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Corresponding Author	Family Name	Stalpaert	
	Particle		
	Given Name	Christel	
	Suffix		
	Division	Theatre, Performance and New Media Studies	
	Organization	Ghent University	
	Address	Blandijnberg 2, 9000, Ghent, Belgium	
	Email	Christel.Stalpaert@UGent.be	
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Christel Stalpaert

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C. Stalpaert (🖂)

Theatre, Performance and New Media Studies, Ghent University, Blandijnberg 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium e-mail: Christel.Stalpaert@UGent.be

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27 **1 Dream of Venus¹**

It must have amused and shocked the visitors of the 1939 New York world's fair. 28 Lured by a siren's recorded chants (sung by B-movie legend Ruth Ford), fairgoers 29 purchased 25 cent tickets from a ticket booth shaped like a hideous fish, and then 30 entered the surrealist pavilion through a pair of giant women's legs made from 31 plaster. The doorway was topped by Botticelli's Venus, blown up to billboard height. 32 Once inside, visitors encountered a topless sleeping Venus, goddess of Love, who 33 reclined in an outsize bed draped in red satin, covered with flowers and leaves. An 34 adjacent aquarium contained telephones floating around like seaweed and bare-35 breasted mermaids who were either milking a bandaged cow or tapping on floating 36 typewriter keys. 37

Dalí agreed to create a pavilion for the world's fair in order to introduce the large 38 American audience to the surrealist movement. The mermaids, "seen at close range 39 and a trifle water-magnified, should win more converts to surrealism than a dozen 40 high-brow exhibitions", claims a contemporaneous review in *Time* magazine (*Time*, 41 10). As they were familiar with Freud's psychoanalytic methods of examination, 42 surrealists believed in the omnipotence of the dream to liberate people from the 43 reign of logic and to find a new way of expressing oneself. In his First Surrealist 44 Manifesto (1924), André Breton regretted that in the western world: 45

boundaries have been assigned even to experience. It revolves in a cage from which release
is becoming increasingly difficult. It (...) depends upon immediate utility and is guarded by
common sense. (...) The mind hardly dares express itself and, when it does, is limited to
stating that this idea or that woman has an effect on it. What effect it cannot say; thus it gives
the measure of its subjectivism and nothing more. (Breton in Waldberg 1971, 66–67)

Instead of the superficial mode of expressionism, surrealism designated a new mode of "pure" expression, by means of revealing unconscious dream thoughts. "I would like to sleep in order to enable myself to surrender to sleepers, as I surrender to those who read me with their eyes open, in order to stop the conscious rhythm of my thought from prevailing over this material", reports Breton (in Waldberg 1971, 67).

In line with these surrealist writings, Dalí's sleeping beauty in Dream of Venus 56 can be interpreted as a brave explorer of the human mind, fleeing the suffocating 57 cage of common sense, crossing the boundaries of consciousness and displaying her 58 dreams to those who gaze at her with wide open eyes. Her imagination on the verge 59 of sleeping is staged underwater, in the adjacent aquarium and subsequent 'cham-60 bers'. Indeed, you can hear her dreaming: "In the fever of love, I lie upon my ardent 61 bed. A bed eternally long, and I dream my burning dreams - the longest dreams ever 62 dreamed without beginning and without end ... Enter the shell of my house and you 63 will see my dreams" (in Schaffner 2002, 18). 64

Dalí used bizarre and delirious images to reveal Venus' dreams, but in fact created an unforgettable landscape of *his own* most inner fantasy; "an erotic underwater

[AU2]

¹For a detailed description of the several surrealist 'chambers', see Schaffner (2002).



fantasia" (2003, 71).² In Dalí's world, Venus does not represent a goddess, sublimating 67 the feelings of love. Instead, with an ironic reference to Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*, 68 Dalí evokes the mad passion of lust for love and sexual pleasure.³ His mermaids refer 69 to the legendary aquatic creatures whose beautiful singing lured the fishermen 70 towards the devastating rocks. These mythological stories were integrated into 71 Catholic moral discourse in order to warn mortals against the dangerous seduction of 72 the flesh. Dalí, however, was not interested in disciplining human beings. On the 73 contrary, he wanted the visitors to freely experience the dream of convulsive passion 74 and mad love. The Botticelli reproduction aligned directly above the plaster women's 75 legs suggests that the visitor enters the very womb of Venus herself. 76

Freud's psychoanalytic writings inspired surrealists to become "the explorer of the 77 human mind to extend his investigations" (Breton in Waldberg 1971, 66). It is precisely 78 in these words that Dalí described his representation of Columbus as a new version of 79 the artist's famous Rainy Taxi (1938) in one of the first 'dream chambers' beyond the 80 glass tanks of Dream of Venus. Dalí conceived this historical personage as the passen-81 ger of an ivy-strewn taxi, bearing a sign 'I Return' (to Europe). Columbus was to be 82 continually sprayed with interior rain, as had been done at the 1938 version at the 83 Galerie Beaux-Arts courtyard for the Exposition internationale du Surréalisme in 84 Paris. A huge fish-tail peeping through the front window mirrored the mermaid theme. 85 According to some critics, the connection between Columbus and Venus was "incom-86 prehensible" (Kachur, 150), but the link between Columbus and the artist himself, on 87 the other hand, was obvious. Both Dalí and his alter ego Columbus had an adventurous 88 mind and endeavored towards yet undiscovered territories. Dalí himself observed that 89 he shared Columbus' desire to leave, to escape, to find himself in the middle of the sea, 90 trying to cross the line of the horizon, making his exit from the known world. Looked 91 at through the lens of poststructuralist discourse, this reads as a critique on the dog-92 matic model of representation and recognition in art. In fact, Dalí maintains a rigorous 93 distinction between on the one hand knowledge, understood as the recognition of pre-94 fabricated truths, and on the other hand thinking, seen as the creative creation of new 95 concepts. In this sense, the surrealist dream image becomes an alternative one, exceed-96 ing pat representations of the real and instead tickling the invisible or unrepresentable.⁴ 97 In The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, the artist confesses the following: 98

Columbus discovered America while he was looking for the Antipodes. In the Middle Ages,99metals like lead and antimony were discovered in the search for the philosopher's Stone.100And I, while I had been looking for the most directly exhibitionist way of showing my101obsession with bread, had just discovered its invisibility. (...) One does not immediately see102

²Lewis Kachur pointed at the stereotypically gendered "Godivers" performing underwater. "They could play milkmaid or secretary, typing on floating keys, or chat on the telephone" (Kachur, 142). These gender issues will not be discussed here, though.

³The delirious images testify of mad love – "l'amour fou", as Breton pointed out in his poem of 1937. "La beauté sera convulsive ou ne sera pas", judges Breton (1945, 108). It is the same convulsive passion that is at stake in Dalí's *Dream of Venus*.

⁴Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have elaborately written about the distinction between knowledge and thinking in *What is Philosophy*?, p. 54.

what one is looking at, and this is not a vulgar phenomenon of attention, but very frequently
 a clearly hallucinatory phenomenon. The power to provoke this kind of hallucination at will
 would pose possibilities of invisibility within the framework of real phenomena, becoming
 one of the most effective weapons of paranoiac magic. (337)

The "hallucinatory power" that reveals "the possibilities of invisibility" that Dalí 107 refers to, is displayed in his Dream of Venus. The bizarre setting of his surrealist fun-108 house was meant to invite the visitors to move beyond common sense, and hence to 109 discover the yet unseen, to hear the yet unnoticed, to feel the yet not experienced. The 110 waterless enclosure in the Dream of Venus pavilion contained a ceiling hung with 111 inverted black umbrellas, displayed like surrealist objects. Most of the umbrellas were 112 open, some of them were accompanied with hanks of human hair or a telephone 113 receiver. In using ordinary objects which no longer had a use value, Dalí unmistakably 114 proceeded the surrealistic quest of "the golden fleece of everyday magic" (Rosemont 115 1978, 52). By diverting objects from their customary use and displaying them as seen 116 in dreams, Dalí wished to discover and reveal the dreamlike magic of these supposed 117 gratuitous objects. It is precisely the immediate utility of goods in a logocentral society 118 that surrealists put into question, hence tackling one of the baselines of capitalism. 119

120 2 I Can't Get No Satisfaction ... of the Appetite of the Mind

The unsettling images were not used for entertainment purposes only and did not 121 serve cheap pleasure. It was the surrealist's intention to move towards a solution of 122 the principal problems of life. "Why should I not expect more of the dream sign 123 than I do of a daily increasing degree of consciousness? Could not the dreams as 124 well be applied to the solution of life's fundamental problems?", Breton wondered 125 in his First Surrealist Manifesto (in Waldberg 1971, 67). This intention goes hand in 126 hand with the common knowledge that surrealism politically moved to the left. 127 Shortly after the first surrealist manifesto, Breton wrote that the true liberation of 128 humanity was only possible after the proletarian revolution. The title of the surreal-129 ist journal that appeared from 1930 onwards - Le surréalisme au service de la 130 révolution - speaks for itself. 131

During the decade 1929–1939, the surrealist movement most explicitly acted as a supportive (artistic) force that sided with revolutionary actors that fought capitalism (e.g. the Communist party, proletariat and the labour organizations). In line with communist thought, surrealism combated every effort of capitalist recuperation, rubbing their shoulders with Marxism. This is no surprise, as Marx pointed out in his *Theories of Surplus Value* that capitalist production is hostile to certain aspects of intellectual production, such as art and poetry.

In 1930, the newspaper *L'esprit française* addressed an inquiry to several revolutionary intellectuals to find out whether, with regard to the sale of works of art, they were pessimistic or optimistic about the relations between intellectual work and those who make it profitable. Breton replied to the inquiry that the intellectual producer should strive to satisfy the *appetite of the mind*, as natural as hunger.

The other mode of intellectual production, aimed at satisfying needs on the part of 144 the producer, such as money, honours or glory, was considered to be problematic. 145 "Such an individual is an integral part of the capitalist world", Breton writes, "and 146 the extent of his disappointments with that world should not, certainly, morally 147 exceed those of any other exploiter – for example, a trader in rubber" (in Rosemont 148 1978, 91). These words would prove to be prophetic, as Dalí would experience 149 severe problems in protecting his artistic concept against what he called the brute 150 commercial forces of his sponsor and rubber agent Gardner. 151

In the New Yorker, Salvador Dalí appropriated the surrealists' 1930s leftist ideol-152 ogy by stating with regard to his Dream of Venus, "I paint for the masses ... for the 153 people" (in Kachur, 126). To create art for the masses indeed seemed to be the solution 154 to move away from the capitalism that ruled the glamorous world of upper-class chic. 155 It was a matter of *épater la bourgeoisie*, of shaking off the weight of artistic conven-156 tion. For this reason, surrealists wished to move beyond the museum walls and were 157 eager to blend high and low culture. They experienced the traditional art hierarchy – 158 which only granted museum status to painting and sculpture - as insufficient and 159 inaccurate, believing that galleries and museums should broaden their purview to 160 accommodate photography, film, architecture, industrial design, and performance. 161 Surrealists radically diffused the line between low and high culture, but also between 162 disciplines, hence following the principles of critic Gilbert Seldes, who in 1924 pub-163 lished his widely read book The 7 Lively Arts. Slapstick films, cartoons, comics, musi-164 cal comedies, black humour, revues, popular songs, and vaudeville (along with their 165 mass audiences) were thus elevated to the formerly exclusive precincts of high art. 166

[AU3]

Paradoxically, many surrealists were attracted to the Hollywood industry of 167 celluloid dreams to satisfy the appetite of their artistic mind.⁵ Applying Taylorist 168 and Fordist production principles to the creative process, the "dream factory" of 169 Hollywood seems at odds with the leftist surrealist ideology. Hence, Breton, arbiter 170 of surrealism, held serious reservations about the potential of film for surrealist 171 endeavours. In the pamphlet Au grand jour, which appeared in Paris in 1927 and in 172 which the exclusion of Antonin Artaud and Philippe Soupault from the surrealist 173 group was made public, he condemns Artaud for being a film actor and perceives 174 the acting as a "concession au néant". 175

On the other hand, not all surrealists saw film in the same bad light as Breton did.⁶ Comedy, musicals, horror films and animated cartoons were 'low culture' 177 genres that provided fertile territory to "dislodge our faith in a realist apprehension 178 of the solidity of reality" (Richardson, 62). For example, some surrealists even 179 adored the humour of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton because of its "taste for anarchy and insubordination" (Richardson, 62). 181

⁵The fascination of surrealism with Hollywood has been explored notably by Kyrou (1967, 1985), Matthews, (1979), Hammond (2000), and Richardson (2006).

⁶André Breton was in fact very ambiguous himself in his attitude towards film. The film *Un Chien Andalou* (1928–29) created by Dalí and Buñuel was hailed as a surrealist masterpiece. In *The Second Manifesto of Surrealism* (1930), Breton explicitly mentions film, next to painting and literature, as a surrealist product.

Dalí himself actually went to Hollywood twice: first in 1945, to stage the dream 182 sequence for Alfred Hitchcock's movie Spellbound, and again in 1946, at the invita-183 tion of Walt Disney to collaborate on Destino, an unrealized animated film based on 184 a Mexican ballad (Schaffner 1999, Levy Gallery, 43). In line with the times, Julien 185 Levy, one of the many sponsors behind Dalí's Dream of Venus pavilion and one of 186 the most influential surrealist art dealers of that time in New York, enlivened his 187 gallery by mixing culture with entertainment, and by putting movies and comics 188 alongside the ballet on his programme. Cultural interest in the cartoonist's art was 189 percolating at the time in America; the Museum of Modern Art included two frames 190 from Disney shorts in the 1936 Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism exhibition. Yet, 191 Levy bears the distinction of being among the first to show the work of Walt Disney 192 in a commercial gallery; in 1938 he exhibited animation art for the film Snow White 193 and the Seven Dwarfs (Schaffner 1999, Levy Gallery, 107). 194

Many surrealists also had a close relation to the world of fashion for the same 195 purpose; to undermine the world of appearance and to destabilize the border of 196 high-brow art. For example, Man Ray very actively photographed models and man-197 nequins for Harper's Bazaar in the mid-1930s. Artists like Meret Oppenheim even 198 worked as couturiers and fabricated fur-lined jewellery for Elsa Schiaparelli. Dalí 199 himself produced a number of surrealist store windows for Bonwit-Teller's depart-200 ment store on Fifth Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street and collaborated with 201 Schiaparelli in dress designs from 1937 onwards. New York glossy magazines 202 would advertise the infamous Dalí-rouge as that year's fashion, together with his 203 infamous shoe-hat. A variety of surrealists used mannequins in their displays, such 204 as Marcel Duchamp's, who used a headless mannequin in the New York bookstore 205 window display for Breton's Arcane 17 (1945). 206

Throughout the 1930s, the playful, inventive spirit of surrealists tickled the decorative arts. Kurt Siligmann's *Ultra-Furniture* (1938), a stool made of four women's legs, competed for attention with Dalf's *Mae West Sofa* of 1936, a lip-shaped sofa inspired by the erotic lips of the Hollywood actress. To conquer America, surrealists rubbed their shoulders with fashion, 'low', commercial culture and entertainment. It seemed to work. The American painter Dorothea Tanning remembers how The Julien Levy Gallery brought:

mostly from France where radical things were happening to art and ideas, a stunning series
of visual explosions whose seismic vibrations were felt in studio lofts and galleries all over
town and as far away as California. By the time the Museum of Modern Art got around to
its famous exhibition *Fantastic Art*, *Dada*, *Surrealism* in 1936, the Julien Levy Gallery had
given New York four years of surrealist chocks, such as the Dalí exhibition I walked in on
one day (...) where both Dalí and his wife occupied the place like an invading army (in
Schaffner 1999, *Gallery*, 15).

221 3 A New Mode of Exhibiting Art

In blending low and high culture, surrealism "moved into three-dimensional space", as Kachur put it (108), and as such it addressed a broad public space. Much in the same way, the surrealist funhouse *Dream of Venus* deliberately wormed its way up

the entertainment business in order to investigate new modes for exhibiting art, 225 outside the walls of traditional museums. Dalí himself cultivated a disdain for the 226 suffocating labels with which art was customarily shrouded. His particular sense of 227 adventure called for a radical blurring of the lines between art and life, between high 228 and low culture, aiming at complete human freedom. He intended Dream of Venus 229 to be provocatively anti-institutional and cross-disciplinary. Hence, the pavilion 230 does not only incorporate the visual arts and performance, but also architecture. 231 A less conventional, more corporeal interaction with art replaced the usual contem-232 plative encounter with pictures on a wall. The circuitous aspect of the pavilion, a 233 kind of 'passage' through surrealist 'chambers' displaying performances, objects 234 and wall paintings, surely questioned the traditional mode of exhibiting art. With a 235 marked point of entry, the visitor followed a determined sequence of surrealist 236 encounters, tickling all the senses in the most intriguing manner. Another way in 237 which the visitors' expectations were thwarted was the ceiling. This is normally 238 an unnoticed zone in conventional museum exhibitions, but here it was stuffed with 239 inverted umbrellas and became a stunning focal point. 240

Dalí's art dealer and sponsor of the surrealist pavilion at the fair, Julien Levy, had the same effect in mind: he also intended to question the traditional mode of exhibiting art in Dalí's pavilion. He had visited the experimental 1938 *Exposition International du Surréalisme* in Paris and was eager to bring the concept of the unsettling environmental display to New York. As Kachur (106) submits, he thought beyond his gallery to envision a newly theatricalised Surrealist installation in a broad public space. 241

Already in his own gallery, Levy had used the unsettling architectural elements 248 of the curved wall. On the opening of the gallery, in October 1937, Vogue enthusi-249 astically wrote, "The newly-planned walls are broken up artfully, dipping and wav-250 ing and straightening out again. The rug is dark wine, the walls white, the effect 251 naked and modern" (in Schaffner 1999, Gallery, 20). Levy not only redefined the 252 conventional backdrop for serious painting and sculpture – the naked, stark white 253 walls would replace the velvet walls and Victorian decoration galleries that were 254 mostly used in those days – he also questioned the static display of paintings and 255 sculpture. Ingrid Schaffner describes his gallery as follows: 256

Pictures hanging on those [curved] walls took on a cinematic sequencing, directed by the257dealer. Accelerated by the viewer's advance, the curve rapidly dissolved one image into258another, like frames in a film screened through a projector. A gallery press release announced259that pictures 'present themselves one by one, instead of stiffly regimented as they would be260on a straight wall'. (Schaffner 1999, Gallery, 21)261

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She concludes very appropriately that "Julien Levy made art lively" (22).

This liveliness of the arts was not only achieved from an architectural point of 263 view, however. Levy cleverly picked up the shift that was taking place in the 264 American art world and codified the rituals of post-war gallery commerce. Galleries 265 changed from upholstered enclaves and salon-style sanctuaries to fashionable 266 forums with an expanded public. As Schaffner observes, "there was always some-267 thing amusing going on" in the Julien Levy Gallery (36). Press releases, snappy 268 announcement cards and opening-night cocktail parties created a discourse that 269 attracted a mix of visitors: critics, collectors, curators, and artists, who then generated 270



reviews, gossip, speculation, interest and sales.⁷ The step that Levy made towards
the public grounds of the upcoming and much ballyhooed New York world's fair in
1939 thus seems fairly logical.

274 **4 Several Americas**

In 1935, in the depths of the Great Depression, when America's future seemed 275 bleak, a group of New York City retired policemen decided to create an interna-276 tional exposition to fire the nation's imagination, to provide hope for prosperity and 277 to lift the city and the entire country out of depression. According to the official 278 New York world's fair pamphlet, the world's fair allowed the visitors to take a look 279 at the world of tomorrow: "Here are the materials, ideas, and forces at work in our 280 world. These are the tools with which the World of Tomorrow must be made." The 281 1939 world's fair proclaimed progress and the arrival of Modern America. While 282 the main purpose of the fair was to lift the spirits of America and drive much-needed 283 business to New York City, it was also felt that there should be a cultural or histori-284 cal association. Therefore, it was decided that the fair should mix fine art with com-285 mercial entertainment forms, that it should blend great mass attractions with 286 class-specific interests. Surrealism fit these decisions well, as it was in those days 287 perceived as a link between both "worlds of upper class chic and fashion" (Kachur, 288 108). It is precisely this mix that drew Dalí to the New York fair. The artist was 289 convinced that America was the right place to obtain this goal, not Europe. In The 290 Secret Life of Salvador Dalí, he writes: 291

I had a growing desire to feel myself in contact with a 'new flesh', with a new country,
that had not yet been touched by the decomposition of Post-War Europe. America! I
wanted to go over there and see what it was like, to bring my bread, place my bread over
there. (324)

This radical choice for America, the so-called 'land of the dollar', seems at odds with the surrealists' fight against capitalism, but one must not forget that surrealism came into existence in a Europe that suffered from the outcome of World War I, an outcome that was completely different for Europe than for America. Both the American and European economies crashed at the end of the 1920s, but, as Robert W. Rydell has pointed out, the formulas for salvation from the depression varied in Europe and America, echoing in different sorts of world's fairs. He reports that:

European and British world's fair promoters, usually national governments, tended to stress the development of empire as the key ingredient for national recovery, while American exposition promoters, usually industrialists and local civic leaders acting with federal government sponsorship, tended to place more weight on the marriage of science and technology to the modern corporation as the blueprint for building a better tomorrow. (7)

⁷From sales income, Levy made 50% if the work came directly from the artist, but he only received a portion of that if another dealer was involved (Schaffner 1999, *Gallery*, 25).

Author's Proof

Salvador Dalí's Dream of Venus at the 1939 New York World's Fair: Capitalist...

In service to the American world's fair, a scientific and cultural association was introduced "as science is the best use of the human intelligence to study and improve the environment of human living". Moreover, the university presidents members of the committee stressed that education was not merely an institutional activity. Instead, they highlighted the value of the radio, motion pictures, and the theatre for "providing 'extra-curricular' instruction to Americans" (in Rydell 1993, 113).

In order to understand Dalí's radical choice for Modern America, one must also 314 keep in mind that by 1939, the Nazi world conquest was on its way to becoming a 315 reality. Hitler annexed Austria and seized Czechoslovakia. The world was burning 316 and America seemed to have the only fire truck in the house. Albert Einstein, who 317 had been invited to serve as the nominal chairman of the ACS of the 1939 world's 318 wair, was on the verge of becoming an American citizen in 1940 and uttered the 319 following warm praise in favour of the United States: "In America, the development 320 of the individual and his creative powers is possible, and that, to me, is the most 321 valuable asset in life. (...) In some countries, men have neither political rights nor 322 the opportunity for free intellectual development. But for most Americans, such a 323 situation would be intolerable" (in Jerome and Taylor 2006, 70). It was in this 324 context that Dalí wrote the following words of acclaim about America: 325

And often what with us had tragic undertones assumed at most an aspect of entertainment 326 in America. (...) Far from the battle, having nothing to gain and nothing to lose or to com-327 bat, they could be lucid and see spontaneously what made the most impression upon them 328 among all the things that were happening in Europe. (...) Europeans are mistaken in con-329 sidering America incapable of poetic and intellectual intuition. It is obviously not by tradi-330 tion that they are able to avoid mistakes, or by a perpetual sharpening of 'taste'. No, America 331 does not choose with the atavistic prudence of an experience which she has not had, or with 332 the refined speculation of a decadent brain which it does not possess, or even with the sen-333 timental effusion of its heart which is too young. No, America chooses better and more 334 surely than it would with all these things combined. America chooses with all the unfath-335 omable and elementary force of her unique and intact biology. She knows, as does no one 336 else, what she lacks, what she does not have. And all that America 'did not have' on the 337 spiritual plane I was going to bring her, materialized in the integral and delirious mixture of 338 my paranoiac work. (325) 339

The complex concept of Modern America was also a topic in the poststructuralist 340 writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, they claimed 341 that capitalist America did not exist, that there were in fact several Americas. 342 According to them, "America is a special case". To them, it acts as an intermediary 343 between East and West, because: 344

it proceeds both by internal examinations and liquidations (not only the Indians but also the
farmers, etc.), and by the successive waves of immigration from outside. (...) They know how
to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with
foundations, nullify endings and beginnings. They know how to practice pragmatics. The
middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. (22, 28)345
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These observations refer to America as a rhizomatic configuration, rather than the 350 solid, structural or generative model of the tree. This botanical concept of the rhizome 351 was developed by Deleuze and Guattari to denote a multiple, non-hierarchical 352 and creative mode of thinking, as opposed to the arborescent conception of 353



knowledge that is based on dualist categories, binary choices and distinct identities.
The rhizomatic configuration that they attribute to several Americas refers to an open
structure that apprehends heterogeneity and multiplicities. According to them:

Everything important that has happened or is happening takes the route of the American
rhizome: the beatniks, the underground, bands and gangs, successive lateral offshoots in
immediate connection with an outside. American books are different from European books,
even when the American sets off in pursuit of trees. The conception of the book is different. *Leaves of grass.* (Deleuze and Guattari 2007b, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21)

However, can one escape the tenets of capitalism as easily as Deleuze and 362 Guattari seem to suggest? They do acknowledge that the recuperative power of 363 capitalism is not to be underestimated. Whereas all social formations usually restrict 364 or structure movements or flows by means of coding, capitalism - as a radical 365 exception – is a regime of decoding in tandem with a process of axiomatisation. The 366 decoding creates the false libratory effects of capitalism. Deleuze and Guattari are 367 Marxists insofar as they consider real freedom to be unavailable in the world of 368 monetary equivalence enacted by capitalism. As a matter of fact, in the same chap-369 ter in which they observe the subversive possibilities the multiple Americas offer, 370 they outline how "the flow of capital produces an immense channel, a quantification 371 of power with immediate 'quanta', where each person profits from the passage of 372 the money flow in his or her own way (...): in America everything comes together, 373 tree and channel, root and rhizome. There is no universal capitalism, there is no 374 capitalism in itself; capitalism is at the crossroads of all kinds of formations, it is 375 neo-capitalism by nature. It invents its eastern face and western face, and reshapes 376 them both – all for the worst. (...) An impasse. So much the better. (...) for there is 377 no dualism, no ontological dualism between here and there, no axiological dualism 378 between good and bad, no blend or American synthesis" (22). 379

380 5 A Story with a Rubber Tail

An impasse is exactly where Dalí ultimately found himself when he headed for a surrealist conquest of America. His affinity with the entertainment industries and low culture had ambivalent consequences, which left him in a difficult position.

To begin with, Dalí's pavilion was not located in the main fairgrounds but was 384 relegated to the Amusement Zone, along with popcorn, barbecue stands, a roller 385 coaster, and other carnival games. One would expect Dalí to be situated, as Kachur 386 writes, "on the cutting edge as investigating Eros" (Kachur, 2003, 71). Squeezed 387 between a popcorn concession stand and the chalet-like spires of Sun Valley, the 388 avant-garde had instead been literally cast away from 'serious' art. Dalí had to 389 compete with top moneymaking amusements like Jungle Land, the Parachute Jump 390 and Rose's Aquacade, but was not able to outshine the other attractions of "the 391 truly carnivalesque midway" (Kachur, 128). Compared with the semi-nude acts of 392 Gypsy Rose Lee's spectacle The Streets of Paris (1940 season), for example -393 described as an "unabashedly topless young woman who entertained in the Zone" 394



(Kachur, 2003, 71) – Dalí's Venus was labelled as "modest". Bel Geddes' Crystal 395 Lassies were endlessly reflected in the mirrored glass on the walls and even the floor. 396 This crystal polygon multiplied the image of the semi-nude, sensuously moving 397 dancers a thousand times more than was the case in Dalí's Dream of Venus, "provid-398 ing access for the desiring gaze from all sides and points of view" (Kachur, 154). 399 Billy Rose's Aquacade featured "dozens of synchronized swimmers and divers as 400 well as singers and dancers, a cast of 350, in a 300-foot pool (...), a 10,000-seat 401 amphitheatre" (Kachur, 157). This obviously outclassed the 11-meter-long glass tank 402 of Dalí's Dream of Venus, filled only two meters deep with water. Aquacade was 403 considered to be more spectacular, more sensational, more thrilling and hence got 404 more public attention. Dalí skirted a thin line between the naked and the nude, ratio-405 nalising the blunt nakedness with an "overlay of fine art veneer", as Kachur put it 406 (157), but his exploration of the unknown territories of the unconscious and the 407 dream were downcast to cheap amusement, being measured on the basis of soft-core 408 entertainment criteria, and ultimately being evaluated half-heartedly. 409

What Dalí himself experienced to be more problematic, however, was that he had 410 to deal with the censorship of the Fair's Amusement Area Chairing Committee to 411 realize his design. The title, for example, was negotiated from the artist's first choice, 412 Dalí's Naked Dream. The main point of contention, though, was the refusal to give 413 Botticelli's Venus the head of a fish. The Fair's Amusement Area Chairing Committee 414 wrote that, "A woman with a tail of a fish is possible; a woman with the head of a 415 fish is impossible" (in Etherington-Smith 1996, 245). As a consequence, the visitors 416 only saw a censored and popularised version of the artist's original concept. "The 417 pavilion turned out to be a lamentable caricature of my ideas and my projects", Dalí 418 complains in his memoirs (377). 419

Dalí's attempt to wed art and the masses was problem-ridden from the start. To 420 secure financing for the surrealist adventure, Julien Levy joined forces with a 'rub-421 ber man', W.M. Gardner from Gardner Displays, Pittsburgh. Gardner would finance 422 the pavilion provided that Dream of Venus would feature his products, mainly in the 423 form of rubber mermaid tails (Harriman 1939, 23).⁸ Dalí was not happy with this. "I 424 had designed costumes for my swimming girls executed after ideas of Leonardo da 425 Vinci's, and instead of this they constantly kept bringing me horrible costumes of sirens 426 with rubber fish-tails", he sighs. He calls the fluorescent gold and silver wigs -427 which he had not designed either - a "wholly and gratuitous and anonymous fantasy 428 of the corporation's" and concludes that, I realized that all this was going to end up 429 in a fish-tail – that is, badly" (376–377). A whole struggle followed. In his memoirs, 430 Dalí recalls how he used "the challenging force" of his scissors and cut open, one 431 after the other, the dozen siren's tails, thus making them unusable. He attacked the 432

⁸"Levy was only one of the many sponsors behind Dalí's *Dream of Venus* pavilion. As reported in the *New Yorker*, it was 'promoted and financed by a group of substantial men', including 'William Morris, the theatrical agent; Julien Levy; Edward James, an art collector and a Dalí fan; I.D. Wolf of the Pennsylvania State Exhibit at the Fair; W.M. Gardner of the Gardner Display Company; Ian Woodner, an architect; and Philip Wittengerg, a lawyer'" (Schaffner 1999, Gallery, 59, fn. 73). See also Harriman 1939, 22–27.



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wigs by cutting them into braids and dipping them in tar, to be stuck to the umbrellas 433 which were to line the ceiling of the pavilion. Yet, this did not end the struggle. He 434 was displeased with the quality of his ordered goods and even spoke of sabotage. In 435 the meantime, Julien Levy's exhibitions at his gallery became a resounding success, 436 with the help of flashy magazines,⁹ which reported his success and hailed his popu-437 larity. "[Dalí's works] sold like hotcakes", Levy writes in his memoirs (199). The 438 gallery was significantly called "one of New York's most fashionable art shops" 439 (in Schaffner, Gallery, 53. See also Newsweek, 48). 440

Dalí was reproached for being "fully capitalized on his easily-won American 441 reputation", for becoming "an entertaining crackpot". Critics blamed Dalí for going 442 down on his knees for fashion commodities, 'low' culture and entertainment modal-443 ities. Franklin Rosemont, for example, calls him a "venal and reactionary charlatan" 444 lured into capitalism by Levy, who cultivated "the marketability of Dalí's work". 445 Rosemont holds him responsible for "the popular equation of surrealism with 446 Salvador Dalí, an abysmal misconception more firmly entrenched in the English-447 speaking world than anywhere else" (Rosemont 1978, 28, 93). 448

By the end of the 1930s, Breton was convinced that Dalí drained surrealism of its political content and simply reconstituted it as pure entertainment. He anagrammatically dubbed him 'Avida Dollars' and expelled him from the movement.¹⁰ In his eyes, Dalí's mode of 'intellectual' production had shifted from satisfying the appetite of the artistic mind to meeting needs on the part of the "rubber man", such as money, honours, glory, etc.

In fact, Dalí himself was very unhappy with the result of *Dream of Venus*. The 455 funhouse did not match his surrealist endeavours at all. He realised that the prom-456 ised liberty was a fake and a farce and left for Europe: "This pavilion was to be 457 called The Dream of Venus, but in reality it was a frightful nightmare, for after some 458 time I realized that the corporation in question intended to make The Dream of 459 Venus with its own imagination, and that what it wanted of me was my name, which 460 had become dazzling from the publicity point of view" (376). Indeed, in the end, 461 capitalism proved to be the main track for the fair to follow in order to escape from 462 depression. "Imperial dreams (...) were never far removed from the consciousness 463 of America's exposition's organizers", states Rydell correctly (7). 464

The 1939 New York world's fair is said to have been the largest world's fair of all time, acquiring the status of the capitalist phoenix rising from its ashes after the Great

⁹The Julien Levy Gallery reached a large public by calling upon both publicity magazines and art journals. "In addition to receiving constant notice in *The Art Digest, The Art News,* and *The New York Times,* the gallery received regular coverage in *Vogue, Harper's Bazaar, Life, Newsweek* and *Time*" (Schaffner and *Levy* 1999, *Gallery,* 53).

¹⁰Dalí's exclusion from the surrealist movement had been proposed as early as 1934 for having avowed, in his typically frivolous way, pro-Hitler sentiments. However, "Dalí formally renounced his pro-fascist views and remained a peripheral figure in the group through 1935. Briefly reconciled with the group in 1938, he participated in the International Surrealist Exhibition of that year, then drifted away permanently. 'Since 1936', Breton wrote in 1942, Dalí's work 'has had no interest whatsoever for surrealism'" (Rosemont 1978, 93, 196, fn 44).

Author's Proof

Salvador Dalí's Dream of Venus at the 1939 New York World's Fair: Capitalist...

Depression. It soon turned out to be that Grover Whalen, former chief of police and 467 president of the committee, saw the fair as an opportunity for corporations to present 468 consumer products, rather than as an exercise in presenting science and the scientific 469 way of thinking in its own right, as Harold Urey, Albert Einstein and other scientists 470 had wished to see the project. "As events transpired", reported astronomer and astro-471 chemist Carl Sagan, whose own interest in science was nevertheless sparked by the 472 fair's gadgetry, "almost no real science was tacked on to the Fair's exhibits, despite 473 the scientists' protests and their appeals to high principles" (Sagan, 404). Even in his 474 praise for America's ideals of freedom and diversity, Einstein did not hesitate to warn 475 that these noble principles were in danger or at least needed vigilant guarding. He 476 voices his disappointment in the 1939 world's fair by recommending that "it is all the 477 more important (...) to see to it that these liberties are preserved and protected" (in 478 Jerome and Taylor 2006, 70–71). Dalí was likewise disillusioned with his word's fair 479 adventure, which led him to publish a pamphlet titled Declaration of the Independence 480 of the Imagination and Rights of man to His Own Madness.¹¹ He hired a small plane 481 to fly over the city and dropped copies of this manifesto on Manhattan below. He 482 refused to attend the opening on June 15, 1939. 483

6 The Rights of Man to His Own Madness

In his *Declaration*, Dalí rid himself of any moral responsibility for the world's fair pavilion *Dream of Venus* and uttered the desire to break with all logical chains of capitalist society as follows: 486

When, in the course of human culture it becomes necessary for a people to destroy the intellectual bonds that until then with the logical systems of the past, in order to create for themselves an original mythology which corresponds to the very essence and total expression of their biological reality ... then the respect that is due public opinion makes it necessary to lay bare the causes that have forced the break with the outworn and conventional formulas of a pragmatic society. (in Schaffner 2002, 106)488489491

The question arises whether destroying the intellectual bonds that tie us to logical systems provides a way out of the tenets of capitalist society. It has been suggested more than once that Dalí cultivated the mythic image of the 'mad artist' as a spectacle. Dalí's press agents released a press clipping entitled "Is Dalí insane?", 497 hoping for big box office successes with a curious public. Reviews of *Dream of Venus* also significantly claim that "there is plenty of Broadway method in Dalí's madness" (in Kachur, 126). 500

From a poststructuralist point of view, Deleuze and Guattari also seem to suggest 501 that even madmen are trapped in capitalism for life. In *Anti-Oedipus*, they pointed 502 at the intertwinement of capitalism and schizophrenia. Capitalism automatically 503

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¹¹Excerpts of his declaration appeared in "Dalí Manifests", *Art Digest* 13 (August 1, 1939). Other art periodicals were silent on the "Declaration". Its entire text is reprinted in Levy's *Memoir of an Art Gallery*, on p. 219–222.

creates schizos, because of its process of decoding in tandem with axiomatization. 504 It produces "an awesome schizophrenic accumulation of energy or charge" (37). 505 What is peculiar is that capitalism constantly pushes schizophrenic modalities into 506 the margin, hence denying the residue of what it actually creates. The schizo is 507 trapped – so it seems – within the very recoding institutions of capitalist society 508 itself; in the analyst's office. In this way, capitalism constantly turns against schizo-509 phrenia with all its powers to bear, but at the same time schizophrenia continues to 510 act as a boundary for capitalism. "It continually seeks to avoid reaching its limit 511 while simultaneously tending toward that limit." (37) Along with Deleuze and 512 Guattari, one could say that schizophrenia is the *exterior* limit of capitalism itself. 513 Hence, schizophrenia is not the identity of capitalism, but on the contrary its differ-514 ence, its divergence, and its death. "Our society produces schizos the same way it 515 produces Prell shampoo or Ford cars, the only difference being that the schizos are 516 not salable" (266–267). Dalí likewise believed that the position of the madman pro-517 vides a way out of the axiomatic system of capitalism. Therefore, he demands in his 518 declaration the rights of man to his own madness. In demanding the right to be mad, 519 Dalí at the same time again links himself and Columbus as Catalans, and as explor-520 ers of new (American) worlds: 521

If I'm the madman, then give me madness or give me death", he aroused. "In the nightmare
 of the American Venus, out of the darkness (bristling with dry umbrellas) the celebrated
 taxi of Christopher Columbus ... [sic] CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, DISCOVERED
 AMERICAN, AND ANOTHER CATALAN, SALVADOR DALÍ, HAS JUST
 REDISCOVERED CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS. (in Schaffner 2002, 108)

The identification with Columbus gets another dimension here; the explorer's 527 historical voyage is deepened with an interior voyage. In an extraordinary tale about 528 Columbus, Jacques Besse describes the explorer's historical voyage in terms of fol-529 lowing non-decomposable distances, and the interior historical voyage in terms of 530 enveloping intensities. At a certain moment in the tale, Colombus has to calm his 531 mutinous crew and becomes admiral again only by simulating a (false) admiral who 532 is impersonating a dancing whore. The peculiarity of Columbus here is that he was 533 something only by being something else, hence displaying the qualities of the 534 schizo. Deleuze and Guattari were thrilled by this tale by Besse because it points at 535 the double stroll of the schizo during Columbus' 'great discoveries'. "The 'great 536 discoveries', the great expeditions do not merely involve uncertainty as to what will 537 be discovered, the conquest of the unknown", says Deleuze in an interview with 538 Claire Parnet: 539

but the invention of a line of flight, and the power of treason: to be the only traitor, and traitor to all. (...) The creative theft of the traitor, as against the plagiarism of the trickster
(Deleuze and Parnet 2007, 41. See also *Anti-Oedipus*, 96).

543 Deleuze here points at the creative qualities of Colombus as schizo, displaying 544 the ability to move beyond logical certainties, common sense and fixed identities. It 545 is true, just like Dalí, Colombus the Great Discoverer might have been motivated by 546 the riches he hoped to find. But at least he opened up lines of flight, moved into the 547 great wide open and hence produced differences. In fact, Dalí's schizophrenic



utterance "the only difference between me and a madman is that I am not mad", is not a matter of synthesis. It is a matter of what Deleuze and Guattari have called an "inclusive disjunction that carries out the synthesis in itself in drifting from one term to another and following the distance between terms" (86). 551

During a boat trip with Gala and the fisherman of Cadaques, moving forward 552 with the characteristic slowness of a row-boat, passing by the rocks of Cape Creus, 553 Dalí is intrigued by all the images capable of being suggested by the complexity of 554 the innumerable irregularities of the rocks. He is delighted by the way the rocks at 555 every stroke continually become metamorphosed: 556

What had been the camel's head now formed to the comb, and the camel's lower lip which557was already prominent had lengthened to become the beak. The hump, which before had been558in the middle of its back, was now all the way back and formed the rooster's tail (304).559

Watching the 'stirring' of the forms of those motionless rocks, Dalí wishes his 560 thoughts to be like them: 561

changing in the slightest displacement in the space of the spirit, becoming constantly their562own opposite, dissembling, ambivalent, hypocritical, disguised, vague and concrete, with-
out dream, without 'mist of wonder', measurable, observable, physical, objective, material
and hard as granite (305).564

He realizes that, if he really wants to return to Paris as a conqueror, he should arrive there rowing a boat. "I ought not even to get out of this boat", he writes, "but go there directly, bringing this light of Lligat chinging to my brow. (...) Row, Dalí, row!", he encourages himself, "Or rather, let the others, those worthy fishermen of Cadaques, row. You know where you want to go; they are taking you there, and one might almost say that is was by rowing, surrounded by fine paranoiac fellows, that Columbus discovered the Americas!" (305–306) 572

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