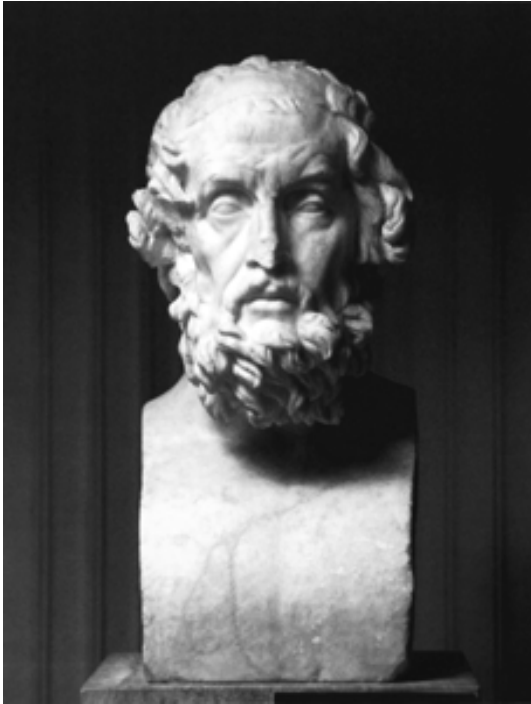


Dalí and Duchamp's mutual interest in Homer: Appropriating the Appropriator

by Megakles Rogakos



Anonymous (Rome, c. 2nd). *Bust of Homer*, c. 150. Marble (H:53). Paris, FR: Musée du Louvre.

A favourite subject of ancient times seems to have been the Homeric epics and their author. Homer (fig. 1) is the most famous poet of all antiquity; the alleged author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, epic poems focussing respectively upon the heroes Achilles and Odysseus. The first tells of Achilles' part in the siege of Troy, while the second relates the adventures of Odysseus on his journey home following the city's fall. The two epics indispensably form two sides of the same coin, which represents the main dramatic genres: tragedy with the *Iliad* and comedy with the *Odyssey*. In the course of time, they became fundamental to the modern Western canon, the body of writings that have been traditionally accepted by literary scholars as the most significant and influential in shaping the literature of the West. The concept of the aforementioned canon became important to the theory of perennial education and the development of high culture. Homer's appeal to the academic world is owed to his epics' high level of artistic merit, their harmonious narrative structure and their textual novelty. These epics commanded the respect of such literary authorities as Aristotle, Goethe, Tennyson, Arnold, Cavafy, Apollinaire, Pound, Eliot and Joyce – to name a selection of fine representatives of Western literature. Notably, the first Greek sceptic philosopher Pyrrho,

who was Duchamp's ancient ideological hero, seems to have referred to Homer as a proponent of ideas about change, the status of human rationality and language.¹

The obsession with the Homeric epics, what may be termed 'Homerism,' spread widely throughout Western civilization – literature, theatre, the cinema, music and the visual arts. In particular, modern culture at the turn of the 20th century was literally infested with things Homeric and the thought and work of the leading artists of the time, such as Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dalí, was affected. Both these artists came from a bourgeois background that exposed them to a classical education that rooted their thought in Greek



Patrice Habans (France, b. 1937). *Salvador Dalí paying his respects to Homer in the Chapel of Humanity*, Paris, 1969. Courtesy of Paris Match N° 1055 of 26 July

antiquity. Therefore, it was to be expected that their artistic production would reveal influences of the Greek myths, largely because of the momentum gathered from their education. What is more, 17 years Dalí's senior, Duchamp was a particularly close and supportive friend of his from 1933. Being so closely connected, it could well hold that the two great artists exchanged ideas about the role of myth in their art, only they expressed their references to it through their highly individualistic idiosyncrasies. So the two artists came under the spell of Homer in strikingly different ways. In the case of Duchamp, the solitary founder of conceptual art, the Homeric influences are more clear in a few works of his, but rather inferred in others. In the case of Dalí, the extravagant surrealist, the influences are as crisp as his photographic realism, yet distorted by his paranoiac-critical method. Despite their different artistic sensibility, however, they converged in key principles – the importance of the

artist as individual; the refusal to put art at the service of social or political objectives; the centrality of irony in art making; and the definitive role of eroticism in their work.²

The Louvre's *Bust of Homer* was widely disseminated as a valid model to artists in France. One of the strangest places housing a faithful painting reproduction of it is the Chapel of Humanity at 5 Rue Payenne, in the Marais district of Paris. In about 1905, the Brazilian philosopher Raymundo Teixeira Mendes (1855-1927) commissioned Manuel Madruga (1882-1951) to paint on the two long walls of the chapel, 14 busts resting on pillars within an arch for Auguste Comte's positivist calendar – 13 portraits of men for the months and one portrait of a woman for the extra day. A photograph records Dalí's visit to this Chapel in the spring of 1969, paying tribute especially to the portrait of Homer. Such a gesture reveals the respect Dalí nourished for the legendary author, whose epics inspired six of his works from different periods. These works are remarkable for their extraordinary representation, typical of Dalí's paranoiac-critical style. They postdate Duchamp's *Glass* and are indirectly related to it, while the last two works seem to be in response to subsequent Homeric takes by Duchamp.



Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *The Return of Odysseus*, 1936. Indian ink and watercolour on paper (25x37). New York, NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Landscape for Dalí is “always and forever that of his native land”.³

For Dalí Port Lligat is “this supremely animistic domain with its wide-open Homeric spaces”.⁴

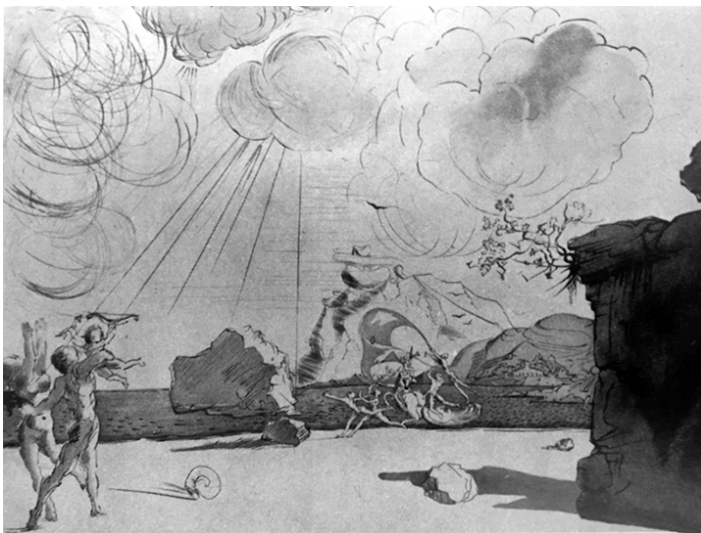
This landscape “adapts itself to the desires of the creator”.⁵

Though it appears in many guises,

weathers and states of mind, Port Lligat is ever recognisable from its shape and ruggedness.

Dalí transmutes Port Lligat by having the protagonist of Homer land there as if it was Ithaca

(fig. 3). The Phaeacian galley is anchored in the heart of the bay. Despite the panoramic view, the bay and the figures are minuscule in this intimate drawing. Even so, a group of sailors appears to be laying down Odysseus to rest on the shore, while others are disembarking the guest-gifts that the king and the lords of Phaeacia offered him. The bareness of the enclosed lake-like sea, which used to host swans, is accentuated with the large stone formations of the nearby region of Cap de Creus. This earthly embrace of the sea was a haven of safety and a base of security for Dalí, as was Ithaca in the heart of Odysseus.



Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). Study for *The Apotheosis of Homer*, 1943. Coloured ink and sepia (66x70). New York, NY: Private Collection.

Dalí's study for *The Apotheosis of Homer* (fig. 4) seems to be taking place in a Catalan seascape with the large stone formations of Cap de Creus. In the distant centre of the composition is the peak of the mountain on which balances a pile of beans, lentils and a loaf of bread, with reference to an

ancient Catalan dietary custom, which seems to be Dalí's offering to Homer. In the middle ground, a boat ashore with its sail floating in the air provides the platform for hovering angels blowing their trumpet. In the foreground, a male and female nude, under the spell of a hovering cupid with bow and arrow, dance to the music.



Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *Apotheosis of Homer: Diurnal Dream of Gala*, 1944-1945. Oil on canvas (64x117). Munich, DE: Staatsgalerie Moderner Kunst.

The focal point of Dalí's *Apotheosis of Homer* is the poet's bust, which emerges from the ground as stone, but turns upwards into soft flesh. The idea of softness is a surrealist meditation on the collapse of the conventional notion of a fixed cosmic order. Dalí propped the poet's drooping head against his familiar symbol of the crutch, which could be perceived as his effort to resurrect ancient literature. In the catalogue for an exhibition of then-recent paintings by the artist at Bignou Gallery, New York, held from 20 November to 29 December 1945, Dalí noted, "Started in 1944, this picture was painted during a period of four months, working one hour a day. It was finished in 1945. It is the triumph of everything that cannot be told other than by an ultra-concrete image. At the left-hand side, the angel of speech is being born from the mouth of the blind Homer. At the right-hand side, Aristophanes is congealed in eternal laughter. In the centre, Venus emerges from a sea-going chariot. The locale of the dream is the Mediterranean Sea, at Cadaqués, on a limpid winter's day."⁶ The angel of speech is given wings through the paranoid-critical association with Homer's moustache. Considering the work's subtitle *Diurnal Dream of Gala*, the nude body of Dalí's wife reposes at right, deep in slumber, while the doors of her dream world are flung wide open onto a richly imaginative space, replete with a varied mixture of symbols, elements and activities.

The detail of the canvas is impressive, from cracks in the floor to scattered pebbles and miscellaneous accoutrements floating in space, surely inspired by the nature of intra-atomic physics, which captivated Dalí so much. Certainly valuing Homeric heritage, the artist perhaps intended to underline how the impermanence of myth, represented by the bust of Homer, is directly responsible for a mutated permanence of the subject, with its new iconography.



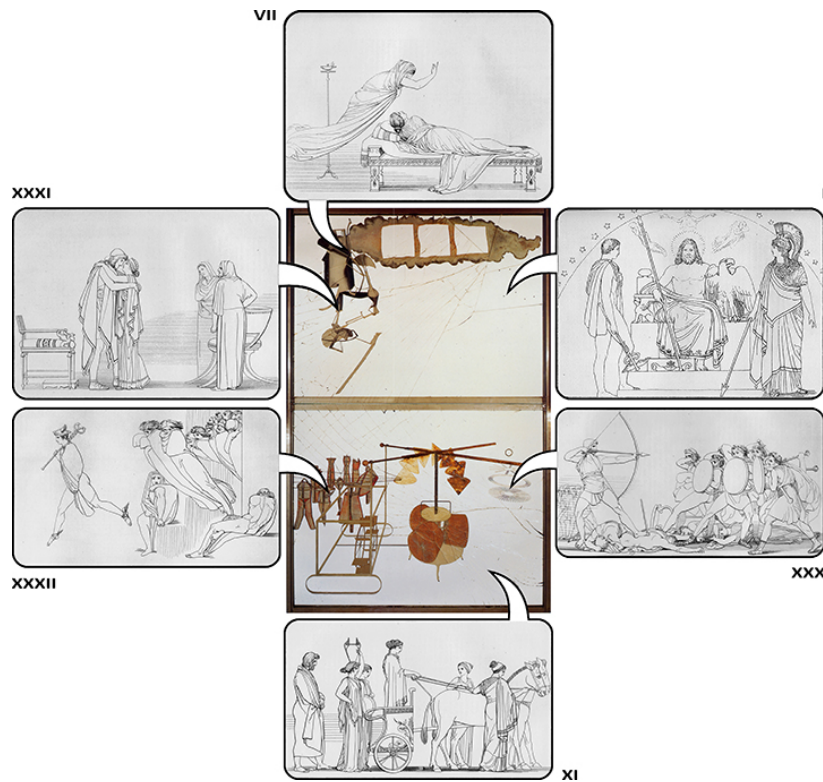
Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *Judgment of Paris*, 1950. Indian ink on paper (62x77). New York, NY: Condesa Guerrini Moraldi Collection.

The *Judgement of Paris* is a story from Greek mythology, which was the basic event that led up to the Trojan War. Paris, a Trojan mortal, would judge which of the three goddesses – Hera, Athena and Aphrodite – would win the Golden Apple destined by inscription on it to the fairest one.

While Paris inspected them, each attempted with her powers to bribe him; Hera offered to make him king of Europe and Asia, Athena offered wisdom and skill in war, and Aphrodite offered the world's most beautiful woman – Helen of Sparta, wife of the Greek king Menelaus. Dalí drew the moment when Paris made the decision to give the Golden Apple to Aphrodite receiving Helen as well as the enmity of the Greeks and especially of Hera. He is immediately identified by the Phrygian *skouphos* (cap), whose soft tip is pulled forward, as if to express an eager readiness for action, in this case of a rather sexual kind. Interestingly, Duchamp's *Pulled at Four Pins* of 1915 is similarly inspired by this particular headgear.

Unlike Dalí, who was open about his admiration of Homer, Duchamp was secretive in his designs. He never mentioned Homer in his writings, while any association between his works and things Homeric are based only on speculation. Nevertheless, the degree to which his works are hinged onto Homeric legend varies, only to heighten the teasing suspense of this speculation. Unfortunately, it is not possible to analyse here the selection of Duchamp's work that reveal Homeric traces in his postmodernism.⁷ However, what is important is that, if this speculation is persuasive, Duchamp's *readymades* should be appreciated as artworks no longer self-referential, but imbued with arcane allegory, whose meaning can be sought in the philosophical poetry of Homer.

Duchamp's *Glass* is his first masterwork, whose fabrication lasted eight years, 1915-1923. His preparatory notes insist that it is a "hilarious picture"⁸ intended to diagram the erratic progress of an encounter between the Bride in the celestial field, and her nine Bachelors gathered tightly on the ground below her. It is quite possible that Duchamp may have had in mind Penelope and her Suitors when he was creating the Bride and her Bachelors. Despite the publication of *The Green Box* in 1934 as its manual, *The White Box* in 1967 to help identify its constituent elements, and the *Notes*, published posthumously in 1980 to throw even more light on it, Duchamp's *Glass* remains an open-ended enigma that defies every kind of exegesis. Conceiving of the *Glass* as a joke, Duchamp seems to refer in it to the comedy that is Homer's *Odyssey*.



Marcel Duchamp's *Glass* (1915-1923) surrounded with corresponding John Flaxman's plates from *The Odyssey of Homer* (1805).

The picture illustrated here relates six parts of the *Glass* with an equal number of Flaxman's illustrations for *The Odyssey of Homer* series of 1805: 1) Flaxman's *I - Council of Jupiter, Minerva, and Mercury* with Duchamp's *Nine Shots*; 2) Flaxman's *VII - Penelope's Dream* with Duchamp's *Cinematic Blossoming*; 3) Flaxman's *XI - Ulysses Following the Car of Nausicaä* with Duchamp's *Chocolate Grinder*; 4) Flaxman's *XXX - Ulysses Killing the Suitors* with Duchamp's *Oculist Witnesses*; 5) Flaxman's *XXXI - The Meeting of Ulysses and Penelope* with Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare*; and 6) Flaxman's *XXXII - Mercury Conducting the Souls of the Suitors to the Infernal Regions*, with Duchamp's *Nine Malic Moulds*. These pairings are speculative and suggest that Duchamp's *Glass* is a hermetic

version of the cerebral way in which Joyce's *Ulysses* (1914-1922) refers to Homer's *Odyssey*. In this cryptic respect, the *Glass* and *Ulysses* are bound to relate to one another as Homeric paradigms of man's initiation to inner freedom.



Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). Detail from *The Coach and the Fly*, 1974. Lithograph drypoint with pochoir (74x90). Courtesy of Third Sector Gallery, Buckinghamshire, UK.

There is yet another most unexpected subject that may serve as common denominator regarding Dalí and Duchamp's mutual interest in Homer. The Mediterranean seaside, whose diet is geared around fish, attracts flies and makes them obsessively present. Very few artists, however,

would be inspired to make serious works of art on this rather scorned subject. In his known bout of inspiration, Homer refers to the fly (*myia* in ancient Greek) in 5 of the *Iliad's* 24 books (2.469; 4.131; 16.641; 17.570; 19.25 and 19.31). The first reference compares the numbers of Achaeans ready to fight the Trojans on the plain of Scamander to “the many tribes of swarming flies that buzz about the herdsman's farmstead in the season of spring”.⁹ The second compares Athena's intervention to ward off a lethal arrow from striking Menelaus, “as a mother sweeps a fly from her child when he lies in sweet slumber”.¹⁰ The third describes the inability to recognise the body of Sarpedon, king of Lycia, because it was thronged by missiles, blood and dust, “as in a farmstead flies buzz about the full milk pails in the season of spring when the milk drenches the pails”.¹¹ The fourth talks about the daring of the fly that Athena inspired in Menelaus, “that, though it been driven away often from the skin of a man, ever persists in biting, and sweet to it is the blood of man”.¹² The final two references regard the tender concern of Achilles about the body of his beloved Patroclus,

being “dreadfully afraid that in the meantime flies may enter the wounds that the bronze has dealt on the corpse of the valiant son of Menoetius, and breed worms inside, and disfigure his corpse—for the life is slain out of him—and so all his flesh will rot”, to which his mother Thetis answers, “From him I will try to ward off the fierce tribes, the flies that feed on men slain in battle.”¹³ Therefore, Homer masterfully explores the full gamut of roles that a fly can play.

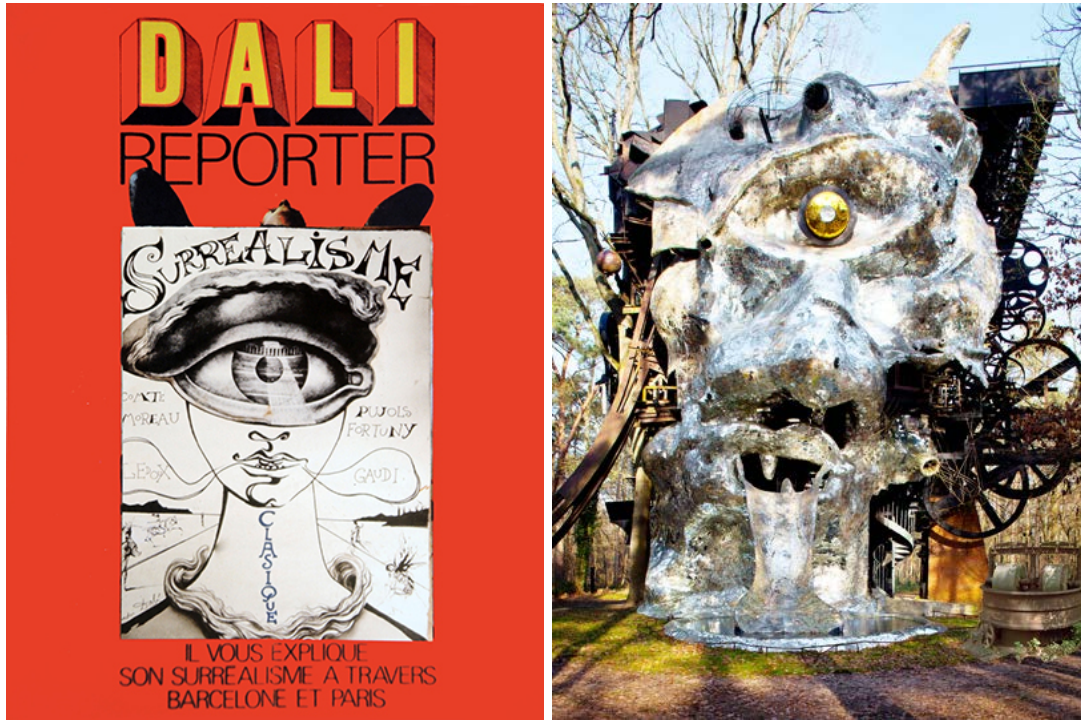


Marcel Duchamp (France, 1878-1968). *Torture-Morte*, 1959, Cadaqués. Painted plaster and flies, on paper mounted on wood (30x14x6). Paris, FR: Collection Robert Lebel. | Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *Laocoön tormented by Flies*, 1965. Oil on three different Rowlux® sheets and paperclip (122x91). Figueres, ES: Fundació Gala - Salvador Dalí.

While in Cadaqués in 1959, Duchamp created his *Torture-Morte*, perhaps inspired by a personal experience that may have brought to his mind the nuisance that flies are, as recounted in ancient Greek literature – particularly Homer’s *Iliad* and the *Apology of Socrates*.¹⁴ The connection of flies with these texts is only speculated, but it would give this

low subject the required *raison d'être*. The work depicts the plaster instep of a foot in relief with a dozen of flies on it. Of course, the work provided Duchamp with the impetus for further thought and research, although he did not discuss it. In this work the presence of flies as emblems of decomposition inscribes a disturbing allusion to death into the already *stilled life* of the image. George Bauer interprets *Torture-Morte* as a footnote to the writing of art history, since it embodies Duchamp's literal step enacting the slippery passage from painting to sculpture: "The slip from painting to sculpture relies on the absent *piédestal*, now replaced by letters that support the work of pun, pain and paint in the essential lay-over of different media and difference in language, art, and letters."¹⁵

Unlike Duchamp, Dalí discoursed on the subject of flies. He expressed a fondness for flies and the curiosity that they arose in him, insisting that he preferred above all others those of Port Lligat, which he described as belonging to olive trees.¹⁶ In *The Diary of a Genius*, Dalí wrote apologetically about flies, "They are the Muses of the Mediterranean. They brought inspiration to the Greek philosophers, who spent their leisure hours lying in the sun covered with flies."¹⁷ So, it was that he painted *Laocoön tormented by Flies* in 1965. What is significant is that this work follows Duchamp's *Torture-Morte* (1959) by six years, and relates to a Homeric theme in the *Iliad* – Laocoön, being the Trojan priest, who, with his two sons, was crushed to death by two great sea serpents as a penalty for warning the Trojans against drawing the *Wooden Horse* of the Greeks into Troy. Here, however, the punishment of the priest is accentuated by the merciless torment by flies. The work is a collage of disparate materials, including oil on three different Rowlux sheets and a paperclip holding the central sheet in place. The picture is based on the juxtaposition of dry and lubricant materials – the inorganic stone and the organic eggs. Laocoön is undergoing the torturous struggle of his certain death by a serpent. The Rowlux sheet that the artist used is a multi-lensed thermoplastic film that manipulates light to create a variety of unique and interesting visual



Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *Dalí Reporter*, Paris Match N° 1055 of 26 July 1969. | Jean Tinguely (Switzerland, 1925-1991), *The Cyclops*, 1969-1994. Courtesy of Association Le Cyclop, Milly-la-Forêt, FR.

effects. Here, its effect is of a cluster of fly's eggs, which prevail in the composition and are echoed also in the brickwork surrounding the stone arches. The pale body of the priest in the centre is starting to produce a rash that seems lethal. The superposition of an arch within a larger arch increases the effect of suffocation – the macrocosm is being overtaken by the microcosm. The outer arch, broken to connect with a pediment above it, provides but a frame for the inescapable doom of the world.

The *Paris Match N° 1055* of 26 July 1969 dedicated its cover to NASA's Apollo 11 mission to the moon, which was a scientific milestone for mankind. At the same time it published the *Dalí Reporter*, an insert wherein the painter explained his experience of surrealism through Barcelona and Paris. This insert featured on its cover the bust of a one-eyed Cyclops that plays a significant role in Homer's *Odyssey*. Dalí inscribed on either side of the Cyclops' head the names of seminal deceased individuals that he considered being of surrealist sensibility – on the left side the French trinity of Comte, Moreau, and Ledoux, while on the right the

Spanish trinity of Pujols, Fortuny and Gaudí. In the place of its one eye Dalí appropriated the *Glance* engraving that Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806) designed for his book *Architecture Considered in Relation to Art, Morals, and Legislation*, of which only the first volume was published in 1804. The glance's iris reflects Ledoux's *Theatre of Besançon* (1771-1773), which had a revolutionary design in its provision of seats for the ordinary public as well as for the upper classes.

Coincidentally, 1969 marked the beginning of a masterwork also inspired by the same Homeric mythical creature – Jean Tinguely's *The Cyclops: The Monster in the Forest* (1969-1994), a gigantic walk-in culture station in Milly-la-Forêt, south of Paris. An interesting fact links Duchamp's *Chocolate Grinder* to the Homeric *Cyclops*. A *Mixer - Blender*, produced by the celebrated French manufacturers Alfred Savy and Jeanjean & Co, was used as a posthumous readymade, in the *Marcel Duchamp* retrospective exhibition at the Centre Pompidou, between 31 January and 2 May 1977. It evoked the chocolate grinder that Duchamp saw operating in the window of Gamelin Chocolate Factory in downtown Rouen in 1913. Soon after the closing of the Duchamp exhibition, that so-called *Chocolate Grinder* was positioned near the entrance of Tinguely's *Cyclops* at Milly-la-Forêt. The idea originated in Centre Pompidou's director Pontus Hultén, but by accepting to incorporate this emblematic readymade to his masterwork, Tinguely paid a powerful tribute to his friend, Duchamp.¹⁸ At any event, the presence of Duchamp's *Chocolate Grinder* by Tinguely's *Cyclops* suggests that the subjects of the Bachelors' lust for flesh and Polyphemus' barbarism go hand in hand. At the same time, their treatment as related subjects fortuitously claims a shared Homeric trait for both, which rather strengthens the argument that Homer was latently in Duchamp's mind.

If Duchamp's earlier *Glass* masterwork relates to the comical *Odyssey*, his latter masterwork *Given* seems to relate to the tragic *Iliad*. This work is a complex installation, involving a spectacle through three planes. The first plane is of an ancient door that Duchamp transported from Cadaqués. Through a pair of peeping holes the viewer has a stereoscopic experience. He sees on a second plane a broken opening of a brick wall, appearing like a vaginal orifice and emblematising the virgin's broken hymen. Through this opening is the last plane that reveals a still female nude figure sprawling on immobile grassland, where the only thing moving is a waterfall in the distance. The work could relate to Cassandra, daughter of the Trojan king Priam, who was given the gift of prophecy by Apollo. When Cassandra cheated Apollo, however, he turned this into a curse by causing her prophecies, though true, to be disbelieved. So, she was fully aware of all the tragedy that was to come – the fall of Troy; her loss of virginity by Ajax the Lesser; her becoming a slave to Agamemnon; and finally her being murdered by axe through the hands of Clytemnestra. The link of the figure to Cassandra is not arbitrary because Duchamp made personally sure that the Copley Foundation, who mediated to donate the work to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was renamed after her!



Marcel Duchamp (France, 1887-1968), *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*, 1946-1966. Mixed media assemblage (243x178x125). Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art - Gift of the Cassandra Foundation. | Salvador Dalí (Spain, 1904-1989). *The Loves of Cassandra: The Girl with a Torch*, 1967. Hand-coloured dry-point etching on Japanese paper (32x24). Courtesy of William Weston Gallery, London.

Interestingly, Dalí illustrated *The Girl with a Torch* for *The Loves of Cassandra* series, issued in 1967, which is one year after Duchamp completed *Given*. His version is a metonymic variation of the Duchamp's installation – a female nude dances to the music of a string instrument played by a male, as seen through her parted feet. Most likely a victim of rape in both works, Cassandra holds up high the blazing torch as a symbol of enlightenment, emblematising the triumph of spirit over matter.

Great artists are hardly self-luminous. They often depend on some kind of mentorship, the guidance provided by an experienced person. To acquire a sense of orientation, they find a mentor that initiates them to their field and points them to the right direction. The significance of a mentor is reflected in the *Odyssey*. When Odysseus left for the Trojan War, he placed his loyal friend Mentor in charge of his son Telemachus and his palace. When Athena visited Telemachus she took the guise of Mentor to hide herself from the suitors of

his mother Penelope. As Mentor, the goddess encouraged Telemachus to stand up against the suitors and go abroad to find out what happened to his father. When Odysseus returned to

Ithaca, Athena appeared briefly in the form of Mentor again at Odysseus' palace.

For Dalí the role of Tiresias, the legendary blind seer in Homer's epics, was played by Lidia Nogués de Costa (1866-1946), the fisherwoman of Port Lligat. She was rumoured to be descended from witches. Her obsessive erotic



In the cemetery of Agullana, near Figueres, Dalí with the undertaker beside the gravestone of Lidia Nogués de Costa, c. 1956

interpretations of her Platonic lover's articles, the writer Eugeni d'Ors (1882-1954), influenced Dalí's famous paranoiac-critical activity,¹⁹ a "spontaneous method of irrational knowledge based on the interpretive-critical association of delirious phenomena".²⁰ Lidia knew Dalí from when he was a child, and appreciated his capacity to comprehend what for others was a subject of scorn. When Dalí was driven from family and home, in 1929, he bought from her the cottage in Port Lligat that was to become the nucleus of his house there. In 1956, in commemoration of one decade from her death, the city council of Agullana supported the installation on her grave of the stone that had been made by order of Dalí, but the ecclesiastical authorities of Girona considered it subversive and the bishop Cartanyà denied the authorisation on the basis of the content of its epitaph. The text by d'Ors, author of *The True Story of Lidia of Cadaqués* (1954), reads, "Here rests, if the tramontana will allow, Lidia Nogués de Costa, sibyl of Cadaqués, dialectical magician, who was and was not Teresa; in her name, the angelic exorcised goats and anarchists."²¹ *Tramontana*, a strong

northern wind believed to be the devil's breath, here refers to her madness. Lidia's identification with Teresa is a direct reference to the protagonist in d'Ors' didactic novel, *The Well-Planted One*, published in 1912. The Teresa of the title is a peasant prophetess, standing for all that is classic and archetypal in Catalunya, and by extension in the Mediterranean, with a mission "to restore the ancient law".²² Dalí claimed that d'Ors had based Teresa on Lidia,²³ and this explains why the later obsessively identified with her and was convinced that she was the author's true concern. Of course, the name of Teresa is not accidental, but a learned reference to the Homeric Tiresias, who was given the female name Thérèse in Guillaume Apollinaire's play *The Breasts of Tiresias*, written in 1903 and performed in 1917. In the case of Duchamp, it appears that the role of Tiresias was performed by Picabia, who "had an amazing spirit [...] had an entry in a world I knew nothing of [...] opened up new horizons for me".²⁴ Delivering *The Creative Act* speech at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts in Houston, Texas, in April 1957, Duchamp described artistic creation as a process in which the work moves between the two poles of the artist and the spectator. Therein, Duchamp defined the artist as a "mediumistic being",²⁵ or an individual whose intuition permits him to recognise and expose qualities in common objects that go unnoticed by the average spectator. Not only does this concept endow the artist with the privilege to condition the relationship between spectacle and spectator, but it raises the gifted artist to the level of a seer compatible with Tiresias' legendary capacity to reveal universal truths. In the end, the question arises, what is there in Homer that may be useful to such brilliant artistic personalities as Dalí and Duchamp? Postmodernism questions the originality that modernism so valued. Appropriation, the use of pre-existing materials with little or no transformation applied to them, is typical of postmodernism. But Homer himself set the first example; being at the verge when the eponymous poem was about to replace the anonymous one, he appropriated the oral tradition, but also boosted it with further literary enrichment.

In so doing, the copy (appropriating) overshadows the original (appropriated) work. Thus, Homer excelled in the two key forms of ancient Greek drama – tragedy and comedy. He combined adventure and imagination, barbarism and civilization, wildness and tenderness, love and hatred, violence and humanity, sadness and happiness. Homer’s unique ability to effectively combine these qualities endowed his appropriated epics with timelessness and ensured their author’s immortality. Homer shows the way of appropriation, the deliberate reworking of images and styles from earlier, well-known works of art, which is the hallmark of postmodernism. It could well be that Duchamp came up with the idea of *readymades* – the mass-produced article selected by an artist or the idea of a work commissioned by an artist for another to materialise, displayed as a work of art – by studying Homer’s example.

In an effort to explain why Duchamp might have Homer’s *Odyssey* in mind when making his *Glass*, or why Dalí should apotheosise Homer, the answer might be simple. These great *enfants terribles* thought of appropriating the Classics in a new way with a sense of humour, paradox and irony to make their own points as successors to an ancient tradition. As Harold Bloom argued on the anxiety of intra-poetic relationships, “Poetic history [...] is indistinguishable from poetic influence, since strong poets make that history by misreading one another, so as to clear imaginative space for themselves”.²⁶ Such a ‘misread’ tactic has always been the Oedipal means by which the poet may overthrow the ‘poetic’ father. There only happen to be varying levels of concealment; where Dalí was so open about appropriating Homer for his work, Duchamp seems to have been hermetic about the same source in his case, and discreetly based his working method and conceptual rationale on the appropriation of tradition. So it may well be that Dalí and Duchamp’s mutual interest in Homer was led by an urge of the son to castrate the father and take his place, in other words to subvert tradition, deeper down to appropriate the appropriator.

[The talk delivered by Megakles Rogakos at the Royal Academy, London, on 4 November 2017, as part of the *Dalí/Duchamp* symposium, was based on this text.]

Notes

¹ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2010.

² Radford 2003:54.

³ Gérard 1986 ad loc.

⁴ *Ibid* 1986 ad loc.

⁵ *Ibid* 1986 ad loc.

⁶ Dalí 1945 ad loc.

⁷ Please refer to my PhD thesis, "A Joycean Exegesis of *The Large Glass* – Homeric Traces in the Postmodernism of Marcel Duchamp", Department of Philosophy & Art History, University of Essex, October 2016.

⁸ Sanouillet and Peterson 1973:30.

⁹ Homer 1925:2.469-470.

¹⁰ Homer 1925:4.130-131.

¹¹ Homer 1925:16.641-643.

¹² Homer 1925:17.570-572.

¹³ Homer 1925:19.23-27 and 19.30-31.

¹⁴ *Apology of Socrates* 1871:413-415.

¹⁵ Bauer 1989:127.

¹⁶ Romero 1979:90.

¹⁷ Dalí 1965.

¹⁸ Canal 2007:163.

¹⁹ Romero 1979:253.

²⁰ Dalí 1935:15.

²¹ Romero 1979:253.

²² Hughes 1992:533.

²³ *Ibid* 1992:533.

²⁴ Cabanne 1971:32.

²⁵ Lebel 1959:77.

²⁶ Bloom 1973:5.

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