

Staging the modernist self: the self-portraits of William Orpen

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Abstract

One of the most financially successful and honoured painters of the twentieth century, William Orpen's reputation, now diminished, rests predominantly on his accomplished society portraits and war paintings. Yet Orpen (1873-1931) also produced an extensive body of compelling self-portraits, depicting himself in a variety of guises that mark diverse performances of his 'self'. This neglected area of Orpen's production stands apart from his distinctly official works as the painter of the British establishment and war artist and as such merits attention for its singular engagement with the modernist self. I consider Orpen's self-portraits as the visual equivalent of autobiography and autobiografiction, drawing on modernist literary examples for comparison, with a particular focus on Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*. I also analyse a range of images to investigate how Orpen could engage with, satirize, mask, elaborate and fantasize his identities in these works. While a comparison with historically specific notions of selfhood can illuminate Orpen's visual autobiography, I also consider the role played by his own biography in the questioning and staging of his own identity. Consistently characterized by critics as a great draughtsman yet frequently condemned for a lack of intellectual curiosity, I argue that Orpen, away from his official status, was intensely engaged in elaborating and examining his identities through self-portraits that also connect with a modernist preoccupation with the very process of creating art.

Keywords

Self-portraits, autobiography, identity, modernism, First World War, Ford Madox Ford, Ireland

Orpen through the looking glass

William Orpen (1878–1931) spent the greater part of his life studying faces. Known predominantly for his prolific society portraits, Orpen would also obsessively portray his own face, in a series of compelling and sometimes extravagant self-portraits. Yet despite a compulsive and intensely analytical fascination with the representation of his own identities, twenty years after his death Orpen was condemned by his nephew, Tate director John Rothenstein, as intellectually “feeble” and “contemptuous ... towards the life of the mind”.¹ This damning appraisal cemented a recurring tendency to underestimate Orpen’s intellectual faculties, a tendency that was arguably aided by Orpen’s own self-mocking levity. It was also the case that Orpen, as a painter of the establishment, official war artist, KBE and Royal Academician, occupied a manifestly public territory, one still dominated by Edwardian orthodoxies and thus unaccommodating to his more modernist engagement with the self.

Beginning with an overview of the literature on Orpen, I posit his self-representations as a visual equivalent of autobiography,² pictorial experiments in the capturing and construction of his composite selves. Autobiography had a central if problematic role in all modernisms: while some writers discouraged it in favour of self-effacement and impersonality, others engaged with life-writing in new ways, playing formal games with an increasingly fractured self through parody and the adoption of multiple personae. Drawing on literary theory and history, I consider ways in which the modernist self was represented in literature, an approach that can illuminate Orpen’s visual “autobiografiction”,³ a form which merges confession with a fictionalization of the self. Within literary modernism lay the idea that the perception and representation of ourselves and others develops out of multiple impressions that succeed one another. In this vein, my assessment of the literary engagement with the modernist self will focus on Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier*, a novel which innovated the rendering of reality through multiple perceptions. I look closely at a selection of Orpen’s “autoportraits” to question how he could engage with, satirize, mask and elaborate his identities in these works, as well as negotiate diverse art historical tendencies. I also consider the importance that aspects of Orpen’s own biography brought to bear on his persistent self-representation, however, a consideration of literary modernism suggests that his experiments in self-portraiture also engaged with historically specific interests, such as the difficulty in forging a fixed identity and the preoccupation with the very process of creating art.

Criticism

Orpen’s self-portraits rarely receive more than cursory appraisal. The sole article devoted to them was written in 1932 by the Francophile critic Frank Rutter who, in acknowledging Orpen’s penchant for disguise, likened the self-portraits to those of Rembrandt. For Rutter, Orpen was principally intent on exploiting the decorative, formal possibilities of dressing up, thereby using self-portraiture as a convenient means of training.⁴ Yet Orpen undertook a rigorous training from the age of eleven and was known for painting long hours daily throughout his lifetime. Moreover, with more society portrait commissions than he could satisfy and considerable wealth as the *de facto* successor of Sargent, there was no economic advantage in indulging a fascination with self-portraiture. Rutter’s comparison with the self-portraits of William Hogarth and Richard Wilson also seems misleading and does not take into account Orpen’s distinctly more problematic relationship with himself, one that evokes a palpable self-doubt compared with his apparently more self-possessed eighteenth-century predecessors. Orpen’s biographer Bruce Arnold also makes the comparison with Rembrandt’s self-portraits, citing both artists’ love of dress-up but, mistakenly I would argue, views Orpen’s images as ultimately comic in comparison with the tragedy of Rembrandt’s depicted self.⁵ Arnold also ascribes Orpen’s growing interest in self-portraiture to his affair with the powerful Evelyn St George,⁶ the subject of one of his most glamorous society portraits, yet this interest began long before and continued well after his association with her.

Rothenstein’s 1952 assessment of Orpen’s entire *oeuvre* is a generally damning one that set the tone for much subsequent criticism.⁷ Rothenstein dwells on Orpen’s spectacular material success but notes that he was virtually forgotten some twenty years after his death. (Orpen himself predicted, “Twenty years after I die nobody will remember me.”)⁸ While Rothenstein acknowledges Orpen’s brilliance as a draughtsman, he starkly condemns his lack of intellectual faculties and portrays a facile, infantilized Orpen who progressed through his career on a “golden treadmill”. Although Rothenstein recognizes in the early Orpen a “sinister humour” and the ability to see things from a “queer” “unexpected” angle, he deems the artist’s early work *The Mirror* as rejecting these qualities in favour of a dull assimilation of Old Masters. If autobiography has been seen as a “a kind of afterword to the author’s works; a supplement [...] a text outside of the other texts”, it is indeed the case that Orpen’s self-portraits are scarcely mentioned by Rothenstein.⁹ Yet I would argue that not only do they engage in significant self-analysis, they also reveal the singular, eerie quality Rothenstein saw in the early Orpen.

There have been occasional acknowledgments of a more singular artistic mind at work than Rothenstein credits Orpen as having. Contemporary critic C.H Collins Baker recognized a “complex artistic individuality” and a mind “at once satiric, literal and imaginative”,¹⁰ although he too mentions the self-portraits only *en passant*. Konody

and Dark situated the self-portraits as a “busman’s holiday”, separate to Orpen’s “real” *oeuvre*. More unusually, they rank them among his best work because of their “experimental vein”.¹¹ Later criticism has more readily recognized the complexity of the self-portraits, with Kenneth McConkey noting that they are “acutely problematic”.¹² McConkey also refers to the tendency of refusing Orpen any modernist credentials yet in the case of critics such as Rothenstein and Stephen Spender, this arose out of the narrowest, most Francophile, conception of modern art.¹³ This was recognized by C.R.W. Nevinson, who thought Orpen unjustly “condemned by those who think abstraction the only solution”.¹⁴ Others still have compared Orpen’s interest in self-portraiture to that of Picasso,¹⁵ with due consideration for their formal disparities. Far from being unaffected by modern developments, in some of the self-portraits Orpen revealed a distinct, even formal, interest in modernism, but above all his compulsive rendering of himself resonates with the modernist literary fascination with autobiography.

Autobiography and autobiographical fiction

“One shouldn’t write *one* autobiography but ten of them or a hundred because, while we only have one life, we have innumerable ways of recounting that life (to ourselves).”¹⁶

To view Orpen’s self-portraiture as the visual equivalent of autobiography seems especially apt in the early twentieth century when a correspondence of text and image was being increasingly advocated. Ezra Pound described the genesis of poetry writing as a strictly visual practice, “an equation... not in speech, but in little splotches of colour... it was... the beginning for me, of a language in colour”.¹⁷ Similarly, T.E. Hulme voiced the equivalence of word and image: “Each *word* must be an *image* seen, not a counter”.¹⁸ Literary works explicitly evoked the notion of visual portraiture, with novels such as *The Picture of Dorian Grey* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* being prime examples. Joyce’s novel, moreover, underscores the specifically modernist interest in thematizing the actual process of creating art. As the literary critic Max Saunders has proposed, modernist autobiography engaged not only with personal and social life, but also with the experience and creation of art. What writers such as Conrad, Yeats, Woolf, Ford and Proust read was thus just as important in their formation and writing as what they experienced, a process Saunders refers to as intertextuality.¹⁹

In addition to the thematizing of the creation of art, an engagement with the inner self was central to early twentieth-century autobiography and fiction, in contrast with the historicizing approach of nineteenth-century (auto)biography. The German biographer Emile Ludwig noted this attention on “the personality *per se*, the personality almost devoid of temporal co-ordinates. [...] Whereas our fathers asked, “How did the individual harmonize with his world? Our first question is ‘Does he harmonize with himself’”.²⁰ This increasing interest in the self illuminates the pervasive fin-de-siècle interest in portraiture that Saunders identifies.²¹ Even if the sense of self was increasingly destabilized and dehistoricized,²² T.J. Clark has argued that such a shift provoked an increase in self-representation rather than its demise,²³ although this process was not without tensions and contradictions. While T.S. Eliot advocated “not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality”,²⁴ the early twentieth century witnessed a growing tendency to engage in formal play with the self in a variety of literary forms. Writers adopted parody, masks, fantasy, time travel, personae and even gender masquerades, Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* being emblematic in this respect.

These drives find correspondences in Orpen’s *oeuvre*, which in its masquerades enacts an engagement with the historiography of art, as well as a preoccupation with personal aspects of his identity. This tendency is at its most ostentatious and jocular in his series of Chardin impersonations, in which Orpen stages himself as a descendant of the Old Masters. He adopts Chardin’s faintly absurd feminizing bandana, ribbon and spectacles,²⁵ which drolly reject self-aggrandizement, although in some of these works Orpen’s stare displaces levity. References to Chardin also located Orpen within a modernist “rediscovery” of artists who had passed into virtual oblivion in the nineteenth century. Manet and Matisse copied Chardin, while Proust wrote an essay considering, among other works, his self-portraits.²⁶ As well as referencing, and including himself in, a history of self-portraiture, Orpen’s response to the Uffizi’s invitation to contribute a self-portrait for the prestigious *sala dei pittori*, a 1925 self-portrait as Chardin, suggests his mockery of the sanction of one of art history’s most honoured institutions. In this version it has been observed that Orpen’s crooked finger and brush emulate the horned hand of the cuckold,²⁷ a gesture considered offensive to Italians and one that might be deemed curious for a Royal Academician recording his identity as an artist (impersonating an old master) at the Uffizi.

The elusiveness of identity and representation

If literary works such as *Orlando* and Gertrude Stein’s *Everybody’s Autobiography* dissolved a sense of a stable self and underscored the absurdity of capturing the self at all, in part because of the fallibility of memory, the difficulties of

self-representation in visual form present specific problems. Jacques Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* draws attention to the inherent elusiveness of self-portraiture, proposing that an artist could not contemporaneously look at himself and draw his own likeness. Drawing is thus blind, an act rooted in memory and anticipation, and the self-portrayed face a recollection of itself, never a direct capturing.²⁸ Moreover, while written forms of autobiography can accommodate changing perceptions of self, such shifts are captured with considerably greater difficulty in a single painted image. In this sense Orpen's visual autobiography should be seen as comprising the entirety of his self-portraiture, each image re-writing a different account of himself. If, as Paul Valéry said, "once my pen intervenes, I can make whatever I like out of what I was",²⁹ one senses that Orpen's self-portraits constitute an attempt to mediate his own identities while also trying to manipulate others' perceptions of him.

"So many views": Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*

The role of memory that Derrida and Stein have identified as central to self-representation, and the idea that the perception and representation of ourselves and others develops out of multiple impressions that succeed one another, are central to Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier* (1915). Just as Orpen occupies an uncertain territory between Edwardian orthodoxies and modernism, so too *The Good Soldier* inhabits a transitional literary phase. Ford has long been regarded (and defined himself) as belonging to literary impressionism,³⁰ an intermediate stage between nineteenth-century realisms and the radical experiments of fully-fledged modernism. Ford stressed the visual qualities of literary impressionism's approach, again suggesting contemporary correspondences between literature and visual art:

"I suppose that Impressionism exists to render those queer effects of real life that are like so many views seen through bright glass - though glass so bright that whilst you perceive through it a landscape or a backyard, you are aware that on its surface, it reflects a face of a person behind you. For the whole of life is really like that; we are almost always in one place with our minds somewhere quite other."³¹

Ford's evocation of multiple, mirror-like perspectives which reflect and constitute reality lies at the heart of the modernist fracturing of unity of self and reality. Ford explained that in order to represent all aspects of a character as they presented themselves to an observer, "you could not begin at his beginning and work his life chronologically to the end. You must first get him in with a strong impression, and then work backwards and forwards over his past."³²

The *Good Soldier* adopts exactly this technique. The story is narrated by the American John Dowell, who recounts the disintegration of the relationships between two couples, himself and his wife, and the philandering "good soldier" Edward Ashburnham and his wife. Dowell, a first-person and highly unreliable narrator, presents a series of varying accounts of events over a nine-year period, recounting an initial impression which is retrospectively modified by later perceptions, elaborated by himself or related to him by other characters. The succeeding impressions become superimposed over one another: "I pieced it together afterwards".³³ If, as Paul Armstrong has noted, Dowell/Ford used language not only to communicate but also as a contrivance to analyse unresolved thoughts and feelings,³⁴ similarly Orpen could be seen as having used his self-portraits not just to perform and communicate his "self" to viewers but also as an attempt at attaining self-understanding and stability. If "to write...is to make the self present to itself by presenting it to others",³⁵ Orpen could confront and stabilize his identities by representing them visually.

The sense of an ever-shifting, fractured succession of multiple narratives which attempt to capture reality is most marked in Orpen's *Self-Portrait* with mirrors (Figure 1). Using opposing mirrors to generate a fugue of manifold reflections, it is one of Orpen's most technically ambitious images.³⁶ The reference to cubist effects is marked and this constitutes the most formally modernist of Orpen's pictures. It is telling that Orpen depicts himself in Paris, the Sacré Coeur in Montmartre visible from the balcony. Orpen had spent a good deal of time in France although he acknowledged never receiving recognition there,³⁷ but this image suggests that relatively late in life, away from London, he felt freer to experiment with the effects of Cubism. Orpen presents himself as a painter, ageing, with a lined face and receding hairline. In the four reflections where his face is distinct, each version is different, but not markedly so, there is no dress-up here, but subtly modified versions of himself, the second Orpen less frowning, the third red-lipped, almost smiling, the fourth sullen and swollen-faced. For all its European, post-Impressionist chromatic vividness, its glassy, angular, receding planes that locate Orpen as a twentieth-century painter and that are so distant from the drawing rooms of Edwardian London, the tone is bleak, the attempt at gestalt, self-knowledge and self-representation as elusive and disorientating as the infinite mirror reflections. The search for self-identity seems as much about the uncertainty of creating the artwork as it does about personal biography, markers of which are scarce in comparison with other self-portraits.

Both Orpen's simultaneous self-representations and Dowell's varying accounts of himself and others suggest not only the multiple versions of reality we construct, but also the discrepancy between how people appear to others and to themselves. Throughout *The Good Soldier* Dowell identifies with Ashburnham, loving the women he loves and

even, by the end of the book, living where he lived, but since Ashburnham's masculinity is undermined by a sentimental, over-emotive streak, Dowell alternates his naive hero-worship with a distinct contempt for Ashburnham's weakness. There is a sense that part of his identification with Ashburnham rests on Dowell's aspiration to be virile, heroic and English, a nationality that he sees as virtually synonymous with manliness. Ashburnham is thus "The English gentleman"; "he was very well built, carried himself well ... he had, in fact, all the virtues that are usually accounted English"; he is "the hero, the athlete, the father of his country, the law-giver".³⁸

As a protestant Irishman who would adopt England as his home, Orpen's sense of national identity was ambiguous. At times he was customarily flippant in tone, claiming, "I was brought up on 'The Irish Question'; but what the Irish Question was I have no idea. (I wonder if anybody has!)".³⁹ When asked to return to Ireland during the war, Orpen responded, "No, everything I have I owe to England.[...] It was the English who gave me appreciation and money. This is their war and I have enlisted".⁴⁰ Orpen thus declares his allegiance to the English who gave him the recognition he craved yet refers to them in the third person, to "their" war. Orpen did not often unequivocally assert his Irish identity in his self-portraits; when he did, his persona seems particularly stogy, as in the camp Celtic revival fantasy, *Man from Aran* (1909, private collection).⁴¹ His biographer refers to his "stage-Irish heart"⁴² yet Orpen's drawing "A dream: I imagine that Dublin has seen fit to honour me" (1924, reproduced in *Stories of Old Ireland and Myself*) suggests that he was not indifferent to the esteem of his countrymen.

There is a sense that he aspired, albeit uneasily, to certain models of English masculinity and authority, akin to those Dowell envies in Ashburnham. If, as David Mellor has suggested, "one route by which the male self could reliably be managed was through the assumption and imitation of authority",⁴³ Orpen maintained a tension between self-denigration and a showy assumption of manliness in his performances as hunter and jockey. His enactment of the soldier was, however, markedly more ambiguous in its heroism and masculinity. As a jockey and hunter, Orpen does not portray his full-length figure, thereby circumventing the problem of his diminutive height, which is exaggerated by the low viewpoint. As a sportsman (Figure 2), Orpen cuts a curious figure. He does not show himself on horseback, glaring at the viewer with the "more direct... hardy...measuring...challenging"⁴⁴ look that Dowell glimpses in Ashburnham. If the brandished whip is a graphic reminder of the sportsman's power, the feminine shimmery pink and blue silks markedly undermine a normative masculinity. Moreover, generally small, the jockey was not the most obviously virile of sportsmen for Orpen to impersonate. In these quasi-parodic manly guises, Orpen impersonates the role while pointing to, and distancing himself from, the travesty.

The *Dead Ptarmigan* (c1909, National Gallery of Ireland) summons another seminal manifestation of masculinity, the hunter, and here Orpen assumes a similarly glowering, sullen-lipped air that seems to dare the viewer to doubt this identity, while also recognizing its absurdity.⁴⁵ Orpen's masculine accoutrements are the brandished dead bird and the phallic gun and, as in *The Jockey*, the blustery sky proclaims the virility of the great outdoors. Orpen told Rutter that this was his favourite self-portrait⁴⁶ and in this case stressed, "my picture is not English, it's Irish".⁴⁷ Both *The Jockey* and *The Dead Ptarmigan* are the height of artifice, Orpen, according to friends and biographers, probably never having ridden or fired a gun. Moreover, the unconvincing relation between figure and landscape illustrate Orpen's "absurd habit of copying landscapes from a painted backcloth in his studio".⁴⁸ The contrived treatment of the sky underlines the overall artifice of the image, one that Orpen presumably sought for its self-dramatizing effects.

If *The Good Soldier* recounts Dowell's perception of events and people, the novel is also significantly about the realization of himself. As Saunders notes, Dowell has a fundamentally changing view of himself throughout the novel,⁴⁹ early on describing himself as a "sedulous, strained nurse", a "eunuch",⁵⁰ until the ultimate revelation of his self-identification with Ashburnham:

"For I can't conceal from myself the fact that I loved Edward Ashburnham - and that I love him because he was just myself. If I had had the courage and the virility and possibly also the physique of Edward Ashburnham I should, I fancy, have done much what he did. He seems to me like a large elder brother who took me out on several excursions and did many dashing things whilst I just watched him robbing the orchards, from a distance."⁵¹

If, as Dowell observes, "it is very difficult to give an all-round impression of any man",⁵² this notion constitutes the central affinity between Ford's novel and Orpen's attempt to present himself, to make the viewer, but particularly himself, see him as he would wish to be seen.

Orpen's life writing

If Orpen's autobiographical fictions imply a modernist collapsing of a fixed, stable self, his own biography should also be considered in the evolution of his self-consciousness. Born of a protestant family in Dublin, Orpen entered the Dublin School of Art at the age of eleven and six years later moved to London where he spent three years at the Slade School of Art, a star pupil. Orpen was not only engaged in visual self-representation, he also wrote two

autobiographical works. *An Onlooker in France* (1917–19) was an account of his time in France during the war, while *Stories of old Ireland and myself* (1924) is a faux-naïve description of an idealized youth in a whimsical, nostalgic Ireland. While the memoir, written as an ageing and ailing man, is almost entirely anecdotal rather than introspective, Orpen nonetheless starkly confronts a lifelong complex about his appearance, in marked contrast to the general levity of the memoir. He writes, “at the age of eleven I entered the School of Art, Dublin, and I at once became an old man, and one of the world’s workers. Anyway, *I looked on myself* as such, and dreamt very few dreams”.⁵³ Orpen underscores the importance of how he views himself rather than subscribing to the fiction of an objective reality. He also confronts his relationship with his own appearance:

“My general appearance, and especially my face, have always been a source of depression to me, even from my early days. I remember once, by mistake, overhearing a conversation between my father and my mother about my looks – why it was that I was so ugly and the rest of the children so good looking. It was indeed a question difficult to explain, and I remember creeping away and worrying a lot about the matter. I began to think I was a black blot on the earth, and when I met people on the country roads I always used to cross to the other side to let them pass, and by so doing save them the pain of having a ‘close-up’ view of me. Later on I had a great chance of improving my looks, but, alas! it never came off.”⁵⁴

Orpen goes on to recount his bizarre plan for self-improvement. Pupils at the art school practised drawing from the antique, which, according to Orpen’s singular vision, made students increasingly take on the appearance of their Greco-Roman subjects. Given an appropriately heroic subject, Orpen evokes the quasi-magical transformative power of art:

“Now my chance would certainly come when I was promoted to draw an antique figure. Surely it would be some wonderful Apollo or Hermes, or perhaps the “Fighting Gladiator”! Then my features would quickly change, my body would develop, I would gradually become pure classical Greek.”⁵⁵

Finally summoned to draw, Orpen was presented with a dancing faun, “as ugly as you please”.⁵⁶ Other than revealing his own mortification, the passages also reveal the importance to Orpen of how his looks are perceived by others, so that even within his own family he could become other, a “black blot” marring an otherwise idyllic ménage. Identity is thus forged by oneself but also by, and in comparison with, others. Moreover, the account of the desire to “improve” by association with ideal figures suggests Orpen’s belief in the power of art to transform identity and this is key to reading his visual autobiographies.

Orpen even made reference to his appearance at the Versailles Peace Conference, which he portrayed. When asked for a memoir to give journalists, Orpen said, “The chief thing that impressed me in my youth was my ugliness, just the same then as now, though having lived so long with it it does not hurt quite the same as when I found it out at first”.⁵⁷ This response was rejected but it is a testament to Orpen’s unconventionality that even in this most solemn and official of contexts he would choose to speak of his “ugliness”. Others too commented on his appearance. A fellow student at the Slade remarked on “his unkempt brown hair growing low on his forehead, concealing almost two formidable frontal bumps”,⁵⁸ while Max Beerbohm openly mocked Orpen’s physique in a caricature of the New English Art Club Artists (1907, Tate Britain). Orpen had some objective grounds for physical self-consciousness; at 5’ 2”, he was very far from reaching the minimum 5’ 8” height requirement for enlisting. When the ruling was changed in 1915 and the minimum height dropped to 5’, Orpen was able to join up, commemorating the event in a sketch captioned “England’s called her last resources/little Orpen’s joined the forces”.⁵⁹

Throughout his life Orpen would refer to himself as “ickle Orps” “Orpsie boy”, a self-mockery that was generally little appreciated. Rothenstein saw it as a “protection against intimacy”,⁶⁰ while James Laver asked, “can high truth come through the mouth of the comic mask?”.⁶¹ Yet Nevinson, as a committed modernist before the war, astutely identified an “uncanny shrewdness” in Orpen’s self-awareness but recognized that his love of disguise and comic masks would lead to misinterpretation.⁶² What seems clear is that Orpen needed to paint and draw himself. He had explicitly communicated his urge to express his thoughts and feelings in literary form, writing to his wife, “if only I had the gift of writing – or whatever it is that allows one to put down impressions on paper”.⁶³ Just as some writers aspired to a visual language, Orpen may have aspired to forms of written autobiography but lacking the necessary verbal facility performed his self-impressions visually, as though he could secure his own self by compulsively portraying it.

Me, myself and I

Orpen began drawing and painting himself early on. The 1891 Ashmolean self-portrait attributed to him would have been made at only thirteen although, in an example of modernist time-shifts, he also repeatedly portrayed himself as a child when he was in his forties. The recurring presence of the mirror in Orpen’s self-portraits and other paintings, suggests an awareness of the mediation of perception, despite the predominantly realistic imprint of his art. As T.J.

Clark has noted, the presence of a mirror in self-portraiture automatically engenders a “dialectical to-and-fro” in which the self sees itself as unfamiliar and is sceptical about its own existence and unity, scepticism of the self being “one of self-portraiture’s deepest and most ordinary conventions”.⁶⁴ Derrida observed the distancing effects of the mirror, saying that just as we can never look at our own faces, so too “the naked face...cannot look at itself in a looking glass.”⁶⁵ Orpen’s self-portraits with mirrors evoke this very elusiveness, the impossibility, of seeing ourselves; far from conjuring up, let alone confirming, identity, the mirror underscores the otherness of the self.

The 1912 *Self portrait* (Figure 3) shows Orpen looking at himself in a mirror whose frame is visible within the image. One of the most formally modernist of his paintings, it draws graphic attention to the flatness of the picture plane while articulating distinct layers receding into the background. On the surface, glued to the canvas, is a series of ferry tickets, “engaged seat” notices, a personal cheque and a page from Orpen’s diary. This incorporation of real life objects is of particular interest in 1912, the year in which collage was first used by Picasso, although whether Orpen was aware of the experiments of Braque and Picasso is unknown. The superimposed papers create an unyielding, hostile barrier between viewer and image. The “engaged” notices have political connotations, evoking the *peintre engagé*, yet Orpen protested his ignorance of politics. Augustus John’s biographer claimed that Orpen “cultivated ignorance and pursued superficiality with extreme zeal. There was not a single serious topic of which he could not claim to be unaware.”⁶⁶ There is no evidence that Orpen was making any claims about his ideological sympathies in this work, yet Holroyd’s word “cultivated” suggests the archness of Orpen’s affectation of ignorance. It is also noteworthy that Orpen’s “engaged” reference, in an image dated 1 October 1912, anticipated Picasso’s *Guitar, Sheet Music, and Wine Glass*, with its newspaper clipping bearing the headline “la bataille s’est engagé[e]”, dated 18 November 1912 (McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas).

Perhaps Orpen refers to his engagement with painting or with the contemplation of himself, holding a highly coloured rag, as if prepared to wipe out the image in this second layer of the painting. Orpen scowls as he scrutinizes himself; it is as if his gaze removes the viewer’s visage and replaces it with his own, suggestive of the French verb to stare, “*dévisager*”, literally to remove the face. He also seems fearful, compressed between the papers that partly obscure him and the black grill that separates him from the background layer of the image whose impressionistic trees merge with the rag and Orpen’s claw-like hand.

The vivid colour does little to mitigate the sensation of discomfort. Konody and Dark perceptively saw Orpen as “a little afraid of the man who is revealed in his pictures.”⁶⁷ In *Memoirs of the Blind* Derrida identifies fear as the very subject of self-portraiture. While self-representation requires a certain exhibitionism, according to Derrida, it also evokes shame and anxiety: “the subject of the self-portrait becomes fear, *it makes itself into fear, makes itself afraid*”,⁶⁸ and here Orpen seems unnervingly uncertain, of himself, but also of the direction to pursue in his art. In the portrayal of himself he is tied to the illusionistic realisms of the nineteenth century, yet he has introduced a distinctly modern flattening of the canvas, the application of papier collé and considerable areas of impressionistic brushwork and colour. While many critics refused to credit Orpen with any modernist aspirations, and Turpin suggests that the Slade, under the aegis of Henry Tonks, had a distinctly anti-modern stance,⁶⁹ some of these self-portraits suggest otherwise.

Self-portraits and the war

The Great War enabled the enactment of another archetypally heroic identity, the soldier, but again the painter assumed the defensive mask of self-denigration. Orpen had a troubled relationship with his wartime experience, habitually seen as one of the prime drivers of a modernist fragmentation of the self. In his wartime autobiography he identifies himself as an “onlooker” and although eventually serving as an official war artist, he never engaged in combat. While carrying out office work after being enlisted he sent a vignette to Evelyn St George depicting an irate colonel demanding, “what can you do?”, to which a mortified Orpen replies, “Nothing, Sir, I’m an artist”.⁷⁰ The war provided yet another opportunity for feelings of inadequacy. As a teacher, society portraitist, war artist, and later Royal Academician and KBE, Orpen had courted public status yet all the while feeling an outsider, a tension that also marks his wartime self-portraits. P.G. Konody and S. Dark claimed that despite being traumatized for life by what he saw in France, the war “made him”,⁷¹ but Orpen generally continued to be accused of levity. For Ezra Pound, Orpen’s war was “very like peace-life Belgravia”.⁷²

Despite accusations of flippancy, Orpen began recounting wartime scenes that speak of disturbance and breakdown:

“I was all alone... I felt strange. I cannot say even now what I felt. Afraid? Of what? The sun shone fiercely... So I went and sat on the trunk of a blown-up tree close by, when suddenly I was thrown on the back of my head on the ground. My heavy easel was upset, and one of the skulls went through the canvas.”⁷³

The image of the skull through the canvas is shocking, unsettling and this malaise colours his major wartime self-portrait *Ready to Start* (Figure 4). Always a drinker, Orpen became heavily addicted in Cassel in 1917 and here the bottles and siphon dominate the image, suggesting these are what enable him to be “ready to start”. As a soldier he cuts an absurd figure in a tin hat and piebald bearskin gilet. Again a mirror is visible, but here it takes on the appearance of a painting within the painting, underscoring the sense of Orpen’s alienation from himself. Other than constructing a portrait of the accoutrements of his daily life, the image is also a complex amalgam of strictly painterly matters that are central to Orpen’s visual autobiography. The flatness of the plane is again accentuated, with the bands of grey serving as a frame within the image, while the everyday objects seem to hover uncertainly between the room and Orpen’s image in the mirror, with the soda siphon encroaching onto the space of the street. Colour and pattern are also significant: the black and white fur, the red and white tablecloth and the pink and green wallpaper reminiscent of Vuillard’s use of detailed decorative schemes. These highly coloured, feminine patterns also make an incongruous background to the khaki-clad “soldier”. It is worth noting that when Orpen does represent himself as a dashing soldier, arguably the only self-portrait where he aspires to an easy, unproblematic glamour (*Self-portrait*, 1917, Imperial War Museum), he seems like an imposter, as if this masquerade were the most artificial of all.

Self-portraits as painter

Orpen acted the part of soldier, hunter, sportsman and dandy about town, as well as depicting himself with a series of female nudes, images in which his persona seems more remote than in the other self portraits.⁷⁴ Early on he portrayed himself with other painters, so his identity was tested not just as an individual but also as part of a specific social group. But he would also enact the performance of the solo painter, now in costume, now as “himself”. As Derrida observes in *Memoirs of the Blind*, when viewing a self-portrait of an artist in the act of drawing, it is generally hypothesized that he is depicting himself but this is conjecture, as the artist may well be in the process of drawing someone or something else.⁷⁵ Orpen also exploited this uncertainty. His 1910 *Self-Portrait* (Figure 5) is one of the few to reveal something of what he is drawing and the circle of the convex mirror that frames the finished image is visible within the image, suggesting that Orpen was in the process of drawing the self-portrait we are viewing. Orpen’s pencil is close to the paper as he frowns at his reflection: this is the moment to which Derrida refers when describing the blindness of drawing, the moment when the artist must look up at his reflection before drawing it, thus relying on memory rather than direct perception.

Conversely, the 1918 *Self-Portrait with ‘Sowing New Seed’* (Figure 6) shows the artist maintaining the fiction that he is in the process of painting, “something else”. Orpen stands in front of his large Irish allegory, a manifesto of artistic and sexual liberation for Ireland.⁷⁶ This is an added twist to his perpetual mediation of perception, for it implies that he is caught in the act of painting by another, unknown, presence. Orpen is at his most grimacing here, his fitted white coat and black bonnet giving him a clinical air. While the original painting has an airy, optimistic background, here Orpen has added a lurid, self-dramatizing combination of gold and cobalt. Instead of the naturalistic hues of the original, ultramarine, verdigris and brilliant scarlet ally this self-portrait with the colours of European modernism. Again, a central aspect of Orpen’s self-imagining was an exploration of art’s histories.

In addition to formal devices, Orpen occasionally supplemented his images with inscriptions. These textual addenda enhanced the weapon of self-derision while also suggesting a modernist detachment from the self. This commentary, moreover, echoes the devices of the literary modernist narrator (*The Good Soldier’s* John Dowell being a case in point) whose observations affect the narrative, thereby modifying its meanings. Used in visual art, an author’s annotations can bear upon the narrative of the image itself. A 1909 drawing is, wretchedly, inscribed, “*a pleasant sight I have just seen while writing*”.⁷⁷ Orpen’s mordant addressing of himself suggests a constant self-awareness so that every moment of his life was an image that could be intercepted and viewed. The two watercolour self-portraits made when Orpen was in his late forties give sardonic voice to his fear of ageing: “Older again, Orpsie boy” (1924) and “Orpsie boy you’re not as young as you were, my lad!” (1928).⁷⁸ Orpen recognized the dramatic force of humour: “the world is a joke, a joke of tremendous significance, and the laughter is no less defensible and indeed no less necessary because there are also occasions for tears and for sighs”,⁷⁹ and these annotated works reveal a perpetual tension between humour and angst.

Modernist self portraiture

Certainly other artists were also engaged in representing an increasingly indeterminate sense of self in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, yet these figures were generally more strictly located within modernism than within the transitional territory negotiated by Orpen. Indeed, Orpen’s enactments, now reticent, now flamboyant, seem all the more remarkable for an artist operating within the orthodoxies of the Edwardian establishment. Orpen had none

of the tediously “professional” demeanour contemporaries such as Lavery and Sargent displayed in their self-assured self-portraits, Stanley Spencer arguably being one of the few British artists engaged in candid self-scrutiny (*Self Portrait*, 1914, Tate Britain).

In Europe the disintegration of unity was central to the experiments of cubism, yet cubist self-portraits were rare. Picasso painted various versions of himself, sometimes echoing self-portraits of earlier artists, although these accounts seem less personal than concerned with his critical investigations of art of the past. Bonnard’s cryptic self-portraits which, unlike Orpen, portray only his –darkened- head and torso, evoke T.J. Clark’s idea that self-portraiture should conjure up an interior dimension beyond the face, something best achieved through the use of shadow: “the shadow is a metaphor for ‘inside’.”⁸⁰ The fact that the majority of Bonnard’s self-portraits were painted late in life might suggest that these were driven by an impending sense of mortality rather than a continuous probing of identity.

The formal distortions of expressionism yielded more confrontational enquiries into the self. For Schiele and Munch, self-portraiture was a means of unequivocally communicating angst, in comparison with Orpen’s palpable yet more guardedly communicated anxieties. Schiele’s self-analysis was enacted through his body and unrestrained sexuality; his head, generally so central to self-portraiture, sometimes barely contained at the edge of the image, as if peripheral to his real, frenetically erotic self. Certainly the grimace can be seen as a defining component of twentieth-century portraiture in contrast with the poised self-control of earlier self-representations.⁸¹ Munch’s self-portraiture seems not so much an exploration of identity as it does a study of victimization and anguish which pervade not only himself but his entire world, whether in the aptly titled *Self-Portrait in Hell* (1903), bloodied on an operating table or prone on a bed in a mental institution. Max Beckmann produced hard-edged, tightly compressed self-portraits in which, like Orpen, albeit with considerably more formal distortion, he assumed varying personae which often communicated his mental breakdown: musician, urbanite, sailor and nurse.

Throughout the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dress-up was adopted as a means of masking or questioning the self, although these performances rarely seem so personal and so much the result of a confusion of self as is the case with Orpen. De Chirico made overtly classicizing references in his self-portraits,⁸² as well as appearing in baroque costume, experiments that have been seen as parodies of historical self-portraiture in the vein of Reynolds.⁸³ These works are ultimately more convincing as manifestations of de Chirico’s interest in art historical revivals than as investigations of identity. Jean-François Chevrier has noted that the profusion of *fin-de-siècle* dressing-up in French art, while ostensibly challenging sexual or racial taboos, ultimately constituted “a measured transgression” which merely reinforced the rules it contravened.⁸⁴ Chevrier has identified Pierre Loti and Toulouse-Lautrec as exceptions, for the “pathos” and “pathological dimension” of their obsession,⁸⁵ qualities that inform Orpen’s self-representations. While Chevrier refers principally to Lautrec’s more outlandish masquerades (as a choirboy, in women’s clothing or Japanese costume), his 1882 *Self-Portrait* bears comparison with Orpen, in particular the 1912 self-portrait (Figure 3). Without the self-defensive screen of a costume, Lautrec seems more exposed, yet this too is a study of obfuscated revelation and self-doubt, in which he conceals his small stature. Lautrec has also assembled a barricade of objects, including the considerable area of black on the left, which obscures and distances him from the viewer, his features barely discernible. While there are formal differences, Lautrec and Orpen share biographical similarities, principally alcoholism and a lifelong complex about their appearance, that result in a kind of wounded self-consciousness.

In the twentieth century, some of the more striking explorations of a sliding self were enacted through photography and photomontage. Photographic self-portraiture was sometimes used to communicate political values, with distinctly unequivocal results, as in Fortunato Depero’s pugilistic *Self-Portrait with Punch* (1915) which brought to life Marinetti’s exaltation of physical aggression. Similarly, John Heartfield’s *Self-Portrait with Police Commissioner* (c. 1929) staged the artist as a protagonist of the social confrontation championed by Dada. The use of mirrors in photographic self-portraiture could also picture a fragmenting self, as in Witkiewicz’s 1915 *Multiple Self-Portrait in Mirrors* (1915-17), yet despite the multiplicity of viewpoints, the image does not seem to articulate the *internal* diversity of self that, for example, Orpen’s multiple mirror self-portrait presents (Figure 1). The spectral painted self-portraits of Léon Spilliaert were among a very few to effectively use mirrored self-representations as an instrument for the de/construction and representation of identity. In these works his reflected or multiple images often assume a separate identity, illustrating T.J. Clark’s point that the use of mirrors in self-portraiture produces selves that are strangers to one another.⁸⁶

Conclusion

While various artists explored unresolved identities and the means of representing them, it is challenging to locate such a disquieting array of performances in the self-portraiture of a single artist. Much as Ford Madox Ford advocated a succession of non-chronological, multiple impressions to convey an ungraspable, non-fixed sense of identity, so too

Orpen, through his “so many views”⁸⁷ confronted and constructed the story of his “self”. If “the self is a text – it has to be deciphered... The self is a project, something to be built”,⁸⁸ Orpen devoted much of his life to this project. The use of disguise he employed to this end could represent fantasy selves, but could also screen the viewer from the artist’s “real” self. There is a sense throughout Orpen’s visual autobiography of a tension between a desire for self-concealment and self-revelation, evasion and presence, evoking D.W. Winnicott’s notion of the true self’s simultaneous need to hide and be discovered.⁸⁹ For some viewers, the masquerades never worked and Orpen “could never keep his secrets”,⁹⁰ for most, a tendency to privilege high seriousness, even within modernism, resulted in a condemnation of Orpen’s mordantly comedic bent.

If the staging of fantasy selves implied the presence of trauma, it could also offer a means of self-liberation, although one senses that for Orpen this was not to be. His final self-portrait, painted in 1931, *Après le Bain, Dieppe* (Figure 7), suggests he had finally laid down his mask, perhaps from resignation or as an experiment in the most artificial of fictions, that of spontaneity. Other than a matter-of-fact allusion to his profession in the palette, there is no costume, no intricate props or mocking comment. Orpen is hatless, his shirt unusually loose and casual, his nose visibly red, his thinning hair in disarray. Rather than his usual challenging, sullen stare, here we see a candid, resolute frown, arguably the most unaffected expression of any of the self-portraits. For all his worldly success, Orpen died aged fifty-two in a nursing home, estranged from his family. Shortly after his death his biographers Konody and Dark wrote, “Orpen was a man who wanted something from life with all the intensity of his vivid personality. I do not believe that he ever quite knew what that something was, but whatever it was, I am quite sure he never found it,”⁹¹ suggesting that Orpen’s autobiographical fictions never resolved his quest.

Notes

¹ J Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters: Sickert to Smith* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, c. 1974), 221.

² Konody & Dark called Orpen’s self-portraiture a “graphic autobiography”, P.G. Konody and S. Dark, *Sir William Orpen: Artist and Man* (London: Seeley Service & Co. Ltd, 1932), 239.

³ While little used until the late twentieth century, the term autobiographical fiction was first coined in a 1906 essay by the writer Stephen Reynolds. M. Saunders, ‘Autobiographical Fiction: Experimental Life-Writing from the Turn of the Century to Modernism’, *Literature Compass*, 6:5 (2009), 1041-1059.

⁴ F. Rutter, ‘Orpen’s Self-Portraits’, *Strand Magazine* (London: March 1932): 268-277.

⁵ B. Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981), 261-2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁷ Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, 212-227. For more on Rothenstein’s criticism of Orpen, see L. Cotter, ‘William Orpen: Towards a Minor Self-Portraiture’, *Visual Culture in Britain*, Vol.13, no.1 (2012): 25-43.

⁸ Orpen, cited in Arnold, *Orpen Mirror to an Age*, 8.

⁹ M. Saunders, ‘Biography and Autobiography’ in *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, edited by L. Marcus and P. Nicholls (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), 299.

¹⁰ C. H. Collins Baker, ‘The Paintings of William Orpen, A.R.A., R.H.A.’, *The Studio: An Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art*, 52, no.215 (1911): 260.

¹¹ Konody and Dark, *Sir William Orpen*, 240.

¹² K. McConkey, ‘William Orpen: His Contemporaries, Critics and Biographers’, in Pym’s Gallery, *Orpen and the Edwardian era* (London: Pym’s Gallery, 1987), 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 12, 13.

¹⁴ C.R.W. Nevins in McConkey, ‘William Orpen: His Contemporaries, Critics and Biographers’, 13.

¹⁵ J. White in V. Ryan, *William Orpen 1878-1931: A Centenary Exhibition: 1 November-15 December 1978* (Dublin: National Gallery of Ireland, c. 1978), 7.

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- ¹⁶ J.B. Pontalis, *Love of Beginnings* (London: Free Association Books, 1993), xv.
- ¹⁷ E. Pound, 'Vorticism' (1914), in H. Zipes (ed), *Ezra Pound and the Visual Arts* (New York: New Directions, 1980), 203.
- ¹⁸ T. E. Hulme, 'Notes on Language and Style', in M. Roberts, *T.E. Hulme* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), 274.
- ¹⁹ M. Saunders, "'Things Passed Over": Ruskin, Modernism, and Autobiography' in G. Cianci; P. Nicholls, (eds), *Ruskin and Modernism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 100.
- ²⁰ E. Ludwig, from 'Introduction: on Historical Portraiture', *Genius and Character* (1925), in J. L.Clifford, ed., *Biography as an Art: Selected Criticism, 1560-1960* (Oxford: OUP, 1962), 135.
- ²¹ M. Saunders, *Self impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 250.
- ²² Hayden White refers to the existence in modernist literature of a 'hostility towards the historical consciousness'. H. White, 'The Burden of History', in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 31.
- ²³ T.J. Clark, 'Gross David with the Swoln Cheek: An Essay on Self-Portraiture' in M. Roth (ed) *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics, and the Psyche* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 265.
- ²⁴ T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1951), 21.
- ²⁵ Orpen also dedicated a section of his art historical survey, *An Outline of Art*, to Chardin, singling out his democratic credentials and "intense humanity", and even assumed his costume at a ball at the Chelsea Arts club.
- ²⁶ H.O.Borowitz, 'The Watteau and Chardin of Marcel Proust', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, Vol.69, No. 1 (Jan., 1982): 31
- ²⁷ The Orpen Research Project, 'Sir William Orpen, R.H.A., R.A., *The Painter; Self-Portrait with Glasses*' http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4112677
- ²⁸ J. Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 36, 68. It is worth noting that Orpen also drew self-portraits of himself at various ages from memory rather than simply "capturing" his immediate mirror reflection. Rutter, 'Orpen's self-portraits', 275.
- ²⁹ Paul Valéry, cited in Saunders, *Self Impression*, 503.
- ³⁰ P. Armstrong, *The Challenge of Bewilderment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 4. Literary impressionism was seen as a distinct phenomenon from visual Impressionism, although it could be said to share a transitional status between Realism and Modernism.
- ³¹ Ford, cited in M. Saunders, 'Reflections on Impressionist Autobiography: James, Conrad and Ford' in K. Carabine, & M. Saunders, *Inter-relations: Conrad, James, Ford, and others* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs; Chichester: Wiley, 2004), 11.
- ³² F.Madox Ford, *Joseph Conrad* (London: Duckworth, 1924), 129-130.
- ³³ F.Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*, (1915) in *The Bodley Head Madox Ford*, vol. 1 (London: Bodley Head, 1962-1980), 101.
- ³⁴ P. Armstrong, 'Obscurity and Reflection in *The Good Solider*' in Armstrong, *The Challenge of Bewilderment*, 196.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Max Beerbohm poked fun at Orpen's fascination with the play of reflection and self-reflection in a caricature showing a typically stunted Orpen, inscribed: 'Bravura. Mr. Orpen trying whether it wouldn't be possible to paint, for the Uffizi, one mirror's reflection of another's reflection of a soap-bubble's reflection of himself.' *Bravura: William Orpen*, 1914, Tate Britain.
- ³⁷ Personal communication cited in G. Sheringham, 'The Art of James Pryde', *The Studio* (May 1933): 311.
- ³⁸ Ford, *The Good Soldier*, 219, 135, 104.
- ³⁹ W.Orpen, *Stories of Old Ireland and myself* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1924), 7.
- ⁴⁰ Orpen, cited in J. Turpin, 'William Orpen as Student and Teacher', *An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 68, No. 271, (1979): 190.
- ⁴¹ For a reproduction of *The Man from Aran*, see Cotter, 'William Orpen: Towards a minor self-portraiture', 36.
- ⁴² Arnold, *Orpen Mirror to an Age*, 411.

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- ⁴³ D. Mellor, 'The Watchmen: Or Notes on the Imaginary Male Self in 20th Century Photography' in J. Lingwood, *Staging the Self: Self-Portrait Photography 1840s-1980s* (Plymouth: Plymouth Arts Centre, 1986), 83.
- ⁴⁴ Ford, *The Good Soldier*, 36.
- ⁴⁵ For a reproduction of *The Dead Ptarmigan*, see Cotter, 'William Orpen: Towards a Minor Self-Portraiture', 33.
- ⁴⁶ Rutter, *Orpen's Self Portraits*, 272.
- ⁴⁷ Orpen, in Turpin, 'William Orpen as Student and Teacher', 188.
- ⁴⁸ H. Carter, 'Art' (review), *The New Age* 6, no.6 (1909), 142.
- ⁴⁹ M. Saunders, *Ford Madox Ford: a Dual Life* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 448.
- ⁵⁰ Ford, *The Good Soldier*, 19, 22
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 217-218.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 135.
- ⁵³ Orpen, *Stories of Old Ireland*, 21, emphasis added.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 22-23.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24. Orpen even depicted himself as a dancing faun in the book.
- ⁵⁷ Orpen, cited in Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, 19.
- ⁵⁸ S. Granger, cited in Turpin, 'William Orpen as Student and Teacher', 178.
- ⁵⁹ Orpen, cited in R. Upstone, "'A Sudden Growing up': William Orpen and the Great War", in *William Orpen: An Onlooker in France: A Critical Edition of the Artist's War Memoirs*, ed. R. Upstone and A. Weight (London: Paul Holberton, 2008), 9.
- ⁶⁰ Rothenstein, *Modern English Painters*, 227.
- ⁶¹ J. Laver, cited in McConkey, 'William Orpen: His Contemporaries, Critics and Biographers', 12.
- ⁶² C.R.W. Nevinson, cited in McConkey, 'William Orpen: His Contemporaries, Critics and Biographers', 13.
- ⁶³ Orpen, cited in Arnold, *Orpen: Mirror to an Age*, 260.
- ⁶⁴ T.J. Clark, 'Gross David with the Swoln Cheek', 266
- ⁶⁵ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 69 (emphasis original).
- ⁶⁶ M. Holroyd, cited in Turpin, 'William Orpen as Student and Teacher', 182.
- ⁶⁷ Konody and Dark, *Sir William Orpen: Artist and Man*, 105.
- ⁶⁸ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 70 (emphasis original).
- ⁶⁹ Turpin, 'William Orpen as Student and Teacher', 178.
- ⁷⁰ Orpen, cited in R. Upstone, R.F. Foster, D. Fraser Jenkins, Imperial War Museum, *William Orpen: Politics, Death, Sex* (London: Philip Wilson, 2005), 34.
- ⁷¹ Konody and Dark, *Sir William Orpen: Artist and Man*, 104. Konody and Dark even claimed that one of Orpen's most celebrated war paintings, *The Unknown Soldier* (1918) should be regarded not "as a work of art but as a vital chapter of autobiography" (*ibid.*), suggesting how deeply a sense of self informed all his work.
- ⁷² E. Pound, cited in R. Upstone, "'A Sudden Growing Up': William Orpen and the Great War", 30.
- ⁷³ Orpen, *An Onlooker in France*, 39-40.

⁷⁴ Orpen's inaccessibility in this series of self-portraits makes an interesting contrast to his frank and sexually progressive female nudes.

⁷⁵ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 60

⁷⁶ R. Foster, "'Old Ireland and Himself': William Orpen and the Conflicts of Irish Identity", *Estudios Irlandeses*, no. 0 (2005), 45.

⁷⁷ W. Orpen, *Self-Portrait Looking in a Mirror*, Ireland, c. 1909. Pen and black ink on writing paper, private collection.

⁷⁸ Both images in private collections.

⁷⁹ Orpen, cited in *Staging the Self*, ed. Lingwood, 10.

⁸⁰ Clark, 'Gross David with the Swoln Cheek', 283.

⁸¹ For an analysis of photographic self-portraiture which also looks at the increase in deforming facial expression see J.F. Chevrier and J. Sagne, 'L'autoportrait comme mise en scène... Essai sur l'identité, l'exotisme et les excès photographiques', in *Photographies*, n.4 (1984).

⁸² Classicizing references could be found in other mainstream modernist self-portraiture: Degas and Van Dongen portrayed themselves respectively as Homer and Neptune.

⁸³ W.Chadwick, 'How Do I Look', in *Mirror, Mirror: Self-Portraits by Women Artists*, ed. Liz Rideal (London : National Portrait Gallery, 2001), 15.

⁸⁴ J.F Chevrier, 'The Image of the Other', in *Staging the Self*, ed. Lingwood, 13.

⁸⁵ Ibid. Chevrier also has suggested that masquerades could provide a means of mitigating pain and inadequacy, acting as self-defensive screens. J.F. Chevrier, 'L'autoportrait comme mise en scène: Essai sur l'identité, l'exotisme et les excès photographiques', *Photographies*, volume 5 (1984): 50, 59.

⁸⁶ Clark, 'Gross David with the Swoln Cheek', 266.

⁸⁷ Ford, cited in Saunders, 'Reflections on Impressionist Autobiography', 11

⁸⁸ S.Sontag, in *Staging the Self*, ed. Lingwood, 5.

⁸⁹ D.W. Winnicott, 'Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self,' (1960) in *The Maturation Process and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London: Hogarth Press. 1965), 140-152.

⁹⁰ Konody and Dark, *Sir William Orpen: Artist and Man*, 105.

⁹¹ Ibid., 70.

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