Formal Analysis of a Work of Art

Salvador Dali’s masterpiece, *Dream caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate One Second Before Awakening,* has Surrealist illusions that contrast one another. In the lower half of the piece a sleeping woman lies on a light grey rock, she is floating above the rock to illustrate how she is in a dream like state. The grey slate is in the middle of a vast blue sea with nothing surrounding it besides a small rock and a tall cliff in the far distance. Next to the woman is a floating red pomegranate with a barely visible bee flying around it. In the upper half of the canvas there is a series of animals and objects bursting from of a bigger version of an open pomegranate. The giant pomegranate releases a red orange goldfish, which then changes into a roaring tiger. Out of the tiger’s mouth emerges another tiger which has a rifle flying out of it. The last tiger is pouncing forward towards the gun, which is pointing directly at the head of the sleeping woman. On the horizon line of the canvas there is a glass elephant with flamingo legs holding an obelisk on its back. The animals are painted in a warm color scheme, changing from red to yellow, while the background is mainly composed of a cool color scheme. Light blue, pale yellow, and light pink are the main colors of the landscape, causing the work of art to have a peaceful undertone. The vivid colors of the pomegranate and the animals are what bring the painting to life and grabs people’s attention.

Although, *Dream caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate One Second Before Awakening,* is a well-known work of art by Dali, it lacks an abundance of illusions on the subconscious level. The morphing of fruit to animal to gun is supposedly from the sleeping woman’s dream instead of from the subconscious. The work of art was one of Dali’s most popular post- Second World War era painting. The piece was created during a rut in Dali’s career, and focused on “state of immobility and suspended animation” due to new inspiration from nuclear fission and atomic missiles. The animals are frozen mid leap, and the gun floats directly in front of the sleeping women, showing a state of immobility. The glass elephant symbolizes destruction and war, tying in to the time in which it was created. The flamingo legs are long and unrealistic on the elephant, showing the dreamlike quality of the painting. The obelisk on the back of the elephant resembles an iceberg, which is a frequent analogy in Freud’s work. The further someone travels down the iceberg, the deeper they go into their subconscious. The tiny floating pomegranate by the woman’s bedside has two drops of water on either side, representing Venus. The heart cast by the shadow of the pomegranate helps support the idea. This work of touches back on Dali’s previous inspiration, Freudian Psychoanalysis. His work has a dream like aspect to it, using to the “paranoiac- critical” method he created in his early days as a surrealist artist.