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Résumé de l'article

Leonora Carrington place des êtres mythiques dans des décors étranges dans la tradition onirique du surréalisme. Cependant elle ignore un certain nombre d'éléments fréquents chez les surréalistes masculins : la violence érotique, la misogynie et la figure de la femme-objet ou de la femme-muse. Afin de mieux saisir leur spécificité, l'article étudie les peintures et les oeuvres littéraires de Carrington sans nécessairement tenir compte de son appartenance surréaliste. Pour Carrington l'humanité toute entière aurait beaucoup à gagner si l'on accordait une plus grande attention aux caractéristiques spécifiquement féminines. Entre autres, l'existence d'une divinité féminine importante pourrait établir un meilleur équilibre entre le masculin et le féminin.

De telles considérations, enracinées dans l'onirisme et dans la révolte surréalistes, ont conduit Leonora Carrington à la quête d'une origine ou d'un dieu féminin. L'article divise la production de l'artiste en deux périodes : dans un premier temps, la révolte surréaliste caractérise ses textes les plus anciens et ses premières peintures; une deuxième période, d'ésotérisme féminin, suit la lecture de *The White Goddess* de Robert Graves (1949) et s'accentue lorsque le peintre intègre dans ses oeuvres les idées de Carl Jung. Une transition entre ces deux périodes à lieu entre 1945 et 1950. Carrington se préocccupe de l'origine mythique de la femme en termes surréalistes et en tenant compte de la théorie junguienne. Dans la mouvance surréaliste certes, l'art de Leonora Carrington s'en éloigne ainsi à bien des égards.

Surrealism and Esoteric Feminism in the Paintings of Leonora Carrington[1]

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RÉSUMÉ

Leonora Carrington place des êtres mythiques dans des décors étranges dans la tradition onirique du surréalisme. Cependant elle ignore un certain nombre d'éléments fréquents chez les surréalistes masculins : la violence érotique, la misogynie et la figure de la femme-objet ou de la femme-muse. Afin de mieux saisir leur spécificité, l'article étudie les peintures et les oeuvres littéraires de Carrington sans nécessairement tenir compte de son appartenance surréaliste. Pour Carrington l'humanité toute entière aurait beaucoup à gagner si l'on accordait une plus grande attention aux caractéristiques spécifiquement féminines. Entre autres, l'existence d'une divinité féminine importante pourrait établir un meilleur équilibre entre le masculin et le féminin.

De telles considérations, enracinées dans l'onirisme et dans la révolte surréalistes, ont conduit Leonora Carrington à la quête d'une origine ou d'un dieu féminin. L'article divise la production de l'artiste en deux périodes : dans un premier temps, la révolte surréaliste caractérise ses textes les plus anciens et ses premières peintures; une deuxième période, d'ésotérisme féminin, suit la lecture de *The White Goddess* de Robert Graves (1949) et s'accentue lorsque le peintre intègre dans ses oeuvres les idées de Carl Jung. Une transition entre ces deux périodes à lieu entre 1945 et 1950. Carrington se préoccupe de l'origine mythique de la femme en termes surréalistes et en tenant compte de la théorie junguienne. Dans la mouvance surréaliste certes, l'art de Leonora Carrington s'en éloigne ainsi à bien des égards.

The daughter of a wealthy English textile manufacturer, Leonora Carrington was born in 1917 and grew up near Lancaster. Her early years were spent at Crookey Hall, a large country manor with views of the Irish Sea and Morecambe Bay that her father leased until the property was sold in 1927. Harold Wilde Carrington then purchased Hazelwood, a large estate in Silverdale. By this time Leonora was nearly 10 years old and beginning a series of not altogether satisfactory relationships with a number of English convent schools. Later, in her teens, she had a more satisfactory experience at a private school in Florence and there completed her education. At no time, it would seem, did she want to be fitted into a traditional middle-class mould. After her schooling, although she was presented at court, Leonora soon struck out on her own, both as an author and as a painter. By 1937 she had become an associate of the Surrealist group in France.

Surrealists were noted for a very precise iconography, and most artists and writers in the movement displayed a strong interest in erotic violence, misogyny, and woman as object or muse. As a member of the movement, Leonora Carrington could be expected to share many of their ideas, but as a woman, she was not inclined to favour aspects derogatory to her sex.[2] This paper seeks to define

1 I wish to thank the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Department of History in Art, University of Victoria, for financial assistance during the research and writing of this paper and to express my appreciation for the encouragement and valuable critical comments from S. Gunisinghe, J. Osborne, J. Patt, and E. Tumasonis of the Department of History in Art and from A. McLaren of the History Department.

2 Further exploration and discussion is required in art history about the dynamics of women artists. Such a direction has been taken in literature; for example, Ellen Hawkes, "Woolf's 'Magical Garden of Women,'" in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf* (London, 1981), 31-60, examines Woolf's description of women striving for cultural identity

the special iconography that Carrington developed in both her writings and her paintings, adjusting and expanding traditional views of Surrealism.

SURREALIST REBELLION: THE FIRST PHASE

Carrington's unique contribution to Surrealism can first be judged on the basis of three early works: two short stories from her 1939 anthology *The Oval Lady*, "The Debutante" and "The Oval Lady" itself, and a painted *Self Portrait* of 1937 (Fig. 98).

A connection between woman and beast dominates all three of these works, suggestive of Carrington's rebellion against society. In "The Debutante," the protagonist asks her only friend, a hyena from the local zoo, to replace her at a large party. To effect a disguise that will fool the girl's parents and the party guests into thinking that the hyena is the young lady, the animal devours the entire body of the girl's maid, except for her face, which becomes the hyena's mask.[3] Both the hyena and the girl assume that the mask will enable the hyena to attend the ball undetected. The conspirators, however, neglect to consider the effect that the hyena's smell would have on the guests, and the plot is discovered. In a last rebellious act, the hyena eats the face of the maid as it flees from the lavish party through a window.

There is little doubt about the aggressive intent of the protagonist. The hyena, in Carrington's work, expresses a contemptuous attitude towards a rite of passage, the debutante's ball. The conspiracy between female and beast in the story is a rebellion against established traditions and, as such, fits well into the Surrealist mode of rebellion that was so vehemently directed against society and its mores.

In "The Oval Lady," the protagonist, Lucrecia, has as a playmate a rocking horse named Tartarus. This horse, according to Lucrecia, is her favourite because "he hates my father."[4] Lucrecia is also able to transform herself into a real horse. The narrator of "The Oval Lady" tells us:

> If I had not known that it was Lucrecia, I might have sworn that I was dealing with a real horse. She was so beautiful, her whiteness was blinding, with four fine limbs like needles, and a mane that fell around her face as if it were water.[5]

Lucrecia's behaviour, like the debutante's, is described as rebellious. The father forbids Lucrecia to play with horses and threatens to destroy her playmate Tartarus. She does not obey. In his wrath at being disobeyed over and over again, Lucrecia's father summons her and says: "What I am going to do is for your own good little one. . . . You are too big to be playing with Tartarus. Tartarus is for little boys. Therefore I am going to burn it until there's nothing left of it."[6] Punishment for rebellion against the father is destruction of Lucrecia's Tartarus, horse and symbol of her childhood.

Carrington's painting, *Self Portrait*, complements the artist's literary efforts. A young Leonora Carrington, with a mass of long, Pre-Raphaelite-like hair, perches on the edge of a small Victorian chair. A white rocking horse hovers over her head and her hand reaches out towards a pregnant hyena. All three figures are frozen in the boxlike room. Outside the house, a horse is running free towards a grove of trees. The real horse is painted in the same precise, hard-edged way as the static interior subjects, but the colour of its coat, a blue-white silvery hue, and the pose in which it is caught leaping towards the trees give this horse a sense of freedom that is lacking in the wooden rocking horse, as well as in the hyena and the woman. The colour of the horse's coat, however, is repeated precisely in the colour of the woman's trousers, providing a link between the quiet woman confined in the room and the horse, free outside. The connection between the rocking horse and the woman, as well as between the hyena and the woman, is reinforced by their proximity.

"The Debutante" attempts animal transformation and fails. *Self Portrait* shows Carrington pointing at the hyena. In "The Oval Lady," the rebellious Lucrecia is able to transform herself into Tartarus. *Self Portrait* presents a horse that looks like the transformed Lucrecia as described by the narrator in the story. Similarly, when pressures increased in her own life and she approached insanity, Carrington saw herself as actually able to effect such a transformation. Two years after writing "The Oval Lady," during her confinement in a mental institution in Spain,[7] Carrington believed

in a patriarchal world in connection with Woolf's own experiences within the Bloomsbury Group.

3 See Bettina L. Knapp, "Leonora Carrington's Whimsical Dreamworld: Animals Talk, Children are Gods, a Black Swan Lays an Orphic Egg," *World Literature Today*, LI, 4 (Autumn 1977), 527, for a discussion of hyena as representation of primitive or natural instincts in "The Debutante." See also Gloria Orenstein, "La nature animale et divine de la femme dans les oeuvres de Leonora Carrington," *Melusine*, II (1981), 130-37, and Jacqueline Chenieux, *Le surrealisme et le roman* (Lausanne, 1983), 254-63.

4 Leonora Carrington, "The Oval Lady," in *The Oval Lady* (Santa Barbara, 1975), 14.

5 Carrington, "The Oval Lady," 14.

6 Carrington, "The Oval Lady," 17.

7 Confused and alone after Ernst's internment, Carrington

that she became a horse. In the literary account of her insanity, *Down Below* (1944), she writes: "I myself was the white colt."[8]

In Carrington's personal iconography, there is no doubt that the horse is a symbol for rebellion against a patriarchal male figure. But equally important is the observation that Carrington requires the assistance of a male to release her from the bonds of another male. Her rebellion in real life, like her rebellion in the story, was assisted by a male figure. When she wrote "The Oval Lady" and when she painted *Self Portrait*, Carrington, in opposition to her Roman Catholic parents, was living with a successful, and much older, Surrealist painter, Max Ernst.[9] Ernst, in effect, had "rescued" her from her father. When Ernst, a German citizen, was interned during World War II in France, and Carrington suffered a complete breakdown, Carrington, just like Lucrecia in "The Oval Lady," called out for another rescue from the tyranny of the "father." She wrote in *Down Below*: "I hastened to seduce him [her doctor], for I said to myself: 'There's my brother who comes to liberate me from the fathers.' "[10] She also wrote: "At that time, Madrid was singing, *Ojos verdes* (Green Eyes) after a poem by Garcia Lorca . . . green eyes, the eyes of my brothers who would deliver me at last of my father."[11]

Carrington's portrait of Ernst (1940) depicts him resplendent in the bird feathers of his alter-ego and includes a white stallion. This stallion links her associate in true-life rebellion with the catalyst for rebellion in her stories and visual images. Given Ernst's established interest in Freud, Freudian symbolism must be considered part of Carrington's iconography while she and Ernst were companions.

Freudian thought suggests that a stallion represents intense sexual desires. This analogy provides another dimension for understanding Carrington's horse imagery in both the painting and the story. Like the other Surrealists of the 1930s, she used a symbol to express her disdain for the repressed sexuality of bourgeois Europe. She was able to "code" a psychological suggestion into her paintings and writings that could be understood if the viewer knew the language. That is, as Carrington's association with the Surrealists, with mature and capable artists, enhanced her visual creativity, so too the exposure to a highly developed language of mythology and psychology enhanced and augmented her symbolism.

By the early 1940s, however, Carrington became more interested in an exploration of intuition and magic than of Freudian repression or sexuality. This new direction can be seen as early as 1942 in a painting, also entitled *The Oval Lady* (Fig. 99), done after her release from the mental institution. The painting of *The Oval Lady* suggests an absolute power and strength existing within an independent female.[12] The focal point of the painting is a gigantic, elegantly robed female figure crowned with a large diadem. She stands within a circular symbol on the ground near the banks of a stream. To her right stands a huge egg topped with the heads of horned stags. An egg represents the power of creation and reproduction; stags are symbols of Artemis, the vengeful goddess who turned Actaeon into a stag and had him slaughtered by her hounds.[13] In Carrington's painting the female figure dominates her environment both by her size and by her sovereignty. The circle in which she stands repeats itself in the circle with which she is crowned, reinforcing and reiterating the creative power of the egg/woman. A pregnant mare, tethered to a tree and expressing both awe and fear, pays homage to the woman by kneeling. The theme of the link between woman and beast still prevails in this work as it did

travelled from France with friends to Madrid, but as her condition became more disturbed she was sent to a private institution in Santander by her family's business associates. Mary Kavanagh, Carrington's nurse from childhood, was sent to Santander to look after her. She and the nurse left the asylum for Lisbon when Carrington's condition improved. (This information was obtained by the author in an interview with a member of the Carrington family in England, June 1986. Notes from this interview remain in the author's possession.)

8 Leonora Carrington, *Down Below* (Chicago, 1983), 38. *Down Below* is Carrington's recollections of her insanity, first published in the Surrealist journal *VVV*, 4 (February 1944), 70-86. According to Carrington, the Chicago publication is unauthorized.

9 Carrington met Ernst in London when she was 20 years old. They spent some time together in England and then travelled to France. Ernst's son, Jimmy Ernst, discusses her parents' horror at their daughter's behaviour in his memoirs, *A Not-So-Still Life: A Memoir* (New York, 1984), 109.

10 Carrington, *Down Below*, 17. According to a family member, Leonora was indulged, patronized, and just generally not taken seriously by her father more than she was restricted or repressed. This was particularly true with regard to her painting. Any rebellion on her part should be seen in that light. (Interview with the author in England, June 1986. Notes from this interview are in the author's possession.)

11 Carrington, *Down Below*, 19.

12 Carrington, a student of alchemy, is heavily influenced by M. E. Atwood's *Hermetic Philosophy and Alchemy* (1850; New York, 1960). The symbol of the egg is important in Carrington's work. She explores alchemical symbolism found in Atwood as well as Orphic symbolism found in Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (Princeton, 1970). Carrington is deeply indebted to both these authors.

13 This, like the Orphic ritualized killing of Dionysus, probably held some fascination for the Surrealists. It is fitting for Carrington to model her figure on this vengeful goddess but she eliminates the violence.

in the story but, in this painting of fertility and creation, the woman dominates. Painted three years after the story of the same name, and after Carrington's bout with insanity, this new "oval lady" is more independent, more in control of her environment, more powerful than the animals.

By 1949, when Carrington first read Robert Graves's *The White Goddess*, her paintings and writings clearly demonstrated a debt to Graves and his attitude towards myth.[14] Graves, like psychologist Carl Jung, recognized a universal feminine archetype as a source of inspiration and creativity. As is obvious from the content of the painting *The Oval Lady*, this female-oriented mythology is one with which Carrington felt comfortable. Because of her interest in Graves and her incorporation of much of his symbolism into her own work, Carrington's paintings and writings displayed a Jungian character even before she began to study Jung's own writings—which she did, with fervour, by 1960. In fact, this exploration of the female archetype that would expand and develop in her later work had its roots in her youth.

For example, an early childlike painting, *Erebus* (Fig. 100),[15] dated September 1932 when Carrington was only 15 years old (from a series of seven pictures she did called *Sisters of the Moon*), portrays a female protagonist and her bestial companion in a mythic or fairy-tale-like role.[16] Although *Self Portrait*, completed seven years later, is much more accomplished and benefits from her study at Ozenfant's Academy in London and her association with Max Ernst, certain characteristics dominate both these paintings as well as later works. Specifically, we find a dominant female protagonist and animal helpers or affiliates. Thus, we find in her work a jump from youthful myth or fairy-tale imagery through Surrealism to the incorporation of Robert Graves's mythology and Carl Jung's symbolism. Carrington continued to expand on a language she had begun using at least as early as her teens, which she developed and adapted during her association with Surrealism and which eventually displayed the sophistication and complexities that only a great deal of time, study, thought, and assimilation of ideas could produce.

ESOTERIC FEMINISM: THE MATURE PHASE[17]

By 1960, Carrington became fascinated with the writings of Carl Jung who, unlike Freud, explored the intuitive nature of human beings.[18] Carrington's increased reliance on Jung was exemplified by her play *Penelope*, produced in Mexico City in the early 1960s.[19] *Penelope* is, in effect, her short story "The Oval Lady" adapted for the stage, but with a slightly altered dénouement. Lucrecia becomes Penelope and she, not the father, is the most powerful character in the work. In fact, near the end of the play, Tartar (the white horse) and Penelope merge and pass silently from sight. The father, seeing the transformation and realizing that his daughter has escaped his tyranny, commits suicide. The "deliverer" in the play is not a male horse but a cow from another world, a cow with the horns and solar disc of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, just like the one that appears in Carrington's painting *Professional Ethics* (1955). The cow tells Penelope that there are savage and wicked men who do not know magic and that Penelope's father is one of these men,"an enemy of magic."[20] In Carrington's works of the late 1930s, the association of the horse with "intense desires" and rebellion against established tradition is in keeping with antibourgeois Surrealist ideology. Her transformation of the horse into a Jungian symbol expressing intuitive under-

14 Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* was first published in 1948. Information about authors who influenced Carrington is based on my interview with Carrington in New York, April 1984, and on a series of interviews I conducted with a close friend of Carrington's, the Canadian poet and painter P. K. Page, in Victoria in the summer and fall of 1984. Notes and scripts from these interviews are the property of the author.

15 Erebus is a son of Chaos, a pseudonym for the underworld or darkness, and a sibling of Tartarus. Carrington uses "author's licence" to make Erebus female, but also interesting is the association so early in her life with Tartarus—a symbol that retains importance in much of her work right through the later novel *The Hearing Trumpet* (Los Angeles, 1976). Carrington loved imaginative stories as a child and continues to do so as an adult. Her favourite author is the Irish writer James Stephens whose delightful fantasy, *The Crock of Gold* (first published 1912), has enthralled her since childhood (Page interview).

16 Two of these paintings are in a private collection in England (interview with member of the Carrington family, June 1986).

17 Whitney Chadwick ("Leonora Carrington: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness," *Woman's Art Journal* [Spring-Summer 1986], 37-42) also creates a two-phase delineation of Carrington's visual work. However, she distinguishes between works of "personal awareness" and those of "political consciousness." I think the extent to which Carrington's "political consciousness" involves "political commitment" must be questioned.

18 See Carl Jung, *The Symbolic Life* (1950; Princeton, 1976), 141-43, where Jung clearly delineates the difference between his and Freud's ideas about animal transference. Jung also thought that the horse (an image found frequently in Carrington's work) might represent intuitive understanding and the magical nature of the human.

19 P. K. Page worked on the production of *Penelope* in Mexico City. A discussion of *Penelope* (written in 1946) plays a major role in Gloria Orenstein's monograph *The Theater of the Marvelous: Surrealism and the Contemporary Stage* (New York, 1975).

20 Orenstein, *Theater of the Marvelous*, 136.

standing and the magical nature of the human indicates a move towards independence. In the late 1930s she relied on a male deliverer or catalyst to secure her freedom, while in *Penelope* and her novel *The Hearing Trumpet* (written in 1960 but published in 1974), the female protagonist was more than able to stand alone.

Even in her early work, there is evidence of the direction she would eventually take—a direction that includes her later interest in Graves and Jung and is influenced by esoteric research into female-oriented philosophies and religions.[21] In "The Oval Lady," the male horse is fundamental to female independence. However, the title of the story, with its implications of an egg and hence creative reproduction, suggests a presence superior to Lucrecia. Her painting *The Oval Lady* suggests that power and strength exist within an independent female.

Another painting from about 1948, *The Guardian of the Egg* (Fig. 101) demonstrates even more clearly the power that the woman has achieved in Carrington's iconography. The Guardian has no male companion and dominates both the painting and the environment even more emphatically than the Oval Lady. All beings—human as well as animal—are subservient to and protected by her sovereignty. Her encompassing power is illustrated by the large cloak she wears over her dress, a dress decorated with repeated images of human figures, and by the egg she holds gently between her hands. Birds—symbols sacred to many female deities—fly out of the huge cloak wrapped around her. The "guardian" is independent, in control, and ascendant. She is, in fact, a "goddess," creator, and protector of her world.

From this time on, Carrington explored what Carol Christ calls the "spiritual dimensions of feminism."[22] She conducted an exploration of an esoteric realm that included magic and mysticism in conjunction with a supreme or deified female figure. Carrington's career, which began with an expression of rebellion and continued in a somewhat different vein during the 1940s, entered what I call her esoteric feminist period by the beginning of the 1950s.

"Esoteric feminism" can be found in many of her paintings of this period. Much of this "feminism" is intuitive or dependent on well-known myths and pagan themes dealing with female imagery. For example, in her 1947 painting *Pomps of the Subsoil* (Fig. 102), an egg sprouting new life provides the focal point. Although three figures, each about the same size, inhabit the painting, the seated female draped with a blue gown located in the left midground is the focal point. Four of the many birds in the painting rest in the branches of a lacy green tree growing out of her head. The other two slender figures, occupying the other half of the canvas, pay homage to the reclining tree-headed female.

Another painting from this period, *Professional Ethics* (1955), is dominated by a silvery-white cow who, like the Egyptian goddess Hathor, holds a solar disc within sweeping horns.[23] Two large ears of corn, three stalks of wheat, and an open pomegranate, all well-known symbols of the Greek goddess Demeter, are found on the floor of the room in which a partially nude woman with a triangular headdress stands. Similarly, in Carrington's book *The Hearing Trumpet*, written in 1960, the symbolism is anything but obscure. The goddess in the novel is an eighteenth-century witch who disguises herself as a nun. The nun/witch, Doña Rosalinda Alvarez Cruz della Cueva, becomes Abbess of "El Convento de Santa Barbara de Tartarus" and is canonized by the Roman Catholic Church after her death. In this instance, Tartarus[24] is not a horse but a place that holds and protects. The "goddess" keeps the castle at Tartarus as her refuge and stronghold while she plans how to regain possession of the Grail, which has been stolen by apostates. She has a "priest," a bishop in the church, as a helper, but there is no question about his status: he is not her equal; she is supreme.

This type of symbolism making direct or indirect references to a female deity became an important part of Carrington's works during this period. In this respect she is an advocate of spiritual development that suggests a feminine mythic history as the source or basis for male-female equality. As

21 Carrington's approach to a female deity has been enthusiastically and non-critically discussed by Gloria Orenstein in "Leonora Carrington: Another Reality," *Ms.* (August 1974); *Theater of the Marvelous*; "Art History and the Case for the Women of Surrealism," *Journal of General Education*, XXVII, 1 (Spring 1975); "Leonora Carrington's Visionary Art for the New Age," *Chrysalis*, III (1978); "La nature animale et divine"; and "Reclaiming the Great Mother: A Feminist Journey to Madness and Back in Search of a Goddess Heritage," *Symposium* (Spring 1982).

22 Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion* (New York, 1978).

23 In addition to a fondness for Celtic mythology that originated in childhood, Carrington is attracted to the art and mythology of the Egyptians and the Etruscans (interview in *Excelsior*, Mexico City, 1 March 1966).

24 Zeus flung the serpent, Typhon, into Tartarus after he had defeated this youngest child of the earth goddess, Gaea. Carrington probably chooses this name because of its connection with the downfall of the goddess. In *The Hearing Trumpet*, it is from Tartarus that the goddess plans her revenge on society for the theft of the Grail.

Carrington became more familiar with Jung's writings, she also became very interested in the work of one of Jung's students, Marie Louise von Franz. Writings such as *Shadow and Evil in Fairy Tales* (1974) only increased Carrington's concern for the emergence of more independent and more spiritually aware women. In Carrington's view, spiritual awareness must coincide with, or come before, economic and political changes, and development of the feminine aspects within the psyche of both men and women would result in healthier individuals and a healthier society. Von Franz expresses similar attitudes, insisting that the "radical materialism" evident in our society today results from the loss of the "feminine Godhead."[25]

This "feminine Godhead" can be found in Carrington's painting long before she read Franz or Jung and seems to develop momentum after she read Graves. For example, in the 1953 painting *And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur* (Fig. 103), Carrington's two young children, Gabriel and Pablo,[26] are introduced to an elegant, gentle "Daughter of the Minotaur." The children gaze at the white "Hathor-horned" creature as she looks out into the viewer's space. Crystal balls lie on the table and on the floor. The capitals of the most prominent columns are decorated with sheaves of grain. A large, butterfly-headed, diaphanous figure dominates the background, and in the right foreground a red rose lies near two white dogs. One dog rests while the other looks towards a dancing figure illuminated by a misty, dreamlike light from a distant doorway. Again, most of the components of the painting are symbols for female deities or magic: the white dog and the grain are symbols of the Greek goddess Demeter; the butterfly can be associated with the Minoan goddess or with a female deity in general;[27] the crystal ball is associated with magic; the rose is often associated with the Virgin Mary. Carrington also wrote in *The Hearing Trumpet*: "A Rose is a secret, a beautiful Rose is a Great Lady's Secret, a Cross is the parting or the joining of the Ways, this is the meaning of Abbess Rosalinda Alvarez Cruz della Cueva's name."[28] In Carrington's personal iconography, then, the rose symbolizes the female deity.

But the most interesting symbol in the painting is the white cow who is the Daughter of the Minotaur. The cow is a symbol of the female deity, while the minotaur was an important theme for the Surrealists. The Surrealist minotaur was a creature of the libido, the epitome of unfettered passion. He is the beast/man about to encounter Theseus, who suggests intellect and rationality. The minotaur was sex, sadism, violence, and debasement; to the Surrealist, he represented the unconscious mind and unleashed irrationality.[29] For example, the cover of the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* (May 1934), by Francisco Bores, shows a woman, presumably dead, draped across a huge hand. The almost goatlike head of the minotaur with his sharp, pointed horns looks down upon the victim from the left corner. Another cover, by Salvador Dali (June 1936), shows a female minotaur, tall, thin, and cruel, with a tongue lolling out of her mouth. One hand is placed on her hip in a seductive pose. A lobster crawls out of her exposed womb; her breast has been replaced by a drawer. In the painting *Childhood of the Minotaur* (1939) by André Masson, the head of a minotaur emerges from a labyrinthian mass of swirling female flesh. Carrington, twisting the theme to her own purposes, depicts a white cow (goddess) as a "Daughter" of the minotaur. The image is serene, calm, commanding, and sovereign. Dread, debasement, and erotic violence are absent.

Like the male Surrealists, Carrington rebelled, but her rebellion was expressed differently and took her along a different path. As a young woman she rebelled against her patriarchal establishment family. As a middle-aged woman she established her own independence as a "daughter" of the Surrealist movement—a movement from which she learned much but from which she moved away as she matured as a woman and an artist. Her progress in this direction appears quiet and gentle but persistent. As with the Daughter of

25 Marie-Louise von Franz, *Alchemy: An Introduction to the Symbolism and the Psychology* (Toronto, 1980), 212-19.

26 Carrington met Emerico (Chiqui) Weisz in Mexico in 1943. They married three years later and had two children: Gabriel, born in 1946, and Pablo, born in 1947. Carrington and Weisz separated in the mid-1970s and Carrington now spends much of her time in New York where, for a time, her younger son practised medicine. Gabriel is involved in theatre in Mexico City.

27 Sir Arthur Evans connected the butterfly motif with a Great Goddess. See *British Archaeological Discoveries in Greece and Crete (1886-1936)*, Catalogue for the Exhibition, Royal Academy of Arts (London, 1936), 11. See also Arthur Evans, *The Palace of Minos* (London, 1930), III, 154, for a connection between the butterfly motif and the double-bladed axe. Evans states, emphatically, that, in Crete, in the great days of Minoan civilization, "the goddess was supreme" (*Palace of Minos*, 57). Carrington is familiar with Evans's work (interview, New York, 1984). She was also studying in London during the large Royal Academy Exhibition in 1936. Carrington favours the butterfly symbol in many paintings and, in fact, even calls one painting *Lepidoptera* (1969).

28 Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 73.

29 See Whitney Chadwick, *Myth in Surrealist Painting, 1929-1939* (Ann Arbor, 1978), for a most informative discussion about Surrealism and myths surrounding images such as the Minotaur. See also Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists of the Surrealist Movement* (London, 1984), for insights into the way women fit into these myths.

the Minotaur, the "feminine Godhead" in her paintings is generally depicted as imposing, protective, and non-threatening. One painting from the "esoteric period," however, is threatening and even violent.

The Return of Boadicea (1969; Fig. 104) depicts a struggle between male and female—between patriarchy and matriarchy—that is disturbing and fierce. The struggle between Boadicea, the first-century Icenian queen, and the Romans was itself vicious and bloody, and in trying to relate this to the viewer Carrington resorts to violent imagery. According to historical accounts, the queen was whipped in public and her daughters repeatedly raped by Roman soldiers as a punishment for "insubordination."[30] After this injury to their royal leaders, the Icenians, led by Boadicea, conducted the last all-out rebellion against the Roman invaders. Despite an early rout, the more organized and highly trained Romans emerged victorious. Boadicea and her daughters committed suicide rather than fall into Roman hands.

Carrington's painting does not recreate a specific incident from Boadicea's life or battles, nor does it attempt to create an historical representation of the queen. As the title implies, Boadicea, with her entourage of ferocious beasts, has returned. Her chariot, pulled by one dark and one light hybrid horse/boar, has wheels of fire. Both the horse and the boar are animals sacred to female deities—the horse to the Celtic goddess Epona and the boar to the Mediterranean goddesses Demeter and Astarte, as well as to a German goddess whose people, said the Roman commander Tacitus, "worship the mother of the gods and wear as a religious symbol the device of a wild boar."[31] The queen is butterfly-headed but in this representation the butterfly is not a floating, diaphanous shape as in *The Daughter of the Minotaur*. It is instead a fierce and frightening mask for a large head with streaming hair and a body trailing flame. Three horse/boars are ahead of Boadicea and her chariot. The one in the lead has felled and gored a shrouded victim. The second is about to grapple with its victim, another shrouded figure who is most definitely male with clearly visible genitals. Boadicea has returned with wrath and fury. She is neither the gentle representation of the female deity in *Daughter of the Minotaur* nor the elegant, serene representation in *Guardian of the Egg*. This representation of a female warrior/goddess shows us another aspect of Carrington's previously gentle female deities, giving us a different insight into the male-female balance. This apotheosis of rebellion combines Carrington's revolt against patriarchy as seen in the independent woman of *Self Portrait* with the pre-eminence of the deity in *Guardian of the Egg*.

The gentle, protective deities—the Oval Lady, the Guardian of the Egg, and the Godmother—and the ferocious, vengeful deity Boadicea vie for domination in Carrington's world. This struggle is most lucidly expressed in her apocalyptic novel *The Hearing Trumpet*. In this novel, the world as we know it is destroyed but those faithful to the goddess remain, watching and waiting for a new humanity. At the end of the novel, the Grail has finally been returned to its female keepers with the help of wolves. But still the world must wait to renew itself. According to Marian, Carrington's protagonist and narrator,

> Ice ages pass, and although the world is frozen over we suppose someday grass and flowers will grow again. . . . After I die Anubeth's werecubs will continue the document, till the planet is peopled with cats, werewolves, bees and goats. We all fervently hope that this will be an improvement on humanity, which deliberately renounced the Pneuma of the Goddess.[32]

Leonora Carrington's art has nothing to do with the "libertine,"[33] nothing to do with erotic violence, nothing to do with woman as muse, child or devourer—all of which are characteristics of Surrealism. Her art is dreamlike, fantastic and, in some instances, capricious. Many of her works stress a relationship between humanity and a female deity, a Mother Goddess. In 1976 Carrington wrote about "the Mysteries which were ours [women's]," and the "Rights" which "where there from the beginning" and should be "Taken Back Again."[34] Referring to pre-patriarchal society, she wrote: "The Bible, like any other history, is full of gaps and peculiarities that only begin to make sense if understood as a covering-up for a very different kind of civilization which had been eliminated."[35] In *The Hearing Trumpet*, Carrington wrote:

> You may well imagine the transports of delight which overcame me when I learnt that Magdalen had been a high initiate of the mysteries of the Goddess but had

30 See *Works of Tacitus: The Annals*, Oxford Translation (London, 1896), I, 372-73.

31 *Works of Tacitus*, I, 731.

32 Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 158.

33 When I questioned Carrington, in an interview, about the philosophy of the movement and the status of women within Surrealism, she said she never approved of the attitude towards women and even less of the cult of erotic violence epitomized by the veneration of Sade and Lautreamont, and had argued with Breton about precisely these things as well as his "libertine attitudes." (Notes from this interview, April 1984, are in the possession of the author.)

34 Leonora Carrington, *Leonora Carrington, A Retrospective Exhibition* (New York, 1976), 12.

35 Carrington, *Retrospective Exhibition*.

been executed for the sacrilege of selling certain secrets of her cult to Jesus of Nazareth. This of course would explain the miracles which have puzzled us for so long.[36]

We must conclude, from all this, that Carrington has rejected the patriarchal traditions of Western culture, replacing these with a spiritual search for a universal feminine creator.

CONCLUSION

The link between Carrington and the Surrealists exists in the exploration of an "other" world, a world that is not tangible.[37] The male Surrealists[38] emphasize the Freudian concepts of repression and sexuality along with the potential for violence that exists within the libido because of repressed sexuality. Carrington, on the other hand, creates no images of repressed sexuality or sexual violence. Even a painting like *Boadicea*, which does represent revenge, cannot be compared with works such as Hans Bellmer's *Dolls*, Salvador Dali's cover for *Minotaure*, Magritte's *Rape*, or countless other Surrealist representations of women. Carrington emphasizes a spiritual or mystical realm as part of the unconscious or dream world with images that sometimes criticize the world of reality as it is and suggest a "better" world. But like the Surrealists, she explores a world that goes beyond what we see and call real.

In addition to exploring "beyond reality," many artists during the late 1930s were rebels against a society that had fought a disastrous world war and appeared to be plummeting towards further calamities. They wanted to destroy old moral orders and change decayed intellectual values. In *The Hearing Trumpet*, Carrington's 92-year-old protagonist, Marian, reminisces about her youth, about the art scene in Paris, about Surrealism and how it shocked London society. But, says Marian, "Surrealism is no longer considered modern today and almost every village rectory and girl's school have surrealist pictures hanging on their walls."[39] Marian is right, of course. In 1937, the Surrealists, like Carrington, were "shocking." The Surrealists were shocking the world; Leonora Carrington wanted to shock her family. Now, however, all but the most outrageous Surrealist works have become acceptable.

Carrington's paintings never shocked or scandalized. This is probably because her iconography is subtle or, perhaps more to the point, because it is not sexually titillating. However, her paintings and writings never change in their continual depiction of a new humanity ordered upon a new set of beliefs. She is still a rebel. Particularly after her breakdown, and more specifically after 1950, Carrington's rebellion against the bourgeoisie assumed an ideological focus that directed itself more specifically against patriarchy. Carrington implies that humanity will progress if more emphasis is placed on feminine qualities—if, in fact, a female divinity becomes important, and ultimately, if a balance of opposites (female/male) is achieved. Her artistic beginnings, her ideas and thoughts, rooted in the oneiric and rebellious Surrealist tradition, carry her into an esoteric search for a female source or creator.

This search ignores the material concerns of female equality. In fact, it avoids even the attempt to combine a material/economic concern with a spiritual/psychological one, and the language Carrington uses, like early Surrealism itself, is a male-dominated language. Both of Carrington's major sources of inspiration, Graves and Jung, have been criticized by feminists as recognizing female power only in the abstract, as an archetype or muse to enhance maleness (patriarchy).[40] Carrington, while offering women a visual statement of female mythic origins, ironically expresses the statement with a male-dominated language that has its roots in Surrealism and Jungian therapy. Nevertheless, in her writings and paintings she presents women as active, as protagonists, rather than as they are more commonly presented in Surrealism, as passive or submissive figures or even as victims.

This view, however enlightened and of interest to the study of women's art, confines itself to the realm of an elite. The rebellious Carrington, so anxious to break away from upper-class family ties and background, insists on using a language accessible only to those who are sufficiently conversant with mythological imagery, Jungian thought and esoteric pursuits to enable them to "read" the message of female equality or even dominance into her work. However, for those who understand the

36 Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 75.

37 Carrington once said that "Surrealism is an unique movement that I accept because of its uniqueness. . . . Surrealism is the fantastic aspect of reality and with me it is a reality that includes the exterior and the interior" (*Excelsior*, 1 March 1966, 6). This does not contradict her comments, in an interview nearly 20 years later (see note 40), but rather points out that *her* interest is in "the fantastic aspect of reality." But her "fantastic" and Surrealism's "fantastic" are expressed in different ways.

38 Certain female Surrealists also depicted sexual violence. For example, Meret Oppenheim's *Painting of an Exquisite Corpse* (n.d.) depicts a large penis nailed to a crucifix.

39 Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet*, 66.

40 Even Monica Sjöo, herself an advocate of mother goddess worship, points out the maleness of Jung and Graves (*The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* [San Francisco, 1987], 28-31).

language, a prescription for spiritual independence can be gleaned. In declaring her independence from Surrealism, she establishes a stance that is different from, but within the bounds of, the movement itself: a variation on a theme rather than a new score. It is in this variation on a theme, relying on the dream and the sur-real, rather than in feminist art, that Carrington's paintings provide us with a framework with which to examine other women artists of the Surrealist movement.[41]

41 Nineteen major recent canvases, as well as works on paper and small sculptures, were recently exhibited at the Brewster Gallery in New York City. Carrington's stories are now being published by E. P. Dutton in two volumes and will be reprinted by Virago (see *Burlington Magazine* [October 1988], 796-97).

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FIGURE 95. William Coverdale, unidentified drawings for Edgewater: elevation of the main façade, watermarked 1855. Kingston, Queen's University Archives, #256 (Photo: Author).

FIGURE 98. Leonora Carrington, *Self Portrait*, 1937 (Photo: Courtesy of Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York).

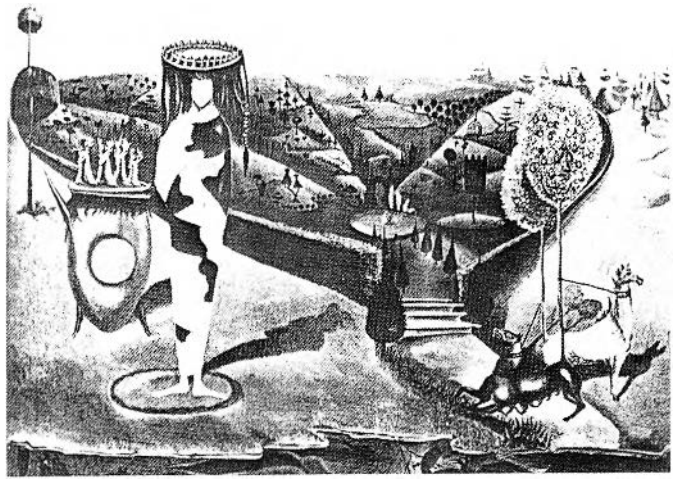

FIGURE 99. Leonora Carrington, *The Oval Lady*, 1942 (Photo: reproduced from *VVV* [March 1943]).

FIGURE 100. Leonora Carrington, *Erebus*, 1932. Private collection (Photo: Author).

FIGURE 101. Leonora Carrington, *The Guardian of the Egg*, ca. 1948. Private collection (Photo: Courtesy of Christie's, London).

FIGURE 102. Leonora Carrington, *Pomps of the Subsoil*, 1947. Private collection (Photo: after Juan García Ponce and Leonora Carrington, *Leonora Carrington* [Mexico City, 1974]).

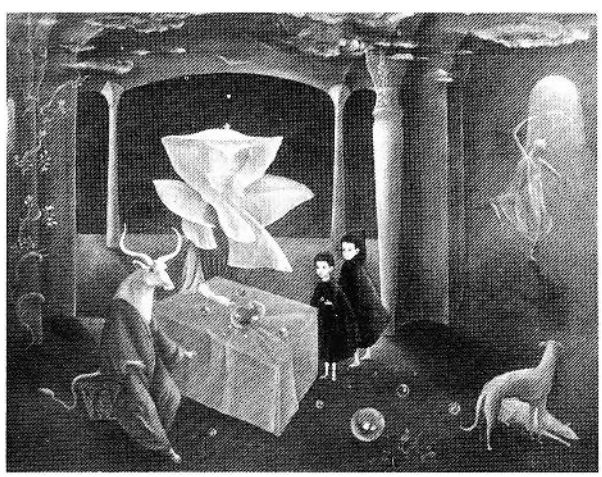

FIGURE 103. Leonora Carrington, *And Then We Saw the Daughter of the Minotaur*, 1953. Private collection (Photo: after Juan García Ponce and Leonora Carrington, *Leonora Carrington* [Mexico City, 1974]).

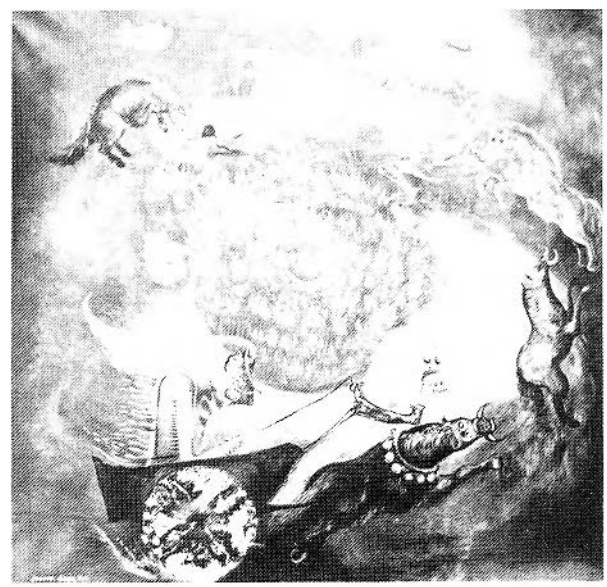

FIGURE 104. Leonora Carrington, *The Return of Boadicea*, 1969. Private collection (Photo: from *Leonora Carrington: A Retrospective Exhibition*, courtesy of Americas Society [New York, November 1976]).