

Modern Narcissus: The Lingering Reflections of Ancient Myth in Modern Art

Silvia Loreti

Abstract

Why has myth continued to fascinate modern artists, and why the myth of Narcissus, with its modern association with narcissism? This article considers the relationship between the Narcissus myth and the lineage of modern art that runs from Symbolism to surrealism through the polymorphous prism of the Greco-Roman Pantheon to which Narcissus belongs. The article offers an interpretation of the role of mythology in modern art that moves beyond psychoanalysis to incorporate the longer span of the art-historical tradition. Addressing issues of aesthetics, gender and sexuality, the following account highlights Narcissus's double nature as an erotic myth that comprises both identity formation and intersubjectivity, as enacted in the field of representation. The myths associated with Narcissus in the history of Western art will help us reconsider his role as a powerful figure capable to activate that slippage between word and image, identity and sociability, representation and reality which was celebrated by the Symbolists and formed the centre of the surrealists' social-aesthetic project.

Et placet et video; sed quod videoque placetque, non tamen invenio.

Ovid¹

In his *Contribution to the Theory of Political Economy* (1857), Karl Marx rejected the idea that the aesthetic pleasure derived from ancient Greek art and poetry proceeded from the political values of the society that produced them. In contrast, he highlighted the importance of mythology in classical art, condemning it as childish and irreconcilable with modern society: 'all mythology subdues, controls and fashions the forces of nature in the imagination and through imagination; it disappears therefore when real control over these forces is established [in] a society demanding from the artist an imagination independent of mythology.'² In the second half of the nineteenth century, the development of disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology and psychoanalysis seemed to contradict Marx's forecast. The archaeological discoveries of the 'primitive' substratum of classical antiquity – the pre-Hellenic worlds of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey* and the Labyrinth of Knossos – provided physical evidence of myth's historical validity, while Freud reframed myth in terms of the structure of the unconscious. Thus, far from disappearing, mythology became the centre of new claims for 'control over the forces of nature,' whether temporal, spatial or instinctive. In modernist art, the capricious logic of mythic narratives and tropes reflected the contradictions and anxieties of modernity.

Of all the myths of classical antiquity, that of Narcissus is among those that modern artists and intellectuals have addressed most often and most directly. It was not the first psychological theory of narcissism, but Freud's incorporation of Narcissus into his theory of psychosexual development remains the major modern transformation of the myth.³ He identified a pre-Oedipal phase between autoeroticism and object-love as 'primary narcissism,' which persisted in adult latency as 'secondary narcissism.' He considered the first phase to be part of healthy libidinal development, but condemned the second as an aberration characteristic of attractive women and



homosexuals.⁴ Following Freud, the myth has been redirected from aesthetics towards ethics or pathology. Famously, Jacques Lacan redescribed narcissism in the more neutral terms of a universal formation of identity through the 'mirror stage.' As the foundation of the imaginary order, narcissism is, according to Lacan, a phase of the development of subjectivity during which the child takes possession of the world, while also laying the foundations of the symbolic order pertaining to intersubjectivity.⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty noted how, by shifting the focus away from sexuality, Lacan interpreted narcissism in ways that make 'full use of the legend, incorporating the components that Freud had overlooked.'⁶

This article moves beyond psychoanalytical approaches to Narcissus to consider his relationship with modern art through the myth's initial context – the Greco-Roman Pantheon. Narcissus's relation to a number of fellow mythological figures highlights his double nature as an erotic character that marries identity-formation and intersubjectivity. The myths associated with Narcissus in the history of Western art reveal his power to activate a slippage between word and image, identity and sociability, representation and reality. Symbolist culture celebrated these dynamics, which the surrealists put at the centre of their social-aesthetic project.

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In the *Metamorphoses* (finished circa 8CE), Ovid already had Narcissus hover between subjectivity and sociability.⁷ He stressed the tension between Narcissus's isolation and a range of associated figures, not least through the story's position in the poem. Narcissus appears in Book Three during a series of accounts of divine vengeance. The context is the story of the nymph Echo, who hides Jupiter's adultery from Juno by verbally misleading the goddess. Juno takes revenge so that the nymph's once-deceiving voice now only repeats the words of others. The tale of Echo's sad fate is brought to a close with a mention of her unrequited love for Narcissus. Having been rejected by the handsome youth, the nymph's frame wastes away through grief and tears, until nothing is left of her but her mimicking voice

A similar fate awaits Narcissus. Having rejected the love of not only Echo but of many youths too, he is condemned to experience the same pain that he inflicts on his suitors. Out hunting one day, Narcissus approaches a perfectly quiet pool to drink; but 'while he wished to calm his thirst, another thirst grew (*sitim sedare cupit, sitis altera crevit*, 415)' – the love for his own image. At first, Narcissus does not recognise himself in the pool, and 'loves a hope without body, thinking that what is only a shadow is a body (*spem sine corpore amat, corpus putat esse, quod umbra est*, 417).' Abashedly, he begins to court his own reflection; believing that it responded to his smiles, he stretches his arms towards it until he tragically recognises himself in the image – 'I am he!... I burn with love for myself: I arouse and endure the flames (*ipse ego sum!... uror amore mei: flammam moveoque feroque*, 464).' Engaging in a mirror play that echoes visually Echo's verbal reflections of his own words, Narcissus, exhausted, prays to be granted the same destiny as the nymph he rejected: 'If I could only escape from my own body! (*O utinam a nostro secedere corpore possem!* 468)' he cries, before fading away, bidding farewell to 'the boy I loved in vain (*frusta dilecte puer*, 500),' while his echoed words fill the air. 'Instead of his body,' Ovid wrote, the Naiads, the Dryads



and Echo 'found a flower of white petals surrounding a golden cup (*croceum pro corpore florem inveniunt foliis medium cingentibus albis*, 510).'⁷

Like this flower, the story of Narcissus is both self-contained and surrounded by several figures that make it signify in the narrative economy of Ovid and the art-historical tradition that followed from the *Metamorphoses*.⁸ In recent years, feminism has considered Narcissus's intersubjective component in relation to Echo as his female Other. I will return to Echo in a following section of this article. She is one of several figures who make a fleeting appearance in Narcissus's pool – figures who reflect mythology's original collective dimension, which is maintained within the surrealists' approach to myth, despite its fragmentation into a series of individualistic tropes in psychoanalysis.⁹

Narcissus cum Orpheus: Narcissus as the Sound of Vision

Narcissus's fortune was equalled by another tragic myth of physical transformation, that of Orpheus, which held great currency in the Symbolist circles that would have so deep an influence on the surrealists.¹⁰ Orpheus occupied much of book ten of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, as both narrator and object of narration. Orpheus's lyrics, Ovid wrote, had enchanting powers over men, animals and even gods. His poetry allowed him to enter the Underworld in an attempt to bring Eurydice, his deceased young wife, back to life. Sadly, Orpheus lost her once and for all when, impiously, he contravened the condition of his grant by looking at Eurydice before leaving the world of the dead. Thereafter, the poet sang in solitude of the loves of the gods for young men. This, together with his disdain for women, made him the leader of a homoerotic cult.

In more recent times, it is this aspect of the Orpheus myth that has attracted the most critical attention. In his reflection on the social function of same-sex desire, Herbert Marcuse, in particular, brought together Orpheus and Narcissus as a performative-contemplative principle capable of recalling the 'experience of a world that is not to be mastered and controlled but to be liberated – a freedom that will release the powers of Eros now bound in the repressed and petrified forms of man and nature.'¹¹ Marcuse considered the two homoerotic myths as the expression of a new sociability based on the unitary character of primary narcissism. 'Narcissism,' he wrote, 'may contain the germ of a different reality principle: the libidinal cathexis of the ego (one's own body) may become the source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world – transforming this world into a new mode of being.'¹² Narcissus's status is raised by his association with Orpheus: the mythological-artistic tradition and psychoanalysis are reconciled in an attempt to overcome the equation of the myth with narcissism.

Within Symbolism, however, it was the 'post-erotic' moment of Orpheus's story that exercised the strongest fascination.¹³ Rather than dwell on Orpheus's living body, artists chose to represent Orpheus's corpse, as described in book eleven of the *Metamorphoses*. Orpheus's death, unlike the quiet fading away of Narcissus who was assisted by Echo alone, happened violently at the hand of a group of inebriated women. However, another group of women, only this time pious, cried upon the dead poet's body as they had done on Narcissus's. It was this mournful moment that



the Symbolists celebrated. They depicted the death of Orpheus in anti-anecdotal scenes in which the poet's severed head and lyre lie on the beach of Lesbos, or are mourned by the nymphs during their journey to the sea along the river Hebrus.

The Symbolists' approach to the myths of Narcissus and Orpheus can be considered to be the product of a modernist emphasis on vision and a will to merge representation and perception in order to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Symbolism aimed, in Gustave Kahn's famous definition, 'to objectify the subjective (the externalisation of the Idea), instead of subjectifying the objective (nature seen through a temperament).'¹⁴ This reversal of the Cartesian *cogito* as revived by French Naturalism finds a parallel in Narcissus and Orpheus's transfiguration from dramatic narratives into immobile icons. Furthermore, their stories summon up that concurrence of the senses which the Symbolists adopted from Charles Baudelaire: 'Like long echoes that mingle in the distance / In a profound tenebrous unity, / Vast as the night and vast as light, / Perfumes, sounds, and colours respond to one another' ('*Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent / Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité, / Vaste comme la nuit et comme la claret, / Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent*').¹⁵ The narrative of Narcissus *cum* Orpheus contains complex correspondences between the senses of sight and hearing. Narcissus in the pool mirrors Echo's frustrated pursuit; appropriately, the nymph's voice echoes Narcissus's unreturned words; Orpheus's lyric poetry, in turn, resonates with the world it describes, but his song is drowned-out by the Maenads' ferocious noise, and his vision of eternity makes the immediate reality of his beloved disappear. In his *Orphée* (1865), Gustave Moreau depicted the mythical poet through these sensorial correspondences. Representing an unrequited visual dialogue between the dead poet and the contemplative nymph, Moreau associated Orpheus's lyre and closed-eyes to conjure up the resounding, death-defying powers of poetry. Scenes of contemplation over Orpheus's head highlight the possibility for sight to take on the indeterminacy of words.¹⁶ Here, the painter emphasised the extra-corporeal dimension of the myth's sensuality by drawing on both sacred and profane iconography to convey its syncretic and androgyne character.¹⁷

The myth of Narcissus is structurally simpler than that of Orpheus, and has proven historically better suited for visual representation. Considering Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (ca. 1597), for instance, Stephen Bann has explored the development of an alternative ancient tradition of the Narcissus myth to the narrative recounted by Ovid: Philostratus's detailed description (*ekphrasis*) of a lost painting that depicted Narcissus at the pool.¹⁸ Even more so than Ovid's drama, the pictorial version of the myth emphasised the deceitful character of the erotic gaze. Arguably, it is the inherent tension between visual clarity and sensorial suggestion as conveyed through painting that attracted the Symbolists to the Narcissus myth. This seems evident, in particular, in John William Waterhouse's *Echo and Narcissus* (1903).¹⁹ By way of mirroring correspondences, Waterhouse represented the underlying sexual frustration of the story through visual rather than physical relations. Waterhouse distilled the Ovidian narrative in a system of visual echoes that centre on Narcissus's reflection, offering a very apt example of the ways in which the myth highlights a concern for the self-reflexivity of vision that characterises the early phases of modernism.



Vision, when granted the nuanced, expressive possibilities of poetry, allowed the Symbolists to offer a new treatment of age-old narratives and to present themselves as at once literary and modernist. The surrealists were quick to take their lead. In the work of Constantin Brancusi, which stands, generationally and aesthetically, between Symbolism and surrealism, Narcissus and the severed head of Orpheus appear to be coupled with yet another myth – that of Prometheus. To be sure, while a lost bust of *Narcissus* and a plaster model for a *Narcissus Fountain* are documented in Brancusi's work of the 1910s and he produced several versions of *Prometheus* during the same period, he made no known sculpture of Orpheus. However, a photograph that Brancusi took of his studio in the 1920s shows the plaster of the *Narcissus Fountain* 'overlooking' two reclining heads that recall Symbolist depictions of Orpheus's severed head [Fig. 1]. Moreover, the two heads were to be the models for *The First Cry* and *The First Step* – two sculptures that, in conjuring up vision, sound, and action within the same figure, perform similar effects to the Orpheus myth.



Fig. 1: Constantin Brancusi, Photograph of the sculptor's studio in rue Ronsin, Paris, showing the lost cast for *The Narcissus Fountain* (1920s-1930s), Gelatin silver print, 13½ x 8½ in., matted and framed, ca. 1922-23. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2011.



Anna Chave has drawn on the reflective character of Brancusi's ultra-polished, ovoidal and self-enclosed heads to sketch a reading of the sculptor's work which emphasises its narcissistic qualities in relation to issues of gender.²⁰ In the case of the *Narcissus* bust, however, its later evolution into the bronzes of *Mademoiselle Pogany* and *Princess X* was not preceded by a cast of either bust or fountain in bronze. Whether this was a conscious choice on Brancusi's part, or simply a paradoxical coincidence, is unclear. What matters here is neither the female development of *Narcissus* (a point to which we will return in a following section), nor the narcissistic function of the medium, but the primacy that the artist seems to assign to what could be called 'speaking vision' in determining the identity of his work.

Friedrich Teja Bach has called Brancusi's photographic depictions of his sculptures 'programmatically without words.'²¹ Around the time Brancusi took this particular photograph, the surrealist Roger Vitrac commented on the limits of language in expressing the 'bewitchment' (*envoûtement*) derived from the spiritual unity conveyed by the mutilated and decapitated bodies scattered around the sculptor's atelier:

... contrary to certain works whose justification requires an acquired knowledge, the work of Brancusi imposes itself to the highest faculties without the intermediary of intelligence. He has thrown a great bridge between the senses and the mind, which we cross at the speed of lightning when attention allows us to acquire the passive attitude of the Sphinx.²²

Alexandra Parigoris has read Vitrac's insights as superseding the Freudian interpretation of Brancusi's fragments in terms of castration anxiety and the disavowal of sexual difference at the centre of Chave's interpretation.²³ Invoking Rainer-Maria Rilke's 'Archaic Torso of Apollo,' Parigoris has called attention to the meaning of the 'fragment' as anti-anecdotal and related to the 'phenomenology of vision' within modernist culture. Further evidence for this interpretation is offered by Paul Valéry's 'Fragments of Narcissus,' which was composed around the time that Brancusi took this photograph, and which constitutes one of the great moments of *Narcissus's* Symbolist resurrection. Valéry's second long poem dedicated to *Narcissus* – one of three in the poet's life-long engagement with the myth – presents the figure in frustrated opposition to the vision *en abîme* offered by its own image: 'Everything brings me back and enchains me to the luminous flesh / That divides me from the vertiginous peace of the waters' (*Tout m'appelle et m'enchaîne à la chair lumineuse / Que m'oppose des eaux la paix vertigineuse*).²⁴ The shape of Brancusi's *Narcissus Fountain* conveys this circular tension between self and universe, identity and representation. Via the enclosed forms of solitary figures such as Rodin's *Thinker* (originally titled *The Poet*, 1902) and Maillol's *Mediterranean Woman* (originally called *Latin Thought*, 1905-23), with their Orphic references, Brancusi's *Narcissus* seems to quote the circularity at play in another unrealised project for a *Narcissus* fountain: the *Fountain of the Kneeling Youth*, or *Narcissus in Five Reflections* (1900) by the Belgian Symbolist Georges Minne, a circle of five replicas of Minne's own *Kneeling Youth*.²⁵

Rosalind Krauss's argument about the Bretonian celebration of the 'perceptual automatism of vision' is particularly pertinent to our experience of Brancusi's fragmented sculptures seen



through the camera.²⁶ The *Narcissus Fountain* and fellow statues collapse the modernist myth of medium specificity to reassert the wholeness of vision, afforded by the eye in its 'savage state.' This state, to go back to Freud via Breton, eliminates contradiction to replace 'external reality by a psychic reality obeying the pleasure principle alone.'²⁷ The sensual vision celebrated by the Symbolists, carved and photographed by Brancusi and theorised by the surrealists, harmonises Narcissus (and Orpheus) with the Marcusean possibility of a return to a state of primary narcissism in which the self can take possession of its surrounding world. This integration of aesthetic dream with vital instincts finds a mirror in what Breton called 'the surreality that resolves the dualism of perception and representation.'²⁸ Jean Cocteau, a figure associated with surrealism contrary to the movement's wishes, drew heavily on the Symbolists' association of Orpheus with Narcissus, giving the two myths a new, 'Marcusean' identity by conflating them with his own personal mythology.²⁹ In Cocteau's personal mythology, the resurfacing of Narcissus *cum* Orpheus reflects the evolution of myth from aesthetic motif to psychic trope that runs from Symbolism to surrealism.

Narcissus *cum* Tiresias: Narcissus as the Smell of Sex

Intervening, like Brancusi, between Symbolism and surrealism, and pre-dating Cocteau's engagement with myths, the poet Guillaume Apollinaire tried to embody the correspondence of word and image in text. He presented himself as the 'Rotten Sorcerer' (*L'Enchanteur pourrisant*) – the title of one of the poems in which he identified with Orpheus,³⁰ while proclaiming 'I am a painter too' (*Et moi aussi je suis peintre*), a statement that served as the initial title of *Calligrammes*, his posthumously published collection of poems.³¹

Apollinaire rose to mythical status during World War I. Convalescing from a head trepanation, the result of a wound gained heroically on the battlefields, in 1916 he became, like Narcissus, the object of a prophecy through a 'premonitory' portrait that Giorgio de Chirico had painted before the war. The *Premonitory Portrait of Guillaume* (1914), which was originally made to illustrate the cover of *Calligrammes*, would later enhance de Chirico's own mythical aura amongst the young surrealists.³² Before Apollinaire's profile – which appears in the shape of a shooting target, complete with hole in the head – the painting depicts an ancient statue with blacked-out sunglasses. The poet's masculine jaw line contrasts with the androgynous features of the sculpture. While the statue's truncated bust thwarts attempts at gender identification, the glasses and the poetic licence taken with the hairstyle also prevents ready associations with a specific ancient type. The statue in the foreground conflates the Venus of Milo and the Apollo Belvedere in a representation of a feminised Orpheus, whose androgynous symbolism is manifested in the conch and fish appearing in the painting.³³ By superimposing female and male iconographies in this 'portrait in absence,' de Chirico presents Apollinaire's sexual identity as unstable, and links the poet's 'portraits' and 'blind vision' to the Freudian uncanny – the male subject's fear of castration when confronted by his feminine side.³⁴

De Chirico's 'premonitory' portrait of Apollinaire leads us to discuss Narcissus's formal indeterminacy in relation to issues of psycho-sexual identity. The problematic status of masculinity



post-World War I was the subject of a drama that Apollinaire wrote after recovering from his head wound. *Tiresias's Breasts* (*Les Mamelles de Tiresias*; premiered in Paris in June 1917), centred on the figure of Thérèse, a woman who decides to transform into a male soldier, leaving her husband with the responsibility of childbearing. The tale illustrated both Apollinaire's concern with 'the problem of repopulation' in war-ridden France and his critical view of official solutions. The character of Thérèse/Tirésias was partly based on the Marquis de Sade's emancipated Thérèse, who refused to bear children to her lover, and partly on the mythological seer who, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, proclaims that Narcissus will live 'as long as he does not know himself' ('*si se non noverit*,' 3. 348).³⁵

In a short passage immediately preceding the story of Echo and Narcissus, Ovid recounted the destiny of Tiresias, a man who, after separating two mating snakes, metamorphosed into a woman for seven years, after which time, striking the two snakes again, (s)he went back to being a man. In light of this experience, Jupiter and Juno once summoned him to arbitrate their disagreement about which gender takes most pleasure out of love. Tiresias's pronouncement in favour of Jupiter triggered Juno's characteristic jealousy; the resentful goddess struck Tiresias blind but Jupiter compensated him with inner vision. In this way Tiresias went on to become the most respected prophet of classical antiquity, the one who predicted Oedipus's bleak destiny and Ulysses's glorious death.

Unlike the original Tiresias, Apollinaire's protagonist is a woman who, after her venture into masculinity, goes back to her original gender role. In the process, however, her husband undergoes an irreversible metamorphosis. As noticed by Peter Reed, while the end of the drama shows Apollinaire's incapacity to reconcile 'the maternal and female aspirations of women' in the post-war years, his celebration of the psychic and social benefits of androgyny addresses the possibility of new social and sexual identities for men.³⁶ Conferring the role of the hero on Thérèse's feminised husband, Apollinaire attempted to reframe masculinity outside the conventional association of sex with gender.

The fact that *Tiresias's Breasts* was one of the first instances in which the word 'surrealism' was used links the drama's androgynous aesthetic and social concerns with the centrality of sex in the revolutionary aspirations of the emergent surrealist movement.³⁷ This point is reinforced by the fact that another instance in which Apollinaire used the word 'surrealism' was the preface of the ballet *Parade* (also 1917). Although Apollinaire's investment in the ballet celebrated the aesthetic possibilities that this art presented for the interaction between bourgeois and popular cultures by collapsing medium specificity and the distinction of 'high' and 'low,' to 'parade,' as highlighted by Lacan, is a behavioural strategy that relates to a burlesque display of sexual identity.³⁸ *Tirésias's Breasts* and Apollinaire's theatrical work lead us to consider the role of gender as metamorphosis and 'parade' within surrealism, the first modern art movement to place the exploration of gender at the heart of its identity.³⁹

A parade of sexual identity with narcissistic undertones is strongly present in the work of two artists who were closely associated with surrealism: Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray. Their play



with Rose Sélavy, Duchamp's female transvestite alter-ego photographed by Man Ray, destabilises notions of authenticity, both in terms of aesthetics and gender. A case in point is Rose's 1921 appearance as the face, and the name, behind the perfume *Belle Haleine – Eau de Voilette* (*Beautiful Breath – Veil Water*) [Fig. 2].⁴⁰



Fig. 2: Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, *Belle Haleine: Eau de voilette (Beautiful Breath: Veiled Water)*, 1921, Modified readymade. © Succession Marcel Duchamp / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2011.

Dawn Ades has drawn attention to Duchamp's destabilisation of patriarchal notions of gender in the context of political, aesthetic and psychological debates happening in France and the United States in the 1920s, and Amelia Jones has investigated in depth the possibility of reading Rose Sélavy's through gender theory.⁴¹ However, as shown by Michal Taylor in an insightful study of the alter



ego's social 'identity,' the extent to which Rose Sélavy was meant to act as a critique of gender stereotypes remains open to debate.⁴² In ways similar to Apollinaire's *Breasts*, Duchamp and Man Ray's Rose seems to address more the inter-war crisis of masculinity than offer a critique of stable gender identity. Duchamp's performance of Rose Sélavy and her appearance in a spoofing commercial photograph for a fictional scent seems to rehearse both disavowal and recognition of the artist's own identity with narcissistic undertones.⁴³ As noted by Ades, Duchamp's portraits in drag present 'poses and guises that imply the presence of a mirror,' which act as extensions of the pool of Narcissus.⁴⁴ The use of photographic portraiture emphasised the slippage between self-absorption and the communicative possibilities of narcissism.

The fictional and fictionally gendered Rose represent a split in subjectivity that references Duchamp's public persona as the 'inventor' of the ready-made, confectioning his very identity through the adoption of ready-made selves – the *cocotte* and her social evolution, the *femme fatale*. The narcissistic play between 'authentic' and 'fake' identity is evident in the five reflections of Duchamp sitting in front of a hinged-mirror setup, in a self-portrait taken in a New York photo shop.⁴⁵ Similar to Georges Minne's replication of *The Kneeling Youth* in the fountain *Narcissus in Five Reflections*, Duchamp, the artist behind Richard Mutt – the famously fictitious author of *Fountain* (1917) – reproduced his own self in mirrored reflections that blurred the boundaries between notions of the 'original' and the 'copy.' The use of circular reflections to question the distinction between truth and falsehood situates this portrait and the contemporary appearance of Rose as *eau* within the tradition of the Narcissus fountain, a site of illusion that originated in antiquity with Pausanias – to which I will return later – and was revived in medieval France by the *Roman de la Rose* (c. 1275).

Yet, the female masquerade implied by *Belle Haleine* adds a sexual dimension to Duchamp's play with his own identity, transforming the male artist's serious reflection into a risibly seductive female Other.⁴⁶ In this ironic play on identity, Belle Haleine performs a role similar to Narcissus's misrecognition of his own reflection: at once an enquiry into (male) identity and a seductive parade for a mysterious Other that mirrors the self. The (perhaps unconscious) references to Narcissus's reflections in the assisted readymade are numerous: Rose's embodiment of the *eau* ('perfume') *Belle Haleine* and her encoding of the verb *arroser* ('to water') reinforces both the connection of photography with the pool of Narcissus and the self-reflexive beauty characteristic of Narcissus. The neuter-gendered French name Narcisse and the female-gendered French noun for flower (*fleur*) link the commercial beauty queen Rose and her/his (*eau de*) *voilette/violette* ('veiled/violet water') with Narcissus's transformation into the homonymous flower. Andrea Weiss has noted the long association of the colour violet with the history of lesbianism, which goes back to Sappho's poetry and re-emerged in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.⁴⁷ Weiss also noted that violets are related to pansies (narcissi) in the Viola family. Interestingly, violets and narcissi appear as interchangeable in Pausanias's version of the myth, in which Narcissus's reflection is simultaneously male and female. Pausanias's *Description of Greece*, a travel guide to



the ancient sites of Greece written in prose a century after Ovid, was one of the best-known sources of the Narcissus myth in the early-twentieth century.⁴⁸

The Symbolists had already extrapolated the link between Narcissus and the flower that stemmed from him. The correspondence of word, image and smell pervades representations of Narcissus at the turn of the twentieth century: 'Narcissus ... this very name is a tender perfume (*Narcisse ... ce nom même est un tendre parfum*),' Valéry remarks in 'Narcissus Speaks,' whose publication predates the appearance of Rose as 'beautiful breath' by just one year.⁴⁹ Yet, unlike the Symbolist Narcissus, Duchamp and Man Ray's Rose brings the senses together in anti-idealist ways. It turns Narcissus's enamoured vision of himself into the 'narcotic' scent of his cadaverous, vegetable metamorphosis, glossed over by ancient and modern poets. Rose's 'veil water' overturns the aesthetic essentialism of commercially confectioned ideas of beauty by unveiling the emanation ('breath') of an ambiguous sexuality. The ambiguity of her/his beauty is reinforced through the connection between Belle Haleine and *la belle Héléne* (Beautiful Helen) – a reference to Helen of Troy, the famous ancient beauty who acted as the prize in an ill-fated contest.

Via Helen, Narcissus's obsession with his own beautiful image (narcissism) is finally, irrevocably linked with the domain of femininity.⁵⁰ In the mid-1930s Man Ray and Rose Sélavy would respectively sign the photographs and text of a book, *Men Before the Mirror* (1934), in which, we are told, narcissism is manifested in the mirror images of men, who are 'separated from reality and alone with their dearest vice, vanity,' and trying 'to take themselves in as a whole,' emulating the time-honoured tradition of depicting women at their toilet.⁵¹ Effectively, the female image imprisoned within the mirror of photography in *Belle Haleine* links Narcissus with his art-historical avatars – images of women looking at themselves in mirrors and mirroring male desire. The association between woman and mirror leads us to consider the reappearance of Narcissus in modern art in relation to the art-historical tradition of female representation: the category of images to which Rose Sélavy is the modern, photographic and openly simulacral heir.

Narcissus cum Venus et Echo: Narcissus as Woman between *Vanitas* and Cosmic Creativity

The 'female Narcissus' appears in antiquity in Pausanias. The author, incredulous that a man 'old enough to fall in love' could mistake a reflection for a real person, gave a heuristic, if admittedly 'less popular' explanation, as the author says, of the Narcissus story by introducing the character of Narcissus's twin sister. When she died, Narcissus consoled himself by looking at his own reflection, pretending that his gaze fell instead on his sister. This 'female Narcissus' remerged at the turn of the twentieth century, when Freud put forward his theory of 'mature' (second-stage) narcissism as a specifically feminine condition.⁵² The perversely narcissistic woman, revelling in the powers of her own image, appears as the embodiment of vice in Léon Baskst's drawing of a bacchante for the programme of the 1911 Ballets Russes's production *Narcisse* [Fig. 3].





Fig. 3: Léon Bakst, *Bacchante*, Costume Design for the ballet *Narcisse*, 1911, Drawing, Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

As in many early productions by the Ballets Russes, the production transfigured classical antiquity through the image of a lavishly sensual Orient. Narcissus, the myth of frustrated erotic vision, was especially apt to stage the drama of modernity's unrequited love for the Other – be it the ancient past, the 'exotic,' or the concupiscent woman. In Bakst's drawing, the bacchante appears to mimic the final act of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*, in which the main character performs autoeroticism with a scarf. Similar to the faun, this 'female Narcissus' is sexually autonomous. Just as the bacchante in *Narcisse* mirrors the male protagonist of the ballet, the narcissistic woman is herself a mirror, a mere imitator incapable of independent pursuits. She is Echo as represented by Waterhouse, her body on display, her gaze turned towards Narcissus; and she is the many women whose voices, as Naomi Segal has shown, acted as ciphers for male authors' desires in nineteenth-century novels.⁵³

Woman as a reflection of artistic creativity is an underlying theme within surrealism.⁵⁴ She can be found, with direct reference to Narcissus, in the work of Max Ernst. In the still-lives of Echo that Ernst painted between 1936-37, the nymph finally possesses Narcissus by feminising the landscape of plants and flowers that she inhabits, linking together her own immaterial presence in nature, Narcissus's dissolution of identity in the pool and his floral metamorphosis.⁵⁵ In *The Attirement of the Bride* (1939-40), Ernst drew upon his own queering of the Narcissus myth by



transferring the mirroring woman into the domain of culture.⁵⁶ Domesticating the female hybrid within a mirror-enclosed interior – one that occupies a middle ground between Jan van Eyck's Arnolfini's room, de Chirico's irrational architectures, Moreau's theatrical scenes and Alberto Savinio's birds/men paintings – Ernst created an image of femininity both alluring and repulsive, in the mode of medieval and Renaissance allegories of *vanitas*. His painting technique, bringing together decalcomania – which Werner Spies calls an 'intersubjective method' – and pictorial naturalism, results in an image that is both 'natural' and carefully constructed, referencing dominant male constructions of gendered identity and gender's simulacral nature concurrently.⁵⁷ 'In the measure of my activity (passivity),' Ernst wrote in 1948, 'I contributed to the general overthrow of those values which, in our time, have been considered the most established and secure.'⁵⁸

David Hopkins has analysed Ernst's *Bride* in depth as an image that connects Catholic, Rosicrucian and Masonic androgynous symbolism to reflect the artist's personal and collective 'submerged masculinist fantasies.'⁵⁹ She emphasises, through formal and cultural hybridity, the mythological and alchemical union of the opposites as a sign of both deadly sin and fertile creativity. These elements in the representation of femininity – at once personal and collective, sacred and profane – are part of the dynamics of seduction at play within the pictorial tradition that associate Narcissus, woman and painting. This is not without precedent. In the Renaissance, Leon Battista Alberti identified Narcissus with the inventor of painting: 'what is a painting,' he asked, 'but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?'⁶⁰ Alberti linked the painter's labour and the viewer's enjoyment with the narcissistic pursuit of a self-reflexive love object. There is evidence of this in numerous works of art. For instance, Tintoretto's *Susanna and the Elders* (1560-2) can be considered to be a narcissistic representation of a female subject, albeit one that bridges pagan and Judeo-Christian traditions. In the painting, the Biblical heroine is transformed into a reversed Narcissus more aware of herself than of her suitors.⁶¹ The two elders, especially the one in the foreground, perform, for their part, the role of Echo, merging with the landscape in a mimetic strategy of ambush.

This mimetic strategy underlines not only the sexual voyeurism of paintings of mirroring women but also the material association of (oil) painting with the pool of Narcissus that served the Renaissance *paragone* ('competition') of painting and sculpture. *Paragone* paintings aimed to demonstrate the medium's truthfulness to nature. They depicted varied subjects, from armoured men to images of Venus and allegories of *vanitas*, to narrative scenes or portraits. The origin of the practice, however, seemed to lie in a lost painting by Giorgione representing a male figure within a landscape, next to a river, reflected three times from three different points of view by the water and two mirrors.⁶² Diane Bodart, who interprets the image as Narcissus, has recently drawn attention to a description of the painting by Gian Paolo Lomazzo (*L'idea del tempio della pittura*, 1590) in which the naked body of the male figure is transformed into a female subject as the symbol for painting.⁶³

Manifestations of Narcissus as his female Others, Venus and/or Echo, have transformed the *paragone* into a metaphor for representation more broadly. Implicating a slippage between reality and its pictorial translation, painting becomes a field of enquiry for the relationship between



identity and imagination, as well as between gender and sexuality. In *The Mirror of Venus* (1898), Edward Burne-Jones multiplied Giorgione's solitary soldier into a row of women contemplating themselves and one another, thus representing woman as, at once, Venus, Narcissus and Echo.⁶⁴ The Pre-Raphaelite painter, who based the figure of Venus on Botticelli, was certainly aware of Renaissance theories of painting and, by assimilating Venus to Narcissus, he equated her with Alberti's idea of painting as the idealised reflection of nature.

Another neo-Platonic theory, Marsilio Ficino's 'double Venus,' is often quoted in Renaissance depictions of Venus at her toilet. Ficino distinguished between a 'celestial' Venus, who arouses love in her viewers through contemplation of her beauty alone, and a 'vulgar' Venus, who is earthly, sensual and associated with sexuality.⁶⁵ The association between this 'double Venus' and Narcissus seems evident in Picasso's *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932). At a time of close association with the surrealists and only a couple of years after having illustrated Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Picasso distilled in this portrait of Marie-Thérèse Walter – his young, and then pregnant mistress – an image of metamorphic identity, both formal and gendered, worthy of Apollinaire's Tirésias [Fig. 4].



Fig. 4: Pablo Picasso, *Girl Before a Mirror*, 1932, Oil on canvas, 162.3 x 130.2 cm, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © Succession Picasso / ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2011.



Transforming the likeness of his model into a mirror of his own artistic identity at a time of increasingly stylistic polymorphy in his painting practice, Picasso brought together the two Renaissance Venuses and Freud's Narcissus. Carl-Gustav Jung read images such as *Girl Before a Mirror* as a sign of the artist's schizophrenia.⁶⁶ Yet, the dualistic representation of the two Venuses within the same figure resolves the contradictions between identity and representation by presenting both as part of a vital metamorphosis that moves from adolescent narcissism to life-giving eroticism and old age *vanitas*.⁶⁷ Playing Medusa – that other great myth of vision – to Picasso's Persean ambitions at a time when he was juggling not only different styles but different media too, *Girl Before a Mirror* is an image that reflects the artist's ambivalent identity, as much as personal and collective ideas of femininity. In conversation with Christian Zervos in the 1930s, Picasso said: 'the beauties of the Parthenon, Venus, Nymphs and Narcissus are all lies,' demonstrating his critical approach to established notions of representation.⁶⁸ Arguably, however, it was precisely the value of representation as lie, its potential to reveal the elusive character of truth, that interested him:

Do you think I'm interested in the fact that this painting represents two characters? These characters existed, yet [in the painting] they no longer exist. The vision of them gave me an initial emotion, then, little by little, their real presence has lost focus, until they disappeared, or rather, they were transformed into a series of questions.⁶⁹

The emotion and questions of which Picasso speaks are the (male) artist's own equivocations and dilemmas, which shift the focus from woman as vain Venus, fully conscious of herself, to Narcissus's naïve love for the self. Venus is an immortal goddess, but Narcissus shares Echo's transient destiny and his representation, like that of the nymph, is destined to lose itself in the world.

Rereading Freud's association of narcissism with woman and its Oedipal corollary of woman as lack, Sarah Kofman pointed out that 'men's fascination with this eternal feminine [the narcissistic type] is nothing but fascination with their own double.'⁷⁰ Kofman substituted the penis-envy attributed by Freud to women with the hypothesis of man's envy of woman's preservation of 'that original narcissism for which he is eternally nostalgic.'⁷¹ The implication of this insight is the possibility that narcissism acts as a ground on which subject and object are fused together, their identities blurred, in what Kristeva has identified as Narcissus's transformation of 'Platonic ideality into speculative internality.'⁷² Thus the female Narcissus oscillates between erotic idealisation and a questioning of identity through representation. She has the potential to displace Narcissus's obsessive fixation with the self by repositioning the myth as a fertile ground for identity creation.

This version of the myth was readily taken up by surrealist women artists.⁷³ The possibilities which the female Narcissus offers for artistic play and identity creation are perhaps asserted most strongly in the series of collaborative (self) portraits made by Claude Cahun and her step-sister/lover Marcel Moore – two women artists who reversed Duchamp and Man Ray's play with transvestism. As noticed by Tirza Latimer and Jennifer Shaw, Cahun and Moore turn the tradition of women at their toilette and the popular association of narcissism with femininity on their heads, in



order to express new possibilities for female creativity and sexuality.⁷⁴ Ades has drawn attention to the fact that Cahun – who misread the death of Narcissus as the consequence of his self-love, rather than of self-recognition in the object of his own affection – refused to believe that Narcissus truly loved himself, opening up narcissism to the possibility of a continuous, fruitful process of identity renewal.⁷⁵

Once again, the process is not without precedent. In the seventeenth century, Diego Velázquez created the painting that perhaps conjures up narcissism and eroticism most directly: *The Toilet of Venus* (or *Rokeby Venus*, ca. 1647-51).⁷⁶ Velázquez's goddess, unlike Narcissus, knows herself, and her viewer, all too well. However, she, like Narcissus, is a figure of both flesh and vision, of lived sensuality as much as of aesthetic pleasure. According to Peter Cherry, Velázquez most certainly knew Ficino's theory of the double Venus, and employed it to blur the identity of his '*muger desnuda*' ('naked woman').⁷⁷ In this way, the painter's erotic image stood ambiguously between eroticism and aestheticism in order to evade the strictures of the Inquisition, which had officially banned the genre of the nude.⁷⁸ Velázquez's Venus is ambiguous in another respect too: her back-view. Referencing the ancient sculptural type of the Aphrodite *Kallipygos* ('with beautiful buttocks'), this viewpoint presents an idealised sexuality, that might have appealed to viewers regardless of their sexual orientation.⁷⁹

Back-views of naked, reclining statues are traditionally linked with the Hermaphrodite, a type that literally embodies sexual ambiguity [Fig. 5].⁸⁰ This leads us to consider Narcissus's relation to the myth of Hermaphroditos, whose metamorphosis into a bi-sexed creature indissolubly links beauty and sexuality.



Fig. 5: *Hermaphroditos Asleep* (Borghese Hermaphrodite), Roman work of the Imperial period (second century AD), Discovered near the Baths of Diocletian in Rome in 1608, Marble sculpture, L. 1.69 m; D. 0.89 m, Formerly in the Borghese Collection, Purchased by the Louvre in 1807, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities.



Narcissus cum Hermaphroditos: Narcissus as Erotic-Aesthetic Beauty

The story of Hermaphroditos, the handsome son of Mercury and Venus (Hermes and Aphrodite), mirrors that of Narcissus in a number of ways. In *The Metamorphoses*, Hermaphroditos partakes of the heuristic character that Pausania attributed to Narcissus as a myth explaining the origins of a legendary fountain.⁸¹ According to Ovid, the fountain of Salmacis in Caria rendered all who bathed therein effeminate, because it was there that the handsome Hermaphroditos, having resisted the love of the nymph Salmacis, was bound with her, forming one single being. His identity merged with Salmacis's, Hermaphroditos became both male and female. Hermaphroditos's metamorphosis was the result of the gods' punishment for a crime similar to the one that caused Narcissus's infatuation with his own self. Yet, unlike the dramatic tension between vision and eroticism that characterises the myth of Narcissus, Hermaphroditos's life depended on a total, harmonious fusion of object and subject of amorous contemplation. Michel Foucault was to apply this characteristic of Hermaphroditos to the clinical case of the real nineteenth-century hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, who died following a surgical operation through which (s)he was made to conform to her juridical status as woman.⁸²

The clinical condition of hermaphroditism, considered monstrous in reality, has been sublimated, aesthetically, into the unique beauty of the mythical Hermaphroditos and the art-historical type that derives from him: the Hermaphrodite. In turn, the Hermaphrodite embodies what Whitney Davis has called, in relation to the post-Kantian aesthetic tradition, 'queer beauty' – 'reified or perfected canonical beauty relocated in its corporeal and communal contexts of affective, cognitive, and social significance.'⁸³ The confluence, in the image of the Hermaphrodite, of an idealist contemplation of the world and its antithesis opens up the possibility of a 'queering' of art-history in which, as Davis has noted, 'idealisation [is] no less queer than camp inflections or outlaw representations.'⁸⁴

Idealisation is the opposite pole of narcissism in Kristeva's psychic tale of love.⁸⁵ Yet, she recognises that both idealisation and narcissism come closely together in the story of Narcissus, in which the figure is enamoured with a *mirage* of the self.⁸⁶ These two poles – the ideal and the narcissistic – have the potential to bring about what Davis calls the 'aesthetogenesis of sex,' that process of sexualizing aesthetics while aestheticizing sex, which started in modern Western aesthetics with Kant and Winckelmann, and was systematised by Freud in his model of sexuality.⁸⁷ In this process, the normatively communal (Kantian) concept of self-reflexive beauty – which could be assimilated to a narcissistic entity – is queered by desire. Failing to explain homosexual attraction as Freud had wished, narcissism, Davis argues, comes instead to represent 'the aesthetic and cultural *forms*' of the doctor's high-profile homosexual patients, who constructed their public personas as decadent aesthetes in order to achieve a 'togetherness' otherwise denied to them.⁸⁸ The sexual, lived and social character of this 'narcissistic' contemplation of beauty results, paradoxically, in the opposite of narcissistic solipsism.



As a notion that bridges the aesthetic and the social, queer beauty is contiguous with the concept of 'convulsive beauty' that lay at the heart of surrealism's project to pervert established aesthetical norms in order to demolish traditional psychic and behavioural patterns.⁸⁹ André Breton's concept of convulsive beauty can be thought of as the avant-garde development of 'queer beauty,' linking cosmic idealism and narcissism, both convulsive and queer beauty subvert, or have the potential to subvert, the domain of aesthetics by destabilising the cultural order. In different ways but with similar effects, queer and convulsive beauties turn Narcissus's hypnotic contemplation of the Other into a vertiginous drowning in the depths of the self. For Hal Foster, the link between convulsive beauty and the Kantian idea of the sublime – as the climax of beauty – is based on their being 'negative pleasures,' both involving 'the inextricability of death and desire.'⁹⁰ The sublime beauty of the sleeping Hermaphrodite, which crystallises the narrative entities of Hermaphroditos and Salmacis into one static form, seems to indicate that supreme beauty is linked to a suspension of sexuality into lifeless objects, a movement that also brings to a close the story of Narcissus and underlines the entire structure of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Foster connects this movement – the narcissistic creation of a unitary subject – with Bretonian surrealism and proto-fascism.⁹¹ However, the aestheticisation of sex in the pursuit of an unbroken subject which is implied by Narcissus *cum* Hermaphroditos offers the opportunity to 'convulse' traditional beauty into critical forms of aesthetic experience that were vehemently advocated by the surrealists under the intersubjective principle of Eros.⁹²

Narcissus Secum: the Narcissistic Condition of Surrealism

Nadja (1928), Breton's first novel dedicated to love, opens with a hunter, whose prey, similar to that of the hunter Narcissus, turns out to be the hunter himself – or a 'haunted self' to quote the title of David Lomas's book on the splitting and undoing of the self within surrealism.⁹³ *Nadja* ends with Breton continuing his amorous and intellectual quest. This incompleteness is the result of an elusive concept of beauty, in which earthly and spiritual pursuits can no longer uphold the distinction bestowed upon them by an incorporeal contemplation of beauty – 'Beauty will be CONVULSIVE or it will not be (*La beauté sera CONVULSIVE ou ne sera pas*).'⁹⁴ Breton further elaborated the concept of convulsive beauty in an article he published in *Minotaure* and incorporated subsequently in *Mad Love (L'Amour fou, 1937)*.⁹⁵ There, Breton describes convulsive beauty as 'veiled erotic, fix-explosive and magic-circumstantial,' and illustrates the concept through the erotic encounter between a row of men and women, concluding that 'the one in question finally recognizes only himself.' Breton thus put forward a principle of identity between subject and object of representation that translates aesthetically in a concept of 'beauty considered exclusively with passionate aims in mind.'⁹⁶ This is convulsive beauty, the activating device of the surrealist marvellous. This '*reality as representation*,' as Krauss has called it, depends on a subjective encounter with the world in which the eye cannot be separated from the other senses.⁹⁷ This way of representing consists of a 'subjectification of the objective world' that extends and reverses Kahn's definition of Symbolism as



the 'objectification of the subjective.' At the same time, it transforms the egotistical Freudian concept of narcissistic self-obsession into a narrative of cosmic exchange between the self and the world.⁹⁸

The year of the publication of *L'Amour fou*, a photcollaged self-portrait of Breton, previously bound inside Paul Eluard's copy of *The Immaculate Conception* (1930) and later published in the *Dictionnaire abrégé du Surréalisme* (1938), was re-photographed and subtitled '*Écriture automatique* (Automatic Writing)' [Fig. 6].⁹⁹



Fig. 6: André Breton, *Le Verre d'eau dans la tempête* (also known as *L'Écriture automatique*), ca. 1930, photomontage, 26.5 x 23.5 cm, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Gift of Vera and Arturo Schwarz ©ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London, 2011.



Beside Breton – or rather, beside the image of his head superimposed on the body of a scientist – the collage shows a Hollywood movie actress who spies cunningly on the surrealist leader from behind bars.¹⁰⁰ Lomas connects the image to the surrealist equivalence between scientific vision, photography and automatic writing; Katherine Conley, in a feminist reading of surrealist automatism, has read the image as symbolic of the identification of women by male surrealists with their own unconscious and creativity.¹⁰¹ The image also speaks of what Evelyn Fox Keller calls ‘the biological gaze.’ Keller has noted that in the early twentieth century the use of the microscope shifted from detached scientific analysis to a convergence of sight and touch, or hand and eye through which ‘the “secret of life” to which we have so ingeniously gained access’ stops being a ‘pristine point of origin’ and becomes ‘a construct, at least partially, of our own making.’¹⁰²

This subjective dimension of knowledge and truth is clearly in evidence in the photocollage, in which the gender relations at play are translated into a Narcissean tale of disavowal. Breton’s doctored self-portrait borrows the supposed intellectual prowess of the scientist as a visual sign of sexual power. The actress gazes longingly at his androgynous figure, kept at a physical distance, inviting the viewer to question the ‘natural’ dimension of traditional gendered relations. Impersonating a very visible Echo to Breton’s photographic narcissism, she reverberates with the thunderous echoes of convulsive beauty. Reflections of transgression – visual, verbal and epistemic – radiate outside the image to invade the field of the viewer, who is at a loss to understand the ultimate sense of what s/he sees. Yet, these are precisely reflections: Breton’s figure and his own vision of convulsive beauty as a subjective and gendered pursuit dominate the image, giving him the role of the master in this game of ‘seeing as writing.’

This controlled notion of subversion places Breton’s convulsive beauty between the enchanted realm of Symbolism and the rationalist lineage of myth. It is no coincidence that Breton associated the idea of ‘spontaneous action’ (such as the concept of automatic writing) with crystals as reflective and self-reflective material that might encapsulate the notion of convulsive beauty: ‘Works of art, just like certain fragments of human life when it is considered in its gravest signification,’ he wrote, ‘seem to me without value if they do not present the same longevity, rigidity, regularity and shine on all their faces, interior as well as exterior, as crystal.’¹⁰³ This statement expresses the possibility, or at least the desire, of surrealist creativity to reduplicate its own authorial voice (its subversive ‘originality’) infinitely, a representational process known as *mise-en-abîme*.¹⁰⁴

Crystals and *mise-en-abîme* are central themes in André Gide’s *Treatise of the Theory of Symbolism* (*Traité du Narcisse – Théorie du symbole*, 1891), a milestone in the modern history of Narcissus.¹⁰⁵ In his treaty, Gide elaborated the image of a primeval Narcissus *cum* Adam as the symbol of an artistic yearning to attain truth within and beyond the appearances of the symbolic order: ‘Paradise is underneath appearance. Everything contains in virtue the intimate harmony of its own being, like every grain of salt contains the archetype of its crystal (*Le Paradis est sous l’apparence. Chaque chose détient, virtuelle, l’intime harmonie de son être, comme chaque sel, en lui, l’archétype de son cristal*).’¹⁰⁶ Like this crystallized Narcissus, the surrealist concept of convulsive beauty is the source of a continuous wonder with the world, which is, however,



determined by the crystallised assertion of individual drives. Incidentally, Tristan Tzara associated the surrealists with Narcissus early on: '[They] are today's Narcissuses' – a sentence that implies the surrealists' collective extension of self-reflexive individuality.¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The ancient myth of Narcissus centred on the psychic difficulty of separating the self from the world, a religious denunciation of the philosophical pretence (*hubris*) of self-sufficient reason. Narcissus's fate, condemning the youth to live 'as long as he does not know himself' ('*si se non noverit*'), dismisses the Delphic imperative 'know thyself' by warning that true self-knowledge is a frustrating and anti-social pursuit. The modernist resurrection of Narcissus within Symbolist and surrealist contexts offered a powerful extension of the myth's ancient significance. It eroded the boundaries between reality, individual cognition and cultural constructions of truth. Yet this, too, could only rob myth of its afterlife. Narcissus represents identity as an unfixed reflection of subjectivity, as he mirrors and co-exists with the polymorphous diversity of the world and holds on to the ego in order to orientate himself in that reflective pool which is the world.

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¹ 'I am enchanted by what I see; but what I see and what enchants me however I cannot reach,' Ovid (Publius Ovidi Nasonis), *Metamorphoses*, ed. R. J. Tarrant, Oxford Classical Texts., Oxford, 2004, 3. 446-7. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.

² Karl Marx, 'Introduction' (1857, first published 1903), in *A Contribution to the Theory of Political Economy*, trans. by S. W. Ryazanskaya, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1971, 216.

³ Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism' (1914), in *On Metapsychology. The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by James Strachey, eds James Strachey and Angela Richards, London, Penguin, 1984, 65. Previous stages in Freud's elaboration of the theory of narcissism are to be found in a footnote of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1910) and the essays 'Leonardo' (1910) and 'The Uncanny' (1919). Predecessors to Freud's theory of narcissism are to be found in the work of Henry Havelock Ellis (1897); Paul Näcke (1899) and Otto Rank (1914).

⁴ For a later development of the theory of narcissism in relation to the concept of libido: Sigmund Freud, 'Lecture 26. The Libido Theory and Narcissism,' in *Introductory Lecture on Psychoanalysis*, eds James Strachey and Angela Richards, trans. by James Strachey, London, Penguin, 1991, 461-81.

⁵ Lacan repeatedly referred to the concept of narcissism starting with his 1936 lecture at Marienbad: Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative to the Function of the I' (1949), in *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan, New York, W. W. Norton, 1977, 1-7. For an in-depth discussion of Lacan on narcissism, see Ellie Ragland, 'Lacan's Theories on Narcissism and the Ego,' in



Essays on the Pleasures of Death. From Freud to Lacan, Routledge, New York and London, 1994, 17-53.

⁶ Quoted in Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 31.

⁷ For Ovid's modern fortune, Charles Martindale ed., *Ovid Renewed. Ovidian Influences in Literature and Art From the Middle Ages to the Twentieth-Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990. Ancient variants of the Narcissus myth were recounted by Greek authors Conon (1st c. BC-1st c. AD), Parthenius of Nicea (1st c. AD), Pausanias (2nd c. AD). The versions by Conon and Parthenius emphasise the homoerotic component of the myth.

⁸ For the influence of the alternative tradition of ekprastic descriptions of the Narcissus myth by Philostratus the Elder (3rd c. BC) and Callistratus (3rd-4th c. AD): Stephen Bann, *The True Vine. On Visual Representation and the Western Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, 105-201; Jas' Elsner, 'Caught in the Ocular: Visualising Narcissus in the Roman World,' in *Echoes of Narcissus*, ed. Lieve Spaas, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2000, 89-110.

⁹ For the collective dimension of the surrealists' approach to ancient myth: Whitney Chadwick, *Myth in Surrealist Painting 1929-1939*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor Mich., 1979; Jennifer Mundy, 'Shadows of Darkness: Mythology and Surrealism,' in *Salvador Dalí: A Mythology*, exh. cat., eds Dawn Ades and Fiona Bradley, Tate Gallery, Liverpool, 119-42.

¹⁰ Narcissus and Orpheus feature prominently as symbols of the limits of human knowledge in the poetry of Paul Valéry and Rainer Maria Rilke. Valéry's 'Narcisse parle' and 'Orphée' (1891) appeared together in *Album des vers anciens*, Paris, Editions Mercure de France, 1920; Rilke brought the two figures together in *Die Sonette an Orpheus*, Leipzig, Insel Verlag, 1923, §3, and wrote two poems on Narcissus in 1913. For the fortune of the Orpheus myth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Eva Kushner, *Le Mythe d'Orphée dans la littérature française contemporaine*, Paris, Nizet, 1961; Dorothy M. Kosinski, *Orpheus in Nineteenth-Century Symbolism*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1989.

¹¹ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Enquiry into Freud* (1962), Boston, Beacon Press, 1974, 164.

¹² *Ibid.*, 169.

¹³ See, for instance, Gustave Moreau, *Orpheus*, 1865, Oil on wood, 155 x 99,5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Odilon Redon, *Orpheus*, c. 1903-10, Pastel, 68.8 x 56.8 cm, The Cleveland Museum of Art; John William Waterhouse, *Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus*, 1905, Oil on canvas, 99 x 149 cm, Private collection.

¹⁴ 'Le but essentiel de notre art est d'objectiver le subjectif (l'extériorisation de l'idée) au lieu de subjectiver l'objectif (la nature vue à travers un tempérament),' Gustave Kahn (1886) quoted by James Kearns, *Symbolist Landscapes. The Place of Painting in the Poetry and Criticism of Mallarmé and His Circle*, The Modern Humanities Research Association, London, 1989, 136.

¹⁵ Charles Baudelaire, 'Correspondances' (1852-1856), reprinted and translated in Henri Dorra ed., *Symbolist Art Theories. A Critical Anthology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1994, 11.

¹⁶ Peter Cooke, *Gustave Moreau et les arts jumeaux. Peinture et littérature au dix-neuvième siècle*, Peter Lang, 2003; Douglas W. Druick, 'Moreau's Symbolist Ideal' in *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream*, exh. cat., Paris, Grand Palais and Chicago, Art Institute, 1999, 33-9.

¹⁷ Gustave Moreau, *Orphée*, 1865, Oil on canvas, 155 x 99,5 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.



http://www.musee-orsay.fr/fr/collections/oeuvres-commentees/peinture/commentaire_id/orphee-359.html?tx_commentaire_pi1%5BpidLi%5D=509&tx_commentaire_pi1%5Bfrom%5D=841&cHash=1396676926

Peter Cooke, 'Gustave Moreau from *Song of Songs* (1853) to *Orpheus* (1866): The Making of a Symbolist Painter,' *Apollo*, Vol.148, No. 438, September 1998, 44.

¹⁸ Philostratus, *Eikones*, 1st C. AD. Stephen Bann, 'Philostratus and the Narcissus of Caravaggio,' in *Philostratus*, eds Ewen Bowie and Jas Elsner, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, 343-55.

¹⁹ John William Waterhouse, *Echo and Narcissus*, 1903, Oil on canvas, 109.2 x 189.2 cm, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.

<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/20c/waterhouse.aspx>

²⁰ Anna Chave, 'The Reflected and Reflective Gaze: For the Love of Narcissus,' in *Constantin Brancusi. Shifting the Bases of Art*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993, 66-92. For a analysis of the role of Narcissus in Brancusi's work, which links the sculptor's use of photography and film to André Gide's *Treatise of the Theory of Symbolism (Traité de Narcisse – Théorie du symbole)*, Alexandra Parigoris, 'Freezing the Frame: Brancusi's Film Stills of *Leda* and the Manifestation of Attention,' in ed. Jon Wood, *Sculpture and Film*, Ashgate, Aldershot, forthcoming.

²¹ Friedrich Teja Bach, *Brancusi Photo Reflections*, exh. cat., Menil Collection, Houston, 1992.

²² '... Au contraire de certaines œuvres dont la justification demande une connaissance qu'il faut acquérir, celle de Brancusi s'impose aux facultés les plus hautes sans l'intermédiaire de l'intelligence. Il a jeté un grand pont des sens à l'esprit que nous franchissons dans l'espace d'un éclair quand la réflexion consent à prendre l'attitude passive du Sphinx,' Roger Vitrac, 'Constantin Brancusi,' *Cahiers d'art*, Nos 8-9, 1929, 383-94.

²³ Alexandra Parigoris, 'The Road to Damascus - Reading the Partial Figure,' in *Constantin Brancusi. The Essence of Things*, Carmen Gimenez and Matthew Gale eds, exh. cat., Tate Modern, 2004, 53-6.

²⁴ Paul Valéry, 'Fragments du Narcisse' (1926), in *Poésies*, Gallimard, Paris, 1958, 64. Valéry dedicated two more long poems to Narcissus: 'Narcisse parle' (1891) and *Cantate du Narcisse* (1938).

²⁵ The reference to Minne has been made by Chave, among others, but she interprets the 'C' shape of Brancusi's *Narcissus Fountain* as breaking away from the 'L' shape of the *Fountain of the Kneeling Youth*: Chave, *Constantin Brancusi*, 84. A photo of the latter is reproduced in *George Minne en de kunst rond 1900*, exh. cat., Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, 1982, 24. On Minne's sculpture, see David Lomas, *Narcissus Reflected. The Myth of Narcissus in Surrealist and Contemporary Art*, exh. cat., The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, Reaktion Books, London and The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011, 102.

²⁶ Rosalind Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions of Surrealism,' *October*, Vol. 19, Winter 1981, 3-34, especially 9-11.

²⁷ André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting* (originally published in French, 1928), quoted in Rosalind Krauss, 'Corpus Delicti,' *October*, Vol. 33, Summer 1985, 11.

²⁸ André Breton, *La Clè des champs*, Paris, LGF, 1979, 278.

²⁹ For Cocteau's association of Orpheus and Narcissus, see David Lomas, *Narcissus Reflected*, 82-4.



³⁰ Other poems in which Apollinaire associated himself with Orpheus include the lyrics dedicated to the myth in *Le Bestiaire, ou cortège d'Orphée* (1911) and 'Le Musicien de Saint-Merry' (1914), later published in *Calligrammes*.

³¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes*, Gallimard, Paris, 1918.

³² Giorgio de Chirico, *Premonitory Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire*, 1914, Oil on canvas, 81.5 x 65 cm, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou.

<http://www.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-surrealistart-EN/image01.htm>

A woodcut of the portrait made by Pierre Roy appeared in de Chirico, 'Sur le silence,' *Minotaure*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1934, 31. See also, Dieter Schwarz, 'Pierre Roy's Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire, After Giorgio de Chirico,' in Paolo Baldacci and Gerd Roos eds, *De Chirico, Max Ernst, Magritte, Balthus. A Look into the Invisible*, exh. cat., Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, 2010, 139-43.

³³ For the presence of Orpheus in the bust: Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, *Giorgio de Chirico. Il Tempo di Apollinaire*, Rome, 1981, 14-15. Willard Bohn has substituted Orpheus with Dionysus and rehabilitated the presence of Apollo in the painting: 'Giorgio de Chirico and the Paradigmatic Method,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, July-August 1985, 36-42; 'Giorgio de Chirico's Portrait of Guillaume Apollinaire of 1914,' *Burlington Magazine*, November 2005, 751-54.

³⁴ For Freud's study of the double as a motif of the uncanny, see Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock, Penguin, London, 135-42. The link between de Chirico's Metaphysical paintings and the uncanny was first made by Jean Clair, 'Metaphisica et unheimlichkeit,' in *Les Réalismes. Entre révolution et réaction 1919-1939*, exh. cat., Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1980, 26-35. For a Freudian discussion of de Chirico, see Hal Foster, 'Convulsive Identities,' *October*, Vol. 57, Summer 1991, 25-34. For the use of the double in de Chirico's 1920s self-portraits, see David Lomas, 'Narcissus and His Double,' in *The Haunted Self. Surrealism, Psychoanalysis, Subjectivity*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2000, 178-80.

³⁵ Jean-Baptiste de Boyer (Marquis d'Argenson), *Thérèse philosophe, ou Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Père Dirrag et de mademoiselle Eradice* (1748), Paris, Le livre du mois, 1994.

³⁶ Peter Read, *Apollinaire et Les Mamelles de Tirésias. La revanche d'Eros*, Presses Universitaires, Rennes, 2000.

³⁷ For a concise history of the genesis and application of the word 'surrealism,' Anne Baldassari, *The Surrealist Picasso*, exh. cat., Beyeler Foundation, Basel, 2005, 11-22.

³⁸ Lacan touched on the sexual character of the parade in relation to animal courtship in at least two of his seminars: 'L'Homme aux loups,' 1952-53 (<http://espace.freud.pagesperso-orange.fr/topos/psych/psyssem/homoloup.htm>) and *D'un discours qui ne serait pas du semblant*, in *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan*, Vol. 20 (1971-1972), ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1973.

³⁹ See Krauss, 'Corpus Delicti,' 31-72; Hal Foster, 'Armor Fou,' *October*, Vol. 56, Spring 1991, 64-97. Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities. Gender Anxieties and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 2007.

⁴⁰ Rose Sélavy became Rose in June 1921 after Duchamp and Man Ray moved to Paris but the double 'r' that first appeared in the fifteenth number of 391 derived from a letter sent by Duchamp to Picabia in January of that year: *Inventing Marcel Duchamp. The Dynamics of Portraiture*, exh. cat., eds Anne Collins Goodyear and James W. McManus, National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC, 153; Antonio Castronuovo, 'Rose Sélavy and Erotic Gnosis,' *Tout-Fait. The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 5, April 2003 http://www.toutfait.com/issues/volume2/issue_5/articles/castronuovo/castronuovo_it.html.



⁴¹ Ades as in note above; Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 146-90.

⁴² Michael R. Taylor, 'Rose Sélavy, Prostituée de la Rue aux Lèvres: Levant le voile sur l'alter ego érotique de Marcel Duchamp,' in *Féminin/Masculin. Le Sexe de l'art*, exh. cat., Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1995, 284-90. David Hopkins has noticed the connection between Duchamp's gender performances and *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* in *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, The Bride Shared*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998, 83.

⁴³ The connection between Rose Sélavy and narcissism has been noticed by Ades, 'Duchamp's Masquerades,' 101-4 and Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst*, 82-6.

⁴⁴ Dawn Ades, 'Duchamp's Masquerades,' 99 and 103-4.

⁴⁵ For a reproduction of the image, *Inventing Marcel Duchamp*, 137.

⁴⁶ For the concept of 'female masquerade' see Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as Masquerade' (1929), in Victor Burgin, James Donald, Cora Kaplan, *Formations of Fantasy*, Routledge, London 1986. For a discussion of Rose Sélavy in relation to the 'female masquerade,' see Dawn Ades, 'Duchamp's Masquerades.'

⁴⁷ Andrea Weiss, *Vampires and Violets. Lesbians in the Cinema*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1992.

⁴⁸ This was thanks largely to none other than James Frazer, whose new translation of Pausanias into English provided the basis for subsequent translations into other European languages. See James George Frazer, *Pausanias's Description of Greece*, Macmillan, London, 1898.

⁴⁹ Valéry, *Poésies*, 17. Rilke also repeatedly referred to Narcissus's essence as a scent, as for instance in his 'Narziß' (1913): 'Narcissus vanished. From his beauty / without cease the essence exhaled, / dense like the scent of heliotrope. / But his destiny was to see himself (*Narziß verging. Von seiner Schönheit hob / sich unaufhörlich seines Wesens Nähe, / verdichtet wie der Duft vom Heliotrop. / Ihm aber war gesetzt, daß er sich sähe*).'

⁵⁰ This is the subject of a forthcoming publication by Giovanna Zapperi. See also Zapperi, 'Marcel Duchamp's *Tonsure*. Towards an Alternative Masculinity,' *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 2007, 289-303: 'Marcel Duchamp's Dandyism: The Dandy, the Flaneur and the Beginning of Mass Culture,' *Arts & Society*, Seminar, 11 February 2005, <http://www.artsetsocietes.org/a/a-zapperi.html> (accessed December 2010).

⁵¹ The text, originally in French and German, is reproduced in English translation in David Hopkins, 'Men Before the Mirror: Duchamp, Man Ray and Masculinity,' *Art History*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1998, 309-11.

⁵² Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity. Images of Feminine Evil in Fin-De-Siècle Culture*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, 142-9.

⁵³ Naomi Segal, *Narcissus and Echo. Women in the French Récit*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1988.

⁵⁴ For male surrealists' attitudes towards women in this sense, see Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, Thames and Hudson, London and New York, 1985; Susan R. Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender Politics and the Avant-Garde*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990.

⁵⁵ See for instance, *The Nymph Echo*, 1936, Oil on canvas, 46.3 x 55.2 cm, Museum of Modern Art, New York. http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=79316



⁵⁶ Max Ernst, *The Attirement of the Bride*, 1940, Oil on canvas, 130 x 96 cm, Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice. http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/inglese/collections/artisti/dettagli/opere_dett.php?id_art=58&id_opera=133&page=

⁵⁷ Werner Spies, *Max Ernst. A Retrospective*, Tate, London, 1991, 230.

⁵⁸ Max Ernst, 'Beyond Painting. I History of A Natural History,' in *Max Ernst: Beyond Painting and Other Writings by the Artist and His Friends*, trans. by Dorothea Tanning, Wittenborn, Schultz, New York, 1948, 10-11.

⁵⁹ Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst*, 108-53.

⁶⁰ Leon Battista Alberti, *De Pictura* (1435), in *Opere volgari*, Vol. 3, Laterza, Rome and Bari, 1973, 47.

⁶¹ Jacopo Tintoretto, *Susanna and the Elders*, 1560-02, Oil on canvas, 147 x 194 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. <http://www.khm.at/en/kunsthistorisches-museum/collections/picture-gallery/italy-15th-16th-centuries/?aid=17&cHash=3ecc77a2d9b6c7a71fd1ceb531e849e5>

⁶² Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. and commented by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, Oxford World's Classics, 303.

⁶³ Diane H. Bodart, 'Le Reflet et l'éclat. Jeux de l'envers dans la peinture vénitienne du XIVe siècle,' in *Titien, Véronèse, Tintoret. Rivalités à Venise*, exh. cat., Louvre, Paris, 216-59.

⁶⁴ Burne Jones painted the subject in a number of versions. See, for instance, *The Mirror of Venus*, 1898. Oil on canvas, 47 1/2 x 78 3/4 inches, Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon. <http://museu.gulbenkian.pt/obra.asp?num=273&nuc=a9&lang=en>

⁶⁵ Marsilio Ficino, 'Sopra lo amore, ovvero convito di Platone' (1475), in *Grande antologia filosofica*, Vol. 6, Marzorati, Milano, 1964, 597-9.

⁶⁶ Jung's article, originally published in a Swiss newspaper on the occasion of the Picasso retrospective at the Zurich Kunsthalle in 1932, is reprinted in Marilyn McCully ed., *A Picasso Anthology. Documents, Criticism, Reminiscences*, Princeton University Press, 1997, 182-6.

⁶⁷ Jung's criticism of Picasso has been discussed by Robert Rosenblum, 'Picasso's Blond Muse: The Reign of Marie-Thérèse Walter,' in William Rubin ed., *Picasso and Portraiture: Representation and Transformation*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996, 354 and by Lomas, *The Haunted Self*, 127.

⁶⁸ 'Les beautés du Parthénon, les Vénus, les Nymphes, les Narcisses, sont autant de mensonges': Picasso, in Christian Zervos, 'Conversation avec Picasso,' *Cahiers d'art: Picasso 1930-1935*, Paris, 1936, 175.

⁶⁹ '... l'homme est l'instrument de la nature: elle lui impose son caractère, son apparence ... Ces deux personnages ont existés, ils n'existent plus. Leur vision m'a donné une émotion initiale, petit à petit leur présence réelle s'est estompée, ils sont devenus pour moi une fiction, puis ils ont disparu, ou plutôt, ont été transformés en problèmes de toute sorte.' *Ibid.*, 175-6.

⁷⁰ Sarah Kofman, *The Enigma of Woman. Woman in Freud's Writings*, trans. by Catherine Porter, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1985, 56.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 52. See also, Polona Petek, *Echo and Narcissus. Echolocating the Spectator in the Age of Audience Research*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, 3.



⁷² Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 115.

⁷³ Whitney Chadwick ed., *Mirror Images. Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation*, exh. cat., MIT List Center, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1998.

⁷⁴ Tirza True Latimer, 'Narcissus and Narcissus: Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore,' in *Women Together, Women Apart: Portraits of Lesbian Paris*, 2005; Jennifer Shaw, 'Narcissus and the Magic Mirror,' in *Don't Kiss Me. The Art of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore*, exh. cat., Tate, London, 2006, 32-45. See also David Lomas, *Narcissus Reflected*, 58-63.

⁷⁵ Dawn Ades, 'Surrealism, Male-Female,' in *Surrealism. Desire Unbound*, ed. Jennifer Mundy, exh. cat. Tate, London, 2001, 171. For Claude Cahun's statement on the death of Narcissus, see *Aveux non avenue*, Éditions du carrefour, Paris, 1930, 37.

⁷⁶ Diego Velázquez, *Venus at Her Toilet (The Rokeby Venus)*, c. 1647-51, Oil on canvas, 122 x 177 cm, The National Gallery of Art, London.
<http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/diego-velazquez-the-toilet-of-venus-the-rokeby-venus>

⁷⁷ Peter Cherry, 'Velázquez y el desnudo,' in *Fábulas de Velázquez: mitología y historia sagrada en el Siglo de Oro*, ed. Javier Portús, exh. cat., Museo del Prado, Madrid, 2009, 241-69. *Muger desnuda* is how the painting was first catalogued in 1651.

⁷⁸ For the politics of the nude during the Spanish Inquisition, Javier Portús, 'Nudes and Knights: A Context for Venus,' in Dawson W. Carr, *Velázquez*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, London, 2006, 62-5.

⁷⁹ Andreas Prater, *Venus at Her Mirror. Velázquez and the Art of Nude Painting*, Prestel, Munich, 2002, 51-2.

⁸⁰ For the Borghese Hermaphrodite as one of the models for the Rokeby Venus, see Portús, 'Nudes and Knights,' note 43, 67.

⁸¹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4, 285-388.

⁸² Michel Foucault, *Herculine Barbin. Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, transl. Richard McDougall, The Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980.

⁸³ Whitney Davis, *Queer Beauty. Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud, and Beyond*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, 44.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸⁵ Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, 6.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁸⁷ Davis, *Queer Beauty*, 3-4. For the 'aesthetogenesis of sex' and the different interpretations of "narcissism" in Freudian theory and homosexualist culture,' see 187-242.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁸⁹ Convulsive beauty has been thoroughly investigated in relation to the Freudian category of the uncanny by Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1993, 19-29. Foster's insight has been applied to the investigation of convulsive beauty in relation to issues of gender by Sharla Hutchison, 'Convulsive Beauty: Images of Hysteria and Transgressive Sexuality: Claude Cahun and Djuna Barnes,' *Symploke*, Vol. 11, Nos 1-2, 2003, 212-26. See also, Roger



Cardinal, 'Surrealist Beauty,' Forum for Modern Language Studies, Vol. 9, No. 4, October 1974, 356- 19: José Pierre, "'Such is Beauty.'" The "Convulsive" in Breton's Ethics and Aesthetics,' *Dada/Surrealism*, No. 17, 1988, 19-27.

⁹⁰ Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty*, 29.

⁹¹ Hal Foster, 'Armor fou,' especially 83-6.

⁹² On this point see *Ibid.*, 46-7: Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968*, Thames & Hudson, London and New York, 2005.

⁹³ Lomas, *The Haunted Self*.

⁹⁴ André Breton, *Nadja*, Gallimard, Paris, 1925, 90.

⁹⁵ André Breton, 'La Beauté sera convulsive,' *Minotaure*, Vol. 1, No. 5, 1934, 9-15.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁹⁷ Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions,' 112.

⁹⁸ See Kahn, note 15 above.

⁹⁹ The documentary information on this work in the following discussion relies primarily on David Lomas's study of Breton's self-portrait in his forthcoming book *Surrealism and Simulation*, whose manuscript was made available to me by the author. See also, Dawn Ades, *Photomontage*, Thames and Hudson, London, 115: Michael Stone-Richards, 'A Type of *Prière d'insérer*: André Breton's *Le Verre d'eau dans la tempête*,' *Art History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, June 1993, 313-35.

¹⁰⁰ Krauss has read the microscope in this image to stand for the camera: Krauss, 'The Photographic Conditions,' 18.

¹⁰¹ Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1996, 1: Lomas, *Surrealism and Simulation*.

¹⁰² Evelyn Fox Keller, 'The Biological Gaze,' in *FutureNatural. Nature, Science, Culture*, ed. Georg Robertson, 107-121.

¹⁰³ 'L'œuvre d'art, au même titre d'ailleurs que tel fragment de la vie humaine considérée dans sa signification la plus grave, me paraît dénuée de valeur si elle ne présente pas la dureté, la rigidité, la régularité, le lustre sur toutes ses faces extérieures, intérieures, du cristal.' Breton, 'La Beauté sera convulsive,' 13.

¹⁰⁴ Krauss has related the presence of the microscope in the image to the concept of the *mise-en-abîme*, 'The Photographic Conditions,' 18.

¹⁰⁵ André Gide, *Traité du Narcisse. Théorie du symbole*, ed. Réjean Robidoux, Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1978.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁰⁷ Tristan Tzara, 'Les Dessous de Dada,' *Comoedia*, 7 March 1922.

Silvia Loreti is the Post-doctoral Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Surrealism and its Legacies (University of Manchester). She completed a PhD on classicism in avant-garde culture



at The Courtauld Institute of Art in 2009. Her research questions the traditional opposition between 'classical,' 'primitive' and 'avant-garde' in modern European art. An extract from her thesis, 'A Timely Call: Modern Representation Awakened by Antiquity – de Chirico, Picasso and the Classical Vision,' is included in the catalogue of the forthcoming exhibition *Modern Antiquity: Picasso, de Chirico, Léger, Picabia and the New Classicism*, eds Christopher Green and Jens Daehner, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 2011.

