SURREALISM:

FOR WOMEN ARTISTS A METHOD OF OPPRESSION OR EMANCIPATION?

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Declaration

I hereby declare that no portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree, or qualification thereof, or for any other university or institute of learning.

I declare that this thesis is my independent work. All sources and literature are cited and included.

I also hereby acknowledge that my thesis will be made publicly available pursuant to Section 47b of Act No. 552/2005 Coll. and AAU's internal regulations.

Markéta Hrehorová

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Abstract

Although Surrealism is perceived as one of the most misogynist art movements, it helped many women artists to emancipate themselves. While the fact some male members of the movement developed concepts and imagery oppressive to women has been criticised by feminist scholars, their actions were largely influenced by the socio-historical context of Europe during the 1920s and 30s. On the other hand, their Avant-Garde essence made Surrealists in some aspect very progressive. Surrealism, for example, provided liberation from social expectations, while helping women search for their identities and finding their own voice at a time in which every-day social values were lacking anything like gender equality. This contradictory nature of Surrealism is illustrated by the lives and oeuvres of two women Surrealists – Toyen (1902-1980) and Leonora Carrington (1917-2011).

The most famous Czech female artist – Toyen – 'became a man' in her fashion, gait, speech and the aesthetic of her art. Additionally, she created a myth around herself via secrecy, androgyny and ambiguity of her art and persona. These aspects and the fact she conformed to the patriarchal system aided he unprecedented success, by which she overshadowed all other Czech and Slovak female artists of the first half of the twentieth century.

In contrast, Leonora Carrington honoured feminine qualities and the important role women hold in the society and the household. She transformed the stereotypical roles of women as mothers, house-keepers, or nourishers by celebrating them as divine powers. She also used feminine symbols from various ancient mythologies in order to create her Goddess iconography. Leonora's art thus provided an inspiring model for following generations of women artists.

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1. Introduction

"I always imagined I would have a life very different from the one that was imagined for me, but I understood from a very early time that I would have to revolt in order to make that life. Now I am convinced that in any creativity there exists this element of revolt."

—Leonor Fini

Like the Argentinian Surrealist painter Leonor Fini, Leonora Carrington and Toyen had to revolt against social expectations, gender inequalities and many other obstacles on their path to becoming eminent female artists of the 20th century. The obstacles of oppression were even greater among the Surrealists, because they believed they could get in touch with their unconscious through the female nude body, inevitably reducing women to objects of their sexual desire. So how has it come to be that Surrealism – one of the most sexist and misogynist Avant-Garde movements – actually generated or provided the soil for a great number of female artists to grow from and develop? This statement is supported not only by the three names already mentioned above, but additionally also those such as Frida Kahlo (1907-1954), Dorothea Tanning (1920-2012), Remedios Varo (1908-1963), Méret Oppenheim (1913-1985), Lee Miller (1907-1977), Kay Sage (1898-1963), Gertrude Abercrombie (1909-1977), Rachel Baes (1912-1983), Valentine Hugo (1887-1968), Eileen Agar (1899-1991) and many other, including those which have not yet been 'unearthed' by the (predominantly feminist) art historians.

While at first glance it may seem that the Surrealist movement was deeply patriarchal, in fact, despite its unquestionably male-cantered origins, this artistic movement actually allowed many women to define their own identity, become independent and find their own voice at a time in which every-day social values were lacking anything like gender equality. This contradictory aspect of Surrealism can be well examined in the lives, works and reception of the two unique European artists Toyen (1902-1980) and Leonora Carrington (1917-2011). Unlike the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, the women I will discuss were both openly influenced by Surrealism and its tenets – both Toyen and Carrington were directly

affiliated with the original Parisian Surrealist circle and produced their art under the Surrealist umbrella. In contrast with Frida Kahlo, who did not know she was a Surrealist until Breton told her she was, Toyen and Leonora Carrington were in direct affiliation with the Surrealists and the influence of Surrealist thoughts and concepts are thus undeniable. The British-born painter and writer Leonora Carrington freed herself of familial and societal expectations by running away to Paris to study art and join the Surrealists. She had been labelled a *femme-enfant* (the woman-child able to delve into the unconscious through her innocence) by the 'Pope of Surrealism' André Breton; she rejected to use the aesthetics based on masculinist ideas; her own father institutionalised her into a Spanish mental asylum; and yet, despite all those circumstances, her art has become a precursor to the feminist waves of the 1970s and 80s and has achieved respect in galleries and auctions. On the other hand, the Czech artist Toyen 'became a man' in her attire, body language and even used the masculine gender when speaking. This has arguably influenced her reception in the dominantly patriarchal society and her success on the Czech and international art scene. Evidently, there are many interesting features of the two women artists which demonstrate the various ways Surrealism freed and confined them at the same time.

Many feminist art-theoreticians, most comprehensively the American art historian and scholar Whitney Chadwick, have examined the oppressive concepts, masculinist aesthetic language and social circumstances which surrounded Surrealism in the first half of the 20th century, as well as women artist's self-evaluation and search for identity through the Surrealist methods of tapping into one's unconscious. Without Chadwick's and other feminists' writings it would be almost impossible to dig deeper into the previously described contradictory nature of Surrealism, and these sources will be crucial to the further development of this analysis. The basic tenets of Surrealism are grounded in psychological concepts developed by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung and especially the various thoughts on

feminine archetypes important for understanding Breton's sought-after *femme-enfant* and *femme-sorciere*. Furthermore, one can't simply discuss an artistic movement while overlooking the socio-historical context of its origins as well as the circumstances in which the individual artists lived through. However, the most important data for analysis are the respective biographies and oeuvres of the artists Toyen and Leonora Carrington. The individual sources and perspectives will be synthesised in order to examine this crucial Surrealist dichotomy in respect to female artists.

In order to explore and understand the contradictory effects of Surrealism on female artists, many intricate questions have yet to be answered. Although Linda Nochlin might have already answered the most important question of all – *'Why have there been no great women artists?'* (1971) – many more inquiries still remain. What were the sociological and psychological effects of the Surrealist ideas in terms of the Muse or *femme-enfant*? Can art which does not include the Surrealist language set up by its originators be defined as Surrealist, or can only women artists who comply with this language attain success and recognition? Is there a "feminine" aesthetic underappreciated by the patriarchal system of the art world? Did Surrealism help women find their identity, voice and autonomy or was it just a by-product of the sociological progress of the times?

These questions will be investigated in the course of the next four chapters. Since Surrealism originated in 1920s France, the social situation of that time will be discussed and put into context of Europe as well as the Modernist atmosphere in the arts. Furthermore, the misogynistic traits of Surrealism with regard to the patriarchal art-historical system will be distinguished according to two categories: active and passive form of gender oppression. These elements will be applied and inquired within the specific aspects of the female artists' life and work. Despite her complicated life journey, Leonora Carrington was able to find autonomy and redefine the female status within the Surrealist imagery as well as the

household in her mystical art. The mysterious woman hiding under the pseudonym Toyen has been also studied by a number of feminist historians, yet her great success might have actually been influenced by her conformation with the patriarchal conditions in society and art.

But before jumping too much ahead, it is necessary to go back in almost one hundred years to the city of Paris. Although French women were still twenty-five years away from attaining their right to vote and another twenty years from achieving the full scope of their right, there were many revolutionary ideas in the world's art-centre of the early 1920s. The first wave of feminism also produced a hyper-masculine cultural atmosphere during the first half of the twentieth century. Concurrently, the field of psychoanalysis developed by Sigmund Freud and extended by many of his followers was on the rise and began to influence the public thinking.

2. Socio-Historical Context

Gender in between Two Wars

During the Great War, women were mobilized to fill in the position in factories and offices left vacant by their sons, husbands and fathers. Outnumbering the working males, the patriarchal system of that time underwent great, yet temporary changes. Finding their autonomy during the war as heads and breadwinners of the family, the image of women also changed in the public sphere. They went dining without any male escort, became more sexually promiscuous and while women smoking was frowned upon before the war, cigarettes enriched the newly found power of the working women[1] (Bader-Zaar). Once the war came to an end, however, men wanted their jobs back and depopulated nations needed to heavily increase their natality rates. Women across Europe were thus supposed to return to the domestic sphere and instead of manufacturing, begin giving birth to new citizens.

[1] Both Toyen and Leonora Carrington actually smoked proudly and heavily.

Nonetheless, the autonomy experienced during the war became a great impetus for change and induced wave of suffragette acts and early forms of feminism.

The Great War seemed to have promising effects on emancipation of women and gender equality. Education reforms already in place at the turn of the century were improved by further removal of barriers in 1929. Women were given access to secondary education (including art fields) and increasingly more jobs outside of the domestic sphere thus became available to them, although the managerial roles were reserved for men only. The development and spread of bicycles also granted women more mobility and independence. This also led women to start wearing trousers, at first only for sport, but from the 1920s even in leisure. The shift in French fashion from 1910s to 1920s was marked by the shortened length of skirts from the former floor length to just under the knees. The positive atmosphere promising bright future for the improving position and greater freedom of women in the society was, however, cast under a large dark shadow of the French Third Republic's problem with very low birth rates.

France, already dealing with depopulation since 1873, found itself by the end of the war in 1918 in a deep crisis. The French men felt extreme fear of the imminent danger of losing their authority at home as well as abroad due to their decreasing population. While (male) anthropologists from *Societe d'anthropologie de Paris* denied economists involvement in finding the resolution of the issue, they also excluded women from the discussion. The feminist social scientist Clémence Royer vocally criticised male disregard of women's equal importance in procreation and she refused men's veto in family decision-making. Clémence Royer wanted:

> support to be aimed at mothers instead of fathers. Second, denying the primacy of the male-dominated family outlined in the Civil Code, she wanted to support both married and single mothers. Instead of socioeconomic incentives for fathers, she advocated eugenic abortions, legal equality for legitimate and ille gitimate children, a married woman's right to work without her hus band's consent, legal divorce, and a social system in which new mothers lived with their parents instead of their husbands to receive help with child rearing. (Pedersen 674)

Societe d'anthropologie de Paris, however, hid Royer's comments and never used them in negotiating the solutions with the government and the medical society. Instead, the solution they implemented in 1920 became one of the most oppressive laws against women in 20th century Europe.

On 31st July 1920 the French government passed a law which forbade all forms of birth control and abortion. In 1923 the law was further tightened to four years sentences for abortionists and six months for the women requiring an abortion (Sonn 416). The modern woman was, as Cheryl Koos calls it, "demonized": "the *femme moderne* [was defined] against the *femme au foyer*, the woman who forsakes the home for outside work, thus for money and personal gain, versus the woman who embraces her biological destiny and social responsibilities by raising a large family" (704). The *femme modern* was thus a traitor to France, who caused the low birth rates, high unemployment and economic problems. Motherhood and family values were heavily propagated. In 1920, there was also a decree passed that promised proactive mothers The Medal of Honour of the French Family (*Médaille d'honneur de la famille française*) – bronze for mothers successfully raising four to five children, silver for six to seven children, and gold for eight and more (the medals are still awarded even today). While a great number of European countries officially passed laws permitting women to vote by the year 1921, including Finland, Norway, Denmark, Island, Russia, Germany, Poland, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Netherlands, Hungary, Latvia and Sweden (Women Suffrage and Beyond), the French government refused to give women their legal rights up until 1944. Hence, French women were during that period perceived only as mute walking uteruses.

"The Woman Question" was also frequently debated in Bohemia and within the Austria-Hungarian Empire; the debates at the end of the 19th century often included education and the right to vote. This early feminism was a by-product of the National Revival efforts

which recognised intellectual women as an additional strength in the battle against Habsburgs for Czech independence. During the 1830s and 1840s, the Czech nationalists František Ladislav Čelakovský or Karel Havlíček Borovský in the lead with František Palacký were looking for a "modern woman", who would enrich their ranks. When the proto-feminist writer Božena Němcová (1820-1862) moved to Prague in 1842, she joyfully took up that role (Benediktová). She was the first Czech woman to become a professional writer and to be recognised by her male colleagues (Kroulíková). Pursuing the profession of writing was made possible for Božena because she had a maid to look after her children and the household, for which she was criticised by her husband[2]. Her novel *Babička* (*Grandmother*, 1855), capturing an idealised version of life in the Bohemian countryside, became a national classic and inspired many other authors and cinematographers. Following in Božena Němcová's pioneering footsteps, in 1890 the writer Eliška Krásnohorská (1847-1926) founded a high quality Prague gymnasium for girls called Minerva after the Roman goddess of wisdom (Minerva was the first school of its kind in central Europe) (Sayer 90). The Czech nationalists realised that educated women doubled the efforts of attaining independence. Achieving partial autonomy, the Czech State Assembly even granted women the permission to vote and become political representatives as early as 1912. When the war broke, women hoped they wouldn't lose the fruit of their efforts.

Their prayers were heard, when the first president of the Czechoslovak First Republic became Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, a vocal feminist and a representative of a much more promising political atmosphere than the French conservative government. The question of social and legal equality between men and women was at the heart of consolidating democracy and liberty in the new Czechoslovak state. Masaryk was known for his long-standing opinions on the "question of woman" even before he became the president:

[2] In a letter to her friend Jan Helcelet in June 1855, she wrote: "My husband doesn't like it that I so fully devote myself to writing, he would rather see that I be a virtuosic housewife." („Mužovi se nelíbí, že se tak zcela oddávám spisovatelství, raději by viděl, abych virtuosní hospodyní byla," quoted in Jana Benediktová's article)

> I never did and never do like to speak of the question of woman. Because there is no question of woman, nor is there a question solely of man: it is a question of the society. Man and woman from the very beginning of cultural development were together and were able to do everything together, there was always mutuality – any inner change of woman is a change of man, and of man also woman's. (67) [3]

Masaryk was also devoted to his American wife Charlotte Garrigue (note Masaryk included her maiden surname in his own name), with whom he studied, shared all thoughts and enjoyed mutual support. Masaryk believed women are not "born to be mothers" as men are not "born to be fathers" (66); woman's place is not at home, unless she wants it to be and thus women is also not a slave (63); and that marriage is unity of souls, minds and bodies (65). In the writings of the first Czechoslovak president it is clear he had even more progressive views than is normal in the world today. Hence, the first Czechoslovak constitution in 1920 included women's right to vote, attend universities, obtain academic degrees and practise any profession.

Despite the feminist president and the progressive constitution promising equality of men and women before the law, it did not mean the Czechoslovak society immediately transformed their perception of women. The civil code of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, which was deeply rooted within the society and affected the Czechoslovak leadership, more or less granted husbands and fathers the right over their wives and daughters (Mills Kelly[4]). The contradiction between the laws and the public traditions is also related to Czech conservatism prevalent among majority of the population living in rural areas. Nonetheless, the constitution still helped in positively shaping the future public consensus in the First

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[3] Nemluvil jsem a nerad mluvím o otázce ženské. Protože otázky ženské není, jako není otázky jen mužské: je otázka společnosti. Muž a žena od samého počátku kulturního vývoje byli spolu a dovedli všecko dělat společně, byla vždy vzájemnost — každá vnitřní změna ženy je změnou muže, muže také ženy. (Masaryk 67)

[4] In his 2003 presentation called *A Reputation Tarnished: New Perspectives on Interwar Czechoslovakia*, Dr. Mills Kelly gave an overview of the debunked romantic idea of the First Republic. Along the myth of women's equality, Mills Kelly also spoke of the inability of the Parliament to work according to the new Constituion, in effect power was focused in the hands of very few men only continuing the former Habsburg tradition, as well as the exclusion of Slovaks and other minorities from political decision-making. Due to ineffective application of the law, internal surveillance and other workings of the secret police also persisted, as Mills Kelly remarked: "the only substantial difference is that the Habsburg foreign ministry spies wrote their reports in German."

Republic, which in contrast to the French promoted the image of an educated woman and the position of women was slowly improving.

The Crisis of Masculinity

The first wave of women's emancipation during the First World War and following slow changes in the society induced the feeling of fear in men – they were afraid they would lose their position in the patriarchy and their masculinity. At the same time the First World War put great pressure on men to adhere to the romantic ideal of a courageous, strong, un-complaining warrior, who is only undisciplined and disloyal if he has a nervous breakdown ('shellshock'). In relation to this, Mark S. Micale brought attention to the systematic suppression of any medical studies concerned with the effect of war trauma on men's mental illnesses, because these would once again threaten their masculine rationality, objectivity and emotional detachment (7). Furthermore, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick studied Western Modernist literature and identified some men having a "homosocial desire" to socially bond with other men; "in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence," (25). Sedgwick identified this sameness as heterosexuality, which enforces homophobia and misogyny in order to solidify masculinity and oppress any form of femininity in men and women. The redefinition of gender roles via feminism and the ideal of masculinity enforced by war propaganda and rising nationalism resulted in a crisis of masculinity. This crisis affected some Modernist artists, writers and poets like Picasso, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wyndham Lewis, Ernest Hemingway as well as the Futurists[5] and Surrealists, who in effect promoted masculinity and masculinist ideals in their work.

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[5] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in his *Futurist Manifesto* (1909) glorified masculinity through machines, speed, technology, war, the smelly fisherman, the filthy factory worker and rejected institutions of love, marriage and monogamy, which tied the men to the feminine. Marinetti also wrote: "9. We want to glorify war - the only cure

The social changes which brought about Modernity went also hand in hand with the development of depth psychology by Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. Depth psychology is a method of investigating the conscious and especially the unconscious mind of an individual and treating the patient's neurosis according to the findings. Freud's and Jungs's theories, at least to a certain extent, amended the lack of medical inquiry of psychological illnesses.

Depth Psychology

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) specialised in neurological disorders, analysing patients with physical symptoms of neurosis with no clear biological reasons and pioneered the practise of simply letting the individual talk about his or her issues. Freud developed this method further, and let the patient voice his/her stream of consciousness in undirected manner utilising free associations of the mind. The method was used to reveal the patient's neurotic contents of his/her unconscious, which was supposed to be the real source of the problem. Freud continued his research into the unconscious especially through dreams, publishing his findings in 1900 in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. His repertoire of publications and essays on the subject of the unconscious became voluminous, and Freud became a public celebrity.

At the base of Freud's theories was the division of the personality into three parts: *id*, *ego* and *superego*. The id is the source of instinctual (animalistic) drives, primarily to satisfy basic needs for life and reciprocation. The individual attains the ego by becoming a member of a society, in which the satisfaction of id's needs has to be executed in respect to other members; hence, these needs are not always met. The superego is an extension of the ego, but it further suppresses the id through moral boundaries; this means the superego is formed by

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for the world - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of the anarchists, the beautiful ideas which kill, and contempt for woman. 10. We want to demolish museums and libraries, fight morality, feminism and all opportunist and utilitarian cowardice," (3). Although these lines are openly misogynistic and anti-feminist, it must not be forgotten that the Futurists also welcomed women into their circle, because they at that time lacked institutional education and thus offered an uncorrupted perspective on art. What Marinetti's "contempt for woman" and institution points to, is the progressive, complex, and experimental essence of Modernism, which is in contradiction to conservatism, tradition, and naturalism represented by the domesticized image of a woman.

the codes and morals of the society, which cause the conflict between one's desires and the restriction to carry out those desires. Freud believed most mental issues stem from the conflict between the id, the ego and the superego. Freud also developed two crucial theories related to the functioning of opposite genders in the society: "Oedipus complex" and "Castration Anxiety". When a boy becomes aware that his genitals differ from the genitals of his mother, he begins to be sexually drawn to her. Then the child becomes afraid the father will discover the desire and try to mutilate the child's genitals as punishment. The sexual desire for the opposite sex parent and conflict with the same sex parent is identified as the Oedipus complex, while castration anxiety is the fear of loss or mutilation of one's reproductive organ (McLeod). The image of the woman's body, which lack's the phallus, embodies and reminds men of the castration anxiety and thus women further threaten men's masculinity on an unconscious level.

Concurrently, when girls realise they lack the phallus, they either expect it to grow later and when that does not happen, it is assumed they have already been punished by castration by nature and condemns them to an inherent Eve-like inadequacy in the society. This induces penis envy in girls and women, who in effect desire to be men. Although the girl, like the boy, is initially drawn to the mother, she has to re-direct her desire towards the father. There are three resulting pathways of the girl's castration complex and oedipisation:

> With her self-love already shattered by her 'lack', her hostility to the mother (who was supposed to be phallic but who was discovered to be likewise castrated) can make her turn away from women and womanhood altogether; in which case, debasing and despising women, as men do, she is liable to become inhibited and neurotic. Or she can refuse to abandon the pleasures of her clitoris; if so, she remains at the pre-Oedipal 'masculine' phase. Finally, if by exploiting 'her passive instinctual impulses' - that is, the passive aims of her sexual drive - she can transfer her sexual attentions from her mother to her father, she can want first his phallus, and then by the all-important analogy, his baby, then the man again, to give her this baby. (Mitchell and Mishra 96-7)

The first and the last resolution of the girl's complex – condemning womanhood and desiring a baby – can actually be helpful in understanding the two opposite approaches of Toyen and Leonora Carrington to dealing with gender inequality in the art world.

Freud's theories, however, are not the only ones applicable to this case; the Swiss doctor Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) provides an intriguing view on the psyche by analysing how one becomes an individual and the collective archetypes rooted in the background of this process. Jung initially worked with Freud, but gradually disagreed with Freud's limited focus on the sexual basis of all psychological problems. Freud was concerned only with hysteria and neurosis, hence his fixation on suppressed experience during infancy was understandable. However, he lacked Jung's medical experience; Jung recognised Freud's approach is inadequate in treating other mental issues such as schizophrenia (Storr 397). Jung finally broke off in 1912 to develop his analytical psychology. In order to explain fantasies and dreams of both healthy and mentally unhealthy individuals, Jung though there must be something beyond the suppressed personal unconscious and so he devised the idea of the *collective unconscious*, on which evolution and memories of our ancestors are imprinted. Jung noticed patterns in his patients' fantasies and dreams, which correlated with those found in myths around the world; he called the recurring symbols, images and figures *archetypes* (ibid 397-8). Three realms of archetypes exist: the *animus* and *anima* (the manifestations of the opposite gender), the *shadow* (animalistic tendencies of one's personality) and the *Self* (the ideal feeling of unity). These archetypical aspects or images have universal meanings across boarders and cultures and they are expressed in dreams, art, literature or religion.

While Freud though the individual's development is finalised by attaining liberty from one's parents and achieving sexual maturity, Jung observed psychological development is on-going. Jung perceived the individual's conscious self is in conflict, or imbalance, with the unconscious self; he called the balancing and integration of the personality opposites *the individuation process.* The goal is to unify the inner and outer reality in order to achieve the archetype of wholeness – the Self – which gives the individual a sense of cohesion, meaning, direction and purpose (Geist). Although complete integration might not be possible, the

process is nonetheless necessary. As was typical of him, Jung searched for evidence of his theory in the patterns of other cultures across history and geography. Along with various religions, Chinese philosophy or Yoga, Jung found traits of the individuation process in alchemy. Since alchemy is not scientific and has no basis in external reality, it can be psychologically studied as a projection of the unconscious. Alchemists sought out objects like the philosopher's stone, which otherwise did not exist in life. Once the alchemist would achieve his/her goal, he/she would possess deeper knowledge of life and consequently also wholeness; thus alchemy mirrored the universal struggle for integration achieved by the individuation process (Storr 402).

Depth psychology played a key role in the development of Surreliasm, especially the writings of Freud which were very familiar to the founders of the movement. But the context of a strongly patriarchal French society and very slow emancipation of women in Europe, which brought about the crisis of masculinity in some men, also crucially affected many Surrealist concepts. Hence, when examining or perhaps even judging Surrealism and its member, one has to keep in mind the socio-historical context of its origins.

3. Surrealism

The official beginning of the Surrealist movement is marked by André Breton's (1896–1966) *Manifesto of Surrealism* published in Paris in 1924. Breton studied medicine and was deeply interested in psychiatry and Freud's ideas on the unconscious. Breton's interests were shared by other French poets Louis Aragon (1897–1982), Paul Éluard (1895–1952), and Philippe Soupault (1897–1990). Surrealism was thus highly influenced by Freud's writings on dreams and accessing the unconscious through irrationality. Surrealists used automatism as their key creative method; this meant the artist, poet or writer would record the images or words as they came to his/her mind with very little or no rational intrusion. Through this process the artist would be able to produce images or texts reflecting the unconscious. The

product was then “realer than real – surreal”. The irrationality and randomness followed in the footsteps of the Swiss-German movement Dada, which revelled in witty collages, anti-traditionalism and anarchy (Voorhies).

The Surrealists, with Breton as their unnamed leader (due to his dictatorial authority often labelled as “The Pope of Surrealism”), were initially reluctant to let visual artists into the group, because they felt the elaborate processes of painting or sculpting were too directed, and consequently contradicted the Surrealist spontaneity. Nonetheless, André Masson’s (1896–1987) continuous-line drawings from which various symbols and images emerge (see fig. 1) proved Breton wrong (although he later withdrew from the group as many others did or in other cases were ‘excommunicated’ by Breton). Masson created many automatic drawings in 1924 by letting his pen travel across paper without any preconceived image or composition; out of these abstract lines spontaneous images appeared, which Masson occasionally elaborated. Max Ernst (1891–1976) integrated his own techniques, which added unpredictability to his images, for example decalcomania and grattage. The former is “the technique of pressing a sheet of paper onto a painted surface and peeling it off again,” while the latter “is the process of scraping pigment across a canvas that is laid on top of a textured surface,” (ibid). These methods are visible in Ernst’s painting *The Barbarians* (1937) depicting two anthropomorphic figures – a woman-bird and an octopus-man – in wasteland (fig. 2). The ‘monsters’’ violent poses and the overall theme of annihilation foreshadow the emerging war.

Along with playful automatic techniques, Surrealism was also marked by a great deal of humour and irony. Probably inspired by Marcel Duchamp’s *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), a post card of Da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* adjusted with a moustache and a beard (fig. 3), Man Ray (1890–1976) created his famous *Le Violon d'Ingres* (*The Violin of Ingres*, 1924) (fig. 4). Influenced by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres’s nude paintings, Man Ray took photographs of his model

Kiki wearing only a turban on her head. He then painted f-holes, usually carved on violins, on the image of seemingly arm-less and leg-less Kiki turning her back to the viewer. Kiki is thus dehumanized into a musical instrument. Her sexual subjugation is further stressed by the title, which is also a French idiom for a 'hobby' – this suggests that "while playing the violin was Ingres's hobby, toying with Kiki was a pastime of Man Ray," (Getty).

A breaking moment was when René Magritte (1898–1967) moved to Paris in 1927 and diverged from pure automatism in favour of displaying erotic topics and surreal dream-like environments. For example *The Lovers* (1928) are kissing although their heads are covered in white fabric (fig. 5) or *La Clairvoyance* (1936), a self-portrait of the artist looking at an egg but painting a bird (fig. 6). This dream imagery was further developed by Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), who created hallucinatory spaces filled with erotic and Freudian symbolic. Dalí's iconic painting *The Persistence of Memory* (1931) is set in Catalan parched nature with several melting clock's highlighting the meaninglessness of time in the realm of the unconscious (fig. 7). The shapeless skin lying on the ground is Dalí's self-portrait with his eyes closed – dreaming. The ants on one of the watches could allude to his phobia of insects or signify overwhelming sexual desire in Freudian terms. Breton was fascinated by Dalí's work and they began working together on the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* (Voorhies).

The most famous Surrealist *Object* (1936) was 'surprisingly' created by a woman artist Meret Oppenheim. The idea of a fur-covered tea cup, saucer and spoon (fig. 8) emerged from a conversation between Oppenheim, Pablo Picasso and the photographer Dora Maar about the fact one could cover anything with fur. Although touching fur might be pleasurable, putting to one's tongue to it is an unsettling notion. Oppenheim also mock's the concept of hard masculine sculptures by creating a petite, soft object. The work was retitled by Breton as *Luncheon in Fur* at the 1936 Surrealist exhibition in order to refer to Sacher-Masoch's erotic novel *Venus in Fur* (1870). This scandalous reference remained imprinted in the audience's

memory, despite the fact Oppenheim's intention was to simply create a strange object (Bee 131).

Surrealists vehemently exhibited until the onset of the Second World War, which brought about the disintegration of the group of artists, who had to flee Europe due to the Nazi's contempt for Modern art.[6] Small circles were created again in New York and Mexico City, where many Surrealists settled. When Breton returned to Paris after the war, he renewed the Surrealist fire and organized frequent meetings at his own house until his death in 1966, and the last organized Surrealist meetings officially ended three years later.

From the description of Surrealism up until this point, two key characteristics of the movement arise: firstly, the long list of male names point to the fact the original Surrealist circle was a men's club and secondly (and perhaps to some degree also *consequently*), some of the imagery used oppressed women by making them mere objects of desire. It is thus necessary to examine the ways Surrealism might have oppressed women.

Oppression

In 1982, Whitney Chadwick visited the painter Roland Penrose and his large art collection at his Farley Farm House in East Sussex. She told him about her intention to write a book about women Surrealist artists, who were at that time still largely overlooked by critics and historians:

> Roland shook his head, kindly but firmly. 'You shouldn't write a book about the women," he said – somewhat to my surprise, given the years he had spent with two female artists.
>
> Perhaps I raised an eyebrow. It was the 1980s, not the 1930s, and histories of women artists and writer no longer felt radical. 'They weren't artists,' Roland said, as images of the dreamlike and haunting photomontages that accompany the poems in Valentine Penrose's *Dons de fémines* (Gifts of Women, 1951), and Lee Miller's searing photographs of the victims

[6] Adolf Hitler was actually an artist, but he was rejected twice by the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna because of his out-dated realism; when Impressionism, Fauvism or abstraction was on the rise, Hitler was still painting highly realistic landscapes and architecture. Hitler obtained his revenge in his years of political power by promoting images of blond nudes or idealised soldiers suitable for his taste and ideology. He claimed Modern art was 'degenerate' and assembled such art at the The Degenerate Art Exhibition in 1937 in Munich to publicly scrutinize progressive art. Paintings by Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, Wassily Kandinsky, or Max Ernst among others hung askew to stress their worthlessness. This art was of course labelled as Jewish and Bolshevik, and was nonsensical; abstract paintings even hung in a special 'insanity room'. (Burns)

> of war rose in my mind. 'Of course the women were important,' he continues, 'but it was because they were our muses.' (Chadwick 2017)

Chadwick's personal anecdote only begins to reveal the sexist and oppressive opinions of many male Surrealist artists. We can find another example in Salvador Dalí's autobiography *The Secret Life of Salvador Dalí* (1942), when he describes a search for six "elegant women, who could obey me to the letter without losing their glacial manners and without letting the mists or erotic emotion come and befog the continual luxury of their faces, six faces capable of experiencing pleasure ferociously, but with disdain," (228). Not to mention the rest of the book that is full of his sexual or violent obsessions with women. These testimonies of the way some Surrealists felt about women not only mirror the position of women in the society in 1920s and 1930s (as described in the previous section), but their oppressive opinions were also transferred into their theories and works.

The Surrealists were deeply influenced by Freud's writings on the repression of sexual desires which blocks the development and liberation of the individual. These desires are of course repressed by the social moral codes inscribed in the superego and so the Surrealists revolted against two key French social strata – the conservative bourgeois and the Catholic Church. However, in their quest to reveal their primal sexual instincts hidden in the deep waters of the unconscious, women were not understood as "co-liberators" but rather the sites of male liberation (King). This led to a rather perverse and violent relationship of the Surrealists towards the female body;

> For the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*, at the Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris in 1938, for example, the entrance hallway – named the 'rue Surréaliste' – was lined with sixteen female mannequins, each provocatively designed and dressed as sex objects at the hands of a Surrealist. Domínguez's mannequin appeared all but naked, her only covering provided by a jet of fabric fired out of a large siphon that had been placed at her side. Other Surrealists presented mannequins wrapped – or, perhaps, trapped – in fish net, gagged with velvet ribbons and flowers, or, such as in the case of Max Ernst's femme fatale, menacingly titled 'Black Widow' and presented with a man cowering at her feet. And in the central room of the exhibition Domínguez's *Jamais [Never]*, 1937, a phonograph devouring a high-heeled woman head first (a mannequin's legs flail in the air), emitted sounds of hysterical laughter. (King)

Following Oppenheim's fur covered tea cup, one of the mannequins displayed at the exhibition – André Masson's *Mannequin* (1936) – became another famous Surrealist object.

This time, however, the object is a nude female figure whose head is captured in a bird's cage. She is prohibited to express herself, as her mouth is covered by a cloth. Was this how Surrealist truly perceived women? Masson's piece and the other mannequins at the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* were of course highly exaggerated, but they seem nonetheless telling of the ideas and concepts the Surrealist originally developed in respect to women.

This is why prior to the 1980s art historians wrote about women within Surrealism in terms of being representational objects onto which men projected their masculine heterosexual desire. Via her book *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985), Whitney Chadwick was the first author to shift her focus to the Surrealist women as independent artists struggling to find their identity and redefine their role as women in a dominantly patriarchal system. Chadwick not only 'excavated' new knowledge and thus enriched art history, but most importantly she highlighted the systematic oppression of male-dominated art historical discourse, which failed to acknowledge the significance and contribution of women artists. This systematic disregard and Roland Penrose's marginalization of women into mere muses are only an example of the various ways women artists within Surrealism and history at large were, and to a certain extent still *are*, oppressed. The oppression against female artists can either be *active*, meaning the oppressive methods are used consciously and intentionally, or *passive*, when the oppression is executed unconsciously or is simply induced by biased judgement.

Within Surrealism, women artists were most frequently oppressed actively via theories, concepts, and under-appreciation. Male Surrealists established their position as the dominant and powerful subjects while they objectified under the concept of "woman" according to *their* needs; she was their mediator with the unconscious, the irrational, and nature; she was the femme-enfant, the Muse, and the object of male desire (Raaberg 8). Many Surrealists portrayed the woman's body as an idealised image of the Other, which was later

replicated by the film industry producing images from the subjective position of the man looking voyeuristically at the woman – so called "male gaze" as Laura Mulvey famously labelled it in her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). What Mulvey's observation adds to the topic of Surrealist oppression is that the male artists created their concepts, language and imagery for a predominantly male audience. This does not mean the women in the audience could not understand or enjoy the art (Mulvey herself re-assessed the situation in her follow up essay focused on the female audience), but I am simply pointing to reality of the art world during the 1920s and 30s, which was in terms of critics, collectors and artists themselves dominated by men (although this imbalance was of course gradually changing). The representation of women was executed on the basis of traditional stereotypes, which link women with youth, beauty, irrationality, passivity, and nature. Influenced by Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), many Surrealists were captivated by the 'archetype' of woman-child muse – *femme-enfant* – promoting the sexually desirable woman with the naïve but creative mind of a child (McAra 1-2). Not to mention the belittling and degrading essence of the 'mind of a child', the concept reinforces the patriarchal power of the male subject over his young female ward. Although no femme-enfant might have existed in reality (it certainly wasn't included in Jung's archetypes), the correlation between a real woman and their concepts wasn't important. The image of a femme-enfant as the men's idealised projection of a woman, their dream version of femininity, supports the patriarchal misogyny which promotes only these masculine fantasy images of women with no regard to reality (Kuenzli 18)[7]. This naïve or irrational woman had direct access to the unconscious, because she was not corrupted by the 'essential characteristic' of men – reason – and could thus guide men towards their unconscious. Hence, the women Surrealists' consciousness, self-understanding or creative production was perceived by some male Surrealists as only

[7] This method of oppression has been most vastly spread into popular culture, which constantly portrays air-brushed women with unattainable proportions and beauty, which continue to give both men and women unrealistic expectations.

secondary to theirs. Although these oppressive ideas were certainly not shared by *all* the men involved with the movement, they represented the common perception of women and their designated roles. These founding ideas also very much reflected the political environment of interwar France, in which Surrealism originated; the secondary position of woman with very little legal rights in the society was mirrored by the position of women within the movement. The majority of women artists were aware of these problematic attitudes and had to fight against them to be able to achieve autonomy and their own personal goals; for example Toyen created a masculine and homosexual image for herself to avoid being sexualized by her male colleagues, and Leonora Carrington developed a Goddess iconography to celebrate the feminine.

As Penrose's quote indicates, the issue of under-appreciation of women's work is another extensive and systematic example of active oppression. In the majority of contemporary textbooks and courses on art history, Modernism or even directly Surrealism, women artists are mentioned only very rarely. Is it because "there were no great women artists?" as Linda Nochlin asked in 1971 – the answer is definitely no. Up until the 1970s, the art world from both the artists' and the critics' side was dominated by men. There is no evidence whether critics shared Penrose's opinion that women's art was not important, nevertheless the missing women in art history textbooks or the figures describing the art world speak for themselves: according to the National Museum of Women in the Arts, only 3-5% of major permanent collections in the U.S. and Europe are works by women artists, in 2017 the Venice Biennale 37% of artists included were women and 38% of names in ArtReview's 2017 list of the 100 most influential people in the contemporary art world were female. The same goes for auction sales, in which the same authorities value men's work at much higher price than women's. Since most of the appraisals are still executed by male scholars, the value of art is not only influenced by the systematic selective priority of men's

work, but also the fact men and women usually have a different aesthetic and thus the individual might prefer the aesthetic of its gender – the male aesthetic.

This selective precedence of the male aesthetic within the patriarchy is an example of another type of oppression – passive. Passive oppression happens unconsciously and is usually a side-effect of the male dominated society. In contrast with some examples of men's art described above, where the dominant focus was the women's body, the relationship of man and woman or sexual desire as such, women Surrealists were often preoccupied with their self-portraits, representations of animals (related to the relationship of women with nature), or images of female deities or specific feminine experiences; these examples can be found also in men's work, however, not as frequently. This binary division of 'men's' and 'women's' aesthetic can thus be problematic; firstly it remains unclear, how each of those can be defined, and secondly not all men have the specific masculine aesthetic sense promoted by the Surrealists, nor all women perceive the world according to a certain 'feminine' aesthetic. Finding answers to these and other related questions will not, however, be the subject of this discussion; nonetheless it is important to mention this problematic.[8] Whether or not gendered aesthetic can be distinguished, it is still evident that the patriarchal society prefers and gives higher value to men's work over women's, which further deepens the unequal reception of women artists.

Another example of passive oppression is directly linked with the problematic practise of conformity: the Modernist styles devised by the 'genius (male) artists' force other idiosyncratic women and men artists into the same brackets. For example the Hungarian artist Lili Ország (1926-1978) worked in the Surrealist style only a few years and for the rest of her

[8] For example Nelly Richard in her *Masculine/Feminine: Practices of Difference(s)* (2004) offers a definition of the 'feminine aesthetic' as "art that expresses woman as a natural (essential) fact and not as a symbolic-discursive category formed and deformed by systems of cultural representation," (29). This is of course directly applicable to the issue of Surrealism, since men represented women as symbols, whereas women artists were more consumed with the universal aspects that make them women. The problem arises, when women like Toyen incline towards the masculine aesthetic of or male artists towards the feminine.

life she created complex labyrinths, which do not fit in with any style or movement. Although she valued her mature labyrinth works most, she remains to be labelled as a "Surrealist". Breton was also known for 'excommunicating' artists, who did not agree with his notions, including Robert Desnos (1900-1945), Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) or Georges Bataille (1897-1962) among others. These 'rejects' were (and to some extent still are) also largely ignored by art historians. This is an example of how the idiosyncrasy and otherness of some artists is suppressed, especially in the case of women when their work does not resemble anything *men* created. Another question is, if women Surrealists employed completely different stylistic language from men, can and should they be even called Surrealists? For example Frida Kahlo famously proclaimed she didn't now she was a Surrealist until André Breton told her she is. This type of oppression, however, does not entirely relate to Toyen or Leonora Carrington, because they both consciously identified with and worked within the framework of Surrealism, but it is important to consider other women or men artists might not have agreed with the label they were given.

Although much of the Surrealist theory and imagery was problematic and in many ways oppressive, the other side of the Surrealist coin reveals the beneficial and empowering effects on women. Although the critical and art-historical appraisal and recognition of women Surrealists was long overdue, since the resurrection of these artists came only in the 70s and 80s, the original generation of male Surrealists were aware of the quality work their female contemporaries produced. Under the heavy critical review Surrealism has been buried, it must not be forgotten the movement was one of the first few groups, following in the footsteps of German Expressionism or Futurism, to "allow" women to enter their ranks (although some men like Roland Penrose did so only in the promise of an influx of muses). Surrealism provided women an escape from the social, familial and domestic duties and a platform on which they could examine their otherwise pacified and repressed identities.

Emancipation

Surrealism was not only concerned with art and psychology, but extensively also with politics. Influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and the Dadaist disappointment with the (post-)war society, the Surrealists and the Avant-Garde movements at large fought against the traditions, tenants and expectations of the conservative bourgeois society. Surrealists believed traditional system functioning on the faculty of reason only led to war and misery (Clancy 273). To be a Surrealist meant to strip oneself of reason and rationality and to free one's spirit. This freedom was partially also offered to the women who joined. Surrealists identified with the freedom advertised by Communism, because it also refused the functioning social order in the first half of the twentieth century, and so they wanted to become "the intellectual wing of the Revolution; their contribution was to be the liberation of the mind," (Clancy 274). The Surrealist ideal of total personal and social freedom, however, was not truly in sync with the Communist vision of the world, which the majority of Surrealists realised only after the Second World War.

Nonetheless, Surrealism "battled the social institutions –church, state, and family– that regulate the place of women within patriarchy," (Chadwick 1998, 5). The church proposed women were the reason of all human misery, the state (in the context of France, where Surrealism was centred until the second war) stripped them of their civic rights, incarcerated them in their domestic family position and pressured them to do nothing but produce and raise children. Although the Surrealists might not have directly fought against the aforementioned oppressive mechanisms of those institutions, they still attacked the ideas those institutions stood for, including the ones normalizing gender inequality. Hence, women Surrealists did not have to (necessarily) become wives (although they had to become girlfriends of the Surrealists, at least in the beginning), stay virgins until marriage, stay at home and become mothers (which especially Toyen took advantage of), or most crucially take up a more

'feminine' profession outside of art or focus only on the 'feminine' decorative crafts inside of art.[9] These are only a few example of the liberty Surrealism provided women with.

Surrealism also provided a platform on "which a group of women could explore female subjectivity and give form (however tentatively) to a feminine imaginary," (Chadwick 1998, 5). Although the sexually violent and misogynistic language of many Surrealists certainly did not "supply women artists with a model for mature, autonomous, creative activity," (Chadwick 1986, 1), the promoted artistic liberty of the mind and no limitations in regard to thematic approaches gave women the space for their own experimentation. The Surrealist interest in mythology (influenced by Freud's theories and Jung's study of archetypes) guided women artists such as Leonora Carrington to revive female deities and the ancient cult of sisterhood. While male Surrealists employed the female body in an oppressive manner, women utilized it as the primary symbol of their cultural politics within which they examined the complex relationship between their body and their identity (Chadwick 1998, 4). This is exemplified by the fact women Surrealists produces many self-portraits and representations of femininity; the extent of this practise has no parallel in the works of their male colleagues, who tried to understand themselves from the outside, most often in projecting their desires onto the body of the Other (in most cases the *other* gender, but could be also understood as any different other including race and sexuality). This examination, re-contextualization and redefinition of feminine imagery and especially the woman's body in relation to her identity was replicated in the art of second and third wave of feminism (Marina Abramovic, Yoko Ono or Cindy Sherman) and can be still seen today (Marilyn Minter, Lenka Klodová, or Lucia Tkáčová). In depicting themselves and their bodies as the bodies of the Other onto the canvases, women artists often sank into the problematic use of the same patriarchal stylistic language the men used to oppress them and posing themselves

[9] Of course, that does not mean all women disagreed with those norms; Leonora Carrington certainly wanted to be a mother, many people want to stay virgins until their wedding night and many great women artists like Delaunay (1885-1979) shifted the belittling connotation of 'feminine' art to respectable and high status.

voyeuristically in accordance to the male gaze. Some tried to escape this dead end by intentionally confronting this problem of representation or adding humour and irony to the portrayal; other invented or transformed the woman's image into totally new forms (Chadwick 1998, 11).

Clearly, Surrealism cannot be judged simply as chauvinistic and sexist or progressively empowering in regard to women artists. Nonetheless, this dual nature of Surrealism can be examined in greater detail by looking at the experiences and works of women Surrealists. There are probably no two women as different in their approaches to this problem as Toyen and Leonora Carrington. From the two, it was Toyen who was one of the very first women to be affiliated with the group and whose means to achieving autonomy in the patriarchal art world might surprise many contemporary feminists.

4. Toyen

Toyen is the most famous female artist in the Czech Republic and probably the only known female artist outside of the country. Her paintings hit records in Czech auctions placing her on the first rank as bestselling Czech artist and being the author of the fifth most expensive Czech painting sold so far. The writers Vítěszlav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert, her contemporaries and close friends, have included her in their memoirs, and both described her as a mysterious woman, who liked to speak, dress and walk in a masculine way. Many more recollections of the artist recorded by various members of the Prague and Parisian Avant-Garde exist, creating a consensus she was admired, attracted and loved by many. She is also known to have been closely acquainted with André and Elisa Breton, Annie Le Brun, Alén Diviš, Paul Eluard, Jindřich Štýrský, Karel Tiege, and many more. Despite her fame and artistic success, many aspects of her life and work remain a mystery. So who was this intriguing female artist veiled under the pseudonym Toyen?

She was originally born as Marie Čermínová on 21st September 1902 in Smíchov, Austria-Hungarian Empire (today Prague, Czech Republic) to a post-office assistant Václav Čermín (*1870) and his wife Marie (*1868), together with her older sister Zdena (*1896) (Národní Archiv). Disappointingly, not much else is known about her family or her childhood because she made great effort to hide her personal life, demonstrated by the fact she even lied about living alone when she was still sharing a flat with her sister. There might have been some disarray, since she ran away from home when she was sixteen to work in a soap factory. A year later, in 1919, she embarked on her art career by studying decorative painting in the atelier of Emanuel Dítě Jr. at the School of Applied Arts in Prague until 1922. Following her graduation, she went on a holiday to Korčula (an island in today's Croatia) where she met Jindřich Štýrský (Burget), who would become her creative partner for another twenty years. Today, one can never speak of Toyen and not mention Jindřich Štýrský and vice versa. Their crucial connection is still illustrated in the National gallery of Prague, where the paintings of the two eminent Czech Surrealist artists hang next to each other.

In 1923 she joined the Prague-based Avant-Garde cultural association Devětsil, incorporating artists, writers, poets, journalists, and dancers. In 1925, she and Štýrský moved to Paris, where they participated in exhibitions while making money from book designs for publishers back in Prague. They also founded their own movement called Artificialism, which was supposed to represent the state of the artist identified with the poet. The duo soon acquainted themselves with the members of the Surrealist circle, such as André Breton, Benjamin Péret and Paul Éluard. They continued to frequently exhibit until their return to Prague in 1928 (Burget).

In 1930, Štýrský published his own 'pornographic' magazine called *Erotic Revue*, to which Toyen contributed her notorious drawings. Emil Filla, Adolf Hoffmeister, František Halas, Vítězslav Nezval and Jaroslav Seifert among others were also involved. Influenced by

her new French companions, she increasingly inclined towards Surrealism. In 1934 she signed the declaration of the Czech Surrealists and took a part in the group's large exhibition organized in Mánes gallery the following year. During their short trip to Paris, Toyen, Štýrský and Nezval also met with capacities such as Salvator Dalí, Max Ernst, and Yves Tangui (Burget).

The Second World War was an especially hard period of Toyen's life. Not only did she hide the Jewish poet Jindřich Heisler, thus living with him and her sister in a tiny one-bedroom apartment for the rest of the war, but she also lost Jindřich Štýrský, who died in 1942 as a result of pneumonia. The stress affected her so deeply she was also unable to continue her career during these years. She left for Paris again in 1947, yet this time with her new artistic partner Jindřich Heisler. Due to the political situation in Czechoslovakia, they never returned to their homeland after that. Together they joined the Parisian Surrealist group and Toyen picked up the thread of her relationships with artists she had known before the war, including André Breton, with whom she stayed in close contact until his death in 1966. She also became close to his wife Elisa or Annie Le Brun (Huebner 32). Unfortunately, her bond with Heisler didn't last as long as with Štýrský, because he unexpectedly died in 1953 due to heart failure. Surviving most of her closest friends and the Parisian Surrealist group which disintegrated in 1969, the last decade of her life was increasingly solitary. Despite that, she tried to continue working and exhibiting until her last days. Toyen, the mysterious and brilliant Surrealist Artist, died on 9th November 1980 in Paris and was buried in the Batignolles graveyard, where she eternally joined her friends Jindřich Heisler, André Breton, Blaise Cendrars and Benjemin Péret (Burget).

Although many details of Toyen's life are known, her personal life, thought and opinions remain hidden. Due to the artist's own dismissal of her family, childhood and past, as well as the lack of scholarly research of Toyen's origins, she seems to have appeared out of

nowhere like a mystical creature rising from the ashes of a cigarette finished in some street in Prague. In effect, Toyen masterfully created a myth around herself. She developed an androgynous image, which veils her life and work in a mist of ambiguity.

Androgyny

In order to examine the androgynous aspects of Toyen, it is necessary to begin with her gender-neutral pseudonym, which enabled her to easily switch from male to female to androgynous or heterosexual, homosexual and asexual. Similarly to her mysterious background, sources disagree on the origins of the pseudonym Toyen, a word which is otherwise non-existent in the Czech language. The poet and Toyen’s fellow Devětsil member, Jaroslav Seifert, claims the authorship for himself:

> Marie Čermínová had long requested that, with Nezval, we should come up with a suitable pseudonym for her. We came up with about a dozen names, but none of them pleased her. For that matter, we didn’t like them either. Except for one. I sat with Manka at the Národní kavárna (National Café) and she had an exhibition coming up. And she didn’t at all want to exhibit under her own name. When after a while she left for some magazines, I wrote TOYEN on a napkin in big letters. When she read the name upon her return, without further thought she was satisfied and bears it to this day; no one addresses her in any other way and her correct name belongs only on her passport, which long ago became invalid. (155)

Karel Honzík and Karel Teige both support this version, the former remembering Seifert came up with Toyen as well Remo (the pseudonym of their colleague Jiří Jelínek) (50), the latter recalling she attained her name at the café table (Nezval 190). Seifert, however, continues in a disappointed tone: “Apparently she has already forgotten about this moment in the corner of Národní kavárna. After many years later she had an interview in Paris and responded to the question of a Czech inquirer, that her name was created from the French “citoyen”,” (155). Toyen’s later friend Annie Le Brunn attests to this version, stating Toyen often said her youthful enthusiasm for the French Revolution led her to adopt the word *citoyen* (male citizen) as her own (Huebner 25). This would also make more sense due to the right pronunciation of Toyen, which in Czech would normally be “toh-yen”, but is actually pronounced “to-ah-yen”, which is much closer to the French pronunciation of the feminine

equivalent to *citoyen*: *citoyenne* pronounced “si.twa.jɛn”. Hence, although her pseudonym in written form is closest to the masculine *citoyen*, the spoken version correlates more to the feminine *citoyenne*, making not only the resulting word but also its origins rather androgynous. An interesting detail is also the meaning of the spoken version of Toyen – “to a jen” translating into “it and only”, which once again supports the negation of definite gender. Adolf Hoffmeister wittily incorporated the Czech grammar gender into his caricature of Toyen called *Ten-Ta-To-yen* (1930), where “ten”, “ta”, “to” are demonstrative nouns of he, she, it – that male, that female, that neuter (fig. 10). The picture depicts Toyen standing in a masculine pose and clothes, but casting a shadow of a woman’s dress. Instead of breasts the shadow has two fidgety fish (an animal occurring frequently in her paintings) and a dove in the place of the head. Hoffmeister captured Toyen’s shape-shifting character (or perhaps more precisely *gender*-shifting), her androgynous freedom via the gender-non-specific fish and uncapturability as the heart-breaker dove.

What is significant of the dual origins of Toyen’s pseudonym is the location of power: one is an act of labelling or assigning a name to someone else, while the other is an act of seeking one’s identity and social equality. Seifert presents Toyen unable to find her own pseudonym and asking Nezval and himself to help her. However, changing one’s name to a completely new pseudonym represents a crucial change of one’s identity;

> When a person changes his or her name, for whatever reason, this inevitably goes hand in hand with a certain change of identity. The old is replaced with the new. A name change involves breaking with the traditions of one’s ancestors and stepping out of one’s family history; it signals the end of a line of continuity whose roots are lost in distant time, passed down from generation to generation of people all bearing the same name. A name change is necessarily the consequence of a conscious decision. A new name brings about the birth of a new person; no longer are they part of the inherited story of their forebears and namesakes, but are instead the authors of a new story of their own. (Baán 7)

If adopting a pseudonym is connected with such a great personal transformation, then it is presumable the new name must have some deeper meaning for the person. Toyen didn’t like her surname (Seifert 154-55), so she wanted to separate herself from her family background and perhaps from her traditional female catholic name Marie (the Czech version of Mary). Of

course, the primary allure of the word TOYEN, irrespective of whether Seifert or Toyen herself came up with it, is its genderless nature. It requires conscious though and identification of one self with the new word, which simply seeing it written on a piece of paper for the first time ever and automatically recognizing herself with it doesn't seem that believable. To claim the authorship of Toyen's chosen pseudonym is to deprive her of her agency and autonomy. On the other hand, the *citoyen/nne* explanation represents an active search and redefinition of her identity similar to the deliberate masculine clothing and body language she has chosen for the image of Toyen and how the majority of her contemporaries seem to remember her.

Before Toyen even existed, the image of young Marie Čermínová foreshadowed the future androgynous artists. In his memoir *All the Beauties of the World* (1982), Jaroslav Seifert describes a remarkable young woman dressed as a male factory worker:

> In front of our house in the former Husova třída in Žižkov, usually at the time when workers from the Karlín factories were going home, I often encountered a strange but interesting girl. In my student years women didn't yet ordinarily wear trousers as they do today.
> The girl, who was evidently going home, wore coarse cotton pants, a guy's corduroy smock, and on her head a turned-down hat, such as ditch-diggers wear. On her feet she had ugly shoes. (152)

Toyen has been repeatedly reported to prefer wearing masculine clothes. The architect Karel Honzík in his memoir *From the Life of the Avantgarde* also recalled her "wearing a man's suit, a man's shirt, and a beret on her head, her hands in her pockets most of the time and perhaps a cigarette in the corner of her mouth. Her careless, swaying gait seems to say: 'I don't care what you all think of me.' (50)[10] These accounts are not limited only to her early period during the 1920s and 30s, but also when she was much older and already living in the French village Saint-Cirque Lapopie; the inhabitant's also remembered her wearing overtly masculine attire. But is her choice of clothing truly that significant?

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[10] Toyen v kostýmu s mužským sakem, mužskou košilí, s rádiovkou na hlavě, zpravidla ruce v kapsách, případně i cigaretu v koutku úst. Její nedbalá, kolébavá chůze jako by říkala: Nezáleží mi na tom, co si o mně myslíte.' Mluvila o sobě v jednotém čísle mužského rodu: 'Byl jsem na výstavě, řekl jsem, že přijdu do kavárny.'

The German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel described in his *Philosophy of Fashion* (1905) the importance of fashion (attire deliberately chosen to express one's identity; not to be misinterpreted for clothes, which have the sole purpose of hiding or warming the naked body) in regard to gender (in)equality. He observed fashion is an important tool for individualisation and at the same time for fitting into a certain group of people. Simmel explained this is exactly the reason why fashion, broadly speaking, has become so essential for women, thereby trying to disprove the wide spread belief it is because women are simply vain and superficial. Fashion gives women the freedom to move beyond the inferior social position they occupied for the greater part of history. While female fashion frequently changes and develops to help women constantly "stand out" of their traditional role, men's fashion has stayed relatively constant since the industrial revolution, which has assigned jobs to the majority of males. Thus, Simmel argued men usually don't feel the need for individualisation nor care about fashion, because their position in terms of their profession or the society is stable, and thus many men wear the uniform of their class/profession/gender proudly.[11] Some women try to imitate this state of social confidence: "the emancipated woman of the present, who seeks to imitate in the good as well as perhaps in the bad sense the whole differentiation, personality and activity of the male sex, lays particular stress on her indifference to fashion," (Simmel 551). To wear male clothes meant joining men in their autonomous position in the patriarchy. This also explains why Toyen was so pleased with the working class image, in which she ideologically obtained the uniform of the breadwinner. Hence, the women, presumably such as Toyen herself, who wanted to be an equal member of the male-dominated art world, disregarded popular female fashion and fashion as such, and adopted the male uniform instead.

[11] Of course, this is not true for all men. For example Marcel Duchamp refused this male uniformity and deliberately cross-dressed as a woman and re-incarnated himself under the name Rose Selavy.

Although it certainly wasn't a widespread fashion trend yet, women wearing trousers or dressing like the opposite sex were not entirely unusual in inter-war Europe, especially in the Parisian bohemian environment, which was much more progressive in this matter compared to Prague (Srp 11). The art historian Marina Dmitrieva believes "cross-dressing is a way to overcome gender stereotypes and promote a creative individuality that would otherwise not be acceptable in a woman," (123). At the beginning of her essay *Transcending Gender: Cross-Dressing as a Performative Practice of Women Artists of the Avant-garde* she describes how gender-roles were still very much inflexible during this period:

> *"Is woman creative?"* is the question that Hans Hildebrandt asks in his 1928 book *Die Frau als Künstlerin* (The Woman as Artist), in which he analyzes the art produced by women from "primitive peoples" to the present. Here, he contemplates "oppositions between masculine and feminine genius," the "strengths and weaknesses of feminine work," and "relationships to the creative man." However, his answer to the initial question turns out to be skeptical: Although the author is impressed by the emancipated woman—particularly by her courage in venturing into a masculine domain—he sees her primarily as "helper and comrade" to man. Even in the substantial chapter on contemporary female artists from Europe and America, Hildebrand emphasizes "specifically feminine" fields like children's books, toys, and textiles in the works of artists such as Sonia Delaunay, Alexandra Exter, and Sophie Taeuber as well as the ceramics of Friedl Dicker. Works by the female Czech artist Toyen (Marie Čermínová), who is erroneously referred to as a Hungarian, are presented as an illustration of the "feminine predilection for the irrational."
>
> […] The book, which appeared in the roaring twenties in the Weimar Republic, illustrates how entrenched the attribution of gender roles was—even in the bohemian circles of Berlin. This helps us to understand the social, organizational, and cultural obstacles women had to overcome in order to gain recognition in this male-dominated world. They utilized various strategies to do so, and one of these was the staging of alternative gender roles—*cross-dressing*. (123-24)

Thus, women choosing to dress like men certainly seeked to obtain the same rights and status men had; they wanted to step outside of the limitations of their gender and be recognized as equals. European feminine fashion of the 1920s and 30s stressed the curves of the female body and thereby purposefully attracted the "male gaze". By staging themselves in the 'a-fashionable' masculine attire these women also escaped the sexualisation of their body.

The assumption Toyen's deliberate male self-stylisation was purposely staged, at least in her formative period during the 1930s, is supported by the fact she actually alternated between the masculine and feminine attire. Many photographs capture her in skirts or dresses

according to the times fashion and even Seifert's first official meeting with Toyen depicts her in a traditional feminine dress:

> There with the painter Jindřich Štyrský sat an interesting, smiling girl, whom we didn't know. This is the paintress Manka, Štýrský introduced her curtly. They came to join Devětsil.
>
> Nezval was excited.
>
> It was Manka Čermínová. When she extended her hand, I couldn't exhale for a couple of seconds and I looked in amazement. It was my acquaintance from Husova třída. And over her clean face flew a surprised smile. But we were both silent. Štyrský invariably only called her Manka. She supposedly didn't like her surname. I don't know why. In place of the unsightly shoes she wore dainty pumps on her pretty feet, although the sidewalks were covered in muddy slush. She wore silk openwork stockings, which were in style at the time. (154-55)[12]

Toyen was able to switch genders easily according to her current needs. Perhaps, in that crucial moment of her first encounter with Devětsil members, she wanted to join the group as a woman. Becoming the only woman in the large men's club, she certainly didn't want to become a muse or sexual inspiration for her male colleagues. Hence, once she secured her position, she adroitly changed her skin from female to male. Instead of being the object of male gaze, she presented herself in the uniform of the voyeur. With time, her male attire was less staged as she became with her rising success and prestige a natural member of the patriarchal art world and her costume was no longer an imitation, but her legitimate uniform. Evidently, Toyen alternated between feminine and masculine attire, nonetheless with a heavy inclination to the latter, because that seems to be how she impressed herself in people's memory and how she mostly dressed later in her life.

But it was not only her unusual gait and fashion choices that distinguished Toyen from female artists and all other women. As Seifert noted: "As much as she didn't like her surname, so she didn't like her female gender. She spoke only in the masculine," (156) she supposedly used the masculine gender when speaking Czech. Honzík gives an example that she would say: "Byl jsem na výstavě, řekl jsem, že přijdu do kavárny," (I was at an exhibition,

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[12] S malířem Jindřichem Štyrským seděla tam zajímavá, usměvavá dívka, kterou jsme neznali. To je malířka Manka, představil ji krátce Štyrský. Přišli, aby se přihlásili do Devětsilu.
Nezval byl nadšený.
Byla to Manka Čermínová, a když mi podala ruku, pár vteřin jsem nemohl vydechnout a díval jsem se udiveně. Byla to má známá z Husovy ulice. I po její čisté tváři přelétl úsměv překvapení. Ale oba jsme mlčeli. Štýrský jí soustavně říkal jen Manka. Své příjmení neměla prý ráda. Nevím proč. Místo nevzhledných střevíců měla na pěkných nohou lehké lodičky, ačkoliv na chodníku byla sněhová cahota a marast. Měla prolamované hedvábné punčochy, které byly tenkrát v módě.

I said, I would come to the café). In Czech, the first person in past tense has two forms according to the gender of the speaker: the masculine form ('byl jsem') and the feminine form ('byla jsem'). Hence, it would be correct if Toyen instead said: "*Byla* jsem na výstavě, *řekla* jsem…" but she deliberately chose to express herself in the masculine. But speaking in the opposite gender is not as easy as talking in the gender you were brought up to use, meaning she had to practise in advance to use it naturally. However, the masculine might have been inherent for her if she was psychologically inclined towards identifying herself as the opposite gender. This explanation would require more thorough research into her childhood behaviour. Whether the reason behind her use of the masculine was natural or self-induced, Toyen certainly had an androgynous drive in her.

Affected by her attire, gait and speech, Toyen's sexuality also becomes a significant question of interest. Although the relationship with her two artistic partners – Jindřich Štýrský and after his death followed by Jindřich Heisler – have been platonic in public, it has always been assumed they were in fact sexual. In his memoir *From My Life*, Vítěszlav Nezval noted "[Toyen] hated the implication that there was any relationship between herself and Štýrský other than normal friendship and would reject such implications in a surly tone," (147). To this day there is no evidence which would prove her relationship with Štýrský or Heisler were indeed anything more than Toyen claimed them to be. Despite her 'masculine' image, she surely attracted and broke hearts of many men. The architect Bedřich Feuerstein fell in love with Toyen and gave her a rose while claiming "To the Muse of Devětsil," (Seifert 159). Seifert followed by quietly "inaugurated" her as his Muse as he observed she created "a pleasant creative atmosphere" with her presence and "almost everyone found her attractive," (159). According to Karel Srp, Paul Eluard later sent her love letters with his own semen (115). Nonetheless, none of these declarations of love ever seemed to be reciprocated. The

extent of her relationships with Štýrský, Heisler and other possible lovers (male or female) still lacks to be scholarly examined for making any clear(er) conclusions.

The majority of conclusions (mostly based on the biographical fragments mentioned above) made about Toyen's sexuality are heterosexually-oriented, which (perhaps unintentionally but nonetheless) leads to reducing the artist's status to a lesser assistant/partner/wife working in the shadow of the male artist. For example Margaret Barlow describes Toyen doing "poetic abstractions before she and her husband (sic), the painter Jindrich Styrsky, discovered Surrealism in Prague. At first influenced by Styrsky's obsession with the Marquis de Sade (the couple illustrated his stories), Toyen's work maintained their erotic edge," (210). Not only is Toyen deprived of her autonomy in art, as the peculiarity of her work is replaced by the idea of her creative approaches were predetermined by Štýrský, but she is also deprived of her autonomy as a woman artist, because she is mistakenly classified as "the wife/girlfriend of an artist". This category, which was undeniably voluminous and included Leonora Carrington, Romedios Varo, Elisa Breton, Dorothea Tanning and many more, was too often degraded to the notion these women couldn't make it on their own and "owed" their success to their male partners, who taught them, helped them or gave them direction.

But the category of "the wife artist" is not the real issue here – it is the assumption all these female artists had to have a heterosexual relationship in order to create and be successful. This oppressive belief prevailed prior to the second and third waves of feminism, today, however, I assume no critic would dare to make such a claim. Nevertheless, traces of this assumption still occasionally appear via latent details such as previously discussed 'heterosexualisation' of Toyen. Malynne Sternstein reproachfully criticizes such commentaries as was exemplified by Margaret Barlow's statement:

> Gender, sexuality, and nationality are all quaint accommodations in such discourse, and the byproduct of the female artist's ghettoized experience is necessarily the reliance of the female artist on the male for direction. In these pre-packaged narratives, the woman artist is first

> fettered to the man. Then in some bold move, so utterly representative of her "boldness" and "courage," she breaks free from her chains and finds her own way. Far be it from Toyen's commentators to conceive of her as an equal agent acting in artistic collaboration with men. In latter instance cited here, heteronormativity has closed the author's horizon to the extent that she cannot imagine Toyen as a woman artist without her being someone's wife. (Sternstein 43)

It doesn't matter if Toyen had or did not have a sexual relationship with Štýrský, she was still an artistic "genius". Toyen certainly wasn't in Štýrský's shadow; it was an equal partnership. Neither did Štýrský help her get into Devětsil or the Czech Surrealist Group nor into the Parisian Surrealist circle – they did so *together*. It is true Toyen and Štýrský were artistic partners and he influenced her art, but *no less* than she influenced his (without being his Muse though). Disregarding the sexual context of their relationship, however, does not equate to ignoring the significance of the relationship. The partnership between Toyen and Štýrský had profound beneficial effects on the work of both artists; "inspired in their choice of themes, even borrowing themes from one another while preserving their own sensitive and semantic accent: Štýrský's cruelty and bizarreness contrasted with the privacy and seclusion of Toyen, (Srp 143). Toyen's autonomy in terms of her successful reception is only underscored by the fact her paintings are much more lucrative than Štýrský's in Czech auctions.[13]

Contrarily to all heterosexual assumptions made about Toyen, she herself had, or at least wanted to appear to have homosexual inclinations. Seifert claimed she asked him to translate some of Verlaine's lesbian sonnets and he also observed: "We were young, we liked beautiful, elegant girls, and Toyen took great pains to assure us that she had similar sinful inclinations. I think, however, that this was only a game and a part of her male auto-stylisation in which she took a certain pleasure. In any case, we had nothing against it," (157). Seifert's skeptical tone suggests he believed Toyen was only protecting herself from the young lustful Devětsil members, such as Seifert himself, and avoided becoming a Muse (although she to a

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[13] Toyen's *Šero v pralese* (1929) is as of June 2017 the 5th most expensive painting sold in Czech auctions; it was sold for 36 million CZK by Gallery Kodl in May 2017. Toyen is surpassed only by two artists: Oskar Kokoschka with his *Frogs* (37,7 mill. CZK) and *Prague* (52,1 mill. CZK) and finally at the top sits František Kupka with *The Shape of Blue* (57,5 mill. CZK) and *Series C I.* (62 mill. CZK). In this ranking, Toyen is appreciated as an equal artists instead of being put on some special chart like 'The most expensive paintings of Czech *female* artists'. (iRozhlas)

certain extent involuntarily became one, at least in Feuerstein and Seifert's eyes) or a sexual fantasy object as was often a custom in Surrealist circles.

While examining Toyen's sexuality, it is noteworthy to look at her erotica, a genre women at that time didn't contribute to. Not only did she draw images 'unfit' for women, but she also depicted bleeding bodies and menstruating vaginas extremely rare even for that environment (Srp 93). In terms of explicit sexual imagery, these included heterosexual, homosexual and auto-erotic accounts. While men Surrealists in many cases dissected the women's body and presented only parts as objects, Toyen employed the same oppressive technique to men – she separated the phallus from the men's body. She objectifies the male organ and plays out men's biggest Freudian fear – castration. In some cases, the phallus is presented in a patriarchal way; it assumes the position of power and the women is subjugated by it. In the drawing *Justine* (1932) the large phallus looms over the naked body of the woman, who shields her eyes from it (fig. 11). The feeling of danger and threat evoked by the phallus in the image might hint Toyen was afraid of the male sexual organ, supporting the theory she truly avoided sexual relationships with men. In other drawings the phallus is controlled by the woman and used for her own pleasure. In one drawing from 1936 (fig. 12), a woman's torso is masturbating next to three phalluses behind bars; in this instance, the phalluses cannot harm her so she can fulfil her own desires in peace. In *Drawing 16* (1938) Toyen achieves full domination of the phalluses as a feminine hand controls an erotic puppeteer show (fig. 13). The main characters are: a naked woman riding a phallus, a clown whose long phallus escapes his pants, a small phallus and a ballerina whose breasts and pubic hair are revealed. Ultimately, her surreal erotica vacillates on the verge of presenting the phallus as dominating the woman and subjugated by the woman.

These two contradictory renditions of the phallus and her relationship to it reinforce Toyen's ambiguous sexuality. It's precisely the dual nature of her stylistic language, which

sometimes re-enacts patriarchal imagery and other times actively subjugates the male, that becomes so striking during the interpretation of her art. The fact Toyen objectifies the male *and* the female body and assumes an oppressive stance towards both sexes/genders throughout her oeuvre points to the idea, that her dual androgynous character was mirrored by the aesthetic of her art;

> Was Toyen's style masculine when she used the palette-knife, a technique hardly expected of a female painter in 1928, or was it feminine, when she made a fine drawing of a female nude in the knowledge it would be viewed by a man? The polarity of the late 1920s and early 1930s was further complicated in the sixties. She occasionally painted a woman seducing a man in order to seize his body and soul. Is it possible to state that Toyen identifies herself with the woman-beast or prey or, in the contrary, that she was the one being lured in this way? The series of paintings Seven Swords demonstrates her broad range of woman-spectre types. Did she paint these women to fire the male imagination, to show that a robust artist of nearly sixty could also accentuate the female traits of painting in her works? (Srp 288)

Evidently even Karel Srp, who is often perceived as the biggest scholarly authority on Toyen, seems to be not entirely certain about labelling her art 'masculine' or 'feminine'.

However, the common understanding is she often used the oppressive masculine language the male Surrealists dominantly employed and seemed to favour the men's aesthetic over the 'women's' aesthetic. Karel Srp even likens her aesthetic to that of Hitchcock, who is known for his perfect illustration of Laura Mulvey's concept of the cinematic prism through which the audience is provided with the voyeuristic male gaze at his object of sexual desire – the woman. Being in contact with very few woman artists and having almost no female models she could look up to, her aesthetic is highly influenced by the men, who constantly surrounded her;

> According to Rita Bischof, the female painter must formulate her own view, detached from the prevailing male ideas which constantly confront her and whose strong influence she cannot shake off. Bischof stressed that Toyen visualised the "drama" of creating the female approach which differs from the male chiefly because she continually has to redefine herself in his presence. […] Two opposing views merge together in Toyen's work: the woman as an artist seeking equal right for her own positions, however in such a way that she merges with male society (...) and woman as the object of a man's gaze. (Srp 288)

Toyen's whole approach to finding equality and autonomy as a woman in a man's world was *to become the man*, in terms of her attire, gait, speech and perhaps female-oriented sexual tendencies; it is then understandable that her art would mirror those methods.

Although the female figure might have been eroticised in Toyen's drawings and paintings, the woman's assigned role, character and position on the active-passive scale was never constant. It is also important to note women were almost always the central figures in Toyen's paintings (and erotic drawings), while "men were given the role of passive by-standers or observers," (Srp 291). Toyen's women can be divided into two categories: on one side there are paintings where the woman is an active subject with an implied state of mind, while in other cases she is a passive object with no internal psyche – only an object to be looked at. In the painting *Relâche* (1943) a girl hangs upside down from a wall ballet barre, her white skirt fallen down hiding her head and uncovering her white underpants, her legs running high up the wall until her feet dissolve into the surface of the wall (fig. 14). At first glance, the observer might perceive the girl as an eroticised virgin, because she resembles a little naïve girl unaware of her sexuality and thus careless about whether anyone sees her innocent, white panties when she hangs upside down. The missing head also echoes the Surrealist objectification of women into mere body parts and stripping them of their cognitive agency. Yet, judging from her wider pelvis, the girl depicted is no longer a child and presumably is very much aware of what she is doing (and showing). The young woman is not captured in a moment of passivity as a reclining nude, contrarily, her play just ended ("relâche") and she is finally free to act according to her own will – to behave *naturally*.

Nature is another theme she connects with the image of women, most prominently in her later Parisian period, where women are presented in their animal form as beasts *or* prey. Of course, neither of the aforementioned forms hold a positive connotation for women, but they put the man (either directly present in the image or only implied as the voyeur) into two distinct positions: the lured/hunted or the hunter. While Toyen's images of women during the 1930s were similar to *Relâche* in the sense they were somehow disintegrating, vanishing or had no bodily presence, during her mature period "they try to protect their identity; assume an

animal form in order to resist and hurt man," (Srp 292). In *The Myth of Light* (1946) a man's shadow (the profile supposedly resembling Jindřich Heisler) is offering a plant with roots to woman's reaching gloved hands (fig. 15). Her unconscious casts a shadow in the shape of a ravenous hyena. Although the woman is disguised in her innocent white feminine gloves, a dangerous beast lurks inside her and poses a threat to the oblivious man. In the collage *When the Laws Fall Silent* (1969) the woman is already transformed into a dangerous leopardess with breasts (fig. 16).

Another 'un-woman-like' aspect of Toyen's oeuvre is the supposed lack of self-representation typical for most female Surrealist artists. The majority of women used Surrealism to examine and (re)define their identities by mirroring themselves in their work; although Leonora Carrington's work supports this pattern, Toyen is identified as an exception to the rule. Toyen truly never portrayed herself, or at least not as overtly as her female colleagues. Some scholars believe her self-representation-less artistic approach is connected to her male auto-stylisation and deliberate suppression of her gender: "Toyen is one of the few female Surrealists - perhaps the only one - who left no trace of self-representation. She remains absent from her art; she did not seek to establish her own identity through painting," (Renée Riese Hubert in Srp 286). This claim, however, not only tries to cut off Toyen from all the other women, once again portraying her as something *other* or *more* than the regular female, but it also seems too quickly judged, as it ignores the key motif recurrent in Toyen's art. Of course the secretive and mysterious Toyen didn't imprint her identity onto the canvas for all to see, so they would exclaim "Aha!" when finally understanding the artist. Such extroverted behaviour could never be expected of Toyen. In my opinion, her self-representation is much more ambiguous and concealed.

It is in fact, the physical absence of herself and that of the female representations in her art which can be perceived as the representative motif of Toyen's introverted and reticent

psyche. The female figure in her paintings is predominantly depicted as an empty dress or some other piece of women's clothing, which becomes the signifier of the woman, as demonstrated by her most iconic paintings, *Dream* (1937) and *Sleeping* (1937) as well as countless others, including *Magnet Woman* (1934), *Abandoned Den* (1937), *Relâche* (1943) (figures 17, 18, 19, 20, and 14). In effect, it is the "empty dress which becomes a metaphor of Toyen's inner inaccessibility, her emotional and intimate private world," (Srp 227). Toyen's substitution of women for feminine fashion items, such as the dress, corset or a long glove, corresponds to Georg Simmel's notion of the great emancipating importance fashion represents to women; they stand out of their passive position and are finally 'seen' thanks to their fashion. But does that mean women are only seen as the clothing they wear and their identity is thus ignored?

Attire in Toyen's art almost always lacks the woman's body; instead, the piece of clothing becomes a symbol for the body and attains its sexual charge:

> Toyen's clothes are an extreme expression of sensuality. They lure the gaze into their folds, they reveal their underside but they do not allow a view of that which cannot be portrayed - the subject they express and enclose, always the stimulus of visualisation itself. (Srp 229)

Although Toyen's personal choice of fashion might have been emancipating, the sensual portrayal of women's clothing in her art tends to have an aesthetic oppressive to women similar to that some men Surrealists employed. The painting *Abandoned Den* (1937) depicts an empty corset by some rocks under the sea surface (fig.); the title could allude to that environment or the 'abandoned den' could in fact be the abandoned piece of clothing. The ambiguity of the image and the body-less corset intrigues the viewer to fantasize the woman's body as the corset envelopes the most eroticised female body parts – the breasts, the waist and ends just above the pelvis and the buttocks. Furthermore, the *Magnet Woman* (1934) shows a corpulent dress widened at the top for breast – the woman's body is missing once again (fig. 19). This painting can be likened to Man Ray's photograph *Torso, Lama Sheath* (1930) (fig. 21) capturing the model's full breasts and torso wrapped in glimmering material. Both of

these renditions present the woman's torso as a sensuous object suggestive of the naked body enough to arouse the viewer's imagination. This objectification of the woman's body and its sexualisation is an example of an aesthetic oppressive to women, however, it could be understood as partial evidence of Toyen's sexuality – she objectifies women in the same way as some men Surrealists did, because she shares their desire for women.

It is not as much as much what Toyen's female figures are wearing or missing, but the environments she sets them in, which might be a reflection of the artist's psyche. Toyen's women are always alone; in few cases a man is accompanying them, but never another woman. Except for living with her sister in Prague, Toyen was known to have female friends only later in her life. Despite having her idiosyncratic methods to emancipate herself and become equal with her male colleagues, she had very few female companions with whom she could share her troubles. This solitude is reflected by the solitude of her female figures. The wasteland often surrounding the women in her art, especially visible in her 1937 paintings *Dream* and *Sleeping* (figures and), not only signify the decadence of the years immediate to the war, but also the artist's own possible inner battle with the ideas of fertility and childbearing only natural for a woman of age thirty-five. All subtle signs of Toyen' expression of own thoughts and self-analysis are concealed in the surreal images of her art. The ambiguity Surrealism provided might have helped the introverted Toyen to express herself, which she would probably be reluctant to do in traditional figuration or the too ambiguous abstraction.

Whether Toyen was actually a woman, man or androgynous; heterosexual or homosexual; or painted according to men's or women's aesthetic – she certainly was a remarkable person and artist. However, there were many other Czech and Slovak female artists, such as the sculptress Mary Durasová (1898-1982), or paintresses Věra Jičínská (1898-

1961) and Milada Marešová (1901-1987)[14], who were talented and had interesting personalities, yet never received even half as much recognition, scholarly coverage or through-the-roof auction sales as Toyen did. What is then the key to her unprecedented success?

Unprecedented Success

Joanna Russ observed in her book *How to Supress Woman's Writing*, women often "created for themselves a romantic and exotic persona that countered *Women can't create* with *I am more than a woman*" (103). When male artists constructed their myth, they appealed on their social and economic position, mental state or the greatness of their deeds. Toyen, however, based her myth primarily on the act of supressing her female gender. Supported by the colleagues who wrote about her, including Seifert, Nezval or Honzík, as well as by scholars who explained her work, character and biography, Toyen achieved to mythologize her persona. Constructing a mythical persona was beginning to be popular during Modernism, with Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) in the lead, later followed by Andy Warhol (1928-1987) and the practise has become ever more popular today with Banksy, David Černický or on the more popular side Lady Gaga. But these artists didn't have to fight the gender bias which faced the 20th century female artists, who had hard times penetrating the closed patriarchal system (they were all men and Lady Gaga became famous in a much more progressive era).

Nezval captures her mysterious image in his memoir *From My Life*: "Of Toyen's life, I never came to know anything; she remained a human mystery and revealed nothing of her past," (131). Toyen's myth begins with her unclear origins; she hid her family background

[14] The Czech feminist art historian Martina Pachmanová created the website Zenyvumeni.cz (Women in Art) precisely for the purpose to educate about these forgotten artists. Pachmanová included many more artists: Zdenka Burghauserová, Helena Bochořáková-Dittrichová, Tina Bauer Pezzellen, Marie Galimberti-Provázková, Věra Jičínská, Božena Jelínková-Jirásková, Zdenka Košáková, Anna Macková, Milada Marešová, Helena Salichová, Sláva Tonderová-Zátková, Tita, Karla Vobišová, Vlasta Vostřebalová-Fischerová, Hana Wichterlová, Julie Winterová-Mezerová. All artists still remain to be largely overlooked compared to the fame Toyen has been receiving.

and never openly spoke about her childhood. In literature, she is depicted as if she emerged only in about 1918, when she worked in the soap factory and Seifert first noticed her. This idea is also enforced by scholarly approach, which lacks to investigate more about Toyen's childhood and young adult relationships with friends and family. This imposes an impenetrable legendary mist around Toyen's origins and presents her as a supernatural being appearing from thin air. Her legend is further deepened by her untraditional behaviour in terms of her male auto-stylisation, as was already discussed in detail in the previous section. The art historian Karla T. Huebner believes this enforced the idea she was something other or more than a regular woman:

> Toyen was indeed, by all accounts, secretive about family, childhood, and various other aspects of her life. At the same time, treatment of Toyen's biography has generally fit the paradigm of the mysterious Other who suddenly appears, without parents or precursors, and amazes others. While this trope is familiar from the story of Giotto and various other famous males, it also fits the notion of the talented woman as alien being, a creature not like others of her gender, a figure of no heritage or antecedents.

In order to become noticeable and be respected in the patriarchal system 'despite' her gender, she created a mysterious and intriguing persona for herself, which ultimately created an impression she was something *more* than a regular woman.

Despite trying to supress her gender, Toyen ended up being labelled and ranked precisely according to her womanhood. As Malynne Sternstein at the beginning of her essay *This Impossible Toyen* sarcastically notes "[Toyen] is often called one of the great female artists of the Surrealist movement, as if this category were one that piggy-backed the greater category of "Surrealist artist"" (1). One might argue the that the subcategory's existence is induced by the fact women artists were less known and appreciated during their time, or flourished later in their life, so they belong to a second generation of Surrealist artists. Yet, many of these women including Toyen and Leonora Carrington for that matter were highly respected by their surrounding colleagues and Toyen certainly achieved equality in regard to the appraisal of her art and its place at exhibitions. In spite of being thrown into the inferior

category devised by art historians for female artists, Toyen strived all her life not to let herself and her art be appraised according to her gender.

Hence, Toyen's chosen method of attaining equality in the male-dominated art world was to play by the men's rules. She dressed like a man, walked like a man, talked like a man. She wasn't ashamed to discuss and draw sexual subjects and was the only woman to contribute erotic images to Štýrský's 'pornographic' magazine *Erotic Revue*. She never let any of her male colleagues become more than friends (which is questionable in the case of Štýrský and Heisler, but as has been already said, her relationship with the two men has never been proven to be other than platonic) to preserve her position as an equal colleague, instead of being degraded to the role of the muse. In effect, she tried to replicate what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick called homosocial desire; Toyen identifies herself as a man, with no intimate ties to other men and sexual desire aimed at women and thus becomes an equal member of the patriarchy built on the ideal of masculinity. Her painting style was also exceptionally bold and masculine compared to what was regarded as a 'feminine' or women's stylistic expression during the 1920s and 30s. To a certain extent, she even fed eroticised images of females to satisfy the tastes of the male gaze. Without much surprise, this method proved to be successful. Compared to other female artists in Czechoslovakia and abroad, Toyen's work was included in high profile exhibitions and she was well critically appraised already during her career, unlike her female colleagues, who usually received major recognition only once the feminist movement of the 70s and 80s 'resurrected' them.

Although Toyen's emancipating approach was successful and she certainly did become an important (female) artist, her method of rejecting her gender to get to achieve this goal can be perceived as rather *anti*-feminist. As Seifert noted, Toyen was even said to not like her own gender. Karel Srp also implies the rejection of the female gender aided her great success:

> Even though Toyen preferred to maintain a certain distance from the female world, she paradoxically became the most important Czech female painter of the first half of the 20th century. From the Eighties onwards her work was analysed from two angles: her approach to Surrealism and her attitude to women. It was in this field, occupied by various female artists, that she held an exceptional position thanks to her effort to renounce the female side of her personality and to the current interest in couples and artistic partnerships. (Srp 11)

But to properly assess Toyen's seemingly anti-female stance, it is necessary to understand the context she was coming from. In the 1920s and 30s Czechoslovakia, feminism wasn't as popular as before the Great War, because "women of Toyen's generation often perceived older feminists as outdated due to their emphasis on purity and temperance, which combined badly with jazz-age interest in Freud, contraception, sexual pleasure, and social drinking," (Huebner 48). This is the biggest difference between Toyen and the highly feministic Leonora Carrington, as we will see in the next chapter dedicated to the younger artist, who grew up in the extremely traditional British upper-class, in which everyone expected the young debutante to marry well. With respect to the social situation Toyen lived in, the claim she didn't like women needs to be reconsidered. Firstly, her anti-female behaviour can be understood in terms of Karla Huebner's idea of the Myth of Toyen. She wanted to be seen as something *other* or even better something *more* than a woman in order to achieve recognition and equality in the art-world dominated by men. Hence, her masculine fashion style and genderless pseudonym weren't deliberately aimed against femininity or women, but she rather thought she needed to hide this side of her personality to be able to compete in the men's category.

Toyen's story resembles one of the brothers Grimm fairy-tale – *The Wolf and the Seven Little Goats*. To give a short summary, mother goat leaves her seven kids at home and warns them not to open the door to the wolf, which has a deep and rough voice very different from her nice and soft one. She leaves for the whole day and the wolf comes knocking on the seven kids. He pretends to be their mother, but they recognize his rough voice and refuse to open the door. He gets his tongue grounded and returns to the kids, who open the door this

time and the wolf eats them. Toyen was the wolf who tried to get into the group of artists and succeeded by changing her whole persona to match them, and although she didn't literally eat them, she did achieve to become much more famous than many of her male colleagues.

Another point of view through which one can look at Toyen's art and unprecedented success is the idea that androgyny has an effect on creativity, as Virginia Woolf proposed: "In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female… The androgynous mind is resonant and porous… naturally creative, incandescent and undivided," (82). Although the British writer Virginia Woolf was aware of the existing relationship between androgyny and creativity as early as 1929, it took scientists another four to five decades to arrive at a corresponding conclusion. The Hungarian psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who developed the concept of work *flow* and enriched understanding of creativity, observed what differentiates highly creative people from others: "men are brought up to be "masculine" and to disregard and repress those aspects of their temperament that the culture regards as "feminine," whereas women are expected to do the opposite. Creative individuals to a certain extent escape this rigid gender stereotyping," (70). Assigning rigid gender roles, a common practise in many cultures, actually blocks people's creativity, because they aren't able to get a 'whole' experience of the world; the suppression of the other gender in themselves robs them of a broader or alternate perspective.

Studies conducted by the psychologist Sandra Bem during the 1970s and 80s have shown *psychological androgyny* – the presence of both masculine and feminine psychological traits in an individual (note this concept does not equate to *physical* androgyny, wherein an individual has both masculine and feminine physical traits)[15] – is prevalent in above-average and highly creative individuals (Cvijetić 2). Bem devised a special androgynous test called Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) by surveying males and females about desirable

[15] Take note neither psychological nor physical androgyny is directly related to sexuality in terms of homosexuality or bisexuality; it simply produced the presence of traits traditionally and biologically attributed to either genders.

characteristics of each gender. From the traits that both sexes agreed to be desirably in only one of the sexes, twenty traits were assigned to be masculine, twenty femininity and another twenty neutral (Bem 157). Hence, in the scope of BSRI, masculine items include: "acts as a leader, aggressive, ambitious, analytical, assertive, athletic, competitive, defends own beliefs, dominant, individualistic, makes decisions easily, self-sufficient, and willing to take risk" among others; feminine items include: "affectionate, cheerful, childlike, compassionate, gentle, gullible, loves children, loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, shy, sympathetic, tender, understanding, yielding; and lastly neutral items ought to be for example: "adaptable, conceited, conscientious, friendly, helpful, jealous, moody, reliable, secretive, sincere, solemn, tactful, truthful, unpredictable," (ibid 156). The respondent of the BSRI test rates himself on the scale from 1 to 7 on how each of the sixty characteristics describe him/her. Using the BSRI, Peter Jönsson and Ingegerd Carlsson found individuals with high identification of both masculine and feminine (*androgynous*) were recognized as more creative than individuals with only one high gender identification (*stereotypical*).[16] Among the androgynous, higher levels of masculinity were in direct proportion to the creativity levels, meaning women with higher levels of masculine identification score better than men with higher levels of femininity. Studies executed by Torsten Norlander and Anna Erixon or James B. Hittner and Jennifer R. Daniels attained equivalent results. Hence, Toyen might have had a high numbers of both feminine and masculine character traits enabling her to be highly creative – her aesthetic could also be favourable to both men and women, increasing the potential of her success.

The concept of psychological androgyny and its effect on creativity can also be explained through Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the *animus* and *anima*. Jung believed the unconscious of individuals is personified by a woman in a man – *anima* – and by a man in a

[16] This might add to the explanation why women were historically less creative, in other words weren't as active as men in art or literature, because their limited gender role strongly suppressed any possible masculine traits and thereby hindered their creativity.

woman – *animus*. The anima governs irrational thinking an "embodies all feminine psychic qualities in a man—moods, feelings, intuitions, receptivity to the irrational, his personal capacity for love, his sense of nature," (von Franz 311). The animus, on the other hand, governs rational thought and embodies masculine qualities such as "initiative, courage, objectivity, and intellectual clarity," (ibid 323). Both the anima and the animus are a bridge linking the individual's personal conscious with one's personal unconscious as well as the collective unconscious; this bridge is accessible through dreams and the archetypical forms the anima and the animus take on is usually presented within the dream. Hence, the anima and the animus are the individual's source of inspirational, creative and intuitive images provided by the personal and collective unconscious. Animus and Anima are modelled according to the parent of opposite gender; the relationship's health with that particular parent thus determines the positive or negative influence of the animus or anima. For instance, if a woman had an unhealthy relationship with her father during childhood, her animus will give her unfavourable masculine qualities such as stubbornness, need for controlling others or the inability to form meaningful relationships. On the contrary, a healthy relationship or a relationship later resolved through dreams leads to "good external strength in the persona," "bridge to knowledge and creative thought," or "problem solving," (van Kralingen).

From the pieces of information known about Toyen and her personality traits, it is obvious she is an example of a woman with high levels of both masculine and feminine traits and an integrated animus. As was already thoroughly discussed, Toyen had clear androgynous tendencies and her animus was a strong influence on her persona and her art. Although she presumably had a problematic relationship with her parents, her strong masculine persona, courage (she wasn't afraid of drawing erotica or joining any male-dominated art associations) and creative faculty lead to the conclusion her animus was fully integrated in her psyche, meaning she either had a healthy relationship with her father or she was able to heal any

issues through the Surrealistic focus on dreams and their creative utilisation. The concept of psychological androgyny primarily explains the dual nature of Toyen's artistic style and aesthetic – she was able to synthesise masculinity and femininity and thus make her art appealing to men and women alike, although the male audience was more important for her success and recognition in the male dominated art world of artists and critics.

Does this mean only androgynous women, or women playing by the rules of men including conforming with the aesthetic oppressive to women could have been successful in art during the first half of the twentieth century? While this approach might have certainly helped Toyen emancipate herself and to a certain extent also influenced the unprecedented success of her art, it was not the only path. In juxtaposition to Toyen, the next section will introduce Leonora Carrington, another female from the ranks of eminent Surrealist artists, who put her gender to the forefront of her persona as well as her art.

5. Leonora Carrington

It's a surprise that the life of Leonora Carrington has not yet been rendered into a film, because it would surely be very interesting to watch. Since her birth on 6th April 1917 in Lancashire, England, until her fairly recent death 25th May 2011 in Mexico City, Mexico, she had led a colourful and adventurous life full of fortunes, misfortunes, story-twists, and coincidences.

Along with her three brothers, Leonora was the child of Irish-born Maureen Moorhead and British Harold Wilde Carrington, who inherited his father's textile company Carrington Cottons, which he later sold and became a principal shareholder of Imperial Chemical Industries. Although they weren't an aristocratic family, all their activities were executed according to the norms of the upper class to show their great economic status. Young Leonora thus had a nanny and saw her mother only on specific occasions. Her mother and grandmother told Leonora tales about their ancestors, even stating they were related to the ancient Irish

people Sidhe who lived underground and had magical powers. She also lived in large mansions which further enhanced her growing imagination and love for the mystical. Her vivid imagination led her to be creative very early, as she became passionate about drawing and writing fairy-tales already since she was six (Aberth 11-2).

Due to her rich imagination and anti-social tendencies which made her seem "eccentric", she was thrown out of various boarding schools. She was also deemed "uneducable", as she had no interest in sports or studying, which could have been caused by dyslexia. She was also sent to the court of King George V as a debutant, but she refused to be sold to the highest bidder. She was then forced to travel to Florence in Italy to study there, where she was deeply inspired by Renaissance painters, especially Hieronymus Bosch. Upon her return, she told her parents she wanted to study art, to which her father offered her she could paint in the house and perhaps even start breeding fox-terriers. She decided to run away to London and join the Chelsea School of Art founded by Amédée Ozenfant (1886–1966) (Aberth 15-23).

In 1936 Leonora was exposed to Avant-Garde art at the International Exhibition of Surrealism, where she was moved not only by the style itself, but especially by paintings of the already established German painter Max Ernst. They instantly connected, when they met at a party and so her relationship with the 46 years-old artist began. Soon after she moved to Paris to be with Ernst and joined the Surrealist circle there. With his jealous former wife Marie-Berthe Aurenche (1906-1960) constantly at their heels and Leonora's father's far-reaching influence to break the fresh couple up, they retreated to a small house in St. Martin d'Ardèche. There they worked and developed their passionate relationship for two years (1937-1938) until Max Ernst was arrested by the French as a German war spy. Leonora fled the emerging Nazis to Madrid, where she had a nervous breakdown, and upon her father's arrangements was incarcerated in the Santander Mental Asylum. Her father wanted to move

her to another asylum in South Africa, but while waiting for a boat in Lisbon she managed to escape to the Mexican embassy, where her acquaintance Renato Leduc (1897-1986) worked. In order to get her a visa to the United States they married. While waiting for the visa Leonora bumped into Max Ernst. Despite his fresh marriage with Peggy Guggenheim (1898-1979) (for similar convenience of escaping the continent), Ernst wanted to resume his relationship with Leonora, but she refused. Reunited again in New York, they visited each other frequently, but Leonora kept the relationship at platonic distance. In 1942, Leonora and Renato Leduc moved to Mexico City and the couple divorced (Aberth 25-58).

Thanks to Mexico's open immigration policy, many other Surrealists came to Mexico City and the group of creative foreigners resumed their meetings, parties and games. In 1945 Leonora met the Hungarian photojournalist Emerico 'Chicky' Weisz (1911-2007), whom she married a year later. Together they had two sons Gabriel (1946-) and Pablo (1948-). She continued to work in Mexico, where she stayed until her death in 2011. During her life, she even got many commissions from the Mexican state and the bank. While forgotten in her home Britain, Leonora Carrington became one of the most famous Mexican artists.[17] Leonora's public sculpture *How Doth the Little Crocodile* (2003) in Mexico City stands today as a tribute to the unique, extremely imaginative and magical artist. It was not until the recent couple of years, when her stories, her biography, and many critical essays about Leonora were published. With the growing Leonora-Carrington-revived-wave perhaps even the awaited film will come soon.

In order to examine the effects Surrealism had on Leonora, it is necessary to return to the beginning. Instead of "being sold to the highest bidder" or staying at home "breading fox

[17] Joanna Moorhead, Leonora's cousin from her mother's side, wrote in the opening of her interview with the artist: "A few months ago, I found myself next to a Mexican woman at a dinner party. I told her that my father's cousin, whom I'd never met and knew little about, was an artist in Mexico City. "I don't expect you've heard of her, though," I said. "Her name is Leonora Carrington."
The woman was taken aback. "Heard of her? My goodness, everyone in Mexico has heard of her. Leonora Carrington! She's hugely famous. How can she be your cousin, and yet you know nothing about her?""

terriers", she escaped the gender and social expectations of her family to study art in London. Nonetheless, London was still close enough for her father's reach and within the conservative boundaries of 1930s British society. When she met Max Ernst in 1936, the vision of Bohemian Paris and the creative freedom of Surrealism became a much more promising environment for young, strong-willed Leonora. Although historians often present Leonora being passively stolen *by* Ernst or travelling *for* him, she herself describes very differently: "Then I ran away to Paris. Not with Max. Alone. I always did my running away alone," (Aberth 27). When she arrived, she finally reached the lifestyle that was unavailable to her at home. The inspiration and creative possibilities in Paris were also much richer and fit her extremely imaginative mind. Although Max introduced her to the Parisian Surrealist circle, Leonora's amazed the Surrealists on her own through her intellect, upper-class privilege straightforwardness and, of course, also beauty. Leonora became an equal member, as much as any women could anyway, and her reception among the group certainly did not change once her relationship with Ernst ended.

In the Midst of the Surrealists

Leonora found herself in a highly creative environment, in which women could do anything they wanted. The sexual relationships among the group were also rather open and liberal, except for male homosexuality of course, which would threaten the homosocial masculinity within the group.[18] No-one was pushing her to get married, because that was a bourgeois and religious tradition, nor did any-one try to force the role of a mother on her, as the French government and social expectations did. Although many Surrealists did marry, very few of them had children (Toyen fully enjoyed both liberties, but Leonora was too in sync with her womanhood not to have children). Although the men Surrealists still had many

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[18] André Breton was actually very homophobic and didn't even like talking about the very idea of homosexuality. He actually ended a conversation on this topic henceforth: "I am absolutely opposed to continuing the discussion of this subject. If this promotion of homosexuality carries on, I will leave this meeting forthvith…" (Brandon 25).

patriarchal opinions and perhaps tried to use the traditional position of power, Leonora quickly subverted any such attempts; “[Joan Miró] gave me some money one day and told me to get him some cigarettes. I gave it back and said if he wanted cigarettes, he could bloody well get them himself. I wasn't daunted by any of them” (Moorhead). Although among the traditional society such a refusal would be treated with a raised eyebrow in the best scenario, the Surrealists accepted and ‘tolerated’ this kind of behaviour. Leonora was also free to do all the ‘eccentric’ activities for which she was expelled from schools, because the Surrealist group enjoyed all kinds of games and practical jokes, which promoted irrationality. Her interest in magic, alchemy and the supernatural was also reciprocated by Max and other members. Surrealism simply let Leonora be the way she was – a freedom she experienced only in her stories and art before joining the movement.

It is undeniable that the Avant-Garde Surrealist circle helped Leonora and other women Surrealists escape an unhappy domesticized life governed by parental and social expectations; despite the movement’s leftist progressiveness in this matter, some other aspects of their ideology was still essentially oppressive to women. Of course, realizing and acknowledging the unfair position of the Other takes time for the empowered individuals; for one because this inequality usually has deep historical roots and for the other that the dominant group has a clear advantage in the society which is hard to give up. The common practise of many male Surrealists – finding their Muse or its childlike version the femme-enfant most adored and promoted by Breton – might have been influenced by the long cultural tradition as much as it could have been a deliberate compensation, if not even the reason, for the involvement of women into the Surrealist circle. A carefully staged photograph taken by Roland Penrose (whose quite sexist and striking quote has already been stated in the chapter *Surrealism - Active and Passive Oppression*) in 1937 “reveals much about the role of women in Surrealism. Leonora, Lee Miller, Ady (Adrienne) Fidelin (a dancer) and Nusch Eluard are

depicted as sleeping beauties with their eyes closed. As if some powerful magician had waved a magic wand, they have collapsed in the middle of having tea (as two of the women hold cups and saucers in their hands) - simultaneously dreaming and as objects of the male dream" (Aberth 27). Of course, the photograph not only perfectly captures Penrose's opinion, but also the role of the Muse women were expected to play within the Surrealist movement. Leonora, however, refused this categorization through which the Surrealists tried to put her in a passive position; "I didn't have time to be anyone's muse, I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist" (Levy).

When she joined the Surrealist circle, Leonora was immediately, yet against her own will, labelled femme-enfant by André Breton. The femme-enfant was primarily promoted by Breton himself and was adopted by some (but not all) his colleagues in art as well as in life. The term femme-enfant, however, was not coined by the Surrealists or Breton himself. Already in 1851, the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) described women as follows: "Women are directly fitted for acting as the nurses and teachers of our early childhood by the fact that they are themselves childish, frivolous and short-sighted; in a word, they are big children all their life long – a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the full-grown man, who is man in the strict sense of the word" (1). Although Schopenhauer did no use any direct label such as "Kindfrau" employed by contemporary German theoreticians to describe a literary character type[19], in 1891, the French writer Catulle Mendès directly titled his novel *La Femme-Enfant. Roman contemporain* (The Child-Woman – A Contemporary novel). The plot of the story is captured by its poster printed in the newspaper *L'Echo de Paris commence* (1884-1944), which depicts a semi-nude woman holding a porcelain doll and standing on a pedestal by which kneels a man in a desperate state (fig. 22). Basically, a young artist falls in love with a prostitute and makes her his muse. He

[19] For example Horst-Jürgen Gerigk analysed the female protagonists of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1891) and Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) in term of the "Kindfrau" as archetype and the term is also included in a German online film dictionary *Lexicon der Filmbegriffe*.

tries to capture the essence of her soul and her body, but fails (Dubbelboer). This 'tragedy' is simultaneously a metaphor for artists' inability to find 'essence' or 'truth'.[20] It remains unclear, whether Breton knew about Mendès's novel, nevertheless the term femme-enfant already existed in the French language (and still remains to even in French popular culture), ready for the Surrealists to pick it up and use it for their own purposes.

The Surrealist femme-enfant was largely based on the character of Alice from Lewis Caroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) – a book most Surrealists definitely knew about. Breton even mentioned Caroll in his first manifesto, Salvador Dalí created illustrations for a limited edition of the book in 1969 and Louis Aragon translated one of his stories (McAra 2). Like Alice, who unintentionally fell into her own unconscious, the femme-enfant is still in contact with childlike curiosity and imagination, since her mind is not corrupted by the logic of the (male) adult world and she is thus free to explore the wonderland (Hiltz 1). McAra pointed out the ambiguity in the femme-emfant concept: "is she child-woman or sexualised child? Is she a young adult exhibiting childlike behaviour or a precocious minor?" (4). Both of these interpretations are equally problematic as one is condescending to women and the other tends to have a paedophilic subtext.

According to Chadwick, the first time Surrealists constructed the image of the femme-enfant was in 1927 on the cover of the 9-10th issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (Chadwick 1998, 33). The theme of the issue – *L'Ecriture Automatique* (Automatic Writing) – is illustrated by a photomontage of a woman in a school uniform sitting awkwardly in a small chair at a small desk; her eyes are transfixed to the side in search for inspiration and her hand is holding a pen ready to transcribe her stream of thoughts onto the blank paper (fig. 23). The "sexual ambiguity" (ibid) caused by her schoolgirl uniform in contrast with her mature face

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[20] It is possible Mendès was inspired or influenced by Honoré de Balzac's novel *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* (The Unknown masterpiece, 1831) in which the 'genius' painter Frenhofer attempts to create a masterpiece with his young beautiful model Gillete, but realizes he is unable to produce the masterpiece. This idea of the infinite struggle to capture 'truth' and ultimate inability of the artist to achieve his/her goal was essential not only to Romanticist poets but especially to many Modernists such as Paul Cézanne, Piet Mondrian, or Picasso.

and rich make-up illustrates McAra's point about the femme-enfant's obscure nature. Although André Breton, who was obsessed most about the concept, was the editor of the issue, *La Révolution surréaliste* was created collectively by the Surrealists (or at least those, who Breton at that time 'permitted' to be in the circle). Hence, the journal "expressed the collective nature of the movement, and [together with *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930–3) was] the principal forum for its multidimensional ideas and activities," (Adès 396).

Hence, the photomontage was not the only a manifestation of the femme-enfant in the work of the Surrealists. Salvador Dalí created two paintings directly referring to the femme-enfant; both are titled *La mémoire de la femme-enfant* (*The Memory of the Woman-Child*, 1929 and 1932). The earlier version depicts a complicated dream environment dominated by a large monument to the femme-enfant (fig. 25). The phallic structure is built from various female sensuous body parts and other amorphous shapes. While the woman at the bottom is seductively cocking her head to the side and showing her breast, the one at the very top is innocently shielding her eyes from the whole picture connecting the coquetting and naïve character of the femme-enfant. The column is linked with a queue of animal heads (bird, monkey and lion), which could allude to the femme-enfant relationship with nature or perhaps the potency of her imagination. The later version is dominated by a large rock in the shape of a simple-minded looking head (fig. 24). It seems the image captures the author's memories of the femme-enfant: the adventurous couple on a boat, the intimate embrace of two lovers, the standing woman casting a large shadow and a woman emerged in water. The last two renditions could allude to the relationship of the woman-child to the unconscious. Nevertheless, the femme-enfant is now only a memory, because she has aged and grown grey hair as the bust at the top of the large rock shows. Possibly the most surprising rendition of the femme-enfant concept is René Magritte's *The Spirit of Geometry* (1937). The image

depicts a mother holding her baby – only the heads are interchanged. Thus a large, bold baby's head with a blank face is attached to a large body, whereas the serious-looking mother has the body of a toddler (fig. 26). The image not only underscores the deep bond between the mother and her son, but essentially proposes the interchangeability of the woman and the child.

In 1933, the Surrealists were astounded by the criminal case of eighteen-year-old Violette Nozière, who poisoned her parents after her father continuously raped her for six years. To defend the young woman, "who had lived out the deepest and most terrifying aspects of the Freudian unconscious" (Chadwick 1998, 43), Breton organized the production of pamphlet bearing her name and containing poems by Breton, Char, Eluard, Henry, Péret, Mesens, Moro and Rosey and illustrations by Magritte, Dali, Brauner, Tanguy, Ernst, Marcel Jean, Arp and Giacometti. The Surrealists were asking the question, whether Violette perhaps consented to her father's incentives to satisfy her own Oedipal desire (Greeley 30). This topic is illustrated by one of the images included in the pamphlet – Magritte's drawing *L'impromptu de Versailles* (1933). The drawing depicts a man in a cylinder hat (identified as Freud by Greeley) coming towards a little girl sitting on her father's lap. She is clinging to him for protections, while his hand is placed under her skirt (fig. 27). This perception the Surrealists had of Violette Nozière case once again demonstrates the femme-enfant concept of a sexual ambiguous woman-child so deeply connected to her unconscious that she is able to enact her Oedipal drive.

Violette Nozière was not the only woman to be the Surrealists' ostensible incarnation of the femme-enfant. Salvador Dalí once instantly fell in love with a twelve-year old girl just from seeing her behind; he then approached her by touching her back with his crotch (Dalí 11).[21] Breton had to have his own femme-enfant of course, as his second wife was the

[21] He describes this event in his autobiography henceforth: "This was a little girl of twelve, who stood looking up and motioning to her mother, who was precisely the one with the beautiful breasts. […] I fell in love with her

fourteen years younger painter Jacqueline Lamba (1910-1993). Paul Éluard's was eleven years older than his second wife was Nusch Éluard (1906-1946). Man Ray's model and lover, the photographer Lee Miller was seventeen years his junior. The Surrealist associate Picasso began his affair with his model Marie-Thérèse Walter (1909-1977) when she was only seventeen and he was forty-five; when she gave birth to their daughter, Picasso 'replaced' her by the Surrealist photographer Dora Maar (1907-1997), who was again half his age. Joan Miró's wife Pilar Juncosa Iglesias (1904-1995) was eleven years younger. Meret Oppenheim had a relationship with the twenty-six years older Marcel Duchamp and twenty-two years older Max Ernst. The latter was of course also Leonora's twenty-six years older lover. These age differences are not only outside the social norm today, they were also in odds with common demographic trends during the first half of the twentieth century, when mean inter-spousal age gap was 3 years (Kemkes-Grottenthaler 206).[22] Of course, the artists mentioned were not always in relationships, where the age difference was so large, and neither did this directly mean they oppressed their younger female counterparts. Nonetheless, these artists had crucial influence on the course of Surrealism and thus the idea of a woman-child muse was at least unconsciously influenced by the projections of their desires.

Hence, when young women artists came to join the Surrealist circle, they were to some extent perceived as these femme-enfants or muses.[23] Most women Surrealists began their affiliation with group in their twenties, and were thus pass the point of adolescent sexual

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instantly, and I think that the view of her from behind, reminding me of Dullita, was very favorable to this first impulse of my heart. […] With my crutch I imperceptibly touched the girl's back. She quickly turned round, and I then said to her, with a sureness and a force of conviction that came close to rage, "You shall be Dullita!" The condensed images of Galuchka and of Dullita had just become incorporated and fused by the force of my desire for this new child whose sunblackened but angelically beautiful face I had just discovered."

[22] According to a demographic study by Máire Ní Bhrolcháin, only in 8% of marriages in England and Wales in 1921 was the husband older more than 10 years (9). This also helps explain why Leonora's parents were so appalled by her relationship with Max Ernst.

[23] In 2012 The Los Angeles County Museum of Art prepared an exhibition including Leonora Carrington, Lee Miller, or Jacquiline Lamba called *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States* – although the show did an excellent job on acquainting the public with fourty-seven women Surrealists (Knight), the title directly likens the women artists to the femme-enfant prototype Alice, just as some of the Surrealists tried to do.

ambiguity attributed to the femme-enfant. Nevertheless, the founding generation of Surrealists were in their thirties and forty's (illustrated by the age gaps described above), which might have affected their perception of these young women. Leonora was also only twenty years old when Ernst first introduced her to the group. Breton immediately recognized her rich creative character and her age made her the ideal femme-enfant – the physically mature and thus sensuous muse with the creative, naïve and boundless mind of a child, which is freely able to access its unconscious and thus serve as a guide for man. Leonora soon became aware of Breton's endeavours to entrap women into the belittling role: "I never considered myself a femme enfant like André Breton wanted to see women. Nor did I want to be understood by this, nor did I ever try to change the rest," (Aberth 38). Leonora was also aware of her gender's inferiority among the circle: "The women Surrealists were considered secondary to the male Surrealists. The women were considered … people there to inspire, aside from doing the washing, cooking, cleaning and feeding… I never thought of myself as a muse. I thought of myself as being carried away by my lover," (Aberth 37). Clearly, even though she found herself in an environment that ventilated some oppressive ideas, Leonora was able to stand her ground and keep the autonomy she strived for.

Her autonomy is best demonstrated by the idiosyncrasy of her art. While male Surrealists employed the body of the Other – the anima, the woman – in order to reach the unconscious, women Surrealists usually went in different ways then to portray the male/animus entity; Leonora numerously identified herself with animals as the representatives of nature through which one could also cross the bridge to the unconscious. Throughout Leonora's painterly and especially literary oeuvre, the role of animals, fantastical creatures or half-human-half-animal beings had become very significant. Her emphasis on animals and fairy-tales rooted in her childhood experience she is able to redefine her role as a femme-enfant and arm herself with the magical powers of a *femme-sorciere*.

Her love for animals began very early and is tightly linked to the relationship she had with her mother. Due to the hierarchical organization of the Carrington household customary for their class, she and her three brothers had an area strictly separate from the adults, only raised and cared for by the nanny and allowed to visit their mother only on specific occasions (Aberth 11). This seclusion let Leonora develop in a *tabula-rasa* childhood bubble uncorrupted by adult life. She often dreamt of animals and they were one of the first subjects she drew when she was little. She began "scribbling" on the walls when she was four years old, as Leonora herself remembered vividly: "I used to draw horses. I just loved it," (Aberth 14). Leonora life-long fondness for horses might be connected to the fact she and her mother "were the only members of the family to ride and that must have created a bond between them," (Abert 14). Another important factor is revealed by one of Leonora's early, yet deeply entrenched, memories:

> She also recalls that as a treat to celebrate her first communion her mother took her to the small local zoo in Blackpool, a nearby English seaside resort. The reason this memory stayed with her is that, first, it was a rare treat to be with her mother and not nanny, and second, she was able, during these visits, to see the wild animals that she often dreamed about. (Aberth 14)

She started writing her own ghost stories and animal fables at the age of six (Aberth 15). Both her pictures and her stories were influenced by the tales she learned in that early formative period. Her library included Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Alice through the Looking Glass* (1872) which were reflected in her stories and "her criptic titling of works of art throughout her career," (Aberth 14). Her Irish maternal grandmother also used to tell little Leonora they were the descendants of the mythical little mountain people of the race Sidhe. In order to hide from some political and religious oppressors these people retired to the underground, where they pursued magic and alchemy. Leonora attested to the inspirational importance of these tales for her work: "The stories my grandmother told me were fixed in my mind and they gave me mental pictures that I would later sketch on paper," and they also explain her "love for the soil, nature, [and] the gods," (Aberth 12). Her childhood was thus

most important in forming her imagination and deliberate choice of imagery and animals which would be reflected in her entire visual and literary oeuvre, especially in terms of her self-expression and her unique redefinition of womanhood.

In her renowned portrait *The Inn of the Dawn Horse* (1937-8), above Leonora's head hangs her childhood rocking horse (fig. 28); her wavy thick hair supplements the horse's missing mane, which representatively links the human figure and the animal as the conscious and her unconscious. The rocking horse refers to the one Leonora had in childhood, which was called Tartar – a double anagram of 'art'. I believe she might be showing that only through her unconscious expressed in her art she is able to escape her stuffy upper-class British environment represented by the chair, which immobilizes Leonora and makes her passive. Hence, through the rocking horse Tartar she transforms herself into a living horse galloping into the woods in the window, similarly to Penelopé in *The Oval Lady* changes into a horse, when her father threatens to burn her beloved rocking horse. On the other hand, Leonora is also connected through the shadows to the lactating hyena, which in my opinion embodies the fertile nigh time when the unconscious (traditionally symbolized by the shadows) is expressed in dreams. The hyena alludes to Leonora's story *The Debutant* (1937-38), in which a hyena goes to the debutant ball instead of Leonora. Thus, Leonora's animals become "symbolic intermediaries between the unconscious and the natural world, they replace male Surrealists' reliance on the image of woman as the mediating link between man and the 'marvelous', and suggests the powerful role played by Nature as a source of creative power for the woman artist," (Chadwick 1985, 79). My reading of the portrait is that Leonora uses her childhood memories, toys, fairy-tales, magic and love for animals to access her unconscious while undergoing a transformative and liberating process.

Although her life-long close relationship with her childhood would suggest she was the perfect woman-child muse, her transformative identification with animals redefine the

naïve sexualized image of the *femme-enfant* and transfers Leonora to the magical realm of *femme-sorciere*. Leonora replaces Breton's passive image of the femme-enfant, as innocent, seductive, and dependent on man, by a powerful woman who uses her intimate relationship with the childhood worlds of fantasy and magic, which grants her the ability of creative transformation through mental rather than sexual power (ibid). Georgianna M. M. Colvile in her essay *Beauty and/Is the Beast* insightfully observed:

> Links between women, children, animals, and various forms of magic are a constant in western art. [Jorge Luis] Borges comments on children's fearlessness in front of fierce animals in zoos, and on the legend that only virgins could approach and catch unicorns. Fabulous beasts, like sphinxes, chimaera, and gorgons, tend either to be female or to symbolize male fear of female sexuality. […]
>
> In order to find herself, the surrealist woman artist was not appropriating nature as divorced from culture, but retracing her steps back to matriarchy and Goddess cult, to the prehumen world of animals, to "the original confusion between man and animal species" (Chénieux-Gendron, Surréalisme 254), to her own paralinguistic infancy and intimacy with the mother, to the nursery world of toys, pets, and animal fairy tales in which the father become the monster. (160-1)

While the femme-enfant prototype is naively oblivious to the agency of her access to the unconscious and thus serves only as a sexualized mediator for the man, Leonora deliberately acknowledges her immediacy with her childhood self and uses the bridge actively. The symbols of childhood naivety, which were used to subordinate women into sexual objects with infantile minds, are now used for Leonora's own purposes. Leonora dons the interconnection of her femininity, childhood, fauna and magic proudly; she becomes the *femme-sorciere*, the archetypical witch, who has the special powers to shape-shift or become a unique creature with all three traits at the same time. The relationship of femininity or womanhood with magic and alchemy is intensely manifested in Leonora's mature work, which totally redefines the role of women and opens a fresh feminist dialogue.

With the horse as her personal totem and the magically alchemical powers, Leonora is able to examine and define her identity in her art independent of her family, social, gender and that of her male colleagues' expectations. Surrealism not only provided Leonora with

social freedom, but additionally it functioned as a mirror, in which she could examine herself and develop her identity.

Art as a Mirror

The oeuvre of most *female* Surrealist artists includes their self-portraits through which they were able to define themselves and establish their identity. While Toyen might have done so very subtly and covertly, Leonora Carrington's self-portrait *The Inn of the Dawn Horse* (1937-38) actually became the artist's most famous and discussed painting (fig. 28). Hence, Leonora and other women Surrealists explored their body (linked with beauty) in terms of childhood and madness, which men used to confine them in, in order to understand their identity (Colvile 160). In order to understand the way Surrealism helped these artists in the exploration of their self, it is neccery to look at the psychological theories on identity.

In 1936 the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) presented his theory on an individual's relation with the self and explained the formation of the self during childhood. In the first six to eighteen months of an infant's life, the baby recognizes its image in the mirror and thereby becomes aware of the *self* (the theory of course follows Freud and correlates to the creation of the ego – conscious separated from the id – unconscious). During this "mirror stage", as Lacan called it, the infant sees the *self* in the mirror and acquires an identity, which it did not have prior to this experience and which concurrently divides our physical appearance from or psychic existence (502-3). The problem is the self is one-dimensional and thus does not reflect the multi-dimensionality of our psyche, meaning our physical appearance presents only a limited picture, which shows only a very small part, or perhaps doesn't even correspond at all to our complex inner mentality. The individual can either accept the otherness of its body, or carefully control one's outer image through material possessions such as clothing (as Toyen clearly did) to near the image to better match the inner complexity. Hence, women Surrealists used their art to redefine, transform, or re-contextualize their self in

order to explore their identity as women from an outside point of view (and inherently the man's view), express their fragmented inner and outer identity, and add dimensions to their one-dimensional self.

However, by portraying her*self*, the physical identity detached from our inner psychic existence, as an object on the canvas, the woman artist is using the objectifying language of male Surrealists. As Chadwick pointed out in her *Mirror Images* (1998), "It is the nature of the self-portrait to produce the subject [the *self*] as object, but, as Luce Irigaray has noted[24], the process of objectification that enables the woman to describe herself *as if from outside the body* also implicates her in a masculine dynamic that projects the woman as other," (8). This also explains the inevitability of artists such as Toyen to employ the voyeuristic male gaze on their depicted female figures. Nonetheless, many women artists including Leonora tried to use the male-devised stereotypical concept of femininity to their advantage, for example donning her close relationship with childhood or madness proudly and making it *hers*.

Similarly to Toyen, there is a visible androgynous tendency in the way Leonora chose to present herself in her portrait *The Inn of the Dawn Horse* (1937-8) (fig. 28). Through a masculine self-stylisation and tough eye contact with the audience, she tries to deflect the voyeuristic gaze and sexualisation of her body. Leonora dressed herself in a jacket and a shirt with no neckline, under which there is no clear distinction of breasts. Her tight white riding breaches highlight her 'un-lady-like' seating position with her legs astride. Her stylised masculine clothing, pose and stern look are balanced by her long wavy hair, dark red lips and pointy high-heel shoes. Similarly to Toyen's favoured cross-dressing, Leonora used such androgynous mixture of male and female signifiers to assume an equal position to man. This

[24] Chadwick refers to Luce Irigaray's quote from her essay "Woman's Exile: Ideology and Consciousness" (1977): "The masculine can partly look at itself, speculate about itself, represent itself and describe itself for what it is, whilst the feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language, but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine, thus by losing itself."

technique can be traced to her earlier portrait drawing created during her study at Ozenfant's school:

> In *Portrait of Joan Powell*, Carrington was invoking a transcendent androgyny that at the time she associated with her own strivings for personal autonomy and artistic freedom. The masculine attire and expression in this portrait and in other early works may have related to the appropriation of male independence and self-confidence. (Aberth 23)

This stylised androgynous prototype was, however, substituted in her mature work by a more magical and ambiguous rendering. Instead of trousers, the figures wore a "shapeless robe", which hid all clear traits of gender distinction and previously "scowling faces" now had an impassive look indicating the "appropriation of male esoteric knowledge" combined with female experience (ibid). Leonora's androgynous self-presentation projected the psychological androgyny of her inner (un)consciousness onto the physical self, which lacks to manifest this characteristic of her psyche.

The numerous details in Leonora's portrait, all intriguingly linked and constantly alluding to one another, reflect her complex personality, but at the same time the protagonist blends into the room's interior and becomes another object – another decoration;

> The lack of distinction between inner self and outer reality, and the tendency to merge with the environment, (…), reflects the Surrealist desire to dissolve difference as the female body blends with furnishings, architecture, or nature. (…) A more subtle transformation occurs in Leonora Carrington's signature Self-Portrait of 1938, in which a curiously anthropomorphic blue chair sprouts the delicate hands and booted feet of its striking artist-occupant. (Posner 158)

On one hand, presenting the female body as fused into the interior and the chair reinforces the centuries-long immobilization of women inside homes (as caretakers, housekeepers, princes waiting to be rescued from towers), and possibly even dehumanizing them into mere aesthetic objects complementing the interior design. On the other hand, it directly draws attention to this problematic correlation of the woman and the interior. Leonora gives herself hope through the horse running away from the house into the mystical woods. It is obvious that Leonora at this time of her life felt the walls of the house were binding her and limiting her creativity and development; this notion radically changes in her mature period. Not only did

art enable her to redefine herself as a person and an artist, but most importantly, as she matured and developed her iconography further, she presented a whole new image of womanhood and women's gender role in the society.

Redefining Womanhood

While male Surrealists were preoccupied by the body of the Other (the woman) as was already touched upon in the previous section on self-portraits, female Surrealists went in a similar direction to portray themselves, not really interested in *their* Other (the man). Their sexuality and their access to the unconscious, however, was not directly their focus; instead they explored their 'otherness' in terms of their social roles and what actually made them the Other. Leonora took the basic women stereotypes and gender roles – the woman as the housekeeper, the caretaker, the cook – and shifted their oppressive character to one of divine power. She also gave autonomy to the naïve femme-enfant, as was already discussed above, and put the neglected crone on the throne of wisdom. Leonora thus became an important feminist and helped create a new empowering language through her art.

It seem that Leonora developed the empowering feminine language when she gave birth to her two sons Gabriel (1946-) and Pablo (1948-), who helped her realize her deeply rooted gender role as a mother, nourisher, and housekeeper. Although Surrealism rejected the social and family emphasis on marriage and children-bearing (perhaps because a woman can no longer be a femme-enfant or a Muse once she becomes a mother), women pursuing a career in art (or any other field for that matter) have to overcome the difficulties of balancing their domestic 'duties' with their work. Usually, mothers don't have enough time for their careers, which hinders their development and makes them forgotten for the three or more

years they spend on maternity leave[25]. Evidently, Leonora was very much aware of her unequal position:

> 'I always continued to paint, even when the children were very small. Only when they were ill I dropped everything and my children became my priority. But often I said to my friend Remedios: 'We need a wife, like men have, so we can work all the time and somebody else would take care of the cooking and the children.' Yes, men are really spoiled!' (Aberth 64)

When her collector Edward James (1907-1984) came to visit her studio, he observed "the place combined kitchen, nursery, kennel and junk store" (Aberth 70); this description captures the essence of her unique image as an artist combined with a mother. Instead of fighting for her rights with her husband (one has to take into account shared responsibilities for running the household of even the quite recent model of a paternity leave would be extremely rare during the 1940s and 50s), she shifted her perception of her role in the household from that of sexist injustice to the divine transformative power of the female.

Leonora's experience with motherhood produced her unique style full of alchemy, fantastic creatures, and androgynous figures within the interior of the domestic sphere, which she transformed into the site of magical rituals:

> It was at this time that she became preoccupied in her work with the transformation of the feminine domestic sphere into a site of magical power, specifically through a correspondence between food preparation, magic and painting. Carrington began full exploration into different mythological and esoteric traditions and the inclusion of certain symbols in her paintings served to elevate the homey everyday into the realms of the sacred. The transit of food from the kitchen to the table to consumption was, in particular, likened to alchemical processes of distillation and transformation, which in turn led to associations involving art production. (Aberth 64)

Leonora's Surrealism fused with her study of alchemy, esotery Celtic, Azstec, Mayan traditions, bestow her figures with magical powers and elevate their position by granting them divine knowledge. Leonora's painting *The House Opposite* (1945), the earliest example of her mature artistic development, presents a multi-storey view of a house, where in each chamber something mysterious is happening. In the bottom right corner, three witches are cooking some potion in a cauldron, while a woman hurries to the dining room holding a bowl high in

[25] That count's especially for the art world, where women artists even today complain about the bad critical reception, when an artist does not exhibit for over three years – if you want to make it, you better not have children!

the air as if she was bringing something sacred to the table. Above, someone is sitting on the bed just awoken from a dream depicted under to floor, in which a girl is sitting in a forest with Leonora's childhood rocking horse. The dream state and the rocking horse allude to Leonora's creative inspiration and creation of art. The process of preparing, cooking, bringing and eating the food has become a ritual with a higher meaning left disguised to the audience. Leonora's home is redefined into a sacred place, where cooking and art represents an alchemical transformation.

For Leonora, art and food and their creation had the same essence, as she once told to her relative Joanna Moorhead: "You don't decide to paint. It's like getting hungry and going to the kitchen to eat. It's a need, not a choice." Leonora was also known for serving her friends omelettes with hair clips or the hair she cut off their head when they were sleeping as a prank or cooking for André Breton from a sixteenth century British cookbook, while creatively substituting any ingredient she did not have. In a letter to Edward James, Leonora also elevates the beneficial effects of eating on the quality of her art: "This is why I painted so beautifully when I was pregnant, I did nothing but eat" (Aberth 66). Hence, it is food that assumes a crucial role in Leonora's domestic-turned-sacred paintings. The woman's gender role as nourisher creates a close relationship between her and food, which has then become related to the feminine:

> Because food and eating are associated with the female, many artists exploit the gendered implications of this medium by deploying food in ways that emphasize rather than criticize its traditional philosophical standing. They highlight or exaggerate connotations of taste and eating and all of the associations of the lower, bodily senses. (Korsmeyer 101)

Hence, Leonora proud of her crucial role in the household emphasizes her relationship with food and makes it present in a majority of her paintings. Food becomes a key ingredient for the alchemical processes in the kitchen and the frequent depiction of the hen's egg (usually in the sacred position, for example levitating and emitting life through light beams in *Sidhe, the White People of the Tuatha dé Danaan* (1954) or served as the main course in *AB EO QUOD*

(1956) (figures 29 and 31)) further stresses the transformational relationship between woman as life-givers and food. The egg was not only present in Leonora's imagery, but especially in her technique. She began to use the medieval egg tempera, which she (not surprisingly) mixed herself. The egg tempera applied on gessoed wooden panels gave her paintings jewel-like tonalities and the surreal representations had an even stronger fairy-tale atmosphere. Leonora's friend Gerzso noted "The fact that mixing egg tempera seemed to mimic culinary procedure further enhanced its use in her eyes" (Aberth 66). Mastering the process of mixing the eggs with the right pigment, she completed the magical combination of art and cooking:

> She had related alchemical processes to those of both painting and cooking, carefully selecting a metaphor that unites the traditional woman's occupation as nourisher of the species with that of the magical of form and color that takes plays in the artist's creative process, nourishing the spirit. (Aberth 68-69)

The Surrealist emphasis on the irrational, the marvellous, or the attainment of deeper understanding and wisdom through the unconscious in combination with stylistic liberty enabled Leonora and other women Surrealists explore various directions of their emancipation. The Surrealist interest in mythology, primarily induced by Jung's explanation of archetypes through the collective unconscious, drew Leonora towards female divinities and the image of woman as the creator (through which she rebelled against her mother's Catholic idea of the masculine God). Janice Helland calls Leonora's approach "esoteric feminism", because she intuitively uses myths and pagan themes dealing with the female image in order to advocate a spiritual development based on feminine mythic history as the source or basis for male-female equality (57). For example the painting *The Giantess* (1950) is dominated by a huge Goddess (in proportion to the space in the painting as well as the canvas itself) in a brown dress decorated with images of human figures and coated by a large white cloak (fig. 31). She is guarding an egg and all beings on land, on sea and in the sky are subordinated and protected by her. The painting is antithetical to the Christian (male) God as "the "guardian" is independent, in control, and ascendant. She is, in fact, a "goddess," creator, and protector of

her world," (ibid). Hence, during her mature period many of Leonora's paintings portray or allude to female goddesses, who often possess knowledge unattainable by men.

Although Leonora was without doubt a feminist, her art is not *feminist* – at least not in the Post-Modernist and contemporary understanding of the word. Nelly Richards in her *Masculine/Feminine: Practices of Difference(s)* (2004) juxtaposed feminine art and aesthetic with the feminist:

> "feminine aesthetic" usually connotes art that expresses woman as a natural (essential) fact and not as a symbolic-discursive category formed and deformed by systems of cultural representation. Feminine art would be any art representing a universal femininity or feminine essence illustrating the universe of values and meanings (sensibility, corporeality, affectivity, etc) traditionally reserved for women in the masculine-feminine binary system. […] On the other hand, a "feminist aesthetic" would be that other aesthetic postulating woman as a sign immersed in a chain of patriarchal forms of oppression and repression which must be broken, through a coming awareness of how masculine superiority is exercised and combated. Feminist art seeks to correct the stereotypical images of the feminine that the hegemonic masculine has gradually demeaned and penalized. (29)

Leonora didn't criticise the historical symbolic and role of women in the society or mythology – she embraced these representations and elevated their status. As visible in *The House Opposite* (1945), she did not reject the notion of the household as a feminine domain, but rather honoured the powers of women in the domestic sphere. She didn't refuse thy symbols and attributes of Goddesses in Greek and Egyptian mythology or other mystical tradition. Leonora celebrates the relationship of womanhood with nature, fertility, or nourishment. Leonora's approach is in deep contrast with the practises of social feminists (like Whitney Chadwick or other writers cited in this essay), who criticised and fought against the stereotypical social connotations which subjugate women. Hence, Leonora's art expresses a different kind of feminism – *Goddess feminism*. Similarly to how the Surrealists promoted masculinity at the expense of women, she returns the oppression by endorsing powerful feminine qualities.

In 1949 Leonora read Robert Grave's *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammer of Poetic Myth* (1948) which analysed archaic goddess religions; the deep influence of the book on Leonora is highlighted by her own testimony: "Reading *The White Goddess* was the

greatest revelation of my life" (Aberth 79). It is then not so surprising, that the most prevalent among Leonora's goddess renditions includes the colour white, but also other symbols of various female divinities. Her painting *And Then We Saw The Daughter of the Minotaur* (1953) depicts two children, most probably Leonora's sons Pablo and Gabriel, as they are introduced to the white horned "Daughter of the Minotaur" (fig. 30). The white cow-human (sitting in a robe and reaching the table with human hands, yet her legs end in hooves and a long tail creeps from the robe) creature alludes to the Egyptian goddess Hathor, who was the embodiment of the Milky Way, which was at that time understood as the spilt milk of a divine cow – she was the creator of our galaxy. The grain décor of the column capitols refer to the Greek goddess of harvest and fertility. Thy crystal balls on the table and floor represent the presence of magic. The wittiest characteristic of the painting, however, is the twist of the Surrealist symbol of the Minotaur:

> 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. 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. […] 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. (Helland 58)[26]

Hence, instead of introducing her sons to the sexually violent and women-debasing Minotaur as the Surrealist promoted, Leonora teaches them about the fertile female creator deities with magical powers, without which they would not be born – Leonora celebrates the importance of motherhood and women's ability to give birth.

[26] The cover of the first issue of the journal *Minotaure* presented Pablo Picasso's collage and the concept of the Minotaur was the only one Picasso acknowledged to be influenced by the Surrealists (Gadon 21). Thee collage depicts a man with a bull's head in a sexualised position of power with a phallic spear in his hand. Although Picasso's Minotaur also reflected his Spanish culture, it essentially embodied his masculinity and relationship to women. As his relationship to his lover, muse and the mother of his child, Marie-Therese, grew increasingly complicated (and in the end Picasso replaced her for a younger muse) the Minotaur renderings thus oscillated from "the minotaur carousing with young women, tenderly caressing another, contemplating a sleeping lover and brutally attacking an amazon" (Gadon 28). In these scenes, the woman is always an object in the background of the Minotaur's psychic dilemmas concerned with his brutish, erotic and destructive masculinity.

From the 1980s, as Leonora grew older and had to confront her old age, she became increasingly interested in the portrayal of the crone who holds the knowledge only the elderly can have. *The Magdalens* (1986) confronts the three stages of womanhood: maiden, mother and crone. The painting's title refers to the network of convents – so called Magdalene's Asylums – for 'fallen women' (promiscuous or unmarried women with children and prostitutes), which were founded in England at the end of the 18th century and spread to Ireland, America, Canada, Australia, and Sweden and functioned until the work-abuse scandal came to the public knowledge in the 1990s.[27] The wrinkly crone, her whole body veiled under her long white hair, hands a red berry to the maiden in dark brown hair, to which Leonora admitted "It's a birth control pill" (Aberth 126). Through the pill, the crone is also gifting the maiden the divine knowledge she accumulated in the many years of her life. Instead of celebrating the young female body as the Surrealists, historical Western art tradition and contemporary culture have done, Leonora fills her later paintings with wrinkly women. Unlike Toyen, who enjoyed the sensuous portrayal of the symbol for women – the corset or the dress, Leonora depicted most of her figures (female and male) in a rather androgynous manner: in shapeless robes with the biological traits of gender missing (breasts, pelvis, etc.). This attire signified the figures appropriated the knowledge of the Other, in her predominantly female figures the knowledge of the male in order to become a new and wholly type of female power (Aberth 23). Hence, Leonora rejected the Surrealist emphasis on the young female nude/Muse/femme-enfant and hid her figures under genderless robes or exposed the unpopular image of the crone as the most powerful and knowledgeable female entity.

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[27] Exposed primarily in Ireland when the Dublin convent sold a part of its property, where they hid graves of 133 women, who were incarcerated at the convent. The Magdalene Asylums were initially purely voluntary convents, but were gradually taken over by the Catholic Church. The asylums were practically prisons for women their communities or families were ashamed of, however, the strict and hard working and living conditions made the institutions even worse than prisons. The asylums were changed into laundries for the clergy as well as commercial clients, granting the Catholic churches profit from slavery. Since the scandal, there were numerous documentaries and most famously Peter Mullan's film *The Magdalene Sisters* (2003). The last asylum was closed only in 1996. The asylums in England were less controversial, because they were regulated by the British government early on, nonetheless, there was a large number of them all over the country and it is thus probable Leonora knew about them.

Clearly, a woman artist does not have to condemn her gender in order to be appreciated and respected. Leonora's beautiful feminine art covering various domains and qualities of the female gender is increasingly admired as her name grows significance among the public. Leonora was certainly a great model for many women artists coming after her, as she showed the world women have a lot to be proud of.

6. Conclusion

Let us now return to the question I have set out to answer in the beginning of my thesis – was then Surrealism oppressive to women artists or did the movement empower them? It was both.

Although this might not be a satisfactory conclusion to some readers, it impossible to reduce such a vast topic in which so many actors and factors are involved to a simple compact answer. The oppressive elements of Surrealism, the society of the first half of the twentieth century, the patriarchal tendencies of the art world and the ever-developing society we live in cannot simply be ignored, nor are they the whole story. It must not be forgotten, that Surrealism inspired Toyen and Leonora Carrington, and countless other women artists. Perhaps, if Surrealism never existed or never even allowed women to join, this thesis would not even exist. To a certain extent, I ought to be grateful for Surrealism, because it 'produced' these excellent artists. This does not mean Toyen and Leonora Carrington would never make it as artists without Surrealism, nonetheless, they would probably have an even harder time doing so.

Although this essay perceives the art of Toyen and Leonora Carrington through the lens of a feminist critique of Surrealism, their art was certainly not created for the purpose of *'fighting those bad oppressive Surrealist men'* (I am strongly exaggerating of course). Although it is undeniable they have been to a certain extent oppressed, it should not eclipse the quality of their art. I dedicated myself to this topic and the two artists not only because I

am deeply interested in questions of gender, but essentially because I greatly admire both women and their art (and my passion was certainly deepened throughout the process of writing this thesis).

Nevertheless, oppression and gender inequality in the art world remains a very important issue. This begs the question, whether the situation is any better today? Do contemporary women artists have the same chance at becoming successful as men do? Do homosexual, transgender, or other minority artists have that chance as well? Do art critics take into account artists on maternity leaves? Is men's or masculine aesthetic no longer preferred over women's or feminine aesthetic? Have all the oppressive boundaries examined in this thesis been eradicated? Or will in a hundred years' time another bachelor student of art history do a similar analysis of contemporary women artists to the one I have done?

Appendix

Figure 1: Masson, André. *Automatic Drawing*. 1924, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *MoMA Learning*, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/andre-masson-automatic-drawing.

Figure 2: Ernst, Max. *The Barbarians*. 1937, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. *THE MET*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/489976.

Figure 3: Duchamp, Marcel. *L.H.O.O.Q.* 1919, Private Collection, Paris. *Tout-Fait*, CyberBOOK+ Press, http://www.toutfait.com/unmaking_the_museum/LHOOQ.html.

Figure 4: Ray, Man. *Le Violon D'Ingres*. 1924, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles. *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, The J. Paul Getty Trust, www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/54733/man-ray-le-violon-d'ingres-ingres's-violin-american-1924/.

Figure 5: Magritte, René. The Lovers. 1928, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Rene Magritte*, Www.ReneMagritte.org, www.renemagritte.org/the-lovers-2.jsp.

Figure 6: Magritte, René. *La Clairvoyance* . 1936, The Art institute of Chicago, Chicago, *Rene Magritte*, Www.ReneMagritte.org, www.renemagritte.org/la-clairvoyance.jsp.

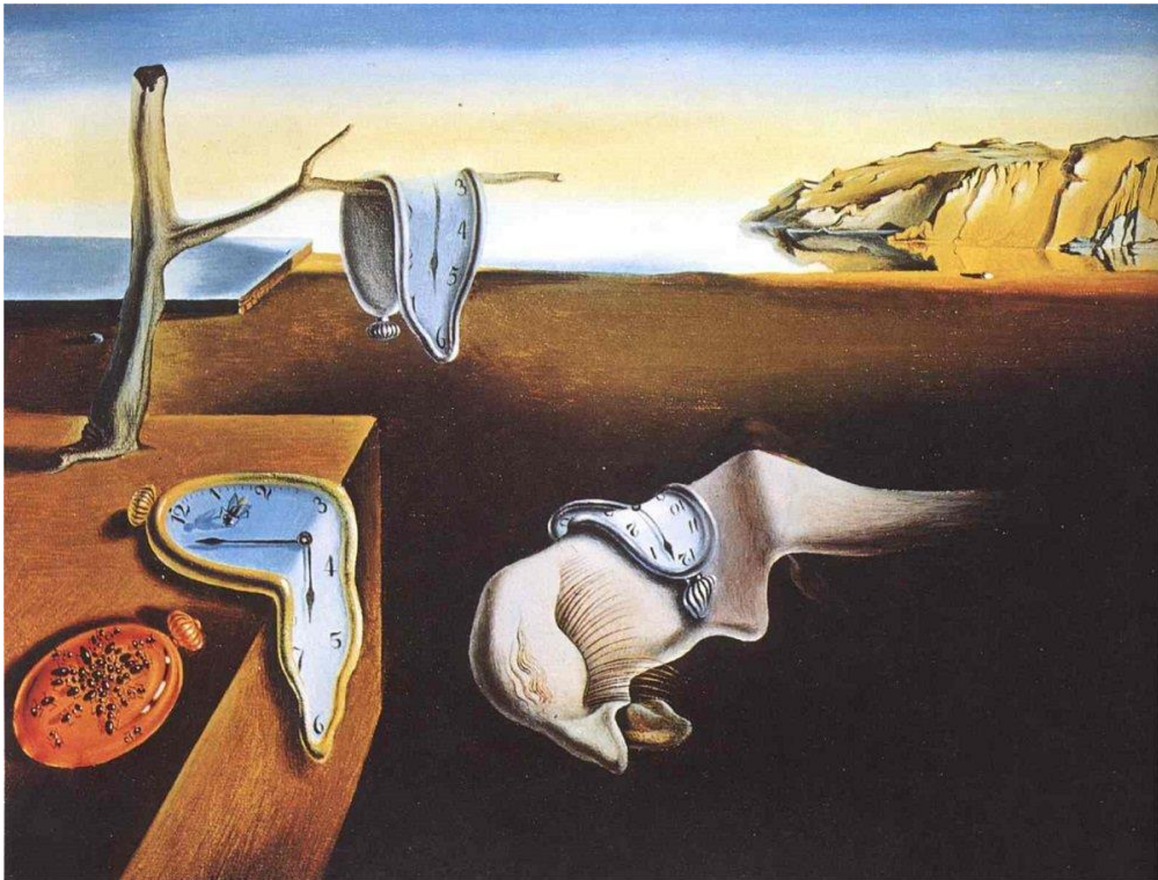

Figure 7: Dalí, Salvador. *The Persistence of Memory*. 1931, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Mental Floss*, Mental Floss, mentalfloss.com/article/62725/15-things-you-didnt-know-about-persistence-memory.

Figure 8: Oppenheim, Meret. *Object*. 1936, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. *MoMA Learning*, The Museum of Modern Art, www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/meret-oppenheim-object-paris-1936.

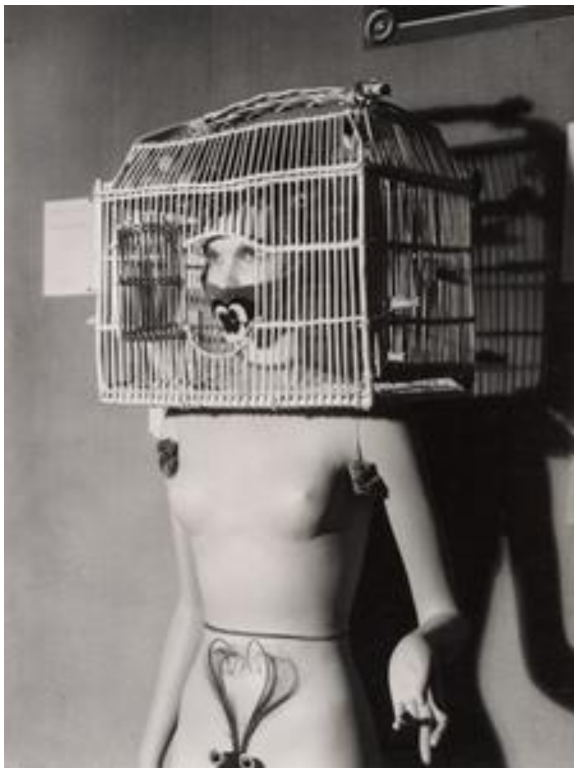

Figure 9: Masson, André, and Man Ray. *André Masson's Mannequin*. 1938, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, The J. Paul Getty Trust, www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/201306/man-ray-andre-masson's-mannequin-american-negative-1938-print-1966/.

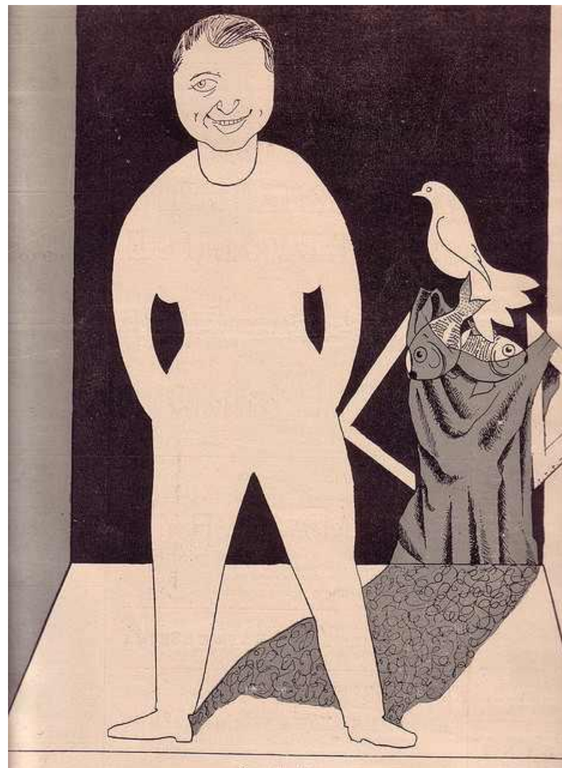

Figure 10: Hoffmeister, Adolf. *Ten-Ta-To-Yen.* 1930, Severočeská galerie výtvarného umění, Litoměřice. *Událost Dne*, Signály, udalosti.signaly.cz/1209/ten-ta-to-yen.

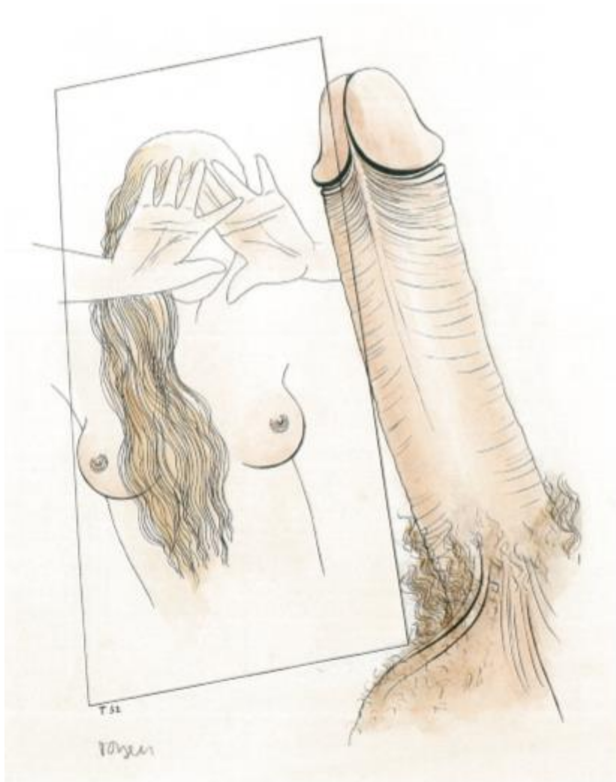

Figure 11: Toyen. *Justine*. 1932, Private collection, Paris. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 99.

Figure 13: Toyen. *Drawing 16*. 1938, Private collection, Prague. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 100.

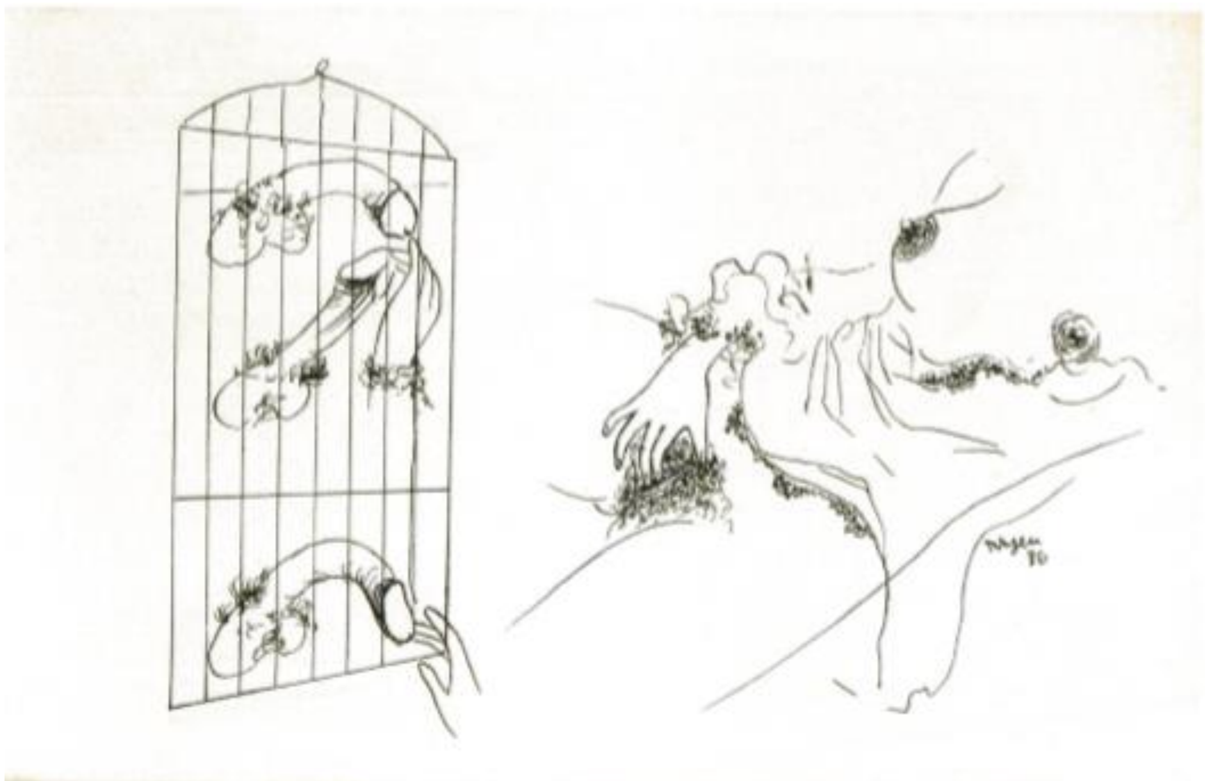

Figure 12: Toyen. *Drawing*. 1936, Private collection, Paris. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 101.

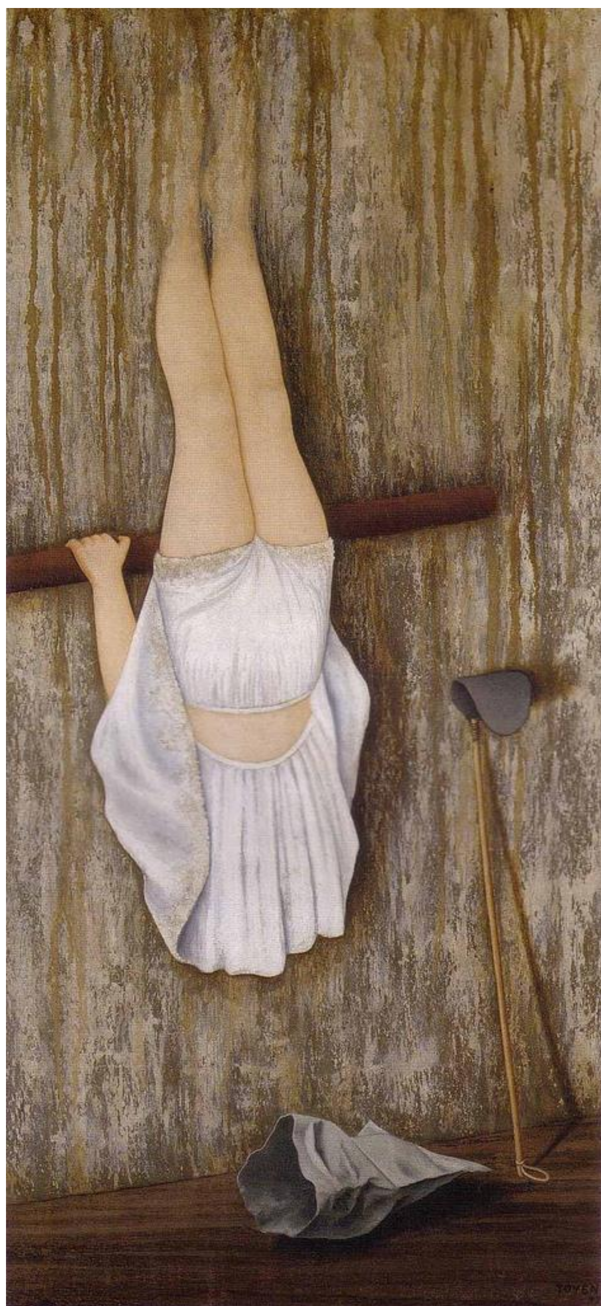

Figure 14: Toyen. *Relâche*. 1943, Aleš South Bohemian Gallery, Hluboká nad Vltavou. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 168.

Figure 15: Toyen. *The Myth of Light*. 1946, Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 180.

Figure 16: Toyen. *When the Laws Fall Silent*. 1969, Private collection, Paris. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 259.

Figure 17: Toyen. *Sleeping*. 1937, Private collection, Essex. Srp, Karel. *Toyen*, Argo, 2000, p. 142.

Figure 18: Toyen. *Dream*. 1937, Kunsthalle Praha, Prague.

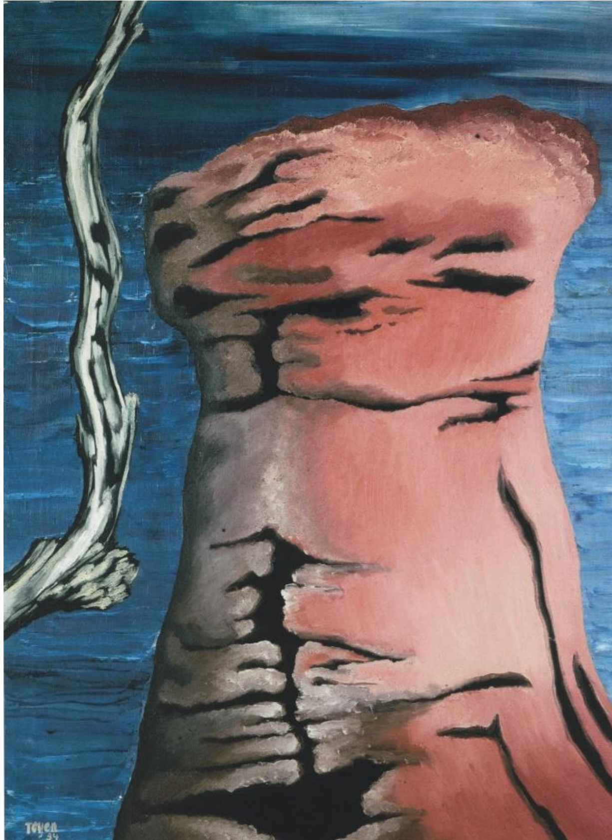

Figure 19: Toyen. *Magnet Woman*. 1934, Private collection, Prague. Krupička, Miroslav. *ČEŠTÍ SURREALISTÉ V MÁNESU.* Radio Praha, Český rozhlas,, http://www.radio.cz/cz/rubrika/kultura/cesti-surrealiste-v-manesu.

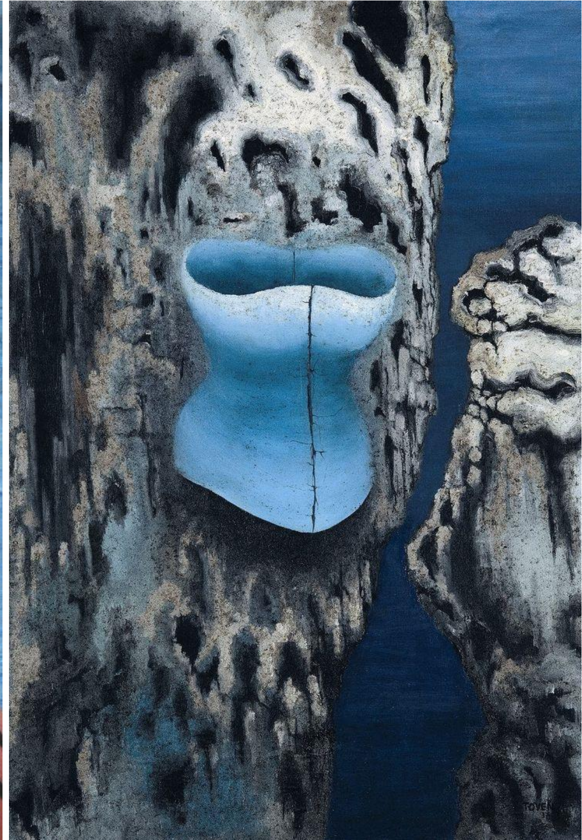

Figure 20: Toyen. *Abandoned Den*. 1937, Galerie výtvarného umění, Cheb. *iDNES,* MAFRA, https://kultura.zpravy.idnes.cz/foto.aspx?r=vytvarne-umeni&c=A150903_160116_vytvarne-umeni_vha&foto=VHA5daefb_Opustenedoupe.jpg.

Figure 21: Ray, Man. *Torso (Lama Sheath)*. 1930. *ArtNet,* Artnet Worldwide Corporation, http://www.artnet.com/artists/man-ray/torso-lama-sic-sheath-PnxQlsmNmiJVb76wayhw2Q2.

Figure 22: Lucien, Métivet. *La Femme-Enefant*. 1891. *MUZÉO,* https://en.muzeo.com/art-print/lecho-de-paris-commence-la-femme-enfant-roman-contemporain-par-catulle-mendes/metivet.

Figure 23: *L'Écriture automatique*. c.1925, Ubu Gallery, New York. *A Surrealist Slideshow,* Slate*, h*ttp://www.slate.com/features/surrealism_slideshow/01.html.

Figure 24: Dalí, Salvador. *La mémoire de la femme-enfant*. 1932, Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida. *Salvador Dalí*, Dalí Foundation, https://www.salvador-dali.org/en/artwork/catalogue-raisonne/1930-1939/287/memory-of-the-child-woman.

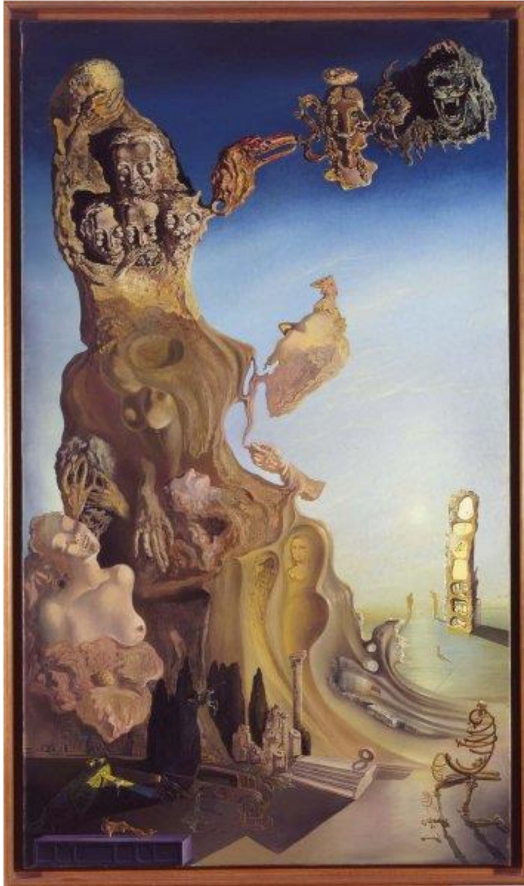

Figure 25: Dalí, Salvador. *La mémoire de la femme-enfant*. 1929. *Salvador Dalí*, Dalí Foundation, https://www.salvador-dali.org/en/artwork/catalogue-raisonne/obra/236/imperial-monument-to-the-woman-child?text=femme.

Figure 27: Magritte, René. *L'impromptu de Versailles* 1933. *Rony van de Velde*, http://www.ceuleersvandevelde.com/Surrealism-Collective-publication-Violette-Nozi%C3%A8res-DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=6&tabindex=5&objectid=251600&mediaid=369333.

Figure 26: Magritte, René. *The Spirit of Geometry.* 1937, Tate, London. *Tate,*Tate, http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/magritte-the-spirit-of-geometry-t00892.

Figure 28: Carrington, Leonora. *The Inn of the Dawn Horse.* 1937-8, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. *TheMET,* The Metropolitan Museum of Art, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/492697.

Figure 29: Carrington, Leonora. *Sidhe, the White People of the Tuatha dé Danaan*. 1954, Private collection. *One Surrealist Day,* http://onesurrealistaday.com/post/6401505075/the-white-people-of-the-tuatha-de-danann.

Figure 30: Carrington, Leonora. *And Then We Saw The Daughter of the Minotaur*. 1953, Private collection. *Curiator,* Readymade, https://curiator.com/art/leonora-carrington/and-then-we-saw-the-daughter-of-the-minotaur.

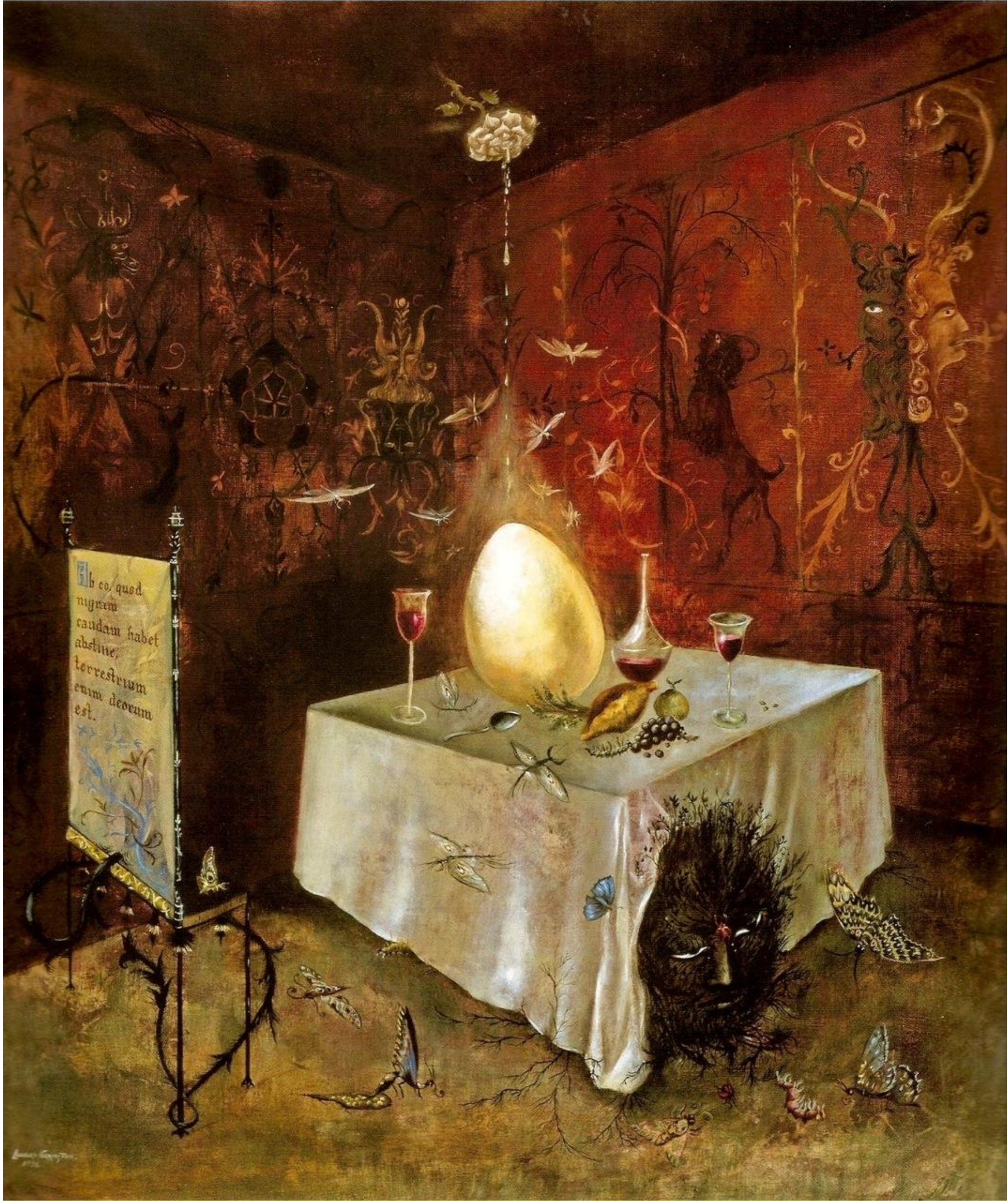

Figure 31: Carrington, Leonora. *AB EO QUOD*. 1956, Private collection. *Flickr*, Flickr, http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2172/5772745125_097854f7d1_o.jpg.

Figure 32: Carrington, Leonora. *The Giantess.* 1950, Private collection. *ArtStack*, ArtStack – art online, https://theartstack.com/artist/leonora-carrington/giantess-also-known-g.

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