

## “Spinning the thread/(t)s” around images of time

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### Abstract

*Salvador Dali's words are actually the embodiment of surrealism<sup>1</sup>, founded in 1924, in Paris, by André Breton with his Manifeste du surréalisme. This literary and art movement was based on surprising and unexpected juxtaposition of elements of reality. These startling transformations of the real world bring forth new objects that are the creative expressions of imagination, “free of the conscious control of reason and free of convention”<sup>2</sup>. The plunge into the subconscious or spontaneous thought could be actually linked to the physical state of headache, mentioned by Dali when starting to paint watches. The combination between the hard metal texture of watches and the softness of the molded watches relies on the “principle of paranoiac metamorphosis” in tangible form (Descharnes, Néret, 2001: 171).*

*My paper is actually a “digging into” the process of creating (of spinning) the nonverbal and verbal images of some indices (threads) of time, watches becoming such a semiotic object. The theoretical background used in the understanding of the reasoning beyond the subjective depicting of some real objects is epistemological in nature, dealing with traditional and social semiotics. The empirical data<sup>4</sup> will be provided by Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory (Soft Watches)* and Carl Sandburg's *Solo for Saturday Night Guitar*. These two verbal and visual images are closely connected, the former being the picture accompanying the discursive representation of time by Sandburg.*

*Keywords: surrealism, Salvador Dali, threads of time, Carl Sandburg*

### Streszczenie

#### Spory i kłótnie wokół obrazowania czasu

*Słowa Salvadora Dali rozpoczynające niniejszy artykuł stanowią w zasadzie motto surrealizmu, ruchu ustanowionego w Paryżu w 1924 r. przez André Bretona. Ten literacki i artystyczny ruch zasadzał się na zadziwiających i nieoczekiwanych zestawieniach pewnych elementów rzeczywistości. W wyniku takich zaskakujących przekształceń powstają nowe jakości, będące twórczym wyrazem wyobraźni, „wolne od świadomej kontroli rozumu i wolne od konwencji”. Zanurzenie się w podświadomą czy spontaniczną myśl można połączyć z fizycznym stanem bólu głowy, wspomnianym przez Dalego, gdy malował zegary. Połączenie*

twardej, metalicznej faktury zegarów z miękkością topiących się zegarów zasadza się na dotykanej formie „paranoicznej metamorfozy” (Descharnes, Néret, 2001: 171).

W moim artykule zasadniczo „wglębiam się” w proces tworzenia (przędzenia) zarówno werbalnych jak i niewerbalnych obrazów niektórych wskaźników (nici) czasu. Takim semiotycznym wskaźnikiem są tu zegarki. Teoretyczną podstawą, wykorzystaną do odkrycia rozumowania stojącego za subiektywnym przedstawieniem niektórych rzeczywistych przedmiotów natury epistemologicznej, jest semiotyka tradycyjna i społeczna. Bazę do analizy stanowi obraz Salvadora Dali „Uporczywość Pamięci” [Ciekące Zegary], jak również wiersz Carla Sandburga „Solo for Saturday Night Guitar”. Oba te werbalne i wizualne obrazy są bardzo blisko ze sobą związane, gdyż praca Dalego powstała jako ilustracja dyskursywnego przedstawienia czasu z wiersza Sandberga.

Słowa kluczowe: surrealizm, Salvador Dali, nici czasu, Carl Sandburg

## 1. The ‘anatomy’ of images

“[...] the day I decided to paint watches,  
I painted them soft.  
It was on an evening  
when I felt tired,  
and had a slight headache,  
which is extremely rare with me.”  
(Dali, in Descharnes, Néret 2001: 173)

An analysis of the etymology of the concept *image* unfolds a semantic equivoque:

- on the one hand, the Latin *imaginem* (nom. *imago*) from the stem of *imitari*, meaning a picture, frame, pattern, or shape (Wunenburger [1997] 2004: 18), together with the Greek etymology of the word *icon* [Gr. *eikon*, single image created as a focal point of religious veneration] sends to an optical experience, to a representation meant for visual perception and which reproduces a reality through resemblance (Wunenburger [1997] 2004: 18);
- on the other hand, the concept of imagination [Gr. *eidolon*, L. *fictio*] which implies the mental capacity for manipulating mental imagery, for fantasy, for creative, original, and insightful thought.

I am of the opinion that this twofold etymology is the perfect combination between two body parts (the eye and the mind), both of them selecting, focusing on and controlling “time within a process which requires the representation of the world [...]” (Cmeciu 1999: 136). This world is made up of some concrete objects that might stand for some abstract notions

and which could actually be linked to Eco's semiotic notions of *type* and *token* and to Wąsik's notions (2003) of objectivism (extraorganismic) and subjectivism (intraorganismic).

The mere uttering of the concept *time* makes one's mind create a universal association to some material objects, namely watches and clocks, seen as *types*. The contextualization of such objects into an artistic, respectively, poetic discourse implies a switch towards some *tokens*, which embody "some individual choices and conditions of a cognizing subject" (Wąsik 2003: 27). Thus, each individual, in his/ her creative process of reshaping the object has a semiotic grid of consumption (Floch 2000: 121) of the respective object, invested with some semiotic values (practical, critical, utopian, ludico-aesthetic).

The two discourses that are to be analysed offer a more profound embodiment of the notion *token*:

- firstly, the context of the surrealist movement, where imagination plays a very important role, installs a reconfiguration of the semiotic system of composition (van Leeuwen, 2005), namely the visual parameter, *textureme* (Groupe  $\mu$  1992: 135): the hard texture of a watch is melted and turned into a soft texture;
- secondly, the poetic and visual metaphors are based on the power of imagination and they might constitute the perfect creative tools to escape into the world of fantasy where the reader/ viewer is invested with the mental capacity of assembling the pieces of the source and target domains.

Even if, at first sight, the choice of Dali's *The Persistence of Memory* as the picture accompanying Sandburg's *Solo for Saturday Night Guitar* might be surprising, the devices (paranoiac metamorphosis and metaphor) used, imply a plunge into the subconscious and are based, both of them, on undercodedness. The reshaping of the cognitive incompleteness or distortion that resides in the surrealist painting and in the poetic discourse should take into account the situational context (some biographical data) and some cultural-specific connotations, thus the decoding process of the poem and of the painting is performed on two axes (Bakhtin 1981: 254–255): the events implicitly "narrated" in the two discourses (the horizontal axis: the chronotope of the represented world) and the event of narration itself (the vertical axis: the chronotope of the readers and creators of the work).

Our (un)spinning the (non)verbal elements/ threads that form the semiotic system of *time* is based on M.A.K. Halliday's ideational metafunction (1994: 36) which places experience at the core of any representation. The different *embodiments* of the two pictorial and verbal empirical instances of *time* enter into a relational process of classifying, identifying and

symbolizing. Creation through negation seems to be the discursive strategy that this quest for a definition of *time* is achieved through.

## 2. Experiencing time through (meta)objects

Even if this paper is not meant to offer a philosophical approach to *time*, being rather a semiotic attempt to decipher the (non)verbal discursive markers of *time*, one cannot ignore that the concept of *time* implies interdisciplinarity. This is the reason for which I will briefly mention some important approaches to *time*.

The concept of *time* has been a very debatable philosophical issue since Aristotle, being perceived either objectively or subjectively (Augustine). Plotinus and, later on, Henri Bergson take into consideration the asymmetry between the past and the future. Unlike Immanuel Kant and, later on, Herbert Spencer, for whom knowledge is more deeply achieved, the less it refers to reality, Bergson seems to grasp reality directly, thus being included (Marcus 1985: 43) into the experientialist type of philosophers for whom intuition and facts play a very important role. Whereas Bergson relates the “being [sein] in time” to space, Martin Heidegger tries to find how time acquired this ontological function. The German philosopher (1962: 39) considers that “*time* needs to be *explicated primordially as the horizon for the understanding of Being, and in terms of temporality as the Being of Dasein, which understands Being*”. Rejecting concepts such as *subjectivity*, *objectivity* or *consciousness*, Heidegger considers that *Dasein* (being-there/ here) is always engaged in the world and the fundamental mode of being is not that of a subjective or objective perception but of the coherence of being-in-the-world. This coherence is achieved through an obligatory mood that any *Dasein* possesses, and this mood is the element which allows any encounters in the world. Any *Dasein* becomes a “thrown” “projection”, projecting itself onto the possibilities that lie before it or may be hidden, and interpreting and understanding the world in terms of possibilities.

This projection should not be interpreted as the present moment, but, on the contrary, it possesses “what is past as a property which is still present-at-hand and which sometimes has after-effects upon it: *Dasein* «is» its past in the way of *its* own Being, which, to put it roughly, 'historizes' out of its future on each occasion” (Heidegger 1962: 41). It is exactly this continuous gliding between past-present-future which is always governed by a mood/ feeling the respective *Dasein* (re)experiences.

## 2.1. The objective discourse of objects (watches)

The poetic and the pictorial discourses of *time* seem to be the harmonious combination of the philosophical approaches, briefly presented above.

The elements that form the coherence and cohesion of a particular discourse should form what Algirdas Greimas (1983) calls *isotopy*. I consider that the first element that comes into one's mind when mentioning the concept of *time* is a manufactured object, namely, a watch or a clock. Both Sandburg and Dali start from this objective discourse which implies a functional system: "Man invented time to be used" (Carl Sandburg). At this generic discursive level, watches and clocks appear depicted in their *configuration component* (Floch 2000: 155), which implies the subdividing of an object into its parts and then recomposing it as a single form: the face, the hands, the numbers and the lens. Through this association-by-inference process, where the minimal parts are identified, the watches and clocks are interpreted at the layer of a metaform (Danesi 2002: 4).

Both Sandburg's and Dali's clocks and watches are, at this discursive stage, the embodiments of the quantitative structure of time (Henri Bergson) through their seconds, minutes and hours. Whereas the verbal clock shows rather the semiotic type wearing "the numbers one to twelve/ And you look and read its face/ And tell the time pre-cise-ly ex-act-ly", the pictorial watches bear the same numbers and face, but Dali's watches become tokens through their *taxic component*<sup>3</sup> because their hands become the indices of three precise instances of time: 6:30 (the watch on the branches of the olive tree), 6:55 (the watch on the box) and 7:02 (the watch on the body). Through the device of gradation, both artists seem to stir the hearing sense through the minimal auditory unit of a watch or a clock, namely its ticking: the exact period of time from 6:30 to 7:02 through the visual images of the exact numbers (Dali) and the hyphenated syllables within the adverbs *precisely* and *exactly* (Sandburg). This method of splitting words into syllables offers the linguistic possibility of identifying two elements within the philosophical triad related to the concept of *time*, namely past (the prefixes *pre-*, *ex-*) and present (the verbal root *act*). The triad is complete if future is added and this last element is implied in two ways:

- on the one hand, through the generic use of the present tense in the simple sentences ("And you look and read its face/ And tell the time pre-cise-ly ex-act-ly").
- on the other hand, through the modal verb *shall* added to the existential *be* ("Time shall be."). Besides being the obvious succession of a sequence of verbal markers of past and present ("Time was. Time is."), the modal verb *shall* in its deontic meaning is stronger than *must* "in that it does not merely lay an obligation, however strong,

but actually guarantees that the action will occur” (Palmer 1990: 74). This pragmatic blending between an exercitive and a commissive (Austin 1975: 155-160) within the interpretation of *shall* could also be grasped in the aspectual dimension of the verb *to invent* which embodies the stretch of time through an implied urge of an inchoative action of invention and a promise of a continuative action of the respective invented/manufactured object.

## 2.2. The objective discourse of objects (watches)

Both the verbal and the pictorial discourses seem to break a presupposed isotopy of watches or clocks initially installed:

- Through a distorsion of objects and their placement in the most peculiar places, Dali moulds a new level of reality governed by allotopy<sup>4</sup> where mere objects turn into metaobjects whose projections should be deciphered only in relation to each other and taking into account the historical and cultural contexts.
- Using the structuralist method of binary opposition, Sandburg offers an implicit subjective interpretation to *time* by trying to define *love* (a primordial emotion) through the stylistic device of a *metaphor* which is actually built on *allotopy* (Groupe  $\mu$  1977). I consider that the startling structure of reality achieved through Sandburg’s verbal metaphors can be solved through the cognitive theories on metaphors. Concepts such as “mapping” (Lakoff, Johnson 1980), “blending” (Turner, Fouconnier 1995) or “cognitive flow” (Danesi 1993, 2002) are the theoretical tools which help with the understanding of “mental imagery transfers” between the discursive partners in the verbal *mise en image*. The verbal representation of *time* through *love* will be dealt with in section 3 (*Experiencing time through feelings*).

### *The syntax of Dali’s soft watches*

The intricate surrealist combination of objects that can be perceived in Dali’s *The Persistence of Memory (Soft Watches)* could be grasped using Theo van Leeuwen’s main semiotic systems (represented participants, modality, composition and interactive participants).

Our choice for this type of semiotics lies in the fact that social semiotics studies signification processes, the production of (non)verbal texts in context, the semiotic systems being analysed in their social and historical determination.

As I have mentioned, allotopy is the semiotic principle which is at the core of Dali’s surrealist association between reality and appearance/ dream whose result will be the paranoid

metamorphosis between two oxymoronic elements: the hardness of watches and the softness of cheese.

Mitchell's distinction ([1942] 1994: 4) between a *picture* (a constructed concrete object or ensemble which is a deliberate act of representation) and an *image* (the virtual, phenomenal appearance that it provides for the beholder) helps the viewer to understand the shocking combination between real participants (water, land, olive tree, rocks) and remoulded participants (watches, the hideous creature). The proper decoding of some elements belonging to reality should be linked to the layer of a meta-metaform (Danesi 2002: 6), namely to indexicality in reference to some cultural contexts, particularly to a geographical location in Spain. The water, land and rocks are actually indices of the landscape of Cape Creus (Cape of Crosses in Catalan), the place where the Pyrenees meet the sea and where Port Lligat, the very place where Salvador Dali built his home, lies.

The relations created between the *represented/ projected participants* (objects) within the frame of Dali's painting remind of Halliday's ideational metafunction, namely each *mise en image* has either narrative or conceptual representational structures. Thus, the world inside *Soft Watches* may unfold implicit actions and events, or processes of change, on the one hand, and abstract comparative or generalized categories, on the other hand. The minimal units which help with establishing these narrative and abstract structures are the *vectors* which might be either centrifugal or centripetal, thus revealing two types of relations (rejection *versus* attraction or distance *versus* closeness) which lead towards another semiotic system, namely *composition*.

Dali's spatial displaying of objects can be interpreted through Rudolph Arnheim's one type of composition systems in visual arts, namely *eccentricity* which stands for the self-centered individual or group who is compelled to recognize that its own center is only one among others. In *Soft Watches*, in the centre, there is a monstrous creature resembling the artist's own face in profile and being an index of the present-at-hand. The polarized structures could be divided into two systems which represent the deictic indices of *being-there* and *being-here*: the left lower system where the olive tree, two watches, the case of a watch and a wooden box are depicted might stand for indices of past, whereas the right upper (rocks and cliffs) could be interpreted as an index of future. Thus, through the choice of one center and two polarized locations, Dali achieves a subjective temporal axis whose spatial representation is not linear, but, on the contrary, circular, thus reminding the circular movement of clock hands.

The different types of objects that form this composition system of *eccentricity* should bring into discussion what van Leeuwen calls *modality*<sup>5</sup> and whose main variables coincides with the three systems of a plastic sign (Groupe  $\mu$  1992: 135), based on visual parameters ('chromemes', 'texturemes', and 'formemes').

The decoding of the distorted formemes and texturemes of the represented objects (the watches, the creature in the center, the olive tree) enables us to reach the layer of a metasymbol (a trace to a culture's historical past, being governed by conventions), thus every object historizing out of its future (Heidegger 1962: 41):

- Dali's watches (*tokens*) possess the invented numbers on their faces (markers of past – *types* – see 2.1.) and they are perceived at the painter's and viewer's present-at-hand and their ticking will continue in the future.
- The olive tree branches seem to historize on several biblical and mythological connotations: either the biblical place (Mount of Olives) of the ascension of Jesus, or the biblical account of the dove returning to Noah's ark at the end of the flood (Genesis 8:11), or the mythological account of a dove bringing an olive twig from Phoenicia to Athens, symbolizing peace and prosperity.
- The creature in the center (with its long eyelashes which seem insectlike and with what may or may not be a tongue oozing from its nose like a fat snail) may seem the surrealist embodiment of a history of Dali's personality, moulded by Gala, "the woman Dali took away from Paul Éluard and who jealously guarded over him for more than fifty years" (Walther 2000: 145).

Dali plays with the indices of these three types of time (quantitative, biblical/mythological and biological) through a visual negation of one important visual parameter, namely the textureme, which consequently will bring about the metamorphosis of the formeme (/dimension/, /orientation/, /direction/).

The first and the most important object to be visually melted is the *watch*, actually the three watches whose numbers tell the passing of time. The hard textureme of a watch seems to be molded into a soft ingredient that can be shaped as the artist wishes. The evening when Gala and Salvador Dali topped off their meal with "a very strong Camembert" cheese (Dali in Descharnes, Néret 2001: 173) could be considered one instance of memory, being the near past that this principle of softness can be linked to. This visual melting process of cheese and watches has a synesthetic effect (hearing: the ticking of the watches, sight: the faces of the watches, smell: the strongly flavoured Camembert cheese; taste: delicate salty taste of Camembert cheese). Boutaud (1998/ 2003: 109) considers that any visual communication of

taste is based on a double absence: on the one hand, the absence of a sense of taste in favour of a sign and on the other hand, the complete absence of flavour in favour of value, based on axiological markers. Camembert, this cow's-milk cheese, has a white, downy rind and a smooth, creamy interior, being the most famous cheeses in France, dating back to the 18th century. The sign of French tradition and fame, Camembert inspired Dali in his visual projection of watches because when perfectly ripe, the cheese should ooze thickly. It is exactly this soft and liquid shape, which seems to slowly and steadily flow, that Dali replaces the objective hard texture of a watch with: "Soft clocks: they are nothing else than paranoic-critical, gentle, and extravagant Camemberts outside time and space." (Dali in Walther 2000: 143).

The direction of the hands of the three watches (6:30, 6:55, 7:02) corresponds to the fluidity of the soft texture showing the slow and exact passing of time. The quantitative time represented by the three watches could be signs of the precision of Swiss watches. Despite the fact that two of the watches are placed on real things (olive tree, wooden box) and one on an undefinable object (a monstrous creature), they seem to be outside time and space because all these objects are interpreted in a reversed manner:

1. The viewer should read these three instances of time in a reversed order (from right to left).
2. The biblical and mythological connotations associated to the olive tree seem to be fading as the grey chromeme of the trunk of the leafless tree is an index of the absence of the hard and solid texture of the evergreen tree.
3. It is very difficult to pinpoint the distorted creature to one concrete body. Most critics associate it to Dali's own face in profile, or to a snail whose tongue is oozing out of its mouth. These two possible projections find actually an explanation in some of Dali's words: "Instead of hardening me, as life planned, Gala [...] succeeded in building for me a shell to protect the tender nakedness of the Bernard the Hermit that I was, so that while in relation to the outside world I assumed more and more the appearance of a fortress, within myself I could continue to grow old in the soft, and in the supersoft." (Dali in Descharmes, Néret 2001: 173).

The surprising juxtaposition between the extraorganismic – hard texture of the skin (shell/ fortress) – and the intraorganismic – the soft texture of Dali's body (flesh) – resemble the appearance of prototypical snail with a spirally coiled shell, a broad retractile and muscular foot and a head. In his creative process through negation, Dali modifies the

prototypical image of a snail into a subjective interpretation of this mollusk which was chosen exactly for its possibility of hiding from the outside world.

I am of the opinion that the reading of the three watches should not stop at the last one (7:02) lying on the metamorphosized body. One might be tempted to interpret number seven as a sign of anxiety and threat, symbolizing death, a bodily disintegration in time, thus a possible ending point of life and of the decoding as well. On the contrary, number seven symbolizes the totality of space and time (Chevalier, Gheerbrant [1969] 1995: 289), thus the apparent centrifugal surrealist juxtaposition/ blending of objects of reality and fantasy are actually governed by centripetal vectors. I consider that the process of reading resembles the spiral shape of a snail: the most coiled points being the three quantitative indices of the exact hours (6:30, 6:55, 7:02), then other remote points being two qualitative indices of the cultural and geographical "here and there" (the Pyrenees and the sea = Cape Creus, Dali's living place/ habitat).

### 3. Experiencing time through (meta)objects

The decoding of a spiral visual projection of time in Dali's painting coincides with what Baudrillard ([1968] 2005: 22) says about clocks/ watches, namely that "the clock stands paradoxically for the permanence and introjection to time". This incorporation of some real or imaginary temporal objects into Dali's own psyche unconsciously implies a metamorphosis of the states of affairs (the events measured by the clock ticking), that form the world, into some states of feelings<sup>6</sup> through the mediation of the body. The importance of a possible disintegration of the body when the clock strikes 7 o'clock was mentioned when analysing the creature in the centre of Dali's painting, thus being a physical assimilation of the substance of time.

In my opinion, the gap that might exist between the poetic and pictorial representations of *time* is exactly filled by the body of Dali's creature and the watch laid over it. My statement is based on a twofold argument:

- on the one hand, Baudrillard ([1968] 2005: 23) mentions that "the clock is a mechanical heart that reassures us about our own heart".
- on the other hand, *love*, the feeling which has heart as its main bodily "residence", is Sandburg's poetic mediated technique of defining *time*.

Despite the linguistic use of the same durative aspectualization (*Love was. Love is. Love shall be.*), this feeling of *love*, which is "directly experienced as a self-evident mode of

existence (Greimas, Fontanille [1991] 1993: 2), seems impossible to be traced to the present moment, just as *time* is identified through its indices (the hands of a clock/ watch).

This difficulty to trace the passing of *love* is overcome by Sandburg through the following discursive strategies:

- *antithesis* (Gr. *antithesis*, “setting opposite”). Greimas and Fontanille ([1991] 1993: 14) consider that in order “to understand, the subject first of all has to negate. [...] Negation is the first operation by which a subject finds himself as *operative subject*, and finds the world as knowable.” Firstly, Sandburg uses in his poem an implied type of negation, achieved through a rhetorical question (“Who tells love numbers pre-cise-ly ex-act-ly?”) whose answer is actually negative. This linguistic device implies that the subject operator engages himself in a quest, *summoning* the position of a person who assigns some “shadows of a value” (Greimas, Fontanille [1991] 1993: 14) to the abstract concept of *love*. The second type of negation used by Sandburg is *contradiction*, a negation in the categorial sense. In the process of classifying, where the carrier is *love* and the attributes are *the shimmering of star dust*, *the smooth flow of new blossoms*, *the drag of a heavy hungering for someone*, the subject seems to negate some stereotypes associated to this feeling (love makes you not perceive things properly, love makes you float, love implies two persons). I consider that this reverse way of classifying love brings Sandburg closer to Dali in the way of projecting a distorted reality, either through visually modifying some real objects or through negating some well-known beliefs about the feeling of *love*.
- *metaphor*<sup>8</sup> (Gr. *metaphora*, derived from *metapherein*, formed of *meta* – “over, across, beyond” and *pherein* “to carry, to bear”). In his quest for a proper definition, Sandburg makes use of metaphors, the arguments that establish the structure of reality. This process of going beyond provided by this device offers a freedom of thought where the simulacra are obtained through the same method of startling juxtapositions/ blendings between the input source mental spaces (white horse/ wheels and hammers/ a rock/ a sea/ a tall shadow/ a circle of spray and prisms) and the input target mental space (love). The newly-obtained poetic blended space<sup>9</sup> could be understood in terms of Danesi’s concept of “cognitive flow” between the layers of a metaform, a meta-metaform and a metasymbol. The six input source mental spaces have several valencies that come from the process of association by inference (an animal, tools, elements of nature, blurred real objects). The moment when some valencies turn into values, the reasoning within the cognitive flow seems to have

reached the layer of meta-metaform, governed by indexicality by inference, or the layer of metasymbols, governed by historical and/ or cultural conventions. Within the six source mental spaces, there could be perceived three symbolic dualities:

- a) the white horse, the wheels and hammers as indices of movement and progression or destruction. The mental image of a (white) horse is the symbol of the passing of time, reminding of an atemporal archetype<sup>10</sup> of “the carrier both of life/ light and death/ dark” (Chevalier, Gheerbrant [1969] 1995: 224, vol. 1). The deictic pronoun *you* seems to be gliding the reasoning towards the ethical archetypal of the horse, the visual parameter of the *chromeme* /white/ being the symbol of the heavenly white horse, standing for the tamed instinct. This stifling of sexual lusting (the verb *to ride*) is to be found in the solitude, the rejection of the other partner (“wheels and hammers leaving you lonely”).
  - b) the rocks and the sea as indices of two primordial elements (earth and water), being the symbols of eternity. Sandburg uses the same method of inverting the prototype of *love* (passion for someone or a physical feeling of joy and restlessness). The two elements are places of rest (“a rock in the moonlight for rest”) and of infinitude (“a sea where phantom ships cross always”).
  - c) the shadow and circle of spray and prisms as indices of a game between reality and illusion. The three dualities end with some blurred projections of *love*. The connotations of the geometrical shapes (circle and prisms) might reveal, on the one hand, perfection and symmetry, and, on the other hand, entrapment and a break of light into its constituent spectral colors.
- *oxymoron*<sup>11</sup> (Gr. *oxy* – “sharp” and *moros* – “dull”). One embodiment of the contradiction of terms (*heavy*, *heavy* is love to carry/ and *light* as ...) is actually the logical result of the use of a prism, namely the rainbow (the splitting of colors into the constituent spectral colors). In my opinion, the idea of a blurred reality is also rendered in the epistemic modality within the modal adverb “maybe”, which suggests imprecision and possibility. In the end of the poem, *love* is bodily perceived through a synesthesia of senses: the smell (“rose petal”), the sight (bubble, blossom), the hearing (bar of music) and the touch (“a finger or a wisp of hair”).

#### 4. Conclusion

Both the verbal (Carl Sandburg's *Solo for Saturday Night Guitar*) and nonverbal (Salvador Dali's *The Persistence of Memory - Soft Watches*) discourses are formed of apparent surprising juxtaposition of real and imaginary objects, but there is the process of decoding (unspinning) which unites these elements generated by the freedom of thought and governed by imaginative creativity. I consider that this reverse way of classifying *love* brings Sandburg closer to Dali in the way of projecting a distorted reality, either through visually modifying some real objects or through negating some well-known beliefs about the feeling of *love*.

After having offered a semiotic approach to the (non)verbal indices of *time*, the conclusion will actually be a decoding of the two titles.

The title (*Solo for Saturday Night Guitar*) of Sandburg's poem contains two important paradigms:

- *solo* is another argument for the distortion of the prototype of *love* (*love* implies two partners) and it stirs the hearing sense, causing a plunge into the world of memories which persist over time (Dali's *Persistence of Memory*);
- *Saturday night* stands for the slowly gliding from six, the sixth day of the week, towards seven, the seventh day of the week which God blessed as holy and as the day of rest, "because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done" (Genesis 1: 24). It is number seven which seems to unite the two explicit and implicit representations of time: the gradation towards 7 indicated by the hands of the watches, in Dali's painting, and the implicit gliding towards seven in Sandburg's poem.

#### **SOLO FOR SATURDAY NIGHT GUITAR**

Time was. Time is. Time shall be.  
 Man invented time to be used,  
 Love was. Love is. Love shall be.  
 Yet man never invented love  
 Nor is love to be used like time.  
 A clock wears numbers one to twelve  
 And you look and read its face  
 And tell the time pre-cise-ly ex-act-ly.  
 Yet who reads the face of love?  
 Who tells love numbers pre-cise-ly ex-act-ly?

Holding love in a tight hold for keeps,  
Fastening love down and saying  
"It's here now and here for always."  
You don't do this offhand, careless-like.

Love costs. Love is not so easy  
Nor is the shimmering of star dust  
Nor the smooth flow of new blossoms  
Nor the drag of a heavy hungering for someone.

Love is a white horse you ride  
or wheels and hammers leaving you lonely  
or a rock in the moonlight for rest  
or a sea where phantom ships cross al-ways  
or a tall shadow always whispering  
or a circle of spray and prisms–  
maybe a rainbow round your shoulder.

Heavy heavy is love to carry  
and light as one rose petal,  
light as a bubble, a blossom,  
a remembering bar of music  
or a finger or a wisp of hair  
never forgotten.

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### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition Copyright© 2004, Columbia University Press. Licensed from Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products N.V. p. 45967.

<sup>2</sup> "Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving out the principle problems of life." (André Breton in Walther 2000:137)

<sup>3</sup> Salvador Dali's painting as illustration for Carl Sandburg's poem appears in McCloskey, Mary Lou and Stack, Lydia (1996): *Voices in Literature*, Boston, Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, pp. 131 – 133.

<sup>4</sup> According to Jean-Marie Floch (2000: 155), the *taxic component* accounts via its differential traits for its status as an object among other manufactured objects.

<sup>5</sup> The term allotopy, introduced by Groupe  $\mu$  (1977) designates the opposite of the term isotopy, introduced by A.J. Greimas (1966). It could be seen as the deviation from a norm/ isotopy and the combination between certain units is expected not to recur in the future. For example, in Max Ernst's collage "Rencontre de deux sourires", a bird's head is placed on a human body, thus subverting, according to Groupe  $\mu$  (1977: 256-261), the isotopy of the human body. The shortcoming of this theory on metaphors is that it only presents the structural ways in which certain visual metaphors are constructed. That is why we will apply cognitive theories on metaphors to decode their meaning.

<sup>6</sup> The main indicators of modality within a visual representation (Scollon & Scollon, 2003: 90) are: color (saturation, differentiation, modulation), contextualization, depth and brightness.

<sup>7</sup> Influenced by Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, Greimas and Fontanille (1991/ 1993: 7) consider that from the point of view of perception, the world is constituted by states of affairs that are transformed into states of feelings through the mediation of the body.

<sup>8</sup> Random House College Websters Dictionary; see also inter alia Hawkes 1989: 1.

<sup>9</sup> This concept of "blended space" (Turner, Fouconnier) can be explained using the terminology from the semiotics of passion. Greimas and Fontanille ([1991] 1993: 44) define *simulacra* as "junctions projected by the subject into the imaginary space, opened up by modalities" (wanting, having-to, being-able, knowing).

<sup>10</sup> Boyer, Régis in Brunel, Pierre (1996: 110-117). Boyer offers three connotations to the concept of an archetype: a) a temporal dimension (the prototype, having an atemporal and primordial aspect); b) an ethical dimension (the ideal model, it has nothing primordial, but to which we implicitly refer); c) a metaphysical dimension (the supreme type, it stands for the perfect image that transcends the particular circumstances).

<sup>11</sup> The poem *Solo for Saturday Night Guitar* was published in the volume of verse whose title is built on an oxymoron, *Honey and Salt* (1936).

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