

## *Remedios Varo's Mexican Drawings*

Rosa Berland

Department of Painting and Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art, New York

As André Breton declared, the Surrealist examines “with a critical eye the notions of reality and unreality, reason and irrationality, reflection and impulse, knowledge and ‘fatal’ ignorance, usefulness and uselessness.”<sup>1</sup> During her long exile in Mexico, the expatriate Spanish painter Remedios Varo, like her colleagues Leonora Carrington and Frida Kahlo, pushed the boundaries of authorship by embodying a complex genre of drawing and painting focusing on a female protagonist.<sup>2</sup> Varo produced an inventive body of work that expanded on the tropes of Parisian Surrealism, including a blending of magical realism, an appreciation for mysticism, popular ethnography, science, and the kind of narrative typical of Mexican muralism. Synthesizing typology from surrealist painting with regional artistic trends, Varo embarked on a dialectic of creativity and the unconscious, producing incisive commentary on psychoanalysis and the social role of women. Rejecting the surrealist inflection of desire derived from Freud's theory of sexuality, Varo employs a lexicon of images replacing the fractured feminine body with images of women engaged in creative acts, metamorphosis and travel.

It is clear from her detailed drawings that Varo did not inscribe her sketches with merely chance imagery in the purely automatist style. However, automatism is considered to be a generative source of surrealist work, and Varo's pictures are an extension of automatism as seen in the use of dream narration and the startling juxtapositions that defy rational systems of time, space, science and gender.<sup>3</sup> Of her lifetime oeuvre, almost fifty percent of the works are drawings, rendered with a technical virtuosity comparable to Renaissance masterworks.<sup>4</sup> Generally, the drawings and works on paper were preparatory works for her paintings. However, in the

Rosa Berland: [rosaberland@gmail.com](mailto:rosaberland@gmail.com)

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drawings from 1941-1963, Varo's fine draftsmanship and scientific powers of observation combine the surprising juxtapositions of Parisian Surrealism with her own esoteric if not confusing dream world constructed with deliberate borrowing from myriad sources. This combination produces a powerful subversion of diverse motifs. In this sense Varo's expression captures the poetry of a boundless world of dreams and fantasy. Like the work of Dali and Magritte, Varo's work is characterized by what William Rubin called "illusionist" capturing of the world of dreams.<sup>5</sup>

Varo was born in Spain in 1913. As a young girl she attended a convent school; the iconography of Catholicism would appear emblematically in her mature paintings. Her artistic talent was evident from a very early age. Encouraged by her father, she began studies at age fifteen at the Academia San Fernando in Madrid, cultivating the agile draftsmanship that she would fully develop in Mexico. Varo's frequent visits to the Prado influenced her later work, as can be seen in her adoption of motifs from the work of Bosch and El Greco. In 1930, Varo married fellow student Gerardo Lizarraga. The couple lived in Paris for a year and then in Barcelona, working in advertising and befriending other avant-garde artists such as Óscar Domínguez. Varo exhibited in the 1936 group show "Logicophobists" at the Catalonia Galeria, Barcelona. One early work of interest is *Lexicon of Anatomy* (1935), a collage depicting the figures of four men. Their ribcages, eyes and organs are fragmented and dissected, a significant reversal of the usual fragmentation of the female form. Examples of Varo's experimentation in Surrealism include the *exquisite corpse* works she collaborated on, such as *Figures* (1935, collage on paper, with Domínguez, Esteban Francés and Marcel Jean); *Cadavre exquis* (1935, collage on paper, with Domínguez and Marcel Jean); and *Cadavre exquis* (1935, collage on paper, Domínguez and Esteban Francés, with whom she shared a studio.)<sup>6</sup> This early experimentation with the *exquisite corpse* may have led to her conceptual experiments in drawing, and perhaps allowed her the freedom to experiment with juxtapositions of images in an unconscious terrain.<sup>7</sup>

In 1937, Varo befriended the surrealist poet Benjamin Péret. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the two fled to Paris, where Varo became part of the central surrealist group, exhibiting in the 1937 London Gallery exhibition "Surrealist Object, and Poem" and the 1938 "International Exhibition of Surrealism" in Paris. Varo's work appeared in surrealist publications including *Trajectoire de revue* and *Minotaure*.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the artist exhibited her work with the surrealist group ten times between 1936 and 1947, including Alfred Barr's 1936 exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, *Fantastic Art Dada and Surrealism*. In 1940, Varo's work *Souvenir of the Valkyrie* (1938) was included in the "Exposición Internacional del Surrealismo" at the Galeria de Arte Mexicano, Mexico City, organized by the Peruvian poet César Moro,

the expatriate Austrian Surrealist painter Wolfgang Paalen, and the French poet and theorist of Surrealism André Breton.<sup>9</sup> The *Exposición* signified the increasing importance of Surrealism within the artistic and intellectual circles of modern Mexico.

In order to understand the revisionist metamorphosis that Varo's work underwent in Mexico, I will first examine a work made before her departure from Europe, the 1938 *Souvenir of the Valkyrie*, a graphic work between painting and drawing (gouache on plywood). In this work, Varo engages in the archetypal surrealist use of the female form: a totemic, condensed and anonymous image of bodily desire. Awash in an oceanic and desolate landscape, the submerged women's heads are half drowning and half swimming around an unidentified ruin. The desolate landscape is a surrealist motif common to Dalí and artists close to Varo, including Domínguez and Frances. This bleak terrain suggests chaos and desolation in a time of war. Within the surrealist framework, Woman—the muse and object of desire—was often depicted as fragmented, a passive object of violence or sexual desire. This object also reflected a generalized taste for the spectacle of inverted sexuality, fractured female bodies, and for violence, as mirrored in Antonin Artaud's "Theater of Cruelty" and the works of various artists including Dalí and Hans Bellmer, as discussed by Xavière Gauthier in *Surréalisme et sexualité*.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after this early period of her work Varo and Péret fled Paris, and after six months, with the aid of the Emergency Rescue Committee, they traveled to Mexico. There Varo became most prolific, while fostering a long-lasting and influential creative partnership with the British artist Leonora Carrington, and associations with Luis Buñuel, César Moro, Günther Gerzo, and Enrique Weisz, as well as with Alice Rahon and Wolfgang Paalen. Paalen and Moro had established the journal *Dyn* that featured the work of exiled surrealists and focused on the study of Indian culture. In these early days, Varo worked for Paalen restoring pre-Columbian pottery.

In this rich community of exiled artists Varo developed her mature work. In fact, she lived only a few blocks from Carrington. The two women became close friends, sharing a great creative exchange, including writing a play together. Eventually they mutually influencing each other's paintings, particularly after the first years in exile. Like Varo, Carrington's visual and literary work was revisionist in nature; she remains a key figure in the development of a new kind of Surrealism authored by women. In her works of the 1950s Varo borrowed freely from Carrington, notably images of mechanical creatures and equipment as well as the use of *decalcomania*. Yet during the early years Varo worked primarily in commercial arts, including designing advertisements for pharmaceutical companies, and traveled to Venezuela from 1947-49.

After her time in Venezuela, Varo's interest in the spiritualism of G.I. Gur-

djief influenced her development of themes of enlightened creativity. As Deborah Hayes has uncovered, Varo owned books by Gurdjieff, Madame Blavatsky, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung, as well as Hindu and Buddhist material, and books on Christian mysticism, alchemy, Pythagorean ideas, numerology, and Platonic philosophy.<sup>11</sup>

Some of Varo's early graphic work, including *Vejez* (1948, gouache on paper), and *La Torre* (1948), show her gradual revision of traditional figuration and landscape through the realistic depiction of otherworldly terrains. *Vejez* is a haunting landscape in crisp line and tone, the growing foliage suggesting the passage of time. Although *La Torre* is a commercial work, it exemplifies Varo's further experimentation with images of impossible machines and creatures. Moving away from the mechanical juxtapositions of collage in favor of a highly defined and modeled technique of drawing, in her 1948 *Distorsion cristalina* Varo uses dark atmospheric tones to create depth, volume, and perspective. The shading creates a sense of mystical atmosphere; the crystalline woman's shadow seems to be a kind of bicycle, and the passageway is dark and mysterious.

The refined pencil drawing *Dos Personajes* (1949) also suggests a dualism and a bridge between two worlds. The drawing is an example of the immediate and inventive way that Varo created her composite creatures, the inhabitants of her dreamlike landscapes and interiors, through the drawing process.

Similarly, in the 1956 pencil drawing *La Calle de las presencias ocultas*, Varo draws a woman in a cloak made of feathers or foliage, her lower body depicted as a wheel, a type also seen in the 1936 stencil and decalcomania *Untitled* by fellow Spanish surrealist Oscar Domínguez. In Varo's drawing, this hybrid creature travels through a nightmarish corridor, the walls ruptured, ghostly figures peering and reaching from the walls. The figure is a hybridized entity, embodying elements from the world of spirits, dreams, and reality, moving beyond the role of woman as mere icon or muse.<sup>12</sup> Varo combines techniques of Renaissance illusionism, the recessing perspective plotted out, with areas of mossy overhang resembling the smoky atmospheric effect somewhere between the surrealist techniques of *decalcomania* and *fumage*. This deliberate attention to texture, even in a drawing, is related to the paintings of Paalen and Ernst and has the effect of creating a mythical subterranean-like dreamscape.<sup>13</sup>

The theme of metamorphosis and travel seen in *La Calle de las presencias ocultas* also alludes to the transcendence of reality in favor of a world of fantasy, a theme that is likely to be related to both the Mexican indigenous pantheon and the European hermetic traditions of spiritualism and alchemy. Varo's imaginative trajectory of local sources, pseudo-science, and spiritualism allowed her to achieve a distinct visual language and narrative that merges the belief in automatism and oeneric Surrealism.

While Carrington's work often plays with irony and parody, Varo reworks narratives more directly, reassembling them into folkloric dreams. However, an ironic reference to the influence of psychoanalysis can be seen in Varo's magical subversive drawing, and her painting by the same name, *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst*. Here a figure—clearly Varo wearing a veil—exits a door inscribed “Dr. F.J.A.” (indicating Freud, Jung & Adler), and it is her father's head that she drops into the well.<sup>14</sup> The Parisian surrealist circle of Breton was interested in Freud's theory of the unconscious, particularly as a means of understanding and achieving a connection to automatism in the creative process. For Varo, the connection to the unconscious mind and the dream world was certainly important to her work. However, in this drawing we see a decided break from classic psychoanalysis, in that it comments subversively on its relegation of women to the role of subject/object of male desire.<sup>15</sup> The appearance of the mystical veiled figure recalls not only Carrington's work but also the ghostly figures in the work of contemporary Mexican artists including Guillermo Meza, who was similarly engaged in themes of magic and transformation. In fact, the surrealist interest in the unconscious and the transformative force of the world of the mind, and a revisionist understanding of the artistic and social role of woman, are not mutually exclusive in Varo's work. Rather, she reconciles the two forces to create her iconography, much in the same way regional artists fused pre-Hispanic and vernacular traditions with the tropes of European Surrealism to create their own genre of Latin American Surrealism.

Indeed, from 1935-1950 many Mexican artists, including Julio Ruelas, Roberto Montenegro, Agustín Lazo, Günther Gerzo, Raul Anguiano, and Julio Castellanos, had already absorbed some of the influences of the European avant-garde including Surrealism.<sup>16</sup> As Marta Traba has pointed out, the influence of Antonin Artaud and the arrival in Mexico of Paul Eluard in 1949 also contributed to the development of a regional form of Surrealism. Mexican artists often combined the idioms of Surrealism with local tradition, especially motifs from pre-Hispanic culture and mythology, including folktales of spirits who exist in the world of humankind. For example, Frida Kahlo featured *La Llorona*, the weeping woman of Mexican folklore, who murdered her children when her lover left her, and is fated to wander the countryside wailing and looking for her lost children.<sup>17</sup> Kahlo's use of folkloric images and motifs, and her subversive treatment of nationality, gender and identity, may in turn have influenced Carrington and Varo. Each artist reinvented images of women protagonists in dream-like narrative scenes to express not only the creative impulse generated by the unconscious but also a world boldly punctuated by personal experience.<sup>18</sup>

Kahlo's work also reflects the contemporary paradox of being an expatriate or a nationalist painter while trying to reconcile an understanding of European

modernism with the indigenous culture and female personal and artistic experience. With the revolution of 1910-20, Mexico had deliberately become tied to indigenous traditions, customs, and structures. Kahlo and her contemporaries explored these themes with a certain violence. Maria Izquierdo's radical and poetic treatment of both Catholic and indigenous beliefs and rituals was typical.<sup>19</sup> It is certain that Varo and her friend and fellow artist Carrington were both interested in the occult, magic, and local traditions, particularly the world of the native woman, the source of indigenous craft and oral tradition, the domestic arts, and spirituality.

While the extent of the influence of the Mexican muralists on Varo's development cannot be precisely outlined, certain parallels are clear. The muralists' emphasis on narrative may have encouraged Varo's shift to narrative in place of condensed symbolic forms. Moreover, the muralists and Varo shared a commitment to naturalistic drawing. Specifically, Varo's use of perspective, Renaissance illusionism and allegory—including images from science, religion and mythology—all link her work to the Mexican muralists and modernist painters, particularly Orozco, with his El Greco-like Byzantine style and elongated forms. Furthermore, the non-linear narrative composition often found in murals (and in Carrington's work) may also have influenced Varo's depiction of a rather fluid sense of time and reason.

But if these traditions were captured in some way in Varo's work, it was only to illustrate a story of personal journey, one primarily focused on artistic experimentation. The traveler seeking knowledge and the ghostly form are both common figures in her work, as are composite hybrid figures, influenced perhaps by the work of Carrington and Ernst.

In *Creation of the Birds* (1957), the preparatory drawing in graphite for the final oil painting, Varo depicts the artist creating in a dream-like state, represented by an owl creature with Varo's own face. The avian protagonist—the artist herself—holds a triangular magnifier that acts as a reflecting device for rays of inspiration that radiate from a mysterious nocturnal sky seen through a tiny window.<sup>20</sup> Alternately, as Deborah Haynes has suggested, the object suspended around the neck of the bird creature may be a three-stringed musical instrument, a symbol of the body: the strings, the nerves, and the implied musician, the spirit.<sup>21</sup>

*Creation of the Birds* shows the artist in a state of creative sacred reverie in a mythic tabernacle. This reverie, a redemptive and sublime process, stands in contrast to alien beasts and seemingly ancient references, and oscillates between repugnance, fascination and admiration. These foreign creatures may also refer to themes of fertility and even the idea of an oracle in Arcadia.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Varo's Mexican drawings often portray a kind of Arcadian world populated by mythic creatures that embody creativity, inspiration, vision, and partnership.



Fig. 1. Remedios Varo, *Vagabond*, 1957, Oil on masonite, 22 x 10 in, Private collection, Mexico City. Gruen, Walter and Ricardo Ovalle, comp. Remedios Varo. Mexico City: Ediciones ERA , 1994.147. Reproduced by permission from Artists Rights Society, 2010

The reoccurring motif of an open door in Varo's work that reveals a nocturnal landscape with a central figure is exemplified in *The Vagabond* (1957, (Fig. 1.), another preparatory drawing for a painting. This drawing and the completed painting reflect myriad influences on Varo's graphic technique and that include the lush atmospheric nocturnal landscapes of Ernst, the symbolic vegetation of Kahlo, and the clean lines and draftsmanship of the works of Dalí and Magritte. Varo's drawing reveals the imaginative process as the artist begins to create a precisely rendered

world detached from the rational world, while the completed painting reveals a highly developed technique paired with wit and the inclusion of the unexpected. A certain artifice characterizes all of the works and relates Varo to the deliberation of De Chirico and Magritte while borrowing and revising the mythic imaginings of both Carrington and Max Ernst. Varo considered *The Vagabond* among her best paintings.<sup>23</sup>

*Cathedral Vegetal* (1957) is a luminous gouache drawing on paper related to the painting of the same name, as well as to the 1939 mixed media work *Vegetal Puppets*. The 1939 *Puppets* features a grotesquely abstracted vegetal structure with disembodied heads. In the Mexican drawing *Cathedral Vegetal* Varo reworks the idea within a composition typical of her Mexican work—a complete Arcadian environment, laid out in painstaking detail to reveal a cartographic dream world with eerie juxtapositions. A female figure sits in a tower, in a chariot pulled by a mythic creature. Once again, a moonlit landscape and the entry into the forest suggest the creative journey; here the figure wears a clerical costume, indicating the dream of creative production and an accompanying spirituality and artistic fulfillment. Varo's inscription of light, haze, and atmosphere suggest mystery and a sense of piety, celebrating a moment between fantasy and objective depiction. The nocturnal landscapes of Varo's Mexican drawings and paintings represent the highest order of creativity: that of the dream world, the mysterious unconscious, symbolized by strange plants and lichens growing amidst a mythical, alien topography.

In fact, Varo's drawings and paintings often show fecund natural growth in an ornate procession that serves as a metaphor for the fertile processes of the creative mind. The lush tactility of Ernst's haunted forests may have influenced Varo's development of nuanced vegetation in all of its metaphorical representations. However, in addition to the *frottage* and *decalcomania* that she gathered from automatist influences, Varo's intense attention to detail in her drawings offers an almost clinical inspection of the natural world. This detail, combined with a miniaturization clearly linked to the work of Hieronymus Bosch, generates a dream-like landscape that is produced from the imaginative force of the unconscious mind. Here, too, Varo's work is related to her Mexican contemporaries, such as Juan O'Gorman, whose meticulously fantastic landscapes mapped a beautiful yet eerily remote Arcadia, and integrated vernacular influences including folk art and religious objects.<sup>24</sup> This kind of treatment of the natural world certainly differs from the desolate landscape seen in her early work and in the work of many of her fellow Surrealists.

That interior space is important as well to Varo's work may be seen in her drawings *The Visit from the Past* (1957) and *Los Ancestros, Poema* (1956). In these pencil drawings Varo makes use of illusionistic space to depict an interior; through the use of dissonant figures and forms, she suggests the relationship between memory, the

unconscious, and the creative process. These works feature a naturalistically depicted interior where light and shadow create volume and form, punctuated by supernatural events—a motif commonly seen in the paintings of Carrington and Mexican modernist painters circa 1940, including the narrational work of Juan Soriano, Raul Anguiano and Julio Castellanos. Indeed, Varo's friends Agustín Lazo and Roberto Montenegro also painted in a realistic style like Varo while focusing on both the vernacular and the mystical.

Yet Varo added something more symbolically organic to her works. For example, in *The Visit from the Past*, the passage of time is noted by the growth of plants beneath the table and from the carpet, suggesting the connection between the four faces of Varo. The mechanics of surrealist creativity allowed Varo, like Carrington and Kahlo, to translate personal experience and to reverse the role of woman as merely an object of a male artistic gaze. Instead of inhabiting the fragmented world of the unconscious and the imagined, woman becomes the creator herself through a dialogue of traversals and journeys of creativity and invention.<sup>25</sup> More explicitly, in *Los Ancestros*, Varo shows a figure (herself?) knitting; the skein winds from a ghostly figure whose torso encases a long passageway, while a long, drapery-like cloth billows from a trunk, opened like Pandora's box. The doorway is awash in white as birds fly into the daylight. This work is an embodiment of memory; the object and figures and events are a condensed displacement of the past. Varo's drawing shows how she is constituted by her own past, deliberately and unconsciously. Here Varo also plays on a trope regarding creativity as a fusion of self-making, deliberate technique, and the operation of the unconscious.

In her Mexican works, Varo's distillation of dreams, alchemy, astrology, mysticism, magic, the occult, and science all provide the potential to liberate and stimulate the mind toward fantastic imagery.<sup>26</sup> Through her inventive fusing of these various influences and motifs in her work in Mexico, Varo invented a new form of Surrealism, first embodied in her graphic works and that would be regarded as a seminal contribution to Latin American modernist practice, and particularly important to the development of Mexican Surrealism.

By the 1950s Varo's imaginative incantations had achieved their full power in elegant masterful drawings and oil paintings. These caught public attention in 1955 with an exhibition at the Galerie Diana, Mexico City. In her body of work Varo integrated the influence of her fellow Surrealists in exile, Mexican and Spanish folklore, the occult, and her revisionist approach to the female protagonist. These works are experimental surrealist graphic works in their own right, an extension and trajectory of the traditions of automatism. They show the metamorphosis of the artist's imagination as the works developed into paintings. We can understand Varo's mechanics

of accessing a world informed by the subconscious in these graphic works. In Varo's work, the lyrical and haunting dream world whose importance was licensed by Freudian theory and the disconcerting poetics of Surrealism find corporeality: it is a world of precise indexical legends turned upside down and populated by alien beings. The process of drawing, in its immediacy and experimental nature, allowed Varo to establish a use of symbols and imaginary science that rejected traditionally encoded systems of meaning such as psychoanalysis, science and religion.

The experimental immediacy of drawing allowed Varo to establish a unique hierarchy of symbols and imaginary science that rejected encoded systems of meaning. She was perhaps influenced by the complex narrative structure of the great muralists such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, while she fused these modernist genres with the proto-surreal world of Hieronymus Bosch. Her work employs an expressive mode of automatism in channeling the world of dreams and the subconscious into images that serve as metaphors for intangible realities. Her style is oneiric and her technique veristic; it achieves the apparently realistic vision of the rationally impossible, as in the mythical pseudo-scientific work of Max Ernst and Victor Brauner, and in the dream-like clarity of Giorgio De Chirico. The startling iconography of Varo's work occupies a place within the literary genre of magical realism. It touches upon the elegant attenuation of El Greco's mystical saints, the philosophy and technique of surrealist painting, and the populist ethnography of the Mexican muralists. But it is a special place occupied by Varo alone.

1 André Breton, *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*, Translated by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1969).

2 See Whitney Chadwick's analysis of the techniques of precise illustrative drawing by women artists and the recasting of self in *Women, Art and Society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 310-315, and Estella Lauter's ideas about Varo's artistic quest and the figure of the female protagonist in "Remedios Varo: The Creative Woman and the Female Quest," *Women as Mythmakers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 79-97.

3 See Katharine Conley's analysis of the "automatic moment" and the creative trajectory in *Automatic Woman, The Representation of Woman in Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 7.

*Automatism* in Surrealist drawing and painting includes techniques using chance in the production process such as *frottage*, *grattage*, and *decalcomania* or from psychological elements including hallucination, intoxication, hypnotic trance, and dream narration. Surrealists believed that automatism could express the creative force of the unconscious. André Breton defined Surrealism in his *Manifeste du surréalisme* (1924) as 'psychic automatism in its pure state.' This automatism was 'dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.' Breton's formulation of *automatism*

borrowed ideas from the practices of mediums and psychiatry.

4 Luis Martin Lozano, *The Magic of Remedios Varo* (Washington D.C.: The National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1999).

5 See William S. Rubin's discussion of "illusionist" painting and the "fixing" of dream inspired imagery in *Dada, Surrealism, and Their Heritage* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 64.

6 *Exquisite Corpse*: a drawing or photographic collage made by three or more artists, resulting in random juxtapositions.

7 Lozano, n.p.

8 From 1939-1940 Varo was imprisoned for sheltering a deserter; soon after, the Nazis occupied Paris.

9 This exhibit included the work of the Latin American painters Carlos Méridos, Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, Antonio Ruiz, Agustín Lazo, Roberto Montenegro, and Manuel Rodríguez Lozano and was divided into two sections: European and Mexican, Kahlo and Rivera requested to be in the European section which also included Victor Brauner, Max Ernst, and René Magritte among others. Paalen and Breton also included ceremonial masks from Mexico and Oceania.

10 See Gauthier's *Surréalisme et sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) and Sidra Stich, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, University of Berkeley, 1990), 135.

11 Deborah Haynes, "The Art of Remedios Varo: Issues of Gender Ambiguity and Religious Meaning," *Women's Art Journal*. Vol.16, No.1. (Spring-Summer, 1995): 28.

12 See Katharine Conley's treatment of the role of women in Surrealism as muse and icon, and how these roles were reconfigured in the work of Carrington and other artists in *Automatic Woman*.

13 Fellow expatriate surrealist artist Wolfgang Paalen lived in Mexico and is credited with inventing *fumage*: a technique of drawing using patterns of smoke from candles. *Decalcomania* is a technique said to be invented by fellow Spanish surrealist Oscar Domínguez, with whom Varo collaborated on exquisite corpse works. Pigment is laid down on paper, and then covered with a sheet of paper, and rubbed to create a chance mossy subaqueous effect. *Frottage* was a technique used by Ernst and other artists, and entails copying a texture or relief design by laying paper over the form and rubbing with pencil or crayon. Similarly, *grottage* included the same method but also included simultaneously rubbing and scraping off layers of paint.

14 Janet Kaplan, *Unexpected Journeys, The Art and Life of Remedios Varo* (New York, Abbeville Press, 1988), 155. See also Richard Ovalle and Walter Gruen, Editors, *Remedios Varo: Catalogue Raisonné* (Mexico City: Museo De Arte Moderno, Ediciones Era, 1994), 58. See also Sue Taylor's discussion of this work in "Into the Mystic-Surrealist painter Remedios Varo," *Art in America* (April 2001).

15 Kaplan, 155.

16 Marta Traba, *Art of Latin American 1900-1980* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 63. For a discussion of the use of narrative in contemporary Mexican Art see Lois Parkinson Zamora, "The Magical Fables of Isabel Allende and Remedios Varo," *Comparative Literature* (Spring 1992) Vol.44, No.2: 136-42.

17 Tanya Barson, "All Art is at Once Surface and Symbol: A Frida Kahlo Glossary." *Frida Kahlo* (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 69. Another central figure was *La Malinche*, the Indian mistress of Cortes, seen as the enemy of Mexico, the lover of foreigners, featured in the work of both José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera.

18 Lozano, n.p.

19 María Izquierdo collaborated with Rufino Tamayo and knew the Surrealist writer Antonin Artaud who greatly admired her work and organized an exhibition in Paris in 1937.

20 Estella Lauter, "Individual Visions: Remedios Varo," *Women as Mythmakers* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), 84-85. The owl is associated with the Goddess Athena.

21 Haynes, 28.

22 Octavio Paz, *Rufino Tamayo: Myth & Magic* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), 15. Paz argues that the love of composite creatures is something typically Mexican.

23 Ovalle & Gruen: 55.

24 Traba, 27. Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros attacked O'Gorman's work as archaic and static.

25 Jacqueline Barnitz, *Twentieth Century Art of Latin American Art* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2001), 107-109. However, Varo's combination of highly detailed realism with fantastic creatures and mythic events can be compared to the literary style of magical realism.

26 See Sue Taylor's discussion of Varo's development and Nancy G. Heller's ideas about Varo's sources in *Women Artists: An Illustrated History* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), 156.