The Language of the Self:

Rejecting the Surrealist focus on Psychoanalysis in Leonora Carrington's

Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)

Ella Morriss
Art History Senior Seminar
Professor Platts
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Women, alas; but thank God, Homo Sapiens! Most of us, I hope, are now aware that a woman should not have to demand Rights. The rights were there from the beginning; they must be taken back again, including the mysteries which were ours and which were violated, stolen or destroyed, leaving us with the thankless hope of pleasing a male animal, probably of one's own species.

Leonora Carrington

This paper will explore the artist Leonora Carrington's *Self-portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)* (ca. 1937-38; Figure 1) and its rejection of the male-centric, sexist ideology of psychoanalysis that governed the European Surrealist movement since its creation in the 1910s. In his *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924), André Breton (1896-1966), the founder of surrealism, explained that Freudian psychoanalysis had a large impact on his work.[1] He believed in Freud's tenets and theories regarding dreams and the unconscious as a liberating and radical force that could tear down society's systems of oppression. Yet there is a willful ignorance in Breton's philosophy regarding the deep-rooted misogyny of Freud's theories and how the institution of psychoanalysis ignored the realities of female existence within the inherently sexist societal structures, such as the sexualization and relegation they faced during this period. However, Leonora Carrington, even though she was deeply ingrained within the Surrealist movement, rejected psychoanalytic theory as it pertained to her art. She refused to be categorized within sexist ideologies and asserted herself as a creative artist, offering her own interpretations of her work and positing her own beliefs in the process. She demonstrated her identity through her work and found liberation by developing her own personal and social feminist consciousness outside of the male psychoanalytic dominant culture.[2] In this paper, I explore Carrington's ability to challenge the misogynistic paradigms of Surrealism and to reaffirm the revolutionary quality of her work through her rejection of them.

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[1] André Breton, 1896-1966. *Manifestoes of Surrealism.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972.

[2] Whitney Chadwick, "Leonora Carrington: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness." *Woman's Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 37–42

While many scholars have delved into the revolutionary aspects of Carrington's work, I will further examine, through a feminist lens, the illuminating biography of the artist and the historical context surrounding the sexist ideologies that governed Surrealism, such as Freudian psychoanalysis. Finally, I will use Helene Cixous' foundational psychoanalytic concept of *ecriture feminine,* "feminine writing", from her seminal essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa," to demonstrate how Carrington developed a pictorial language through the implementation of personal symbols in her work *Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)* (Fig. 1) in order to reject the male Surrealist assumptions regarding the authority of women within the art world.

When assessing the scholarship on Carrington, a prominent scholar within the field of Surrealist art history is Whitney Chadwick, and it is her work that inspires my own. Chadwick's 1985 book, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* informs my understanding of the movement's attitudes towards women. Her book sought to fill the gaps concerning the research on the lives and art of the women who were associated with the Surrealist movement, and in doing so, provided integral insight into the sexist principles that were ingrained within the movement's creation and the life and work of Carrington. I am using Chadwick's research as a cornerstone for my own development of ideas concerning the consignment of women within the movement to a position of objectification. Through Chadwick's analysis, I see how Carrington's work demonstrates how, even in a position of relegation, she stayed true to her own artistic vision. Chadwick notes that the Surrealist mode of language and expression was distinctly masculine. Although the artists discussed women, they were always seen as the object, never the creator.[3] While using Chadwick's scholarship as a foundation for considering Carrington's life and work, I will also draw on Cixous's work to demonstrate that Carrington used her own self-referential language, free of catering to male desire, to craft her self-portrait.

[3] Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (Thames & Hudson Inc., 2021), 10.

Examining Chadwick's research informs my analysis of Carrington's work because her scholarship sheds light on some of the Surrealist movement's failures in creating an equitable environment for female artists. She explains: "The Surrealist Revolution failed in its bid to resolve the conflict between a nineteenth-century image of woman as passive, dependent, and defined through her relationship to an active male presence, and a more contemporary demand for female autonomy and independence."[4] The movement claimed to break down societal barriers and strict dichotomies regarding family, country, and religion due to its subversive ideology, yet, in reality, it perpetuated oppressive structures under the guise of artistic idealism.[5] This idealism consisted of treating women as objects and muses that tapped into a sexual and creative energy that fed the male artists, rather than esteeming women Surrealists for their own work. These are the foundations which Carrington rebelled against.

Self-Portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse) (Fig. 1) immediately addresses the viewer with Carrington, perched on the edge of her chair, staring directly at her audience. She is dressed in white riding pants and a brown shirt with a green overcoat, seated in an almost barren room on a blue-upholstered chair with a red cushion, staring directly at the viewer. The room in which the artist is situated has a red terra-cotta tiled floor and two grey walls that come to a corner in the center of the work.[6] Upon closer observation, the chair upon which the artist rests dons anthropomorphic features such as hands and feet, which reflect the same poses as Carrington. The artist's brown hair defies gravity, floating in the space, suspended around the figure. However, Carrington is not alone in the room; she seems to be reaching out to a hyena, who stares back at the viewer in a markedly similar fashion as the artist, and a white rocking horse, which hovers, unconstrained by gravity, behind Carrington's head. In the background, an open

[4] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 13
[5] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.*
[6] Susan Aberth, *Leonora Carrington : Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*. (Lund Humphries, 2004)

window, framed by an elaborate golden curtain, draws the viewer's gaze, where a white horse, reminiscent of the rocking horse within the room, gallops away into the distant woods. These figures are the basis of the visual language through which Carrington speaks to viewers.

Carrington's portrait simultaneously demonstrates her surrealist style and imagery, and her ability to reject traditional Surrealist conventions, such as Freudian ideas about dreams and their accompanying symbolic language, as she felt they did not serve her message or personal expression.[7] In *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 1), Carrington creates her own meaningful symbols, including the white horse and the hyena, which recur throughout her oeuvre. She utilized these elements of her work to challenge traditional notions of femininity and the idea of a passive muse by creating alternative modes of visual expression. Carrington rejected the male Surrealist notion, popularized by Breton, of the *femme-enfant*, as will be discussed at length later, which relegated women to the position of childlike and naive muse, as it was reductive and, by definition, infantilizing. Carrington instead asserted herself as an artist in her own right, stating in an 1983 interview with Chadwick, "I didn't have time to be anyone's muse…I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist."[8]

In order to understand the career of Leonora Carrington, one must delve into the artist's childhood and adolescence, which reveals that, from an early age, Carrington was not preoccupied with conforming to the gendered social structures around her but was instead an individual who listened to her own artistic wants and needs rather than surrendering or compromising herself for others. This examination of her biography also illuminates the "metalanguage" the artist develops in her portrait.[9] Carrington (1917-2011) was born to an

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[7] Whitney Chadwick. "Leonora Carrington: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness." *Woman's Art Journal* 7, no. 1 (1986): 37–42. pg . 38-39

[8] Madeline Murphy Turner, "Leonora Carrington," *MoMA*, Accessed March 10, 2026, https://www.moma.org/artists/993-leonora-carrington

[9] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, 33.

affluent family on April 6th, 1917, in Clayton Green, South Lancashire. Daughter of the British textile tycoon Harold Wilde Carrington, Leonora Carrington was raised amid enormous wealth and inside grand halls. Her mother, Maureen Moorhead, was an Irish immigrant who was prone to telling stories of familial fictions and Irish folklore.[10] Historian and scholar of Carrington, Marina Warner, recalls how Moorhead was a "complete mythologist", and it was these stories she spun that would later have an immense impact on the artist's psyche and artistic inspiration.[11]

Carrington was deeply committed to her own personal artistic journey and knew her own mind from a young age. However, the artist grew up in a distinctly repressive social environment due to her upper-class status and her gender. This privileged upbringing came with many social expectations, such as strict schooling and an eventual debut into high society.[12] By the age of nine, Carrington was sent away to religious boarding schools. Her time at these schools was marked by disciplinary measures and expulsions due to Carrington's learning problems and antisocial behavior.[13] As the artist recalls in an interview, "I think I was mainly expelled for not collaborating."[14] This continuous behavior of non-conformity caused her to be sent to a finishing school in Florence, Italy, for aristocratic children, and then, after having to leave due to appendicitis, other rigorous finishing schools in Paris after her recovery.[15] Although this period was marked by emotional distress in Carrington's life, it was during this time in Italy that she was exposed to many of the Italian and Tuscan masters, which were informative in the development of her artistic style.[16] This influence is evident in the picturesque landscape framed

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[10] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy and Art*, 11.
[11] Maria Warner. "Introduction" in *Down Below* by Leonora Carrington. (The New York Review of Books, 2017), xvii.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 15.
[14] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 18.
[15] Ibid
[16] Warner. "Introduction" in *Down Below* by Leonora Carrington, xvii.

by the window in *Self-Portrait* (Fig. 1), reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance, particularly Fra Angelico and the beautiful gardens he depicts in *Noli me tangere* (Fig. 2).

After her "proper" schooling, Carrington was presented to the court of King George V as an eligible wife in 1934. Enduring the entire debutante season and the accompanying balls and luncheons, Carrington completely rejected the life of the gentry and asserted that she was going to go to art school. Her parents vehemently disapproved of this life trajectory and effectively cut her off financially. Regardless, in 1935, Leonora Carrington left her family in North England to attend the Chelsea School of Art in London. After a year at the Chelsea school, a family friend recommended that she switch to the newly established Ozenfant Academy, which would be instrumental in Carrington's career as a dedicated artist.[17] This strong sense of self and personal spirit is instructive in understanding her rejection of the hierarchies and social conventions that the Surrealist movement later sought to impose on her.

Carrington became acquainted with the Surrealist Movement after her mother gifted her a book concerning *The First International Surrealist Exhibition* in 1936.[18] Immediately, Carrington became enthralled by the works and essays in the text, thus marking her first introduction to the movement. Then in 1937, at a dinner party hosted by friends, Leonora Carrington was introduced to Max Ernst.[19] This was a momentous occasion in both of the artists' lives and marked the beginning of Carrington's official relationship as Ernst's lover and burgeoning artist within the Surrealist group. Soon after her meeting with Ernst and involvement with the group, Carrington completely cut off her family and, in her words, "ran away to Paris" to join Ernst and explore the

[17] The Ozenfant academy was very impactful as a place where Carrington learned dedication, discipline and formal skills rather than developing Ozefant's distinct style of "Purism", which was an offshoot of Cubism. Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 23.
[18] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 25.
[19] Ibid

limits of Surrealist art.[20] Carrington's feelings towards her family during this time are on full display in her work, *The Meal of Lord Candlestick* (1938, Fig. 3). Carrington used the moniker "Candlestick" as a stand in her family name throughout her career, and in this work she depicts Lord Candlestick, a large discolored face in the bottom left corner, who is representative of her father, overseeing a grotesque and indulgent dinner scene where babies constitute the main course.[21] This depiction of gluttony and perversity reveals Carrington's moral dilemma and her disgust with her family and their lifestyle. By running away, Carrington, in this final act of familial rejection, fully embodied her desire to be separate from her family and asserted herself as an individual, again, laying the foundation for her rejection of the misogyny within the Surrealist movement.

For the purpose of understanding the sexist paradigms that underpinned the movement, it is important to take a brief look at the Surrealist movement in Europe as a whole. Surrealism was initially founded in the early 1900s by trained psychiatrist and poet Andre Breton (1896-1966).[22] In 1924, Breton published his first *Manifesto of Surrealism,* which outlined his beliefs and inspirations drawn from Sigmund Freud's writings concerning dreams and the unconscious.[23] Surrealism was a movement predicated on the belief in the power of the unconscious as it related to desire, which led to a complicated relationship with gender, particularly regarding women's roles within the movement, which were defined solely by men. The men of the Surrealist group were, at the same time, engrossed with female sexuality, yet the majority refused to listen to women's actual experiences. This is clearly exemplified when, in 1928, Breton called the male

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[20] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 27.
[21] Joanna Moorhead*, Surreal Spaces: The Life and Art of Leonora Carrington*, (Princeton University Press, 2023), 83.
[22] James Voorheis. "Surrealism," *The Met*, Accessed April 8, 2026, https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/surrealism
[23] Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism.*

artists of the Surrealist group to formally discuss sexuality and sexual pleasure, and not a single woman was present.[24] This again demonstrates the movement's male-centric nature and its preoccupation with male desires and experiences.

The Surrealist movement's main role for women was that of the *femme-enfant.* This demeaning epithet, applied to many female artists during this period, serves as a potent example of the sexism that pervaded the Surrealist ethos, and a title that Carrington rejected through her work as an artist. The *femme-enfant,* which directly translates from French as "woman-child," was the ideal woman for male Surrealist artists. Gloria Orenstein writes in her essay, "Art history and the Case for the women of Surrealism" how, "she [the femme-enfant] was held up as a splendid example of that being who incarnated a purity, an innocence, a spontaneity, and a naivety that put her more easily in touch with the world of the dream, the unconscious, and the realm of the imagination."[25] This idealized figure is a woman who is perpetually young and, lacking emotional agency, is inextricably connected to the great creative powers in her unconscious mind. This male fantasy became their idea of a muse, and while positioning women as a limitless source of creativity and inspiration, the male Surrealists maintained her status as a second-class member within the movement by perpetuating the idea that she was a passive participant rather than an artist with agency. She was not granted the title of artist, but was instead labeled the muse yet again.

Furthermore, in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism,* Breton claims an affinity with those who are deemed mad by society, as they are those who are driven entirely by their imagination according to his interpretation of Freud's theories.[26] These theories were predominantly focused

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[24] Chadwick, *Female Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 103.
[25] Gloria Orenstein. "Art History and the Case for the Women of Surrealism." *The Journal of General Education* 27, no. 1 (1975): 31–54.
[26] Breton, *First Manifesto of Surrealism*

on the hysterical woman and her "conflict" with her own unconsciousness.[27] This idea of tapping into this "madness" intrigued Breton and was something he associated with the *femme-enfant*. Male surrealist artists were allowed to merely visit the world of the mad and the unconscious, still maintaining their authority and reason, while female artists, the *femme-enfants*, had to maintain permanent residence within the world of madness, and were "allowed no such distance from her unconscious."[28] In the eyes of the male surrealists, women exist "at the mercy of the unconscious" and must lose their autonomy in exchange for true "surrealist creativity", in essence, artistic authority.[29]

Carrington, however, was not the only female artist to face male-imposed objectification. Artists such as Leonor Fini, Meret Oppenheim, Dorothea Tanning, and Frida Kahlo all faced the rampant sexism that pervaded the narrative of what it meant to be an artist in the Surrealist movement.[30] Although these artists were also placed in positions undervalued by the Surrealist male circle, these women all carved out a place for themselves in art history. A female artist whom Carrington greatly admired, for example, was Leonor Fini. Fini also refuted the relegating notions tied to Surrealism, and in fact, although she often showed her work with the group and participated in their discussions, she outright refuted the title of "Surrealist" altogether.[31] Fini also defied the gendered structures that repressed women within the group by openly critiquing Breton for his misogynistic and authoritarian rule over the movement, and simultaneously exploring her own artistic drives.[32] In works such as *The Alcove: An Interior With Three Women* (Fig. 4), Fini imbues the female subject with power and authority, depicting her in armor and

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[27] Assoun, Paul Laurent. 1998. "Freud and Femininity." Interview by Sergio Benvenuto. *Publication Number 7*, European Journal of Psychoanalysis.
[28] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 74.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement.*
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

with a wide, assertive stance, staring off into the distance with a clear, determined gaze. Fini, along with the other female artists, rejected the fetishization of the female form and mind in their work and further demonstrated female artists' responses to male attitudes throughout the movement.

A seemingly playful picture taken by Lee Miller of Ernst and Tanning, experimenting with perspective (Fig. 5), palpably illustrates the power dynamics that permeated the movement's gender hierarchies. Ernst lords over the foreground of the picture plane as the towering subject of the photo, while Tanning, positioned in the background, stands underneath Ernst's grasp, an object over which he has control. The photo visually represents the dominance with which male Surrealists controlled the conversation and occupied space in the history of the Surrealist movement, as well as the relegation that women artists suffered at the hands of their male counterparts. Through these characterizations of the male and female agents within the Surrealist movement, it is clear that the movement was built on a foundation of female repression and disrespect. The male artists refused to acknowledge the artistic intellect and ingenuity that women associated with the Surrealist movement held. They were more preoccupied with what they could provide them with, rather than their merit as artists themselves. This is further proven by Carrington's own words when she was asked whether she felt supported by the male Surrealists, she responded, "they weren't interested in me."[33]

Chadwick astutely observes, "A vision of a woman as muse, the image of man's inspiration and his salvation, is inseparable from the pain and anger that gave birth to surrealism."[34] The Surrealist female artists were stifled by the sexist notions that permeated the Movement's ideology; they were consigned either to the realm of the naive and childlike or to the

[33] Moorhead*, Surreal Spaces,* 80.
[34] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 13.

realm of the mad, and it was these very preconceptions that Leonora Carrington challenges in her self-portrait.

Leonora Carrington's 1938 work, *Self-portrait (Inn of the Dawn Horse)* (Fig. 1), reflects not only her physical appearance but also her inner psyche and personal history. Created in 1938, this artwork was completed relatively early in the artist's career. Although executed in this initial period of her career, this work asserts that Carrington is not only technically skilled but also an autonomous artist with an artistic language of her own. The subtitle of the work *Inn of the Dawn Horse* reflects this nascent phase of her journey as well. The idea of the dawn horse refers to an early species of horse that predated the horses we know today, demonstrating how, in this self-portrait, Carrington positions herself as the figure of the prehistoric horse, which also appears within the work. Carrington, by placing the term "Self-portrait" next to "Inn of the Dawn Horse," is creating a symbolic link between the two phrases. Carrington comes to embody the idea of Dawn Horse, a symbol of her young self, and the "Inn" is the room in which she situates herself in the composition, housing her personal narrative.

The visual language that Carrington employs within her portrait relies heavily upon her identification and symbolism regarding the animal figures she places within it. The hyena emerges into the image on the left side of the composition, as if materializing from the blurred section spot to its left. Art historian Susan Aberth discusses Carrington's deep relationship with alchemy later in her life when she emigrates to Mexico, but this representation of the alchemical process of materialization marks her burgeoning interest in the area.[35] Carrington gestures to the hyena, which is portrayed as a female with prominent teats, marking its gender and sexuality. The pregnant hyena stares at the viewer with the same eyes as Carrington does, asserting their connection. The hyena is a symbol that not only appears in Leonora Carrington's visual work but

[35] Aberth, *Surrealism, Alchemy, and Art,* 33.

also plays a role in her short story, "The Debutante."[36] In the semi-autobiographical short story, Carrington explores her experience as a debutante in the upper echelons of English society, yet with an otherworldly, macabre twist. The young debutante, not wanting to attend her mother's dinner party, wishes to trade places with the talking hyena she visits almost daily at the zoo. The hyena agrees and, in order to fill her place, eats a maid, wears her face, smells beastly, and speaks in an entirely wild language. In the story, Carrington substitutes the hyena for herself, demonstrating the interchangeability of the two figures within her personal narrative and also in her self-portrait. The hyena is an integral aspect of this artwork due to its connection with Carrington, yet its resonance is not with the psychoanalytic designations of a wild beast as a representation of what Freud states as "passionate impulse".[37] The hyena acts rather as a substitute symbol for unrestrained femininity and Carrington's rejection of female standards of behavior.

Further exploration of the work reveals that the horse imagery plays a significant symbolic role throughout Carington's oeuvre, offering insights into the artist's psyche. While Freudian and Surrealist interpretations of the works lend to the horse imagery connotations of a father figure or male power, instead, Carrington reclaims the image of the horse for her own personal narrative.[38] There are two horse figures: one, a white stationary rocking horse that floats above Carrington, and the other, a galloping horse in the background. In order to understand the significance of the white horse, one must travel into Carrington's relationship with the Celtic legends, told to her by her mother growing up.[39] There is the prominent Celtic horse-goddess, Epona, whom Carrington would have heard of through the mystical retellings of

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[36] Leonora Carrington, "The Complete Stories of Leonora Carrington"
[37] Georgiana M M Colvile, "Beauty and/Is the Beast: Animal Symbology in the Work of Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo and Leonor Fini" (*Dada/Surrealism* 18, 1990) 159-181.
[38] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 79.
[39] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 7.

the Celtic myths. This figure of the "Great Mare", a powerful female deity, would have informed her personal vocabulary and the imagery that she would find compelling in her work.[40] The image of the white horse is also used frequently throughout Celtic myths, manifested in figures such as Enbarr, a magical white horse.[41] The rocking horse is also a recurring figure within her literature as well, in stories such as the "Oval Lady", Carrington writes about both a rocking horse named Tartar, "frozen in a gallop", similar to the figure in the portrait, and a girl who is able to transform a galloping white horse.[42]

The figure of the horse within Carrington's self-portrait is also important to view within the purview of her relationship with Max Ernst. The rocking horse was not merely a symbol within Carrington's work but also existed in physical form. A photo of Max Ernst from 1938 depicts Ernst stationed atop of of a life-sized white wooden rocking-horse taken when Ernst and Carrington were together (Fig. 6). Along with this photo, in Carrington's, *Portrait of Max Ernst* (1939: Fig. 7), the horse makes a reapperance, frozen in the background of an arctic landscape within which Ernst is standing in a red feathered costume and yellow socks reminiscent of his alter-ego, the Bird Superior.[43] Ernst was a large presence within the Surrealist movement, and although he played a crucial role in Carrington's introduction to the movement, he also perpetuated feelings of restriction and relegation to the position of muse due to his status as a male Surrealist, that Carrington experienced. The imagery of him seated atop the rocking horse further demonstrates the feelings of constraint and control that Ernst imposed on Carrington. This, coupled with the fact that Carrington depicted a horse frozen and stuck in the ice behind the

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[40] "Epona" The Order of Bards, Ovates, and Druids, Accewhichssed April 20, 2026, https://druidry.org/resources/epona
[41]"Énbarr," Oxford Reference, Accessed April 12, 2026, https://www-oxfordreference-com.uc.idm.oclc.org
[42] Leonora Carrington, "The Complete Stories of Leonora Carrington"
[43]MoMA. "Max Ernst", Accessed March 21, 2026. https://www.moma.org/collection/works/35777

looming presence of Ernst, lends support to the reading that the horse represents herself and that, during this period, she was experiencing feelings of oppression from the forces surrounding her.

From these biographical connotations, the rocking horse can be seen as a representation of a restrained wildness hovering over Carrington. It symbolizes the familial disapproval she faced when she first claimed to be an artist, and the horse galloping away in the window represents artistic and personal freedom, which she gained from her departure from those same familial expectations when she ran away to Paris. Carrington, poised on the chair in her riding clothes, is waiting for the moment when she can escape on her white horse to freedom.

The lighting within the room plays an interesting role in the work as well. There is a distinct misalignment occurring with the shadows cast by the figures of the hyena and Carrington, and the shadow of the suspended rocking horse. The hyena and Carrington cast shadows from a light source that seems to originate from the open window behind them, while the rocking horse is illuminated by a second, indiscernible source. The portrait employs two separate light sources, adding a heightened sense of liminality and furthering the idea that it is a reflection of Carrington's internal personal narrative, detached from the rules that govern reality.

Additionally, the manifestation of the shadows adds another layer to the work. The shadows of Carrington and the Hyena then come together into a unified form, signifying their connected identity while resembling the horse that gallops behind them. This amalgamation of forms is representative of the different aspects of Carrington's psyche and personal narrative. While the shadow of the rocking horse is cast against the wall of the room, possibly a parallel to its static and restrained nature. It is stuck within the room, trapped, similar to how Carringotn was trapped within the restrictive social norms of her family and the Surrealist movement.

Furthermore, within the room, there is a distinct line dividing the figures of Carrington and the rocking horse from the hyena and the window that frames the galloping horse. The intersection of the wall creates this division, marking a separation between the symbolic, constrained wildness of Carrington and the unrestrained freedom and wild femininity represented by the horse and hyena. However, both the rocking horse and Carrington encroach upon this separation, demonstrating a desire to reach across the boundary of restriction, mimicking Carrington's own personal journey.

Through her self-portrait, Carrington defies the definition of Surrealist femininity and the psychoanalytic paradigms that claim to define and contain women, using her own transcendent imagery. The psychoanalytic approach to female identity and womanhood is predicated upon the belief that to be feminine is to be defined in opposition to masculinity and the realm of manhood, which cannot encapsulate the language in which Carrington defines herself. Through the imagery of the hyena and white horse, she is mirroring herself through animalistic escape, a wild and bestial quality, yet she is not, however, aligning herself with masculinity. She retains her womanhood yet refutes its relationship with the world of man and its dominance as a means of definition. To be a woman in Carrington's eyes, to be herself, is not predicated on the relationship between woman and man but rather her own spiritual and creative journey, which she conveys through her self-referential visual vocabulary.

When examining Carrington's work, applying the foundational work of French feminist psychoanalyst Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", illuminates a new perspective in which to view Carrington's artistic work as a creation of a new female-centric language that extends beyond the male relegation of women to the position of the *femme-enfant*. Cixous coined the term *ecriture feminine* or "feminine writing" to describe a distinctly feminine form of writing

which can only be done for and by women.[44] I want to use Cixous' general tenets as a guide for viewing Carrington's *Self-portrait (Dawn of the Inn Horse)*. Although Cixous predominantly discusses women's literature in this work, her ideas can be applied to the visual vocabulary Carrington employs.

The language Carrington creates in this portrait exemplifies Cixous' concept of *ecriture feminine.* Cixous explores the idea that women throughout history have been denied the ability to express themselves or ignored in their attempts to do so. The male, phallocentric ideologies refuse to believe in the power of the intellect of another sex or "female-sexed texts", solely predicated upon the belief that their (the male) intellect, their abilities, are the god; are the end-all be-all of existence within the realm of ideology and visual vocabulary.[45] In response to this historical denial, Cixous argues that there is only one thing for women to do: create a language of their own. Leonora Carrington does just that through her work. By rejecting the psychoanalytic characterizations of women and prevailing beliefs of her time, she shows that a new avenue of identity exists.

Through combining the images that resonate with her personal identity and various different mythical beliefs, Carrington crafted a language of her own that defies the relegated language that is assigned to "the other" in typical male Surrealist ideology.[46] By creating her own system of personal symbolism, Carrington creates a new sense of becoming and asserts herself not as the *femme-enfant* of the surrealist vocabulary, but as an artist in her own right. She elucidates Helene Cixous' project of transcending the masculine mode of language, driven by a

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[44] Mark Olsen, "*Écriture féminine*: Searching for an Indefinable Practice?" (University of Chicago, 2003), https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/mark/papers/ACH2003/

[45] Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa." Trans. Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen. *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875–93.

[46] Whitney Chadwick and Dawn Ades. "An Infinite Play of Empty Mirrors." In *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-representation*. (MIT Press, 1998.)

necessity of expression and a reclamation of denied history. Carrington had to construct her own language because the Surrealist movement neither valued nor understood female expression, and its phallocentric vocabulary was insufficient for her own means of artistic expression. In her self-portrait, Carrington is neither young nor naive, nor mad, nor sexualized. Carrington paints herself as an embodied individual, asserting herself through her own eyes and language. Leonora Carrington's work was revolutionary because it asserted the beauty and importance of female vision within the male-dominated art world and demonstrated how female non-conformity to societal standards of femininity is integral to female artistic and social liberation.

Figure 1. Leonora Carrington. *Self-Portrait*. 1937. Oil on canvas, 65"x81 1/4". New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 2. Fra Angelico (Italian, ca. 1395–1455), *Noli me tangere,* 1440–42. Fresco from the convent of San Marco, Florence, Italy.

Figure 3. Leonora Carrington, *The Meal of Lord Candlestick,* 1938. Oil on canvas. Private Collection.

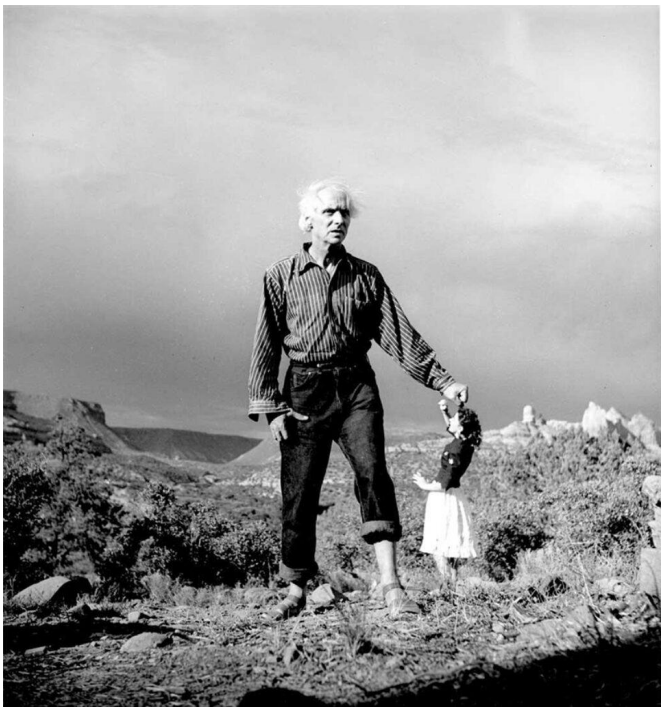

Figure 4. Lee Miller, Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning, 1946. Gelatin silver print, image/sheet: 9 15/16 x 9 15/16 in. (25.2 x 25.2 cm)/15 13/16 x 11 13/16 in. (40.2 x 30 cm). Courtesy of Lee Miller Archive 1997.

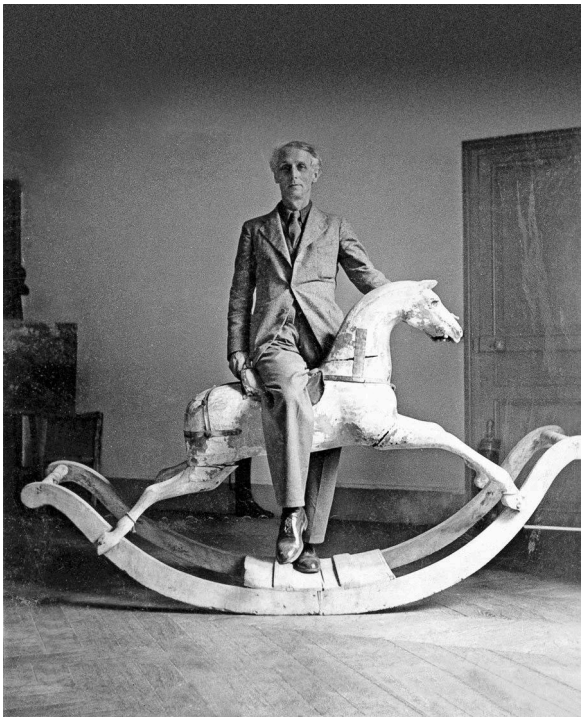

Figure 5. *Max Ernst with Rocking Horse, Paris*, 1938, photograph, Max Ernst Museum Brühl des LVR, Stiftung Max Ernst

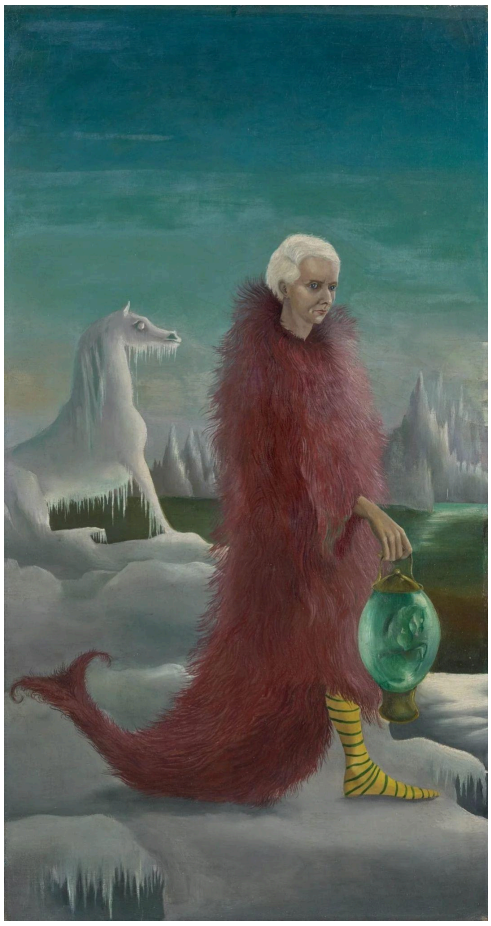

Figure 6. Leonora Carrington, *Portrait of Max Ernst*, 1939, oil on canvas, 50.30 x 26.80 cm, National Galleries Scotland

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