

# Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* – a Break with the Classical Tradition or Ovid's Story Retold in an Ingenious Way?

La *Metamorfosis de Narciso* de Dalí, ¿una ruptura con la tradición clásica o una reinterpretación ingeniosa del relato de Ovidio?

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## ABSTRACT

The article proposes a reconsideration of the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* by Salvador Dalí which focuses on the issue of the relationship between Dalí's treatment of the theme and the myth of Narcissus as depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Although at first glance, the revolutionary surrealist painting owes little to the story of the beautiful Boeotian youth as presented by Ovid, the iconographical analysis nevertheless reveals Dalí's profound interest in *Metamorphoses*. Using the paranoiac-critical method Dalí creates an original visual interpretation of metamorphosis based on Ovid's description of Narcissus' death with details that are lacking in other classical (or later) sources.

**Keywords:** Painters; surrealist painting; iconography; psychoanalysis

**Identifiers:** Dalí, Salvador; Metamorphosis of Narcissus

**Period:** 20<sup>th</sup> century

## RESUMEN

El artículo propone una revisión de la *Metamorfosis de Narciso* de Salvador Dalí a partir de la relación entre el mito de Narciso que se narra en las *Metamorfosis* de Ovidio y el tratamiento que el autor hace del tema. Aunque a primera vista, esta revolucionaria pintura surrealista debe poco al relato ovidiano sobre el bello joven de Beocia, su análisis iconográfico revela el profundo interés de Dalí por esta obra literaria. Utilizando el método paranoico-crítico, Dalí crea una original interpretación visual de la metamorfosis en base a la descripción que Ovidio hace de la muerte de Narciso, con detalles ausentes en otras fuentes clásicas o posteriores.

**Palabras clave:** Pintores; Pintura surrealista; Iconografía; Teoría psicoanalítica

**Identificadores:** Dalí, Salvador; Metamorfosis de Narciso

**Periodo:** Siglo 20

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1. Salvador DALÍ, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, 1937, oil on canvas, Tate Modern, London.

Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* (1937, Tate Modern) is one of the most famous paintings of the Catalan surrealist as well as the most original treatment of the Narcissus myth in the 20<sup>th</sup> century painting. Its originality aroused curiosity from the very moment it was created and the masterpiece still attracts attention of the scholars<sup>1</sup>. Although the scholarly approaches might differ considerably, the greater part of the studies concentrate on psychoanalytical interpretations. Among recent contributions one should mention the analysis of Haim Finkelstein in *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing*, an article by Milly Heyd *Dalí's 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus' Reconsidered*, and above all the in-depth study by David Lomas in *Narcissus Reflected*<sup>2</sup>.

The extravagant combination of the rich iconographic tradition of the Narcissus myth in European art and the new surrealist approach, Dalí's erudition, self-analysis, autoerotic as well as artistic exhibitionism, result in the intrigue of the painting, which remains enigmatic and eludes the attempts of any final or undisputable interpretation. Considering Dalí's interest in psychoanalysis and especially in the Freudian theory of narcissism, the psychoanalytic components in the iconography of *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* cannot be ignored and are indeed vital for its understanding. On the other hand it is clear that by concentrating on psychoanalytical approach only, one might fail to notice some other iconographic aspects that should not go by unmarked.

One of them is the question of how Dalí's painting relates to the *Metamorphoses* by Ovid as the main classical source of the Narcissus myth<sup>3</sup>. Strange as it might seem it has not yet been fully explored and opinions of scholars differ considerably. The majority of the authors agree that Ovid's story of the beautiful Boeotian youth represents an important inspiration for Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. But they usually treat the issue as a fact without an effort to pursue further the question of Ovidian elements in the painting. Others imply that Dalí's revolutionary treatment of the theme has little in common with Ovid's poem nor with the traditional presentation of Narcissus in visual arts<sup>4</sup>. Consequently Ovid is (more often than not) mentioned in the context of Dalí's divergences from the literary source: the authors are pointing out the differences between the modern surrealist visual interpretation and the classical myth as codified by the Roman poet.

It is true that at first glance, Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* owes little to the story as narrated by Ovid. The fantastic barren landscape lit with strong light has nothing in common with the place as described in *Metamorphoses*: a hidden spot in the dark woods, the silver-clear fountain in the deep shadow of the trees, and the green grass which surrounds the fountain<sup>5</sup>. The pool in Dalí's painting is far from the crystal silvery spring of fresh water but seems more like a part of a lake; its water is strangely still and sinister. The nymph Echo does not appear in the scene nor do other nymphs mentioned by Ovid. Narcissus is not depicted as a youth whose charm attracted both girls and boys – he is not a graceful ephebe of white slender limbs and rosy cheeks, as portrayed in Ovid's verses. (As we cannot see his face we are actually unable to judge his beauty.) He also lacks the classical attributes of the bow and arrows etc. On the other hand, Dalí introduces several elements which seem to have nothing to do with the traditional iconography of Narcissus: the fossil hand with an egg in the foreground of the picture, the strange wolf-like hound tearing at some meat or rather a piece of carcass, the chessboard with a figure of a youth on the pedestal, a group of agitated women and men, etc.

But one should not be discouraged by the first impression because the iconographical analysis nevertheless reveals Dalí's profound interest in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. His concern with the classical text is certainly not that of an illustrator nor does he enlist himself in a long line of artists who are re-telling the story and adopting the traditional iconography without any really significant changes<sup>6</sup>. In *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* Dalí actually recreates the myth according to his paranoiac-critical method and adopts it to his own narcissist character. He even expands it into his personal myth, thus producing a new iconography. His reference to Ovid is rarely direct – more often he creates a subtle reinterpretation of images and notions found in *Metamorphoses*. This might be the reason (at least in part) why the concordances between Dalí's painting and Ovid's poem were not fully recognized or were sometimes inadequately interpreted.

Besides the main motive of the hero's metamorphosis there are but few cases of immediate correspondences between Dalí's painting and Ovid's poem. One of them might be the group of men and women in the middle distance of the picture; the «heterosexual group» as Dalí's calls it in his poem the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. In the poem which accompanies the painting and serves as a sort of commentary<sup>7</sup>, Dalí does not give a clear explanation of the group in relation to Narcissus. He

describes it and names nationality or ethnic type of the participants but the only clue to its meaning in the context of the story can be found in the statement that the figures are in the poses «of preliminary expectation» and that the group «conscientiously ponders over the threatening libidinous cataclysm»<sup>8</sup>. In the poem they are obviously waiting for the punishment of Narcissus to take place. David Lomas offers two possible explanations to the «heterosexual group». Because the group comprises a «veritable League of Nations» as Lomas puts it, it might – in the ominous situation of Europe in 1937 – be an allusion to political events. On the other hand the group can suggest the suitors, male and female, whose amorous designs Narcissus obstinately resisted<sup>9</sup>. Lomas takes the second possibility to be more plausible. In our opinion it is certainly so. There are namely no other indications in the painting that would allude to contemporary political situation. Narcissus' story in Dalí's reinterpretation clearly shows autobiographical elements, it is personalized in a quite modern sense of the word: the great surrealist painter openly asserts his narcissist character, he identifies with the mythic figure and even creates a new myth of Dalí-Narcissus. Dalí in the *Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* proudly speaks of his many frustrated admirers<sup>10</sup>. He is like Narcissus who was loved by many Greeks of both sexes. It is worth noting that Ovid is the only classical author who explicitly speaks of «many boys and girls» who fell in love with Narcissus<sup>11</sup>. He puts great emphasis on the fact that Narcissus was universally desired for his beauty. Not only boys and girls were his admirers but even semi-divine beings like nymphs adored the Boeotian youth. The most famous among them was Echo with her tragic fate but Ovid tells us that Narcissus scorned the other nymphs of rivers and mountains as well<sup>12</sup>. The universal appeal of Narcissus is one of the components of the myth that were very close to Dalí. Therefore the diversity of the heterosexual group with underlined internationality might well stand for Dalí's international fame and popularity which he gained in the mid-1930s<sup>13</sup>.

Among rare direct pictorial associations to Ovid's verses we should mention Narcissus' hair. Despite Dalí's obvious stylization of Narcissus' head, which looks like a golden walnut, the rich hair is clearly visible. The pony tail indicates how long his golden locks really are. This is not a hairstyle common in contemporary depictions of Narcissus and might be taken as direct allusion to antiquity. Readers of *Metamorphoses* will certainly recall Ovid's praise of Narcissus' hair: «his hair, fit for Bacchus, fit for Apollo», the two gods which in classical antiquity were famous for their beautiful golden locks<sup>14</sup>.

The stone hand in the foreground of Dalí's painting was also related to Ovid by some scholars and the idea is indeed very interesting because in the context of Ovidian elements it illustrates the variety of possible interpretative approaches. The explanation of the giant stone hand as proposed by Christiane Freitag<sup>15</sup> may serve as an example of an attempt to find a direct reference in *Metamorphoses* which proves to be inadequate. She believes that the hand of stone stands for a transformed image of Echo because Ovid says that the bones of the unfortunate nymph changed into stone<sup>16</sup>. The idea was categorized as «grotesque» by Beate Czaplá<sup>17</sup>. Harsh as Czaplá's words might be, it is true that Freitag's proposal has no solid ground and cannot be justified. Ovid's metaphor should namely be considered in the original context of the story. The poet describes Echo's pain and shame at the rejection by Narcissus, telling us that she runs far away and hides herself. Scorned,

she wanders in the woods and hides her face in shame and from that time on lives in lonely caves. But still her love endures, increased by the sadness of rejection. Her pain wastes her body which finally vanishes completely. Only her petrified bones and the sound of her voice are left. She hides in the woods and mountains, no longer to be seen, but to be heard by everyone as an echo<sup>18</sup>. Consequently it is very unlikely that a fossil hand in the very centre of the picture should represent Echo. There are of course other iconographic arguments against the identification of the stone hand with Echo in the way which Christiane Freitag suggests it. For example: how could one explain the white egg with the narcissus flower, assuming that the stone hand is indeed a petrified nymph?

Beate Czaplá offers another solution: the stone or fossil hand may indeed be an allusion to Echo, but in a completely different context: as the outline of the hand repeats (one may as well say reflects) the figure of the crouching Narcissus; it is actually his visual echo. In this way the allusion to the nymph is indeed included in the picture: not in the literal sense or the established pictorial tradition but in an original way, transferred to a different level of visual concept in accordance with Dalí's surrealist art. Czaplá does not develop the idea further but her reasoning indicates the direction which should be followed. The reflection of figures and forms is part of Dalí's paranoiac-critical method, as several authors have noticed<sup>19</sup>, and its persistence in the composition of the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* clearly supports the idea of reflection as visual counterpart of an echo. The figure of the young Boeotian is not only echoed in the stone hand but also in the outline of the snowy mountain peak on the horizon, the «god of the snow» as Dalí calls it in his poem the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. The «echoing» of Narcissus in the snow-covered mountain or glacier features also in Dalí's poetic commentary of his painting. He is quite explicit in the correlation of Narcissus to the «god of snow»: both of them are melting down and both are in the process of metamorphosis. Narcissus is going to change himself into a narcissus flower while the melting «god of snow» transforms itself into the water and «the artesian fountains of grass» from which rise the innumerable narcissi<sup>20</sup>. But the correlation between Narcissus and the glacier goes beyond the parallel metaphors of melting and transformation. It exists also in the complex play of reflections emphasized by Dalí both in the poem and the painting. He says that the god's head is «bent over the dizzy space of reflections», he «starts melting with desire», «annihilating himself» and that his waters fill the «distant mirror of the lake» in which he discovers «the flash of his faithful image»<sup>21</sup>. On the shores of that very lake Narcissus is kneeling accompanied by his reflection.

Lomas points out yet another aspect of the stone hand that in his opinion may come partly from Ovid. The poet namely uses a metaphor of the statuesque to depict Narcissus – in Ovid's words the youth is «like a statue carved from Parian marble»<sup>22</sup>. But it is hard to agree with this suggestion. Ovid's simile namely refers to Narcissus in an early stage of the episode when he has just fallen in love with the beautiful boy in the water; he lingers at the pool motionless, gazing at his own reflection. On the other hand there is no doubt that Dalí's painting depicts the final episode with the death and metamorphosis of Narcissus. It should also be stressed that Ovid's comparison of Narcissus to the statue of Parian marble does not denote only his stillness but his beauty as well. In our opinion the latter is even more significant. Not only because Ovid later on explicitly compares Narcissus' limbs to Parian marble, thus stressing their beauty, but because the metaphor of the



marble statue is but one of many and the poet puts much stress on the hero's motion as well. He says that Narcissus often gave his lips to the deceptive pool and tried to embrace the neck he could see on the surface of the fountain. He even plunged his arms into the water in the vain effort to embrace the beautiful boy<sup>23</sup>. In *Metamorphoses* Narcissus is actually quite an active hero, especially in the final part of the drama when in desperation he cries, tears his clothes and strikes his naked chest with his hands of marble<sup>24</sup>. In the last moments of his life Narcissus is far from resembling a marble statue: Ovid tells us that his body, once so admired, no longer has the natural color and strength, nor the form so pleasing to look at<sup>25</sup>. It is also quite evident that Dalí's Narcissus does not in any way look like a statue of Parian marble: his limbs are not white, the contours of the body are blurred and the whole figure is painted in hues of yellow with dark shadows in brown instead of in shining white color of marble. And why should the idea of statuesque immobility of the boy be applied to a fossil hand at all when there is Narcissus himself depicted next to it?

In this context we should reconsider the explanation of the hand in Dalí's poem *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. As already mentioned above, the poem serves as a sort of commentary on the picture – certainly Dalí had intended the picture to be viewed in juxtaposition with the poem. It offers explanation of the painting although it introduces some additional motives, which are not to be found in the painting. It is obvious that while offering the «reading» of the picture, Dalí reveals the meaning of certain iconographic elements but also consciously manipulates the spectator. The poem is nevertheless of crucial importance for the understanding of the painting. In the poem the hand evidently denotes death. Dalí describes it as «mortal hand», «terrible hand», «and excrement-eating hand». He also states that the hand is actually the reflection of Narcissus, the reflection, which finally absorbs him «with the digestive slowness of carnivorous plants»<sup>26</sup>. In the poem Narcissus' reflection takes its own existence in the form of the hand, the «fossil hand of the water» as Dalí calls it in the prologue. It is not only Dalí's description of the hand that denotes its symbolic meaning – it is confirmed in visual realization as well. The hand is namely cracked, thus suggesting decay and decomposition. Even more importantly: there are the sinister ants crawling on it, the insects which in Dalí's paintings traditionally symbolize death and decay<sup>27</sup>. The hand obviously stands for death of Narcissus – it is part of Dalí's original visualization of the metamorphosis and cannot be explained as a metaphor of Narcissus' motionless gazing at his own reflection. Consequently one could hardly take it for an Ovidian element in the way Lomas (with due reservations) suggests it.

In the cases where visual realizations in the painting and textual commentary of the poem complement each other, the interpretation is on (relatively) safe ground. But there are examples where the discrepancies are evident and where maximum caution is necessary. The existing iconographical analyses confirm that Dalí's «explanatory» poem might in some cases indeed be misleading. This fact represents one of the crucial problems for any interpretative approach to the painting, and it is an important factor also in the search for Ovidian elements. From this point of view the main manipulation is the identification of the narcissus flower with Gala in the final stanza of the poem. The *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*, which clearly has many autobiographic elements, can be interpreted as an encoded self-analysis of Dalí's homoerotic and autoerotic desires with implication of an overcoming of his narcissist autoeroticism and its metamorphosis into love for Gala<sup>28</sup>. In the clas-

sical myth Narcissus is transformed into the flower which bears his name. Both in literature and visual arts of later periods this poetic idea became an established iconographic feature. Lomas in his study argues that despite the explicit identification of the narcissus with Gala in the poem there is no reason to accept it in the study of the painting. On the contrary, the iconological approach to the painting in the context of Dalí's homoerotic and autoerotic preoccupations reveals the true meaning of the metamorphosis: Narcissus/Dalí does not overcome his narcissist autoeroticism and remains Freudian Narcissus. «Dalí is fully aware that it is really only himself whom he loves in the guise of an other. . .»<sup>29</sup>. As far as the iconography of the painting is concerned, the narcissus flower is just a metamorphosis of Narcissus; it has nothing to do with Gala whatsoever.

With Narcissus transforming himself into the flower, Dalí's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* actually remains in the confines of classical tradition although the visual realization of the metamorphosis is quite unique and indeed revolutionary. The clue for understanding of this process can be found in Dalí's poem, where the precise instructions for viewing the picture in accordance with the paranoiac-critical method are presented<sup>30</sup>. The picture should be gazed at in the special way of «distracted fixation» causing the blurring of the forms in which the figure of Narcissus merges with the stone hand. Visually the latter prevails because of its sharper contours and brighter color. In the dissolving of the figure of Narcissus, which fuses with the stone hand, the only thing that keeps focused and attracts the attention of the spectator is the narcissus flower. The metamorphosis is thus completed: the youth disappears and reappears in the form of a flower; Narcissus dies and is reborn as narcissus.

As Milly Heyd points out in her study it is for the first time in the history of visual arts that the metamorphosis of Narcissus is depicted as a process – an act in progress – thus bringing in the fourth dimension<sup>31</sup>. No other painter had ever treated the Narcissus myth in this way. They normally chose to illustrate a framed scene of the Narcissus story or sometimes they combined two or three episodes in the painting, but arranged them as sequences which are clearly separated by compositional means. In iconographic tradition previous to Dalí the idea of metamorphosis was either implicitly present in a bunch of narcissi besides the Narcissus, who is gazing at his reflection in the pool, or in the narcissi blossoming next to his dead body<sup>32</sup>. Dalí's invention of the transformation as a process (placed in the surrealist landscape and enriched with new iconographic components) gives the impression of a complete break with tradition and appears to have little in common with the original story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. But it is precisely this groundbreaking idea that reveals Dalí's close interest in Ovid.

It is of special significance that the author of the most influential literary source of the Narcissus myth does not depict the actual metamorphosis of Narcissus. He merely describes Narcissus' death as the beginning of the transformation – his body melting down and disappearing slowly. Later the poet speaks of nymphs who were looking for the dead youth but found a flower at the place where his body should be. He indicates only the starting and the ending points of the metamorphosis thus leaving space for the reader's imagination to fill the gap. The same goes for an artist – he is given an opportunity to carry out his own vision of the central point of the Narcissus story. While

older masters usually went no further than the conventional indication of the metamorphosis by including a narcissus flower in the composition, Dalí fully exploited the potential of Ovid's narrative. Not only did he place the metamorphosis in the center of the composition and realized it as a continuous process by the means of his paranoiac-critical method but he also carefully observed and visually articulated the poet's words regarding the death of Narcissus.

The figure of Narcissus in Dalí's painting is a complete *novum* in iconographic tradition. The young Boeotian is in an unusual pose, often described as «foetal». The body is completely immobile, head resting on his knee suggesting melancholic thoughts or deep sleep<sup>33</sup>. As we are unable to see his face (this is the first time that an artist completely conceals Narcissus' face), we can only guess what its expression could be. But already his posture makes him look fragile, helpless and weak. It is worth noting that Dalí's Narcissus is not gazing at his reflection in the water either: judging by the position of the head he is actually unable to see it. What he could see (supposing that his eyes are open) is the inner part of his legs, lower part of the stomach, his loins and sex. He certainly could not contemplate his mirror image in the pool. The contours of the body are soft, the limbs losing firmness and vitality, even the normal color of the skin is gone. He is not a handsome youth whose limbs are fine and white like they were made of Parian marble. Instead his body is depicted in hues of yellow very close to the color of bee wax. Narcissus' beauty is fading away and it seems that with his beauty his very existence is going to evaporate.

Is such an image really just a surrealist caprice of the Catalan master? Not necessarily so. In fact, this is a perfect visual realization of Ovid's metaphor describing the very last moments of Narcissus' life. In the mortal anguish of the tragic revelation that the youth in the pool is no other than himself, Narcissus is not able to bear the pain any more and his body starts to melt «like yellow wax on the light flame». In *Metamorphoses* this is the final image of Narcissus before he dies – an original poetic depiction of his death<sup>34</sup>. It is also the moment when the metamorphosis begins and the precise point where Dalí starts rendering his own idea of hero's transformation into a flower. While looking at the painting one should recall verses of Dalí's poem where, after describing the immobile Narcissus by the pool, he continues:

*“Now the great mystery draws near,  
the great metamorphosis is about to occur.*

*Narcissus in his immobility, absorbed by his reflection with  
the digestive slowness of carnivorous plants, becomes invisible.*

*There remains of him only  
the hallucinatingly white oval of his head,  
his head again more tender,  
his head, chrysalis of hidden biological designs,  
his head held up by the tips of the water's fingers,  
at the tips of the fingers*



*of the insensate hand,*

*of the terrible hand,  
of the excrement-eating hand,  
of the mortal hand  
of his own reflection.*

*When that head slits  
when that head splits  
when that head bursts,  
it will be the flower,  
the new Narcissus,  
Gala –  
my narcissus»<sup>35</sup>.*

On the canvas Dalí puts a giant hand of stone next to Narcissus as his compositional counterpart. The «terrible, mortal han» does not only look like Narcissus, it is actually (as Dalí tells us in the poem) a reflection of the young Boeotian which had risen up from the water and took its own existence. The hand represents the death of Narcissus while the flower which springs out of the white egg stands for his rebirth. In the painting the metamorphosis is ingeniously accomplished by the means of paranoiac-critical method: the crouching youth and the stone hand visually merge with the effect of Narcissus fading away and the narcissus flower coming into focus. Thus, of Narcissus there only remains the flower with white petals surrounding a yellow heart which, according to Ovid, the mourning nymphs are going to find instead of the dead body of the Boeotian youth<sup>36</sup>.

From the perspective of Dalí's artistic creativeness and the newly developed paranoiac-critical method it becomes evident that Ovid's narrative on Narcissus' death with details that are lacking in other classical (or later) sources finds its place at the very center of the painting. Dalí's treatment of the theme represents a unique contribution to the iconography of Narcissus in European art. Yet its modernity does not exclude classical tradition, and Ovid's text appears to be an important inspiration for the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*.

## NOTAS

1. Dalí's letters to his friend and patron Edward James show he was very proud of the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* as proved by his (Letter from 15 June 1937, Edward James Foundation, West Dean). He considered it an important stage in his artistic career also because of the originality of simultaneous treatment of the theme in painting and poetry and the full realization of the newly developed paranoiac-critical method. The poem with the same title as the painting was published both in French and English to reach greater international attention. James Edward (actual owner of the painting) deemed both painting and poem a great artistic success. The fact that Dalí decided to take this picture to the long-awaited meeting with Sigmund Freud in 1938 illustrates Dalí's high esteem of the painting. Finkelstein considers

the painting a turning point in Dalí's artistic development. Cf. FINKELSTEIN, Haim. *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing 1927-1942. The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. Cambridge: University Press, 1996.

2. HEYD, Milly. «Dalí's 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus' Reconsidered». *Artibus et Historiae*, vol. V, 10 (1984), pp. 121-131; FINKELSTEIN, Haim. *Salvador Dalí's Art and Writing...*, pp. 229-242; LOMAS, David. *Narcissus Reflected*. Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery, 2011, pp. 26-53. See also: LOMAS, David. «Sobre el Narcisismo en Dalí: Una introducción». In: DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus/La Metamorfosis de Narciso*, Barcelona: Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Galàxia Gutenberg/Cercle de Lectors, 2009, pp. 89-133; LOMAS, David. «Metamorphosis of Narcissus: Dalí's Self-Analysis». In: DAWN, Ades & BRADLEY, Fiona (eds.). *Salvador Dalí: a mythology*. London: Tate Gallery, 1998, pp. 78-100.

3. For Ovid as the main source see: ORLOWSKY, Ursula & ORLOWSKY, Rebekka. *Narziss und Narzissimus im Spiegel von Literatur, Bildender Kunst und Psychoanalyse. Vom Mythos zur leeren Selbstinszenierung*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1992, pp. 19-20; BELTING, Hans. *Florence and Baghdad. Renaissance Art and Arab Science*. London: Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 232. For reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* see also: HERMAN, Walter & HORN, Hans-Jürgen (eds.). *Die Rezeption der Metamorphosen des Ovid in der Neuzeit: Der antike Mythos in Text und Bild*. Berlin: Gebrüder Mann Verlag, 1995; LICHTENSTERN, Christa. *Metamorphose. Vom Mythos zum Prozessdenken: Ovid-Rezeption, Surrealistische Ästhetik, Verwandlungsthematik der Nachkriegskunst*. Weinheim: VCH, 1992.

4. Bibliography on Dalí's oeuvre is huge and the majority of books dealing with his paintings pay some attention to the *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. Among recent monographs see for example: ROJAS, Carlos. *Salvador Dalí, Or the Art of Spitting on Your Mother's Portrait*. Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1993; DAWN, Ades. *Salvador Dalí*. London: Thames&Hudson, 1995; MOORHOUSE, Paul. *Dalí*. San Diego (Calif.): Thunder Bay Press, 1995; DAWN, Ades & BRADLEY, Fiona (eds.). *Salvador Dalí: a mythology*. London: Tate Gallery, 1998; DESCHARNES, Robert & NÉRET, Gilles. *Salvador Dalí. 1904-1989*. 2 vols. Taschen, 2004; ADES, Dawn & TAYLOR, Michael. *Dalí* (exhibition catalogue, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 12 September 2004 – 16 January 2005). Milano: Bompiani Arte, 2004; WOLF, Norbert. *Salvador Dalí 1904-1989*. Bath: Parragon Books, 2008; BARNES, Rachel. *Salvador Dalí*. London: Quercus, 2009.

5. *Metamorphoses*. III, 407-412.

6. The iconography of Narcissus in visual arts is an issue that so far has not been fully researched and there are but a few studies dedicated to the individual works of art and oeuvres of selected painters or selected periods in European art. A consistent study of Narcissus myth in visual arts is still a work to be done. So far only a short overview has been published by Luise Vinge in her study of the Narcissus in European literature (VINGE, Luise. *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century*. Lund: Gleerups, 1967). Another study of Narcissus in European literature that includes notes on visual arts: ORLOWSKY, Ursula & ORLOWSKY, Rebekka. *Narziss und Narzissimus im Spiegel...* München: 1992. Among studies dedicated to visual arts: PANOFKY, Dora. «Narcissus and Echo: Notes on Poussin's 'Birth of Bacchus' in the Fogg Museum of Art». *Art Bulletin*, 31 (1949), pp. 112-120; NORDHOFF, Claudia. *Narziss an der Quelle. Spiegelbilder eines Mythos in der Malerei des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*. Münster/Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1992; ZAALENE, Sabine. «'Peindre, c'est embrasser la surface de la source': Narcisse, la Peinture dans les oeuvres françaises du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle». In: AURAIJ-JONCHIERE, Pascale (ed.). *Isis, Narcisse, Psyché entre Lumières et romantisme. Mythe et écritures, écritures du mythe*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2000, pp. 181-191.

7. The poem was published on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1937 (Éditions surréalistes, Paris) in English and French. Both versions are available in several publications, recently in: DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus/La Metamorfosis de Narciso*. Barcelona: Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Galàxia Gutenberg/Cercle de Lectors, 2009; LOMAS, David. *Narcissus Reflected*. Edinburgh, 2011. The text of the poem is also available at: [http://www.salvador-Dalí.org/media/upload/pdf/PoemaMetamorfosiNarcisFR\\_noticies\\_fr\\_home\\_101.pdf](http://www.salvador-Dalí.org/media/upload/pdf/PoemaMetamorfosiNarcisFR_noticies_fr_home_101.pdf).

8. DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, verses 36-38.

9. LOMAS, David. *Narcissus Reflected...*, p. 35.

10. DALÍ, Salvador. *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí*. Translation Haakon M. Chevalier. London: Vision Press, 1968<sup>3</sup>, p. 70.

11. *Metamorphoses*. III, 353-355.

12. *Metamorphoses*, III, 402-403.
13. The exhibition in New York in 1934 was a major success; in 1936 Dalí exhibited his works at London International Surrealist Exhibition. He also made a second trip to the USA where he was much celebrated and appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine. At that time he was already surrounded by Hollywood celebrities and started to call himself Divine.
14. *Metamorphoses*, III, 421.
15. FREITAG, Christiane. *Altsprachlicher Unterricht und moderne Kunst*. Bamberg: Friedrich Maier, 1994, p. 42.
16. *Metamorphoses*, III, 398-399.
17. CZAPLA, Beate. «Salvador Dalís Metamorphose des Narziss. Anregung zu einer erneuten Ovidbetrachtung». *Arkadia. Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*, 30 (1995), p. 200.
18. «*spreta latet silvis pudibundaque frondibus ora  
protegit et solis ex illo vivit in antris;  
sed tamen haeret amor crescitque dolore repulsae;  
extenuant vigiles corpus miserabile curae  
adducitque cutem macies et in aera sucus  
corporis omnis abit; vox tantum atque ossa supersunt:  
vox manet, ossa ferunt lapidis traxisse figuram.  
inde latet silvis nulloque in monte videtur;  
omnibus auditur: sonus est, qui vivit in illa*».  
(*Metamorphoses*, III, 393-401.)
19. See e.g.: GORSEN, Peter. *Salvador Dalí, Der 'kritische Paranoiker'*. Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1983.
20. DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, verse 29.
21. *Ibidem*, verses 8-19.
22. *Metamorphoses*, III, 418-419.
23. *Metamorphoses*, III, 427-429. See also verses 457-462:  
«*spem mihi nescio quam vultu promittis amico,  
cumque ego porrexi tibi brachia, porrigis ultro,  
cum risi, adrides; lacrimas quoque saepe notavi  
me lacrimante tuas; nutu quoque signa remittis  
et, quantum motu formosi suspicor oris,  
verba refers aures non pervenientia nostras!*»
24. *Metamorphoses*, III, 474-481.
25. *Metamorphoses*, III, 491-493.
26. DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, verses 119-120.
27. E.g. ROJAS, Carlos. *Salvador Dalí...*, p. 85.
28. E.g. HEYD, Milly. *Dalí's 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus'...*, p. 126.
29. LOMAS, David. *Narcissus Reflected...* p. 52. We should add that in the painting itself there is no indication whatsoever for the interpretation suggested by Dalí in his poem. There are also obvious hints at homoeroticism such as homage to Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (1597-1599, Galleria del Arte Antiqua, Rome) in form of the exposed knee, which is further eroticized by the reflection in the pool. Together with its reflection the knee conforms to the shape of a man's buttocks.
30. «If one looks for some time, from a slight distance and with a certain 'distant fixedness' at the hypnotically immobile figure of Narcissus, it gradually disappears until at last it is completely invisible. The metamorphosis of the myth takes place at that precise moment, for the image of Narcissus is suddenly transformed into the image of a hand which rises out of his own reflection. At the tips of its fingers the hand is holding an egg, a seed, the bulb from which will be born the new narcissus – the flower. Beside it can be seen the limestone sculpture of the hand – the fossil hand of the water holding the blown flower». DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, prologue.
31. HEYD, Milly. *Dalí's 'Metamorphosis of Narcissus'...*, p. 122.

32. The first version is older and dates back to antiquity – Narcissus by the pool with blossoming narcissi can be found in roman frescoes and mosaics (E.g. *Narcissus by the pool*, mosaic from the House of Menader in Daphne, 250-275 AD, Antakya Museum). The second is much later and appears in Renaissance art. The narcissus flower by the dead body of Narcissus is often very stylized or it can be represented by an imaginary flower like in Raphael Regius', illustrated *Ovidii Metamorphoses* (Venice, 1518). The most famous example of dead Narcissus with narcissi painted naturalistically is Poussin's *Narcissus and Echo* (ca. 1630, Louvre).

33. Dalí himself speaks of «incurable sleep, vegetable, atavistic» and «vegetable state of fatigue-laden sleep» (DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, verses 100-105).

34. Ovid completes the image of the dying Narcissus by yet another metaphor – the morning dew that thaws in the sun. He further underlines the idea of melting of the hero's body by saying that Narcissus has been weakened and melted by love, and worn away little by little by the hidden fire:

*«quae simul adspexit liquefacta rursus in unda,  
non tulit ulterius, sed ut intabescere flavae  
igne levi cerae matutinaeque pruinae  
sole tepente solent, sic attenuatus amore  
liquitur et tecto paulatim carpitur igni».*

(*Metamorphoses*, III, 486-490.)

35. DALÍ, Salvador. *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. 1937, verses 121-138.

36. *Metamorphoses*, III, 505-510.