced entirely in accordance with the paranoiac-critical method, *Métamorphose de Narcisse* (*The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937) shows (on the right hand side of the painting) ants crawling on a hand that is holding an egg between its thumb and forefinger – a flower breaks through the egg; that painting clearly concerns the theme of death and rebirth. (This is Dalí's metamorphosis of the myth of Narcissus, i.e., the daffodil.)

In Dalí's paintings, then, ants are linked with eros (with pubic hair and with the pubis), with putrefaction, and with death; so, in *André Breton le Tamonair* (*André Breton, The Great Anteater*, 1929-1931) Dalí presents Breton as an animal that will devour the death (one thinks of Bataille's condemnations of Breton's Icarian ambitions) – though at the same being devoured by ants (death). Though ants are especially prominent in Dalí's work, they appear elsewhere in the corpus of Surrealist works. The following line, anticipating Dalí's use of ants to suggest putrefaction and death, appears in Breton and Soupault's "Les Modes Perpétuelles" ("The Perpetual Modes"): "You discover a brain there are red ants" Artaud also associated ants with death, through the mediating image of bones: "A kind of night fills his teeth. Enters moaning, into the caverns of his skull. She lifts the lid of his sepulcher with her insect-bony hand." A marvellous image, condensing the themes of the erotic and death, appears in Benjamin Péret's *Mort aux vaches et au champ d'honneur*: "There are two ways to shorten the nose. The simplest method consists in grating it with a cheese grater, until several dozen ants come out of it."

Shot 53 - return to medium shot of man next to door examining his hand anxiously (same as shot 51).

- **Shot 54** - medium view of the woman in the chair, with her body turned to the right, staring; she stands up. The door is directly behind her. The woman should be looking directly behind her, toward the door, in order to see the man

Shot 55 - the woman is seen from a different angle, with her back turned from the camera; she walks away from the chair in the lower left corner and towards the man (who is still in the same position) standing beside the door in the background; she walks up to him.

- **Shot 56** - a closer view of the man and woman, seen from their fronts and from their waists up: they stare into the hand. For continuity, the door should not be behind the woman. This indicates that the position of the two actors has been changed, placing the woman closer to the door with her back to the door

- **Shot 57** - a large close-up of the man's palm (same as shot #52, with the ants crawling out the hole in its centre). This view of the hand (presumably from the man's perspective) should have changed with the new spatial organization of shot #56. It is also inconsistent with the woman's point of view in shot #56

Shot 58 - shot # 56 continues: the woman looks up at the man and he turns his head and looks at her, she looks back at his hand and he too turns back to look at the hand

- **Shot 59** - large close-up of the man's palm, with ants crawling out of a hole in its centre. Same inconsistency as in shot #57

Shot 60 - fades to a close view of a woman's armpit – we can see, at the edges of the frame, a bathing suit, some grass and a white hat that covers the face (and that protrudes beyond the frame edge), leaving an ear visible; apparently woman laying on the grass sunbathing.

Shot 61 - dissolves to an image of a sea-urchin on the sand: the shot emphasizes sea-urchin's spines.

Somewhat later, a woman stands in the street, as cars whiz past her.

Shot 93 - a view up the street: a car in the middle of the road approaches the camera.

Shot 94 - shot # 92 continues (head and shoulders of the androgynous woman); the androgyne notices the car

Shot 95 - a view from the car as it travels down the street (the auto's hood is visible at the bottom of the frame); the androgyne stands in the middle of the street (at the centre of the frame), with her hands raised in the air as the care speeds towards her. (The box and rod are on the ground in front of her.)

This analysis reveals many mythological themes in Buñuel/Dalí's film. Yet both artists wanted to create an art that would be contemporary. Dalí, was one of the authors, along with Lluís Montanyà and Sebastià Gasch, of the "Yellow Manifesto" (1928). The manifesto declared in favour of the machine, of the new mechanical world – that is probably one of the reasons Dalí became involved in filmmaking). The "Yellow Manifesto" declared: "*Mechanization* has revolutionized the world. . . . *A post-machinist state of mind is in the process of being formed: The artists of today have created a new art in harmony with this state of mind. In harmony with its time. . . . There are motor and aeronautics shows. . . . We denounce the absolute lack of youth in our youth.*"

Including automobiles in this work, whose psychological themes are so ancient creates a dissociation of ideas: their presence links a story grounded in fossilized psychological traces with the utterly new. This too is a juxtaposition of distant realities.

Shot 96 - shot # 94 continues (head and shoulders of the androgynous woman): she grips the box closely with her arms and chin, grinding her teeth in fear

- The box, which was on the ground, is now back in the woman's hands.

Shot 97 - a view from the side of the car, speeding towards the woman who still holds her hands in the air; the box is on the ground to her right and the stick on her left; the car hits her and she topples beneath it.

- The box is back on the ground
- There is an inconsistency in position of rod and box (in comparison with shot 95)

Shot 98 - shot # 90 continues (close-up of the cyclist in the window); the cyclist bites his lip, his eyes widen and his head jerks, as though in reaction to the what he has seen.

**Shot
99**

- a high angle view of the road: the androgynous lies on her back toward the bottom of the frame (the sidewalk comes into view at the lower left of the frame); one man moves towards her from the upper left of the frame and

another from the top of the frame – as they hurry towards her, a third man enters the frame (comes towards her) at the top and a woman

Somewhat later the woman, pursued by the man, flees into the bedroom, and tries to close the door behind her. He reaches through the door, as though to prevent her from pushing it shut, and she catches his hand in the door jam. There ironies here are many.

Shot 150 - shot # 148 continues: back to the wider view, as the cyclist struggles with the load: the woman dashes for the door and escapes, the cyclist notices and drops the ropes and rushes after her.

Shot 151 - medium close up of the cyclist: he is trapped while trying to get through the door: his right arm gets stuck – the woman tries to pull the door shut, but the man's arm is caught between the door and the jam. (The door opens from his side.) the door is pulled shut from the outside; the cyclist squirms relentlessly, in great pain.

Shot 152 - close view (from shoulders up), of the woman presses the side of her body against the door (the door now opens from her side); she pushes back as the door is being pushed from the other side.

• there is an inconsistency in the position of the door: if everything we same as in the previous shot, she should be pulling the door closed, instead of pushing it.

Shot 153 - full-length view of the cyclist unable to remove his arm.

- This time he has his left arm stuck in the door.

Shot 154 - medium close-up of the cyclist: he is now in incredible discomfort, squirming and grinding his teeth.

Shot 155 - close-up from directly behind the woman: the woman's back is to the camera and her head is turned to a profile; she pushes against the door.

Shot 156- close-up of the cyclist's hand sticking out of the door.

- in the previous shot, the door covers the cyclist's arm up to the elbow; so only the lower part of the arm should be visible through the door.
- it should be the cyclist's left hand that is caught in the door; instead, it is his right hand

Near the end of the film, the man seems to be shot – he topples over, and then falls into a sort of edenic paradise, and as he falls carasses the back of woman sitting on stump, nude from the waist up, rather like a sculpture on a pedestal. Then,

Shot 233- the man falls to the ground (he falls so that his body lies parallel to a stream behind the woman), and the woman vanishes (dissolves out of the frame).

Shot 234- long wide angle of the bucolic environment, with the man lying on the ground; several men enter, and one-by-one approach the wounded body.

- The stream is visible no longer in the background. (The man's position on ground has changed, so the stream is now at his feet)

Shot 235 - two men stroll in the park while carrying on in a conversation, one of them has his hands in his pockets, the other carries a cane. They are occupy the left half the frame and approach the camera; on the right side of the screen there is a large bush.

Shot 236 - close-up of two of the men kneeling over the wounded body on the ground and turning him over, while the other two men observe what is going on; the two kneeling men open the stranger's jacket to check his pockets, then one of the men presses his head against the man's chest to listen for a heart beat, while another man leaves the frame to get help.

- Shot 237 - similar to shot # 235: two men, out for a stroll, approach the camera. inconsistent with shot #235. The two men should be a little closer to the camera at the beginning of the scene.

Shot 238 - Similar to shot # 236: the men tend to the wounded body.

Shot 239 - a long, wide-angle shot of the two men out for a stroll; a third man (we presume he is the man who left for help in shot # 236) enters the frame and runs up to them. The two men brush him aside, and continue their recreation (but stroll past the third man, ignoring him).

- The man who left the scene in shot #236 was wearing dark coloured suit, while this man wears a light coloured suit

Shot 240 - close-up: the two men, out for a stroll (seen in side view), cross the frame, while the man who approached them stands still in the foreground, facing the camera; the two strollers walk by and exchange a few words with him.

Shot 241 - similar to shot # 239 – a wider view of the pair of men, out for a stroll: they stroll away (exit screen right), while the man who had approached them runs off to the left.

Shot 242 - long-shot (full view) of the two men, hunched over the three men and their surroundings: the men tend to the stranger's wounded body; the fourth man runs in, as though to announce that the other two men are coming; the two men come strolling in; the man with his hands in his pockets instructs the four men as he walks to the side; the four men pick up the wounded body and they carry the body away (exiting screen left), led by the man with the cane (the man with his hands in pockets casually stands to the side).

- The two strollers had paid no attention to the man in shot #239. Yet, they now appear in the scene as though they had followed the man, while in shot # 241 they departed in a different direction from that of the man who looking for help. (They also enter the scene as though they had continuing all the while to walk in a straight line, even though the man who tried to get their attention in shot #230 made a 90° turn when he left them – consequently they should not have reached the same destination as the man who gave up in despair and left their company moving in a different direction).

Shot 243 - long shot of the strollers approaching the group surrounding the body – the man with the cane walks in front, the four men carrying the body, in the middle and the man with his hands in his pockets in the back. (The group resembles a funeral procession.)

- The two men (from shot #239) walking in front of and behind the procession, seem to be taking charge – nothing in their manner in shot #239 prepared for this.

Shot 244 - closer view of the procession.

Shot 245 - back to a long shot.

Shot 246 - fades into very long wide shot, from behind, as the cortège exits the frame and the image fades to black.

To this point, our commentary has construed the narrative of *Un Chien andalou* in rather straightforward terms. But the film's narration is hardly typical – in fact, its presentation is literally disrupted and dismembered. For example, in shots 2 and 4 there are no curtains on the window, while in shots 3 and 5 curtains appear on the window; furthermore, in shot #11 the man is wearing a tie, in shots 2-10 he is not. Sometimes the man in the prologue wears a striped shirt (establishing a motif that will be repeated in the wrapping paper inside the box that the cyclist carries around his neck and in the striped tie wrapped inside the striped wrapping paper) and sometimes a pure white shirt. In a later sequence, at shot 30 the female protagonist looks out of the window and recoils violently at what she sees – we expect that the following shot (shot 31) would show the cyclist as having passed the window; but instead it shows him as several paces away from reaching the window. In shots 150-152, the female protagonist runs out of the room and prevents the cyclist from following her by pulling the door shut (although his arm gets caught in the door). We subsequently see her pushing at the door. (It is a though the door opens both into the room the man is in and the room the woman is in.) There are a great many such anomalies – I have indicated many of them in the analysis I give below.

Breton's line, that eyes without bodies "can be found . . . on the far-off meadows red from the blood of blooming herds," provides a good example of Rifaterre's point that a fundamental device of the Surrealists was to create verbal forms that are syntagmatically grammatical, but which, because incompatibilities among the elements, fail to cohere on the paradigmatic plane (and so lack reference and meaning (in Meinong's sense of that term): What sense can we attach to conjoining a reference "eyes without bodies" with "meadows red with the blood of blooming herds"? What comparison is made between herds and flowers through the use of the term "blooming"? For that matter, what sense do we make of joining "blooming" with "herds"? These questions have no answers. They seem poetically meaningful – to resemble metaphors – but unlike metaphors, the more we ask questions about them, the greater our uncertainty becomes. It is as though we are brought up against a mystery. So it is with these spatial anomalies: the filmic syntagms that articulate them seem well-formed, but nonetheless they are, by reason of the incompatibilities among their elements, blocked from making any concrete extra-textual reference.

But these incompatibilities also suggest the idea of metamorphosis – another theme of which the Surrealists were very fond. André Breton notes that Benjamin Péret's work is based on "a generalized principle of mutation, metamorphosis." His 1945 novel, *Histoire naturelle* is perhaps the work of Péret's that most focuses on this theme: in it we read of oil made of snow turning into a chair under the influence of the sun's warm rays, the chair turning into a venomous lemur, and the lemur becoming a kangaroo (a wonderfully implausible Surrealist beast). But Max Ernst, too, produced a splendid *Histoire naturelle* – the very idea of a natural history, for the Surrealists, implied tracing the transformations involved in the evolutionary process.

This dismemberment of diegetic space mirrors the motif of dismemberment that is so prominent in the film. Consider the famous violation of the eye in the film's prologue, the severed hand lying on the street that the androgyne pokes with a stick, and the threatened severing of the hand as it squeezed in the door, along with such images as the ants crawling out of a hole in the hand and the man wiping his mouth off, only to have it replaced with the hair from the woman's underarm. The motif of the dismembered body was common in Surrealist (and that prominence doubtless influenced Lacan to posit the infantile experience of the *corps morcelé*).

Of course, Surrealists did not invent this motif, but the topos did take on a special importance in Surrealist art. The motif of the slit eye in particular reappears in Georges Bataille's *L'Oeil* (*The Eye*, 1929), a work that Bataille wrote immediately after the first screening of *Un Chien andalou* and, according to Bataille's own testimony, was influenced by that film. Indeed Bataille's *L'Histoire de l'oeil* (*Story of the Eye*) interrelates the eye, other body parts, insects and the sun, as *Un chien andalou* does – and, specifically, Bataille relates the eye metaphorically with sun, testicle, egg. Near the beginning of Bataille's work, Granville's dreams of eyes that pursue him as they transform into fish and Crampon gives a priest his glass eye as a memento. Later, the eye is pulled its socket so that it cannot see and returns to the body through the vagina and anus of the heroine. The next year Bataille wrote the essay "La Mutilation sacrificielle et l'oreille coupée de Vincent van Gogh" ("Sacrificial mutilation and the severed ear of van Gogh"), a work that was anticipated Lacanian treatments of the topic of mutilation. Max Ernst's work is rife with the motif: *Et les femmes volcaniques relèvent et agitent, d'un air menaçant, la partie postérieure de leur corps* (1929) is an assemblage of body parts (many of which have undergone transformation). *Schmetterlingssammlung* (*Butterfly Collection*, circa. 1930/31) trades on the analogy of the hand and insects (a motif in *Un Chien andalou* as well) while *Le prince consort* (1931) works with an analogy between the hand and a bird. *Armada v. Dulgedalzen: Die rechte Hand der zentrale DaDa* (ca. 1920) presents a severed hand not dissimilar to that in the box the androgyne clutches in *Un Chien andalou*. *Die Anatomie als Braut* (*Anatomy as Bride*, 1921), *Santa Conversazione* (*Sacred Conversation*, 1921), *Loplop présent* (*Loplop presents*, 1932) and *Loplop présent Loplop* (*Loplop presents Loplop*, 1931) all trade in the effects of the phantasy of the body in pieces. In 1919-20, Ernst's work entered a phase in which an assemblage of machine parts evokes the machinery of the body – works of this phase include: *Helio Alcohodada* (1919-20); many of the plates in *Fiat modes, pereat ars* (*Let There Be Fashion. Down with Art*, 1919-20), and especially *Letze Kreaktion* (*Durch MODEspaltung*); *Le mugissement des féroces soldats* (*The Roaring of Ferocious Soldiers*, 1919-20); *Adieu mon bon pays de MARIE LAURENCIN* (*Farewell My Beautiful Land of MARIE LAURENCIN*, 1919-20); *Selbstkonstruiertes Maschinchen . . .* (*Self-constructed Little Machine . . .*, ca. 1920); *Lächeln sie Nicht!* (*Don't Smile!*, ca. 1920); *chilisalpeterein* (*Little Chili Saltpetre*, 1920); and *Figure ambiguë* (*Ambiguous Figure*, ca. 1920). *Jeune chimère* (*Young Chimera*, 1921) and *Perturbation, ma soeur* (*Perturbation, My Sister*, ca. 1921) extend this theme into a more harmonious, less mechanical, humanoid synthesis whose features recall that of Synthetic Cubism. *Die Chinesische Nachtigall* (*The Chinese Nightingale*, 1920) pulls together motives that suggest the human form a bird, the human form transformed into an insect, and the assemblage of the human form out of individual parts. *Physiomythologisches diluvialbild* (*Physiomythological Flood Picture*, 1920) exchanges human body parts for bird parts, and even whole bird forms. Ernst's *la femme visible* [*The Visible Woman*] of 1925 and Plate 29 from *Histoire naturelle* (*Natural History*, 1926) is based on the theme of the eye. *La femme 100 têtes* (*The Hundred-Headless Woman*, 1929) is replete with images of severed body parts (and of body parts that have a seemingly independent existence). Ernst's *Une semaine de bonté ou les sept éléments capitaux* (*A week of kindness or the seven deadly elements*) exchanges human body parts for animal body parts. Hans Bellmer's dolls also draw on the phantasy of the body in pieces, as does Antonin Artaud's later writing.

The numerous discontinuities that appear in this film have several significances: In the first place, the film evolves out of anxieties around castration, that is to say, out of a fantasy of dismemberment (the word "couper" is the source of many of the film's puns); these discontinuities can be experienced as a means for dismembering space. The theme of cutting

can also be associated with the idea of castration, which relates the film's motif of androgeny.

Furthermore, these discontinuities turn a seemingly realistic space into a space with an imaginary form. Thus, it suggests that continuity between the realms of the real and the imaginary that was the basis of surrealism (and especially of Dalí's conception of the documentary). It reveals that the mind (i.e., desire) has a role to play in structuring reality, that reality and desire cannot be disintricated.

Furthermore, they embody Dalí's ideas of the paranoiac-critical method. Paranoia's ultimate implication, for Dalí, is to "discredit completely the world of reality," by which he meant that it can discredit all beliefs that the objects we know have an existence independent of us. Dalí remarked that "Paranoia uses the external world in order to assert its dominating idea and has the disturbing characteristic of making others accept this idea's reality. The reality of the external world is used for illustration and proof, and so comes to serve the reality of our mind."