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Through the Looking-Glass: The Interartistic Practice of Remedios Varo

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University College Cork

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Abstract

This thesis sets out to map and explore the interartistic practice and relations developed in the creative production of twentieth-century woman artist and writer, Remedios Varo i Uranga (Anglès, Girona 1908 - Mexico City, 1963), who achieved significant international recognition for one aspect of her work: her paintings. I explore and analyse key examples of her interartistic practice throughout her career. These include: Varo's literary experiments, co-creating the surrealist play *El santo cuerpo grasoso* with Leonora Carrington; the commercial commissions she carried out for Bayer which is here read in relation to their context of publication; her best-known sculptural work, *Homo rodans*, examined in relation to the hybrid text which accompanied it and the various traces of its performative composition; and her most famous 'treatise' on interartistic practice, the painting *La creación de las aves*, which is read alongside a selection of her dream narratives. These works are primarily analysed using an interdisciplinary framework that includes cultural and literary studies, theatre and performance studies as well as anthropology and philosophy. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the extant critical insistence on translating her into a single dominant frame or worldview, even while recognising the importance of her diasporic mobility, ultimately reduces the liminal, performative and often playful nature of her work and downplays her capacity to negotiate and move between different languages, cultures, media and disciplines.

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Chronology and Key Exhibitions

1908 Remedios Varo is born 16 December in Anglès, Girona (Spain), Carrer Indústria, 5 (now number 9). The family subsequently moves to the Carrer Major 13, opposite Cal Rellotger. She is the middle child of Rodrigo Varo and Ignacia Uranga. She is named after the patron of the village — the Verge del Remei (Virgin of good remedy).

1913 Varo moves with her family to Algeciras (Cádiz).

1917 Varo and her family move to Madrid (Spain).

1917 - 1922 Varo studies in a convent school the Instituto de San Isidro.

1922 - 1924 She joins the Escuela de Artes y Oficios de Madrid.

1924 - 1929 She starts training in the Academia de San Fernando art school in Madrid, and meets José Luis Florit, Gerardo Lizarraga, Pedro Lozano and Francisco Ribera, as well as Maruja Mallo, Delhy Tejero and Francis Bartolozzi.

1929 Varo travels to Paris to study at La Grande Chaumière and she stays at a residence run by nuns.

1930 Back in Madrid, Varo marries Gerardo Lizarraga, her fellow student and painter from the San Fernando Academy, in San Sebastián. The wedding takes place on 6 September in the church of San Vicente.

1931 The couple moves to Paris. They live at Aubesprine, 26. Two years later they decide to move back to Barcelona due to financial problems. They contact their friend Francisco Ribera who is now art director of the Walter Thompson advertising Company.

1932 Varo and Lizarraga settle in Barcelona, where Lizarraga starts work for Thompson. Lizarraga gets the contract first. They live in Carrer Muntaner in a shared flat, then move to their own apartment in Avinguda Gaudí. Later they move to

Ronda Sant Antoni. Varo shares a studio with Esteban Francés in Plaça Lesseps. In this period, she meets Marcel Jean and Oscar Domínguez.

1933 Varo's father dies. As a result of his death, she no longer receives an allowance, which is the reason she has to start to work at Thompson.

1935 Varo takes part in the surrealist games *Cadavres Exquis* with Esteban Francés, and José Florit, among others. She participates in a drawing exhibition together with Florit in Madrid at Cafeteria Yacaré, in the Gran Vía. During this time Varo separates from Gerardo Lizarraga.

1936 In autumn 1936, she meets surrealist poet Benjamin Péret in Barcelona. When he goes to Aragone front, they remain in contact. His letters indicate that he is obsessed with her and wants her to move to Paris with him.

Three of Varo's early works are exhibited in the Exhibition Logicofobista organised by the group ADLAN (Amics de l'Art Nou).

1937 (March/April) Varo moves to Paris.

1938 While in France, some of her works are included in the Surrealist Exhibition in Paris, at the Galérie Beaux-Arts. It is believed that during this time she first meets Leonora Carrington.

Varo participates in a Fashion Design Exhibition in Paris with some of her designs.

1939 Due to political instability and Péret being incarcerated due to his politics, Varo moves to the south of France where she shares a house with painter Victor Brauner. Later she joins Péret — now free — at the Villa Air-Bel. For a few months, the couple share the Villa with other surrealist artists such as André Breton, Óscar Domínguez, Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington and André Masson, among others.

Varo's young brother Luis dies at age 25.

1940 Varo is imprisoned for a short time.

She has one painting at the International Exhibition of Surrealism in Mexico City exhibited (*Recuerdo de la walkiria*), organized by Inés Amor, César Moro and Wolfgang Paalen.

1941 Varo and Péret are reunited and move to Mexico. They depart from Marseille on 20 November on board the Serpa Pinto. Along with various other artists and arranged by Varian Fry. They travel via Casablanca and arrive in Mexico in January 1942.

1942 Varo designs costumes for Léonide Massine's Ballet *Aleko*, under Marc Chagall. She reencounters Leonora Carrington in Mexico City.

1943 Varo and Péret marry. Péret could not legally marry Varo until after Elsie Houston's death (Péret's first wife).

1943 — 1946 Varo works on a series of anti-fascist propaganda leaflets for the British Foreign office as well as refurbishing and decorating furniture for the Mexican company Clardecor.

1945 At the end of 1947 Varo travels to Venezuela with her friend Jean Nicolle, with whom is believed she started an affair in 1945.

1947 Péret returns to France, but Varo makes the decision not to return to Europe.

She writes *El santo cuerpo grasoso* with friends Kati Horna and Leonora Carrington.

1948 Varo works for the Instituto Francés de Malariología as well as for the Pharmaceutical Company Bayer.

1949 Varo returns to Mexico and moves in with friend Kati Horna and her husband, at Álvaro Obregón, 72, in the Colonia Roma.

1953 Varo moves next door to her friend (and neighbour) Walter Gruen. They will live together until Varo's death.

1955 Varo takes part in a collective Exhibition in the Galería Diana — 'Seis pintoras' (Leonora Carrington, Alice Rahon, Cordelia Urueta, Elvira Gascón and Solange de Forge) — run by the Spanish exiles Rosa Garcia Ascot and Jesús Bal y Gay. It raises her profile in Mexico.

1956 First solo exhibition in the Galería Diana (26 April - 15 May 1956).

1958 Short trip to Europe to visit her family and Péret who is very ill. On her return to Mexico from Europe, Varo designs hats and masks for a production of Calderón de la Barca's *El gran teatro del mundo*.

1959 Varo gets a commission to paint a mural for the Pabellón de Cancerología de Centro Médico, but she will never finish it.

Péret dies in Paris.

1960 Varo writes *El caballero Casildo Martín de Vilboa*.

Varo participates in a collective exhibition in honour of artists María Izquierdo and Frida Kahlo.

1963 On 8 October Varo dies from a heart attack at her house while sleeping. She is only 55 years old.

1964 First solo exhibition in Spain at the Palacio de Bellas Artes (Madrid) includes 124 works by the artist.

1986 First exhibition in North America; 'Science in Surrealism: The Art of Remedios Varo' (New York, New York Academy of Science).

1992 Exhibition in her birth province at the Casa de Cultura (Girona).

1994 Major exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico — first of many — 'Remedios Varo: 1908-1963'.

Declaration

I, Nadia Albaladejo García, hereby declare that this thesis is the record of my research, that it has been written by me, that all sources are acknowledged, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Signed_____ Date_____

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On my trip to Mexico to see Varo's work, in January 2017, I was lucky to have met two wonderful friends that I now consider my Mexican family: Sergio and Lorena. Thank you for taking me under your protection when I was lost and scared on my first day, and thank you for helping me around the city. My gratitude to both Cecilia Gámez and her family for their support during my trip. I also want to thank the curator at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico Marisol Argüelles for agreeing to meet during my

visit and for the long emails that followed to discuss Varo's exhibitions and events. Special mention to writer Eli Bartra for her inspiring chats on Mexican art and feminist cultural production in Mexico. Thanks also to Bayer Communication's Manager in Mexico, Lilia Pérez Lara, and Head of Corporate History Archives Hans-Hermann Pogarell, for their assistance and patience with regards to my questions all of this time.

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This thesis is dedicated, in loving memory, to my friend, Dr. Pat Aylward, who taught me that pain cannot and should not stop you from achieving your dreams.

Introduction

> Remedios creyó en el conocimiento que es capaz de cifrarse en una obra, sea ésta un poema o la manufactura de un par de zapatos; sea ésta un cuadro pintado al óleo o el diseño de las alas de un avión.
>
> Alberto Blanco[1]

Relatively unknown in her native country,[2] Remedios Varo i Uranga (1908-1963) is a respected and well-known figure within the Mexican artistic tradition,[3] who achieved significant international recognition for one aspect of her work: her paintings. Varo was born in the small town of Anglès, Catalunya, where she lived with her family until the age of five. Her father worked as a hydraulic engineer and was relocated constantly because of his work. Varo and her family then moved to Madrid where she was to remain for the rest of her childhood, later enrolling in the prestigious Academia de San Fernando where she studied classical painting and met other contemporary artists who were to strongly influence her later pictorial style.[4] Remedios Varo's art conjoins all of the ele-

[1] Alberto Blanco, 'El oro de todos los tiempos', in *Remedios Varo. Catálogo razonado,* ed. by Walter Gruen and Ricardo Ovalle (México, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 2008), p. 12.

[2] In Josep Massot's words, she was 'una pintora que aún no es reconocida en España', Josep Massot 'Viaje al enigma de Remedios Varo', *La Vanguardia*, 2015, p.40 <https://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20151112/54438790885/viaje-al-enigma-remedios-varo.html> [Accessed 24 December 2018].

[3] As Kaplan asserts, 'her debut in the 1955 group show at Galería Diana was so successful that Varo was quickly invited to have a one-woman exhibition the following year', Janet A. Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000), p. 133. Further proof of Varo's continued success over the years is the current exhibition in the Museo de Arte Moderno de Mexico: http://www.museoartemoderno.com/remedios-varo-2. Olga Ries also confirms that 'Su obra ha sido proclamada patrimonio nacional, y también entró en cierto grado en la cultura popular - en forma de posters, postales y artículos parecidos', 'El exilio y la política nacionalista mexicana Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington y el nacionalismo mexicano', *Izquierdas*, 3. 8 (2010), 1-13 (p.1).

[4] For more on this period of Varo's life see Juan Manuel Bonet, 'En el Madrid vanguardista' in *Dalí joven* (1918-1930) [Exhibition Catalogue] (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, 1994-1995), 110-26.

ments of her experience, including her happy childhood but also her subsequent forced exile to both Paris and Mexico.[5]

Even though in recent scholarship there has been increasing recognition both of the range of her work in different genres, media and artistic disciplines, and the eclecticism of her interests, influences and practices, the prevailing tendency is to treat her experiments in other genres either as laboratories for or keys to explain her major works. My overarching hypothesis is that to read the diversity and multiplicity of Varo's output always primarily as a function of her now undisputed artistic contribution and canonical status in one discipline, language or medium, is to disregard the full extent of her experimentation and development as an artist, and the complexity of her intricately layered and relational artistic universe. The first extended studies of the artist appeared nearly twenty-five years after her death. Since then, many art historians have shown interest in and have been dazzled by the intriguing and mysterious content of her creative production. Remedios Varo has, especially recently, attracted the interest of many art critics as well as academics, musicians and other artists.[6] However, extant scholarship tends to focus on a single frame for looking at her work either as a woman in exile, a surrealist artist, or, from a perspective frequently deployed in the analysis of women artists, one

[5] 'In all, her experience among the surrealists both in Paris and in Barcelona was essential in establishing the theoretical referents which constitute the essential element of her aesthetic proposal. But at the same time, it was in Mexico that Remedios Varo found the ideal magical space to project her accumulated experiences and where she was confirmed as an artist of universal scope', see Luís-Martín Lozano, 'Remedios Varo: una reflexión sobre el trabajo y los días de una pintora', in *Catálogo Razonado*, ed. by Gruen and Ovalle, p. 45.

[6] Contemporary artists inspired by Varo include: María Bueno (http://www.mariabueno.es) and Catalan writer Gemma Lienas, in whose novel *El fil invisible* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 2018), Varo's art encourages the main character to search for her family secrets and roots. Current and recent art exhibitions include: one at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico (*Remedios Varo. Nuevo Legado 2018*; from 19/10/2017-12/02/18) that brings together for the first time many of the artist's collection of objects and documents (https://www.inba.gob.mx/prensa/10747/el-museo-de-arte-moderno-albergara-la-exposicionadictos-a-remedios-varo-nuevo-legado-2018); an exhibition in the Catalan art museum 'Galería Mayoral' (2017) looking at the connection between women artists and Catalonia (http://galeriamayoral.com/en/magazine/surrealist-women-artists-and-their-connections-with-catalonia-victoria-combalia/a).

that sees her paintings as a simple reflection of her identity and life as a woman. As Margaret Lindauer points out:

> The woman is framed in a relative, secondary position by the patriarchal discourses of art history in which the commemoration of her private, autobiographical art consigns her to an insignificant role in history.[7]

As a result, the diverse artistic forms with which the artist worked throughout her career have largely been dismissed up to now as mere 'experiments', disregarding the potentiality that an interdisciplinary study of the dialogue between her interartistic output holds. During her lifetime Varo did not limit herself to just one artistic medium. As Guigon writes:

> Remedios parece no haberse podido limitar a un único modo de expresión. Para ella los medios del pintor y los del escritor son solidarios en el quebrantamiento de nuestras costumbres visuales e intelectuales.[8]

After her death she left behind a collection of texts some of which she herself had published before 1963, and others that were published later on with the permission of her companion, Walter Gruen. The self-published works include *De Homo Rodans* (a scientific, anthropological and entirely fictional treatise about the discovery of a set of bones that to date before the emergence of homo sapiens), *El Caballero Casildo Martín de Vilboa* (a short and fictional tale about a bird watcher made knight set in 1462 and his quest to liberate the kingdom of Vilboa by bringing talking owls from his trip to 'Islandia'),[9] and some notes written on the back of paintings that she used to send to her brother Rodrigo Varo. The texts published after her death include a collection/diary of

[7] Margaret A. Lindauer, *Devouring Frida: the Art History and Popular Celebrity of Frida Kahlo* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), p. 8.
[8] Emmanuel Guigon, 'Imágenes y textos en la obra de Remedios Varo', *Remedios Varo: arte y literatura* [Catalogue] (Teruel: Museo de Teruel, 1991), p. 17.
[9] Varo's reference to Islandia here might be connected to Austin Tappan Wright's novel of the same name, *Islandia* (1942). Indeed the timing of the novel and the argument are not too far from Varo's own interests. For more on this novel see: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/islandia-and-the-dangers-of-globalization/#!.

dreams, short stories, letters to both real and imaginary characters, and a play written in collaboration with Varo's long-life friend, Leonora Carrington.[10] She also devoted time to other creative endeavors such as furniture restoration and textile and graphic design (with some of her works featuring in the magazine *Feminidades*), created sculptures, as well as designing masks and costumes for plays, among other practices. As Eva Cortès i Giner mentions in her book about Varo's drawings during the years she spent in Paris and Barcelona:

> Quan va arribar a Mèxic va treballar en tasques tan increíblement diferents que per ser ella en realitat no ens estranya. Va dissenyar brodats que després van ser publicats en una revista anomenada *Femineidades* [sic]. Va dissenyar interiors i va decorar mobles on pintava motius florals i arbres japonesos, els donava un aire surrealista i d'art oriental al mateix temps; va fer treballs de cartells de publicitat bèl·lica per als aliats. Va dibuixar el vestuari del Ballet de Chagall que es va presentar a Mèxic amb l'obra Aleko, l'any 1942. També va col·laborar en el muntatge de la maqueta de la Casa Magna, a la Universitat de Mèxic, i va restaurar ceràmica prehistòrica amb Wolfgang Paalen.[11]

Even though recent scholars have engaged with her interartistic practice, there has been a tendency to focus on the writings, as recovered by Edith Mendoza Bolio, or on specific, discrete projects. None of the scholarship published to date sets out to fully explore the interartistic scope of her production as its central aim, notwithstanding recognition of its variegated and polythetic nature.[12] The need for a study that addresses the full scope of her interartistic practice is, arguably, even more timely now, with the emergence of major critical interest in intermediality and interartistic practice at the present time.[13] Furthermore, I am convinced that such a focus on Varo's work will help to

[10] For analysis and revision of Varo's written legacy, see Edith Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo como si se tratase de un boceto: Los escritos de Remedios Varo* (Madrid: Iberoamericana 2010). It is important to note that Varo's written works did not emerge as a part of her *oeuvre* until after 2008.
[11] Eva Cortès i Giner, *Remedios Varo i Uranga: l'encontre dels seus dibuixos amb el surrealisme francès* (Girona: Arola Editors, 2013), p. 53.
[12] This will be further discussed in the literature review chapter.
[13] As Ulla Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund and Erik Hedling claim in their book *Interart Poetics*, 'the term "Interart" has a deliberate air of the temporary, the hybrid, the betwixt-and-between that is exactly right for this fluid moment'(Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), p.15.

interrogate and reassess the position of twentieth-century women artists within current histories of art practice and theory. The aim of my thesis, then, is to rethink the place of Varo within the artistic traditions in which she is usually located, by reading a range of examples of her interartistic practice, including instances of collaboration and co-creation. To aid my analysis of these processes, I have drawn on an interdisciplinary method capable of responding to the interartistic dialogue placed in motion by her work, including cultural studies, literary studies, theatre and performance studies, anthropology and philosophy.

Research Questions

> Cabe señalar que la comprensión del universo artístico de Remedios Varo será más amplia y profunda en la medida que se consideren todas las huellas de su quehacer.
>
> Edith Mendoza Bolio[14]

> For me, the word art must cover all artistic creations: art is plainly the universe of artistic creations.
>
> Eli Bartra[15]

Inspired by these quotations, written on the one hand by one of the pioneering textual historians of Varo, and on the other by the feminist sociologist Eli Bartra, herself a

[14] Edith Mendoza Bolio, 'Los bocetos de Remedios Varo', *Lectura y Signo*, 4 (2009), (pp. 141-59), p. 56.
[15] Eli Bartra, *Women in Mexican Folk Art: of Promises, Betrayals, Monsters and Celebrities* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 4.

daughter of Spanish Republican exile, my thesis sets out to answer the following questions:

- What type of interartistic relationships can be seen to emerge from the analysis of the works of Remedios Varo?

- How can we find ways to respond to these relationships? What theories, methods and approaches are appropriate to reading this interartistic dialogue and experimentation?

In addressing these questions, I am both responding to a gap and a call in the existing secondary scholarship on Varo, and to recent debates around the role of interartistic and intermedial practice, particularly in women's art history. For instance, in 2016, Begoña Alberdi Soto asked:

> ¿Cuál es la relación entre lo que uno lee y uno ve? ¿desde qué punto de vista pueden complementarse dos medios que comparten el sentido de la vista, pero que activan diferentes partes de nuestro cerebro asimismo produciendo un conjunto de significados diferentes?[16]

Here Alberdi Soto returns to the time-honoured debate regarding 'Ut pictura poesis' to reflect on the relationship between different media, the possibilities of complementarity between the verbal and the visual, and the functioning of the brain in the processing of their different modes and meaning. I found myself considering the same questions while researching Varo's production. What are the possibilities of expanding the interpretative parameters surrounding an artist who is so frequently constrained within categories based on art history (surrealism), personal history (exile) and/or gender? Varo's work,

[16] Begoña Alberdi Soto, 'Escribir la Imagen: la literatura a través de la écfrasis', *Literatura y Lingüística*, (2016), 17-38 (p. 25) <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0716-58112016000100002> [Accessed 20 December 2018].

as is the case with many other women artists and writers, demands such an interartistic reading, for, as Wendy Steiner asserts,

> The greatest advantage of the interartistic comparison […] is the very richness and wit of its juxtapositions. Though it cannot organize the arts into a structured, coherent system, nevertheless it delivers a copiousness to aesthetic speculation that has long been missed in the restrictive matrix of academic disciplines.[17]

The concept of the 'interartistic' demands further clarification at this stage given that it is often used interchangeably with other similar concepts such as 'intermediality'. It is important then to be able to differentiate between 'interartistic' and other '-inter' notions. One of the reasons why these concepts produce a variety of definitions is that the prefix 'inter' can be understood differently according to context.[18] For example, the Oxford Dictionary online defines it as meaning both 'between' and 'mutually; reciprocally'.[19] Whereas the term 'intermediality' can be seen to include that 'betweenness' applied to media, in the sense of 'culturally recognized forms of communication', the interartistic should be perceived both as the relationship between arts and the mutual reflection or mirroring between the different arts. Furthermore, as Steiner indicates above, analysis of interartistic practice requires interdisciplinary approaches capable of moving between disciplines and placing them in new forms of dialogue. For Begoña García Pastor, for instance,

> La interdisciplinariedad, como perspectiva de estudio, nos permite cruzar todo tipo de fronteras poniendo en cuestión su sentido y existencia. Por un lado, las fronteras disciplinares que nos definen al tiempo nos separan como sujetos investiga-

[17] Wendy Steiner (ed.), *Poetics Today: International for the Theory and Analysis of Literature and Communication* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotic, 1989), 10 (pp. i- ii).
[18] For more on Interart Studies see, for example, *Comparative Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies*, ed. by Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (Purdue University Press, 2013); *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature – Image – Sound – Music*, ed. by Gabriele Rippl (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015); *Interart Poetics: Essays on the Interrelations of the Arts and Media*, ed. by Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, Hans Lund, and Erik Hedling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997); Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Introduction: From Comparative Arts to Interart Studies', *Paragrana*, 25. 2 (2016), 12-26.
[19] Oxford Dictionaries, 'Inter' - Definition of 'Inter' in English, Online edition' <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/inter-> [Accessed 20 August 2018].

> dores y, por otro, las fronteras culturales que, al relacionarnos, todos los seres humanos construimos con nuestras interacciones sociales.[20]

This project places Varo's work in-between and across genres, media, spaces, identities, disciplines and worlds. It is original in its aim to pursue a multi-layered comparative analysis of her works of art in parallel with one another, to position and reclaim Varo from beyond the context of exile, which has influenced her reception both within and beyond her homeland. Although, from a superficial perspective, her representations of women in her art do not always break with more traditional models, it is the combination of forms, genres and media with which she worked, alongside her simultaneous interest and commitment to "high" artistic practice and appreciation and acknowledgment of more artisan and domestic forms and practices, that mark her out from other contemporaries as well as confounding critical attempts to provide a totalising view of her output.

In the chapters that follow, I have set out to explore the different forms of art that Varo produced — paintings, writings, commercial work, sculpture and dream narratives — alongside reference to some of her other works, such us masks, recipes and letters. Each chapter focuses on specific artworks from different periods of her career, while also making links with other pieces with which they enter into dialogue. This allows for deep analysis of the particular artwork in context while harnessing different theories and methods to explore them, keeping in mind that 'every profound work of art is a microcosm'.[21] I have tried, where possible, to allow the artwork to guide my reading and interpretation, utilising a theoretical approach informed by feminism and drawn from different disciplines, including theatre studies, humanist geography, phenomenol-

[20] Begoña García Pastor, Ana Giménez Adelantado and Juncal Caballero Guiral, 'Interculturalidad e interdisciplinariedad. Experiencias de investigación e intervención', *Recerca*, 11 (2011), 7-9 (p. 7).
[21] Christian Borch, *Architectural Atmospheres: on the Experience of Politics and Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2014), p. 32.

ogy, dream studies, architecture and atmosphere studies, pain studies, anthropology and archaeology.

Underpinning my toolkit approach to Varo's interartistic practice is the insight of Lois Parkinson Zamora: 'no "unified" theory exists to direct the process. Each interartistic comparison will generate its own methods and, ultimately, a workable theory for the particular texts and contexts under consideration'.[22] In fact, many of the theorists, thinkers and philosophical frameworks invoked for the analysis of Varo's interartistic practice are obviously anachronistic — they do not pertain to Varo's life-time — nevertheless, their work sheds light on Varo's in interesting and illuminating ways, even those critics, like for example Gloria Anzaldúa who are postcolonial feminist critics working in a different tradition.

The chapters are organized chronologically, beginning with the years after Varo's first arrival to Mexico, defining her 'place' in collaboration with other exiled women artists, and attending to her transitional years (Chapter Two) and training in other media resulting in commissioned work for commercial purposes (Chapter Three). Chapters Four and Five focus on the interartistic work completed in the decade before her death, when she was beginning to become more established as an artist, and had a number of influential exhibitions. Chapter Four deals with the interartistic tour de force that is *De Homo Rodans*, completed in the 1950s, and comprising a sculpture, treatise and piece of performance art. Chapter Five further discusses the interartistic dialogue between her paintings and her work in other media by analysing one of her best known paintings *La creación de las aves* and one of her dream narratives.

[22] Lois Parkinson Zamora, 'Interartistic Approaches to Contemporary Latin American Literature', *MLN, Hispanic Issue*, 114. 2 (1999), 389-415 (p. 413).

Chapter One includes a review of scholarship on Remedios Varo with a focus on those authors who have attempted to address and include interartistic approaches to her work. Most scholarship on Varo has tended to focus on a single aspect of her artistic career. For example, the studies carried out after her death (1963) generally explore her exile from Spain, her connection with surrealism as well as her arrival in Mexico, while more recent studies acknowledge her "experiments" with other media and mention a series of influences on her work, such as the role of esotericism and alchemy. However, my literature review demonstrates that the ever-present interartistic dialogue between her different works — paintings, writings, drawings, sculpture, dream journal, recipes and letters — has not yet received the sustained analysis it deserves, even though my own study would not itself have been possible without the pioneering scholarship of Isabel Castells and Edith Mendoza Bolio, in particular.

Chapter Two begins by analysing one of the works recovered from the archive by Mendoza Bolio, the surrealist play *El santo cuerpo grasoso*, written in collaboration with British artist and close friend (of Varo's), Leonora Carrington. Entitled 'Mattering Maps and Spaces of Co-creation', the chapter not only explores the friendship between the two women artists, as studied in recent publications and exhibitions, but also the part played by the close group of exiled Europeans who on their arrival in Mexico established themselves in what Breton claimed to be the "surrealist place par excellence".[23] The play can be seen to enact through which these individuals envision their evolving relationship with the place they share, and with the space of Mexico more gen-

[23] Breton wrote: 'Mexico, half-awake of its mythological past keeps evolving under the protection of Xochipilli, God of the flowers and lyric poetry, and Coatlicue, Goddess of the Earth and of the violent death (…) This power of conciliation of life and death is without a doubt the principal *attractive* that Mexico offers. This keeps an open record of endless sensations, from the most benign to the most insidious', as quoted in Mónica Fernández, 'Mexico: A Surrealist Country', 2015 <https://www.fusionmagazine.org/mexico-a-surrealist-country/> [Accessed 24 December 2018]. For more on this see Karina Alanis, 'André Breton, su interpretación Surrealista sobre México', *Espacios de Arte y Cultura*, 2009 <http://arteycultura-espacio.blogspot.com/2009/05/andre-breton -su-interpretacion. html> [Accessed 20 December 2018].

erally. The chapter places a particular focus on the performative elements of the play, even though the play has never been performed, and is theoretically framed within Grossberg's notion of the 'mattering map'. It also draws on the later theoretical formulations of Gloria Anzaldúa's 'new *mestiza*' offers alternative political modes of reading the gender reversals and hybridity of Varo and Carrington's play. Chapter Three focuses on Varo's paintings commissioned for use in commercial publications by the pharmaceutical company Bayer and produced during the artist's year-long move to Venezuela — 1948 — where her family was then based. Varo's commercial work has often been excluded from serious consideration as part of her *oeuvre* because of the commercial impulse that underscores its existence. Yet, as I will argue, the work she carries out for Bayer plays a key role in developing her approach to the body in her art, due to the focus it places on the individual and social experience of embodiment. By exploring three illustrations of the body in pain, it becomes possible to uncover the ways in which Varo positions herself through art in relation to disciplinary discourses about the human body, in the relationship she draws between the body and architecture and the body-in-pain. Theoretically framed by Foucault's ideas on discipline and power, and utilizing his concept of the Panopticon, the analysis also links these three works to important artistic influences such as medieval religious imagery, work by "proto-surrealist" artists Chirico and Magritte, as well as tropes from the work of the Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo.

Extending the Foucauldian frame from the previous chapter, Chapter Four offers an analysis of Varo's only self-published text, '*De Homo Rodans',* by taking on Foucault's notion of discourse and the dispositif as mechanisms through which to reconfigure scientific discourse, in particular, twentieth-century evolutionary theories. I will also compare the work from other Mexican women writers of the period, such as Elena Garro, Josefina Vicens and Rosario Castellanos with that of Varo as to reclaim a

female decolonial scientific genealogy. Underpinning my analysis of Varo's re-framing of evolutionary theories is a careful reconstruction of the main anthropological discoveries that might have influenced her at this time.

Chapter Five centres on two of Varo's works: the dream 'Los cuadros de Paalen' and the well-known painting *La creación de las aves* (1958). This final chapter draws from the rich body of scholarship currently existing on the relationship between esotericism and Varo's artistic practice but departing from these esoteric readings focuses most particularly on the interartistic construction of space in these two texts. The works of humanist geographer Yi Fu Tuan, feminist writer Elizabeth Grosz and queer writer Sara Ahmed form the theoretical basis for this analysis. Here, I argue that the hallmarks of Varo's interartistic practice all come together in this painting and that, together with the analysis of the dreams, it ultimately captures the essence of her interartistic approach. In this way, it forms a fitting conclusion to the thesis, drawing together many of the themes explored in earlier chapters.

Chapter One

Literature Review

In order to better understand where my project fits within what has been published on Varo, it is necessary to identify the dominant strands in Varo scholarship and how my research enters into dialogue with them. As will be seen below, most of the studies to date tend to focus one way or another on Varo's paintings, either a biographical approach which emphasizes the role of exile and travel in her artistic production (Kaplan, Varo, Luquín Calvo, Vives); an esoteric/religious dimension looking at the influence that her religious upbringing had as well as Varo's own interest in the teachings of Gurdjieff and Oupensky (Arcq, Haynes, Comisarenko Mirkin, O'Rawe); or a surrealist viewpoint, analysing the way in which her condition as a woman framed her creativity (Kaplan, Cortès i Giner, Everly). While, at times, her writings and other endeavours are considered, it was not until Castell's work in 1997, followed by Mendoza Bolio in 2011, that there was proper engagement with Varo's writing. Since then, there have been attempts to include these comparatively with the analysis of her paintings (Zaneta, Ferrero Cándenas, Everly, Vidaurre Arenas, Moreno Villareal). These studies add much to our understanding of the interartistic dimension of Varo; however, my study is the first to undertake a sustained analysis of the role played by the interartistic throughout her career. It does this by utilising an interdisciplinary methodology to frame and illuminate the analyses. The following literature review provides a synthesis of the different strands of Varo's scholarship mentioned above, including the most important studies that focus on her condition of exile, the impact of religion and esoteric teachings, surrealism and gender, as well as outlining the key contributions on the interartistic dimension of her work, the body of work that is most crucial to my own study.

Janet Kaplan's article 'Remedios Varo: Voyages and Visions,'[1] and her book *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys* (1988),[2] consider for the first time some of the main themes treated in this review and that later on will be the focus of individual studies. The article examines Varo's interest in magic and esotericism, alongside her fascination, given her exiled condition, with the idea of the 'journey' and with travelling. It also evaluates her relationship with surrealism and the consequent influence of psychoanalysis, and investigates the struggle for gender freedom taking place within the male-centred artistic movement of surrealism as it emerged within the context of the deeply patriarchal societies of both Mexico and Spain. The book, alongside Beatriz Varo's *Remedios Varo: En el centro del microcosmos*,[3] is one of the most significant contributions to scholarship due to its detailed examination of Varo's life and thorough analysis of her career. Both works offer rich insights into Varo's life: from her birth in the small town of Anglès, Girona, to her move to Madrid, where she joined the Academia de San Fernando, thanks to the support of her father;[4] to her marriage to Gerardo Lizaizairraga and her subsequent trips to Paris and later Barcelona. They go on to explore her experience with the surrealists both in Paris and Barcelona before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, her unpleasant experience in Paris, and her final and definitive move to Mexico where she was to remain by choice.[5] Kaplan's book is a well-documented narrative

[1] Janet Kaplan, 'Remedios Varo: Voyages and visions', *Woman's Art Journal*, II. 1 (1980), 13-18.
[2] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys.*
[3] Beatriz Varo, *Remedios Varo: En el centro del microcosmos* (México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica USA, 1990).
[4] Kaplan confirms that 'Don Rodrigo was a commanding figure in Remedios life', *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 15.
[5] Kaplan further explains that Varo was briefly imprisoned at the start of World War II before she managed to escape: 'Sometime in the winter of 1940, she, too, was arrested, merely for being Péret's companion'; *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 71. As Eva Cortés i Gener explains: 'Cap a finals de 1957 Remedios viatjarà a Europa per veure els seus amics i la familia […] El punt d'encontre fou la ciutat d'Hendaia, així Remedios no va haver de patir pels records dels seus anys de la joventut ni tampoc es va arriscar a ser detinguda, perquè les autoritats espanyoles consideraven exiliats polítics totes i tots els qui van eixir del país en esclatar la Guerra Civil', Cortès i Giner, p. 56. Kaplan is of the same opinion: 'She was to dwell on the impact of this abrupt and painful break throughout the rest of her life, expressing deep remorse at having thus separate herself from her family', Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 53.

about Varo's trajectory from the point of view of an art historian. The book uncovers several hitherto unknown aspects from Varo's life that allow the reader to further comprehend the rationale behind her life choices, her relationships, her paintings, her close connection with surrealism and later on with contemporary Mexican artists. Beatriz Varo's *En el centro del microcosmos* has a more personal tone as it is Varo's niece who takes on the task of following her aunt's footsteps and reconstructing Varo's journey from Girona to Mexico. The most significant recent biographical publication on the artist is José Antonio Gil and Magnolia Rivera's *Remedios Varo: el hilo invisible*.[6] Published in 2015, the book centres on the different artistic and non-artistic influences that Varo has been exposed to throughout her childhood and early formative periods, such as the figure of her father, Don Rodrigo Varo, by looking at Varo's library. It also discusses the influence of magic, esotericism and mysticism derived, as already mentioned by Kaplan, from the teachings of Jung and Gurdjieff. Some original elements that are mentioned as crucial to Varo's artistic formation include the influence of the prominent Catalan philosopher Ramon Llull (1232-1316) and medieval engravings that depict science and religion working together in the search for truth, as seen in Varo's *Creación de rayos astrales* (1956). It also uncovers the important symbols of martyrdom within Varo's work for Bayer and, in particular, the direct reference to the martyrdom of St Sebastian, a common motif in surrealist imagery.[7] Medieval imagery and Varo's commercial works will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. I draw extensively on these studies for my own analysis given that, as can be seen from this brief summary, they serve as an excellent reference point for researchers interested in Varo's work and create significant pathways for future research.

[6] José Antonio Gil and Magnolia Rivera, *Remedios Varo: el hilo invisible* (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2015).
[7] See, for example, Andrea Mantegna, *Martyrdom of St Sebastian* (1480).

The most frequently discussed influence on Varo's works is that of exile, and although it is mentioned by nearly every writer when referring to Varo and her work,[8] Andrea Luquín Calvo's thesis *Remedios Varo: el espacio y el exilio*,[9] is exclusively devoted to the question of exile in Varo's creations by focusing on the idea of space as centrally connected to Varo's life experiences of exile, viewing the condition of exile as determined both by geography and gender. Luquín Calvo sees Varo as a woman who — having moved homes/countries several times in her lifetime — was strongly influenced by movement between different spaces; she argues that in her work Varo is constantly creating and re-making those spaces. Luquín Calvo's final chapter looks at Varo's anthropological text *De Homo Rodans* (1959). The idea of metamorphosis is the focus of the early part of the analysis of the text, while also making original connections with Donna Haraway's cyborg — 'creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted' —[10] to explain Varo's ideas on seeing alternatives modes of reality in order to create not only a new space, but a new society with a new identity.[11] Luquín Calvo's work is a valuable addition to scholarship on Varo even if the interartistic dimension which is the focus of my study is absent.

The analysis of space is another theme that has frequently been explored in relation to Remedios Varo and her work where, as seen above, it serves as a focus point along with the idea of exile, in Luquín Calvo's study. Throughout the literature on the artist, Varo's treatment of space has been presented as emerging as a direct result from

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[8] See among others, Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected journeys*; Varo, *Remedios Varo: En el centro del microcosmos*; and María Alejandra Zanetta, Kelly Ann Wacker, *Alchemy in Exile: The Alchemical Kitchen in the Work of Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo* (Ohio: Ohio Nothern UP, 1995); Ries; also Camilla Sutherland, 'Shifting Realities: Migration and Surreality in the Work of Remedios Varo', *Opticon1826*, 13 (2012), 23-32.

[9] Andrea Luquín Calvo, *Remedios Varo: El espacio y el exilio* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 2008).

[10] 'A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid, a machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction', see Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century', in *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2006), 117- 58 (p. 117).

[11] For more on metamorphosis, see Lourdes Andrade, *Remedios Varo* (México, D. F: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, 2002,) and Eva Vàzquez, 'Remedios Varo al país de les metamorfosis', *Revista de Girona*, 227 (2004), 48-57.

her exiled condition, but there are other theories, too. For example, Anna F. Vives's article 'Surrealism, Gender and the City in the Works of Remedios Varo'[12] explores some of Varo's early paintings from her time with the surrealists in Barcelona and in Paris together with one of her dreams. Vives describes Varo's work as being replete with doorways — of a feminine nature — that manage to act both as symbols of separation and of unity. Through these doorways, the relationship between the body and the city is perceived to be in a constant state of exchange and communication. Vives's study of Varo's construction of the urban space presents some exciting new ideas but also opens up some questions: for example, how do these theories extracted from her early works develop and transform in her later production and how do they relate to the interartistic? In a similar manner, Goretti Ramírez also treats the theme of space but looks at it from a 'tactile' perspective.[13] By analysing the architecture and the movement in some of her paintings, in the light of theories by Mark Paterson,[14] Paul Rodaway[15] and Giulana Bruno in her book *Atlas of Emotion*,[16] she classifies the creation of space in Varo's works in three distinct ways. The first refers to those paintings that feature characters that move freely in an enclosed architectural space — i.e. *Ruptura* (1955), *Mujer saliendo del psicoanalista* (1961), *Taxi acuático* (1962); the second involves paintings in which characters move through architectonic space and are actually inserted within it — i.e. *La llamada* (1961), *Nacer de nuevo* (1960); and finally, there are the paintings that evoke architectural spaces that move freely within other spaces — i.e. *Roulotte* (1955), *El malabarista o El juglar* (1956), *Vagabundo* (1957). All of these have a sole purpose: to subvert authoritarian power from an exiled perspective. Further studies on space/time

[12] Anna F. Vives, 'Surrealismo, género y ciudad en la obra pictórica y poética de Remedios Varo', *Ángulo Recto. Revista de estudios sobre la ciudad como espacio plural*, i. 5 (2013).
[13] Goretti Ramírez, 'Arquitectura y movimiento en la pintura exiliada de Remedios Varo', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, vi. 87 (2010), 815–27.
[14] Mark Paterson, *The Senses of Touch. Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. ix.
[15] Paul Rodaway, *Sensuous Geographies. Body, Sense and Place* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994).
[16] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion. Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007).

are included in both the *Catálogo Razonado* as well as in *Las cinco llaves del mundo secreto de Remedios Varo*.[17] However, as Ramírez remarks, '[d]eterminar el alcance de esta propuesta, en cualquier caso, es tarea compleja y merecedora de otro estudio',[18] hence the need to further explore and analyse the representation of space in Varo's works, as her portrayal of it is both complex, intriguing and open to multiple interpretations. To add an 'inter' approach to these explorations of space might, in fact, result in a productive line of enquiry.

The relationship between Varo's work and the ideas of the surrealist movement has also been the subject of multiple investigations and form a third prominent theme in Varo's scholarship.[19] While Varo, in her early years, lived in two cities in which surrealist ideas were dominant within the artistic community — Paris and Barcelona —, arguably, the crucial years in her artistic development, it is now also widely accepted that Varo had ideas distinct from those mapped by the surrealists, and moved towards a more individual style with wider influences, as can be seen in her work after she settled in Mexico.[20] In general, most research published to date acknowledges the surrealist elements that permeate Varo's work and agree upon the fact that she borrowed not only artistic techniques — such as decalcomania, *fumage* and *frottage* — but also psychoanalytic and Bretonian theories. While it is true that Varo adopted surrealism in her art, she also adapted it to her own vision and transformed it to subvert women's role within

[17] Ruy Sánchez and others, *Cinco llaves del mundo secreto de Remedios Varo* (México D.F.: Artes de México y del mundo, 2008).
[18] Ramírez, p. 826.
[19] See, for example, 'Remedios Varo (1908-1963): El Viaje Interior' (2007) by José Luis Antequera Lucas, *Espacio Tiempo y Forma. Serie VII, Historia del Arte*, 20–21. 0 (2008), 341-61. This article offers an exhaustive list of biographical details from the surrealist years (1936-1941) until Varo left for México (1941), as well as describing the surrealist movement and Varo's relationship to it.
[20] Researchers who have focused on Varo's relationship with surrealism include Janet Kaplan (1984;1988), Haygood (2001), Taylor (2001), Teresa del Conde (2002) and Luís Martín Lozano (2002). The same discourse – was she/was she not a surrealist also hovers around both Leonora Carrington and, more obviously, Frida Kahlo. This in turn has much to do with the dogmatic dimension of surrealism and its in/out perspective (very pronounced with writers/artists from Spain, e.g. Dalí, Lorca, Buñuel, among others).

what was predominantly a male-centered artistic movement.[21] It is absolutely necessary to consider surrealist ideas when exploring Varo, as it was the most predominant artistic movement during her lifetime and it was part of her training as an artist. For example, Kaplan continuing with her work on the artist aims to re-discover Varo as a woman who adapted her style from within the ranks of surrealist movement, rather than becoming the passive object of desire, and an inspiring muse for her surrealist contemporaries.[22] Kaplan believes that Varo moved from this traditional view through the elaboration and re-placing of domestic space, not as an exclusively feminine space but as a laboratory for creativity. Eva Cortès i Giner's thesis on Varo's early drawings and their relationship with French surrealism, published in 2013, includes a biography of the artist and mentions interesting points such as the acknowledgement that the memory of her hometown Anglès was always with her.[23] Cortès also asserts that, for the first time in the history of art, surrealist women seemed to have a presence for future artistic developments. However, the surrealists never publicly and explicitly admitted it:

> Si per exemple, per una banda el grup surrealista va aconseguir fixar l'atenció de la història de l'art perquè considerava que la presència de les dones dins el panorama artístic era fonamental per apostar amb fermesa pel futur, és mostra d'una gran contrarietat que no fes res per corroborar-ho en públic, si més no, eren de domini públic les seues participacions i l'aportació artística i social, i al mateix temps, al moviment.[24]

A connection of interest to this study is that Cortès mentions the multidisciplinary character of surrealism that was also shared by Varo, as seen in her own written descriptions of her own work, her dream journal, the invented recipes, her letters to imaginary characters and fictitious dialogues as well as a play written in collaboration with her friend

[21] While never overtly a feminist, at times, her works might be seen to contain a strong feminist position given the subvertion of roles both in her paintings and writings, as seen with the gender ambiguity of her figures or the gender parody that occurs in *El santo cuerpo grasoso* and *De Homo Rodans*. Will be discussed in much detail in the following chapters.
[22] Gruen and Ovalle (eds.), *Remedios Varo. Catálogo Razonado.*
[23] Cortès i Giner, p. 29.
[24] Cortès i Giner, p. 61.

Leonora Carrington. This argument manages to integrate Varo's work strongly within surrealist parameters but — as Cortés herself asserts — while many aspects of Varo's work have been discovered, '[c]onsidere que cal continuar la tasca investigadora perquè puguem conèixer la totalitat de la intervenció creadora d'aquesta artista i donar-li el reconeixement social ací, a la seua terra'.[25]

The influence of religion, mysticism, the esoteric and alchemy on Remedios Varo's work has been regularly examined by, for example, Tere Arcq, Deborah J. Haynes,[26] Dina Comisarenco Mirkin,[27] and Ricki O'Rawe, among others. Tere Arcq, in her essay 'La llave esotérica', focuses on the influence that esoteric and mystical theories had on the artist.[28] In particular, Arqc mentions as a primary source the Russian mystics and philosophers George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877 - 1949) and Pyotr Demianovich Ouspenskii (1878-1947).[29] Arqc's chapter makes reference to some paintings by Varo (c.g. *La tejedora*, 1956) to prove this point, but also draws on evidence of her other creative productions such as furniture.[30] Ricki O'Rawe further develops Tere Arcq's argument about the influence that the esoteric and, in particular, the teachings of Gurdjieff and Oupensky, had on Varo.[31] He does so by looking at some of Varo's lesser known paintings. This perspective on the esoteric and Varo is frequently foregrounded in work on the artist, and these esoteric teachings appear as common motifs in her works from the 1940s onwards. Along the same lines, and also by O'Rawe, the 2018

[25] Cortès i Giner, p. 144.
[26] Deborah J. Haynes, 'The art of Remedios Varo: Issues of gender ambiguity and religious meaning', *Woman's Art Journal*, I. 16 (1995), 26-32 (p. 26).
[27] Dina Comisarenko Mirkin, 'Remedios Varo, the Artist of a Thousand Faces', *Aurora*, 10 (2009), 77–114.
[28] In Sánchez, *Cinco llaves del mundo secreto de Remedios Varo*, pp. 19-90.
[29] Sánchez, p. 29.
[30] One of the founding members of Gurdjieff followers in America commissioned a piece of furniture from Varo, known by the title of Icono, see Sánchez, pp. 24-25.
[31] Ricki O'Rawe, 'Ruedas metafísicas: "Personality" and "Essence" in Remedios Varo's Paintings', *Hispanic Research Journal*, 15. 5 (2014), 445-62.

piece 'The Re-enchantment of Surrealism: Remedios Varo's Visionary Artists',[32] explores the artists that appear in Varo's paintings and presents them as searching for a spiritual aesthetic in tune with the teachings of the writer and poet René Daumal (1908-1944), as well as Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. O'Rawe makes a case for Varo being an early pioneer within the surrealist group of the use of art 'to uncover esoteric knowledge of the universe',[33] and that this practice was heightened and emphasized on her arrival to Mexico, and also shared with other exiled companions such as Leonora Carrington, Kati Horna and Eva Sulzer. The article successfully manages to place Varo's late work — from the 1950s onwards — within a mystical and esoteric framework that was thought contradictory with respect to surrealist tenets. To make his point, O'Rawe refers to some of Varo's commentaries on her paintings, which according to him are written using Gurdjieffian language. A different take on religion and esotericism is pursued by Haynes. In her article she envisions Varo's late style as different to her surrealist contemporaries and reflects upon the ambiguous representation of gender and the use of religious, hermetic or occult motifs in her works as a strategy to subvert patriarchal religion and gender boundaries. Useful biographical references underpin this argument, including books from Varo's library on alchemy, Pythagorean ideas, numerology, sacred geometry, and Platonic Philosophy. Haynes concludes by confirming that 'Varo's work challenges patriarchal religious traditions by bringing attention to the arcane, esoteric, and hermetic, just as it simultaneously "gives the lie" to our inherited sex/gender sys-

[32] Ricki O'Rawe, 'The Re-enchantment of Surrealism: Remedios Varo's Visionary Artists', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, xcv. 5 (2018), 533-61; see also Ricki O'Rawe, 'Remedios Varo's *Feminine, Spiritual Quest' in Preservation, Radicalism and the Avant-Garde Canon* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 111-28; 'Ruedas metafísicas: "Personality" and "Essence" in Remedios Varo's Paintings'. For more examples of Varo's use of mystical symbolism, see Ricki O'Rawe and Roberta Ann Quance, 'Crossing the Threshold: Mysticism, Liminality, and Remedios Varo's Bordando el manto terrestre (1961–62)', *Modern Languages Open* (2016)

<https://www.modernlanguagesopen.org/articles/10.3828/mlo.v0i0.138/> [Accessed 5 September 2018].

[33] O'Rawe 'The Re-enchantment of Surrealism: Remedios Varo's Visionary Artists', p. 29.

tem'.[34] The strongest point of Haynes's article is her analysis of the paintings, but she does not engage with the rest of Varo's artistic output or consider how this aspect contributes to the significance of Varo's creative production. Also of interest is Dina Comisarenko Mirkin's 'Remedios Varo: The Artist of a Thousand Faces'. [35] Comisarenko Mirkin analyses some of Varo's paintings in relation to Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.*[36] For Comisarenko Mirkin, the different stages described in Campbell's mythological book correspond almost 'exactly' to many of Varo's paintings:

> In the particular case of Varo's body of work, the different stages of human maturation, symbolized in the hero's path, are represented through suggestive visual metaphors acted out by alchemists and scientists, travellers and explorers, and musicians and composers, all immersed in adventures of research, discovery, the breaking of paradigms, and creativity.[37]

Here, Comisarenko Mirkin proposes that Varo's 'artistic production must be understood as a complete, integrated system',[38] but only some of Varo's paintings are selected and all of her other artistic production such as her dream journals, play, designs, and other texts, is neglected. This scholarship on religion and esotericism provides an important source to further comprehend Varo's interest in esoteric and mystical ideas throughout this thesis.

Studies that compare Varo's paintings/works with those of other artists or writers are also common. This is the case with María A. Zanetta in her comparative analysis of Varo's work with Carmen Marín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* (1978),[39] Inés Ferrero-

[34] Haynes, p. 31.
[35] Dina Comisarenko Mirkin, 'Remedios Varo, The Artist of a Thousand Faces', *Aurora*, 10 (2009), 77–114.
[36] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato, CA: Princeton University Press, 1972).
[37] Comisarenko Mirkin, p. 78.
[38] Comisarenko Mirkin, p. 114.
[39] María Alejandra Zanetta, 'Carmen Martín Gaite y Remedios Varo: trayecto hacia el interior a través de la literatura y la pintura', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, ii. 27 (2002), 565–95.

Cándenas' 'Gendering the Marvellous: Strategies of Response in Remedios Varo, Elena Garro and Carmen Boullosa' (2007),[40] as well as Kathryn A. Everly's *Catalan Women Writers and Artists. Revisionist Views from a Feminist Space.*[41] On the one hand, Zanetta explores formal and common aspects of space as represented in Martín Gaite's novel and Varo's painting *Armonía* (1956). Theories by Annis Pratt and Barbara Frey Waxman are employed to present the novel and the painting as narratives 'de maduración' with a Reifungsromane — ageing woman — that manages to subvert patriarchal authority and exclusion to transform a private and domestic space into a creative space by 'the progressive return to consciousness of past experiences'.[42] Zanetta makes revealing connections between the novel and Varo's painting; however, one might consider Martín Gaite's 'inner exile' to be a relatively different experience to that of Varo, who never returned to her homeland. In this regard, identity and space have been constructed in a comparable manner, but the specific details of the creative process and artistic development vary significantly between both artists.

In contrast, while still being in essence a comparative study, Inés Ferrero-Cándenas offers us an insightful analysis on the influence that Latin American narrative, in particular *lo real maravilloso* and together with writers Elena Garro and Carmen Boullosa, played in Varo's paintings. While some critics have doubted or even negated this influence on Varo — Rodríguez Trampolini (1983), Kaplan (1988), Chadwick (1998) and Luquín Calvo (1998) —[43] Ferrero Cándenas dedicates an entire chapter to

[40] Inés Ferrero Cándenas, 'Gendering the Marvellous: Strategies of Response in Remedios Varo, Elena Garro and Carmen Boullosa' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2007).
[41] Kathryn A. Everly, *Catalan Women Writers and Artists. Revisionist Views from a Feminist Space* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2003).
[42] Robert N. Butler, 'The Life Review: An Interpretation of Reminiscence in the Aged', *Psychiatry*, 26. 1 (1963), 65- 76 (p. 66).
[43] Exceptions include Lourdes Andrade, in 'Remedios Varo: sueño de un nuevo mundo', *Artes de México*, 64 (2003), 34-41. Also, Estrella de Diego remarks that surrealism is not the only source of inspiration for Varo once she settles in Mexico: 'lo que se hace patente en la obra de Varo es la comentada esencia de México con lo que tiene de híbrido y de mezcla, de cierto panteísmo y esa magia que inundan toda la

perform an analysis of some of her paintings during her years in Mexico. This chapter contributes to convince the reader of Varo's connections with *lo real maravilloso*, which itself has been shown to be in constant dialogue with surrealist ideas. The first section of this chapter acknowledges the extensive number of comparative studies published to date on the relationship between Varo's paintings and literature and questions the narrative essence of her pictorial work, asking,

> what is it about Varo's pictorial production that makes it so prone to analogies with literary texts? What techniques and pictorial conventions does she use in order to achieve such narrative effect? How can this be accounted for structurally?[44]

In the analysis, there are connections between Varo's paintings and Latin American literature, such the mystical and metamorphic properties of music as in Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) and in Varo's *El gato helecho* (1957) and *Catedral vegetal* (1957); the theme of metamorphosis as in Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967) and the fantastic, resurrection and eternal return as seen in Jorge Luis Borges' *El libro de los seres imaginarios* (1957), Octavio Paz's *Piedra de sol* (1957) and Carlos Fuentes' *Terra nostra* (1975); as well as time as circular as exemplified in Ernesto Sábato's *El túnel* (1948).[45] Ferrero Cándenas concludes by stating that Varo's 'imagination shares a common ground with the marvels of the Latin American continent as imagined by their contemporary writers'.[46] In spite of its penetrating analysis and convincing argument, Ferrero Cándenas's work does not include any other aspect of Varo's artistic production. Yet, as will be demonstrated in my thesis, the interartistic, including other literary and extra-literary elements also play an important part in Varo's artistic

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producción de la artista' in Estrella de Diego, *Remedios Varo* (Madrid: Fundación Cultural Mapfre, 2007).

[44] Ferrero Cándenas, p. 56.

[45] Alejo Carpentier, *Los pasos perdidos*, 1953 (Madrid: Alianza, 1998); Gabriel García-Márquez, *Cien años de soledad* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1967); Jorge Luis Borges, *El libro de los seres imaginarios* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1957); Octavio Paz, *Piedra de sol* (Barcelona: Mondadori, 1957); Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra* (México: J. Mortiz, 1975); Ernesto Sábato, *El túnel* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1966).

[46] Ferrero Cándenas, p. 79.

process, one that manages to construct a woman, 'in complete control of her visionary gifts'.[47] In contrast, Everly looks at feminine exile from the perspective of dominant culture by comparing and contrasting the work of three writers — Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983), Montserrat Roig (1946 -1991) and Carme Riera (1948) — with that of Varo. The rationale for linking these female artists is based on their shared gender and cultural background: the influence of Catalan culture and their common knowledge and use of a minority language. Overall, she takes a feminist approach — influenced by theories of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and Judith Butler (1956) — and sees these works as a logical result of a desire to transgress the norms of a strong dominant male culture. Her study concludes that while the forms of exile experienced by the women artists differed significantly, a singular feminist voice might be discerned in their creative output. Although praised by some, her analysis has been seen by other critics to fail in some respects because as Everly herself recognises, 'the disadvantage in separating artistic agendas along gender lines suggests what Pollock calls "the deadly paradox": to name what makes it interesting to study art by artists who are women is to condemn the artists to being less than artists: women'. Pollock resolves the paradox by pointing out the ability of art to cross all barriers of difference: 'art speaks to us all across the barriers of all our differences, art is meant to be simply truth and beauty'.[48] In many ways the present study will be compatible with (if not fully aligned with) other feminist interpretations — particularly in the discussion of spatial transformation and the body — but I am also aware of the potential limitations of this position.

[47] Ferrero Cándenas, p. 120.
[48] Griselda Pollock, *Generation and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. xv.

Other comparative studies that explore Varo's inter- or transtextuality — 'las relaciones que una obra sostiene con otras obras'—[49] and that therefore must be included in this literature review include those of Jaime Moreno Villareal in 'La llave literaria I'[50], Sandra Lisci 'La llave literaria II',[51] as well as Carmen Vidaurre Arenas's essays. Moreno Villareal looks at the narrative character of Varo's paintings. Proof of this, for him, can be found not only in the fact that her works are envisioned as containing a beginning, climax and a resolution, but also that some of the titles of her paintings are shared by literary work of the time. For example, *Au bonheur des dames* (1956) can be linked to a novel by Émile Zola of the same title published in 1883; *Tailleur pour dames* (1957) to a comedy by Georges Feydeau of the same title published in 1886; and *Ascensión al monte análogo* (1960), to the title of one of Varo's preferred books by René Daumal also of the same title, published in 1952.[52] Villarreal also looks at Varo's library and, based on the marks or drawing of lines in certain paragraphs of interest to her, makes interesting connections between Varo's paintings and readings selected by Varo herself. He confirms that 'para ella [Varo] la literatura no es pura, sino que está tejida con otras textualidades esotéricas, psicoanalíticas, cosmonólogicas, etcétera: la literatura no constituye para Varo un campo de exégesis, sino de revelación'.[53] The last connection Moreno Villareal makes is with poetry, in particular the German poet and author Novalis (1772- 1801) and Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), authors that exerted a strong influence both on surrealism and on Latin American literature. In a similar vein, 'La llave literaria II', written by Sandra Lisci, focuses on the common aspects in some of Varo's paintings, scenes described by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (1900-1944) in *The*

[49] Carmen V. Vidaurre Arenas, 'La exploración de las fuentes de la luz: Remedios Varo', *Memoria del Exilio. Proyecto Clío*. REDER. Red de Estudios y Difusión del Exilio Republicano, 20 <http://clio.rediris.es/exilio/remediosvaro/RemediosVaroarticulo.htm> [Accessed 22 December 2018].
[50] In Sánchez, *Las cinco llaves …*, pp. 113-130.
[51] In Sánchez, *Las cinco llaves …,* pp. 187- 206.
[52] Moreno Villareal, in Sánchez, p. 115.
[53] Moreno Villareal, in Sánchez, p. 118.

Little Prince (1943) and the ideas of Buddhist philosopher Daisetz T. Suzuki (1870-1966). Another comparative study on Remedios Varo that acknowledges an 'intertextual' element is Carmen V. Vidaurre Arenas's article 'La exploración de las fuentes de la luz: Remedios Varo'.[54] The article starts by carrying out an analysis of Varo's *El flautista* (1955) which, according to Vidaurre, contains elements from various sources: the attention to detail is reminiscent of Flemish realism (fifteen - seventeen centuries), while the elongated shape of the central character can be compared to that of El Greco's figures; also, the figure is dressed as if it belongs to the Medieval epoch. Another influence, also noted by Kaplan,[55] is that of painter Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) as both artists use a type of theatricality when depicting the scene.[56] Regarding the literary influence for this painting the source seems to have been *The Pied Piper of Hamelin.*[57] This article is compelling in its argument, showing how Varo takes on known legends but deconstructs them to give the story a new meaning. While it is true that Vidaurre Arenas acknowledges the important role that experience and the artist's biography play in her artistic production, my thesis challenges the view that individual experience can fully determine the meaning of Varo's *oeuvre*.[58] Vidaurre Arenas also asserts that literature was not a mere source of inspiration, and mentions some of Varo's writings such as *Lady Milagra* (1942), *Costumbres tropicales*,[59] and *De Homo Rodans* (1959). The article represents a good starting point for a discussion about the presence of literature in

[54] Vidaurre Arenas, http://clio.rediris.es/exilio/remediosvaro/RemediosVaroarticulo.htm.
[55] 'Among the artists whose influence can be felt in Varo's work is Surrealism's great progenitor, Giorgio de Chirico. Although de Chirico can be cited as a source for much of Surrealism, there are also specific similarities between his work and Varo's that bear closer examination', Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 206.
[56] See, for example, *El vidente* (1915)
[57] This reading of the painting is controversial; as Magnolia Rivera explains, 'investigadores de la obra de esta artista han confundido, […] estas claras referencias. Por ejemplo, Carmen Vidaurre ha supuesto que, al pintar el óleo *El flautista de Hamelín* retratando a un músico que "construye en lugar de destruir", cuando en realidad la pintora lo único que ha hecho es retomar una constante de la mitología celta', Rivera, p. 31.
[58] 'Estos elementos que proceden de la experiencia individual son meras huellas textuales de una vida, no son lo fundamental en los cuadros y su significación depende del texto mismo y de las relaciones que establecen con el resto de los signos de la obra plástica, no determinan la significación de las obras', Vidaurre Arenas, http://clio.rediris.es/exilio/remediosvaro/RemediosVaroarticulo.htm.
[59] Never published.

Varo's work but it also strongly conveys the need for a more holistic and interartistic approach to Varo's artistic production. Many of the references included in this comparative scholarship will be crucial to my own interartistic readings and analysis in the chapters that follow.

Although Varo's writings have been mentioned previously when referring to some of her paintings, there are two books published to date that fully focus on this aspect and that are keystones for my thesis: Isabel Castells's *Cartas, sueños y otros textos*,[60] and, more recently, Edith Mendoza Bolio's '*A veces escribo como si trazase un boceto': Los escritos de Remedios Varo.*[61] Castells is the first to contextualise Varo's literary work within her artistic trajectory, at the same time as collecting together most, if not all, of her written legacy. Castells also acknowledges that

> existe una asombrosa unidad entre su pintura y su escritura porque, aparte de la existencia de imágenes y motivos comunes […] la coincidencia más llamativa consiste precisamente en la utilización de un estilo transparente, académicamente perfecto, para la presentación de un universo siempre inestable y mutante, angustioso e impredecible la mayoría de veces.[62]

Mendoza Bolio further extends the analysis of Varo's writings by classifying them as follows: on the one hand the texts that Varo herself published (e.g. *De Homo Rodans*); on the other the personal/intimate texts (letters to her family and friends, dreams, recipes, ….); and finally focuses on Varo's play *El santo cuerpo grasoso*, written in collaboration with her friend Leonora Carrington. In general, Mendoza Bolio provides a detailed outline of the content of these texts, contextualises them within Varo's *oeuvre*, and undertakes a genealogical analysis in order to detect the most pronounced literary strategies. Together with the analysis of these texts, Mendoza Bolio also finds common

[60] Isabel Castells, *Remedios Varo: Cartas, sueños y otros textos* (México: Era, 1997).
[61] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*.
[62] Castells, p. 31.

aspects that are shared with Varo's pictorial work such as technological invention or science, alchemical transformations, characters with long beards, the construction of the house, spiritual quests, and nature, among others. Mendoza Bolio's analysis enables us to apprehend Varo's literary production at a deeper level, as her analysis undertakes a perspective that seeks to present her work 'como un todo, como unidad significativa a la que hemos considerado como un constructo creativo'.[63] These two books by Castells and Mendoza Bolio will be essential sources for Chapter Two and Chapter Four of this thesis.

Conclusion

As can be seen, all of the studies discussed here have attempted to include different aspects of Varo's interartistic output. However, there is no single study that has set out to thoroughly explore her works from a fully interartistic perspective. Regarding the necessity to carry out an interartistic analysis through an interdisciplinary methodology such as mine, William Condee reminds us that

> The goal of interdisciplinary studies, […] is not just to look at the same objects from a new perspective (as valuable as that may be), but to examine new objects that have previously not been considered noteworthy or sufficiently related to the discipline, and to do so in new ways.[64]

It is for this particular reason that the full range of Remedios Varo's production ought to be taken into account and studied interrelatedly: to ask new questions and find new answers as 'interdisciplinarity offers the opportunities for new questions, new tools, and

[63] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …,* p. 40.
[64] Charles Buchanan, 'Interdisciplinarity Defined', *Ohio.Edu*, 2018 <https://www.ohio.edu/finearts/interarts/about/interdisciplinarity.cfm> [Accessed 20 August 2018].

new objects'.[65] Comparative studies have been more common; as seen above, her paintings have been analysed in relation to other writers or artists as a means to uncover points of similarity with other exiled contemporaries. However, while there are compelling examples, as seen in the paragraphs presented above, it is important to go beyond tracing the relationship between writing and painting, because, as Kaplan asserts, Varo's aims in crossing artistic and disciplinary boundaries were more far-reaching:

> Having dealt with anthropology, she intended to continue the project, addressing herself to medicine, chemistry, astronomy and others. However, only *De Homo Rodans* was completed; the rest were left unfinished after her death.[66]

All of the other projects and writings that Varo produced along with her paintings were more than mere experiments for her; they formed parts of a whole. Hence, they deserve to be seen, if not as parallel to her paintings, at least discovered, brought forward to the world and analysed in order to further comprehend the figure of Remedios Varo. The following chapter will focus on the analysis of Varo's only finished play written in collaboration with friend Leonora Carrington to examine the ways in which her arrival in Mexico and her relationship with other European exiles framed her interartistic output, contributing to challenge the ways she envisioned Europe, Mexico and art itself.

[65] Charles Buchanan, 'Interdisciplinarity Defined', *Ohio.Edu*, 2018 <https://www.ohio.edu/finearts/interarts/about/interdisciplinarity.cfm> [Accessed 20 August 2018].
[66] Kaplan, *Unexpected Journeys: The Art and Life of Remedios Varo*, p. 258.

Chapter Two

Mattering maps: Spaces for/of Co-Creation in Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo's *El santo cuerpo grasoso*

2.1. Introduction

This chapter sets out to analyse one of the most intriguing literary pieces by Remedios Varo from an interartistic perspective, the play *El santo cuerpo grasoso* (est. 1947). In doing so, it offers an account of Remedios Varo's life: her arrival to Mexico and the relationship with other exiled artists of the period, in particular British artist Leonora Carrington and Hungarian photographer Kati Horna. It also offers a brief evaluation of the place of theatre and performance within surrealism. The aspects of the play that are considered in the analysis that follows are mainly the gender reversal taking place through characterization; the relationships within the play; the cultural elements including language and music, as well as an overview of the exotic landscape in which the play is set and the ritualistic practices that dominate its argument.

The relationship between Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo has been of interest to many scholars.[1] More recently, it has come to be of relevance following the publication of Varo's writings, in particular, Mendoza Bolio's '*A veces escribo como si trazase un boceto'*, where among other of Varo's texts, the first genetic and critical edi-

[1] See for example, Maria José González Madrid, 'Estoy lavando una gatita rubia, pero no es cierto, parece más bien que es Leonora...: la amistad creativa de Remedios Varo y Leonora Carrington', *Nierika: Revista de Estudios de Arte*, 1. 1 (2012), 26-42; also Juncal Caballero Guiral, *Hechiceras: Un viaje a la vida y la obra de Remedios Varo y Leonora Carrington* (Asturias: Ediciones Trea, S.L., 2018).

tions of the play are available to the wider public.[2] Mendoza Bolio's analysis enables the reader to understand on a deeper level the basic elements of the play such as the structure, themes, character, space, sound, and lighting, and sets out the initial collaborative context in which the play was written, showcasing the different devices that the artists utilised, in order to create the magical universe in which *El santo cuerpo grasoso* is located. Another analysis of the play can be found in Tara Plunkett's chapter in *Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-garde*, published in 2017.[3] Plunkett's situates the play within surrealism and the Mexican avant-garde, while mainly discussing the use of hybrid bodies or hybridization as a deliberate tool for the subversion and parody of limiting gendered stereotypes. María José González Madrid in her article 'Leonora Carrington y Remedios Varo: alquimia, pintura y amistad creativa', also published in 2017, provides an interesting overview of Carrington and Varo's shared interests in alchemy, magical knowledge, and occultism.[4] Although González Madrid mainly focuses on the comparative analysis of some of their paintings, she does also mention Carrington's *The Hearing Trumpet* and *Down Below*,[5] with insightful commentary on the artists' shared creativity and imagination.

Partially inspired by these recent enquiries into Varo and Carrington's creative and interartistic outputs, and keeping in mind that, as Plunkett affirms, the analysis of the artists' play 'is useful in helping us to position Carrington and Varo within the local

[2] An English translation of Varo's writings was published at the end of 2018, and therefore not in time to include in this thesis. See Margaret Carson, *Remedios Varo: Letters, Dreams, and Other Writings* (Cambridge, Massachuset: Wakefield Press, 2018).
[3] Tara Plunkett, 'Dissecting the Holy Oily Body: Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and *El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso*', in *Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
[4] María José González Madrid, 'Leonora Carrington y Remedios Varo: alquimia, pintura y amistad creativa' , SHJ VII, 1. 5, *Leonora 1917* (2018) <http://studiahermetica.com>.
[5] Leonora Carrington, *Down Below*, introd. by Marina Warner, (New York: New York Review Books, 2017); Leonora Carrington, *The Hearing Trumpet* (London, UK: Penguin Modern Classics, 2010).

context of contemporary Mexican avant-gardes',[6] this chapter will examine the ways in which Varo and Carrington's act of co-creativity — their writing of *El santo cuerpo grasoso* — aids in the construction and negotiation of a new place, empowering and positioning themselves within maps that matter. A mattering map is 'a socially determined structure of affect which defines the things that do and can matter to those living within that map'.[7] They also 'chart the places or experiences of affect, locating what it is that the individual cares about, invests in, and construct how they experience the world'.[8] Hence, the term 'map' is here understood as a theoretical and ideological metaphor rather than a physical and visual device. The terms 'place' and 'space' are highly embedded within this notion of the mattering map, central to the argument of this chapter. I choose to adhere to Grossberg's formulations of these terms: 'places are the sites of stability where people can stop and act, the markers of their affective investments' while 'spaces are the parameters of the mobility of people and practices'.[9]

The later theoretical formulations of Gloria Anzaldúa offer alternative political modes of reading the gender reversals and hybridity of Varo and Carrington's play.[10] Although there is not the same level of subversion of gender/class/race critique, nevertheless there is a clear radical play on gender and a reversal of western and non-western worldviews. In fact, Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* could also be seen as a sort of mattering map given that 'Anzaldúa's project is one of discursive self-formation'; in other words 'through writing she constructs a consciousness of difference, not in adversarial relation

[6] Tara Plunkett, 'Dissecting the Holy Oily Body: Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and *El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso*', in *Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-Garde* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 72-90 (p. 73).
[7] Lawrence Grossberg, *We gotta get out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 398.
[8] Caroline Alexandra Stevens, 'Making Art Matter: Narrating the Collaborative Creative Process' (unpublished PhD, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, 2001), p. 10.
[9] Grossberg, p. 295.
[10] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

to the "same" but as what Alarcon calls the "site of multiple voicings"'.[11] Taking both Grossberg and Anzaldúa to theoretically frame my analysis, I will try to show how both Carrington and Varo manage to construct their mattering map through the analysis of the different elements of the play such as characterization, setting, (perceived) theatrical stage, imagined landscape, and language, acknowledging the performative dimension of the play and its juxtaposition with the socio-political context in which the play is created: Mexico city. The relationship between exile and theatre is also a strong one in terms of identity formation, given that both Carrington and Varo carried out this project from a position of exile, and that they both came from different countries. In this regard,

> *Subjective aspects of struggle* ... [that] moment in subjective flux when social subjects […] Produce accounts of who they are, as conscious political agents, that is, constitutes themselves, politically... Subjects are contradictory, 'in process', fragmented, produced. But human beings and social movements also strive to produce some coherence and continuity, and through this, exercise some control over feelings, conditions and destinies.[12]

Given the interartistic focus of this thesis, other works by the artists will come into consideration. The next section will focus on the co-creative aspect of the play.

[11] Lamia Khalil Hammad, 'Border Identity Politics: The New Mestiza in Borderlands', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2. 3 (2010), 302-308 (p. 304).
[12] Richard Johnson, 'What is Cultural Studies Anyway?', *Social Text*, 6. 1 (1987), 38-80 (p. 69).

2.2. Surrealist Co-creativity or Female Coalition?

> Rewriting history around the issue of gender, is not about reversing the 'facts', whatever they may be, it is about taking both public and private representations and estimations of women's place in art among the determinants both of the artists' self and of her art.
>
> Anne Wagner[13]

There are many things that make *El santo cuerpo grasoso* interesting, the first being that it was written as a result of a creative collaboration between two friends, in the specific context of exile and within a country marked by strong post-colonial attributes, with a variety and mixture of intercultural identities already at play. Regarding artistic co-creation, it is not new to link surrealism with the act of co-creation or collaboration. An early example of this is the notorious game *cadavres exquis* in which it is known Varo herself participated.[14] As Herbert Gershman explains, 'surrealist games were a method by which they might detach themselves from the world' and 'a gesture of defiance directed at the world of reality'.[15] The idea of co-creation — or even collaboration — can be seen to be intrinsic to the surrealist movement: 'surrealists from the inception of the movement in the early 1920s produced works in collaboration'.[16] In 1994, a book based on artistic collaboration within surrealism entitled *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism and Partnership* was published.[17] It is interesting to note that the cover for this book is Varo's painting *Los amantes* (1963), which seems appropriate, as the focus appears very much to be on how romantic partnership was 'used' by women artists to

[13] Anne Wagner, 'Lee Krasner as L.K.', *Representations*, 25 (1989), 42-57 (p. 47).
[14] 'A game played withfolded paper where each player collaborates in creating a drawing or a sentence without knowing what the other two or three participants have produced', Hubert, p. 7.
[15] Herbert Gershman, 'Toward Defining the Surrealist Aesthetic', *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, 2 (1966), 47-56 (pp. 51-52).
[16] Hubert, p. 7. Co-creation was central to surrealism from the beginning. The 'exquisite corpse' method *(cadavre exquis*) being the most obvious example but also automatic writing which was also collaborative – the Champs Magnetiques by Soupault and Breton, are an example of this. Rapti Vassiliki in his *Ludics in Surrealist Theatre and Beyond* also confirms that these 'surrealist games were a method by which they might detach themselves from the world', (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2013), p. 5.
[17] Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors.*

promote their work.[18] Needless to say, both Varo and Carrington have a chapter each, on their relationships with partners Benjamin Péret and Max Ernst, respectively. The author, Renäe Riese Hubert himself explains that 'women artists, to function creatively, relied on partners whose ideals they could share and with whom they could participate in path-breaking experiments'.[19] However, although it might be true that their partnerships with these surrealist artists allowed Varo and Carrington to 'enter' into and 'educate' themselves within the surrealist group, neither artist ever fully committed to one male partner and worked until the end of their lives on being independent from them.[20] Thus, the emphasis of Hubert's book on collaboration between male and female can be seen to be both limiting and restrictive with regard to female creative authority. Furthermore, the term 'rely' is overly limiting, in its suggestion of dependency, when interpreting how artistic and intimate relationships really functioned. Sharing this partnership and art focus, Whitney Chadwick's aptly titled *Significant Others* explores the systems that developed between creativity and intimate relationships, and once more Carrington and Ernst are the protagonists of one of its chapters.[21] In Chadwick's case, however, the focus on couples — different and same-sex — moves slightly away from the surrealist context, asking 'how do two creative people escape or not the constraints of this framework and construct an alternative story?'.[22] Regardless of this early scrutiny of artistic partnership, 'the issue of collaboration has to be closely examined and reconsidered in every instance',[23] given that the focus on art and couples has usually been seen from this intimate context. Between Carrington and Varo, a true artistic friendship

[18] Chadwick agrees, 'Since the 1920s women, if not women artists, had found their way to Surrealism through personal, often romantic, connections with members of the group', Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), p. 55.
[19] Hubert, p. 1.
[20] Varo decided to stay in Mexico when Péret returned to France, given the political unrest in Mexico at the time, and Carrington moved to the U.S. with her sons, leaving her last husband Chiki Weisz behind for a number of years.
[21] Chadwick, *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991). Remedios Varo does not appear in this book.
[22] Chadwick, *Significant Others*, p. 7.
[23] Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors*, p. 11.

was forged, one that deserves to be examined closely because, as has been recognised by both and mentioned by other academics, it appears to have been a relationship based on their interartistic ideas and creative principles.[24] Hence, *El santo cuerpo grasoso* can be considered an ideal text through which to explore their artistic relationship, given that it is a play that seems to directly address and challenge the function of these relationships, as well as being a window onto feminine experience. A thorough analysis of the play will also allow a better understanding of these female artists and their relationship with surrealism, the art and socio-historical and, more specifically, the Mexican context.[25] The following section will set the context for Varo and Carrington's co-creation, exploring how they first met and the development of their relationship, alongside their place within surrealism as well as the genre of theatre. The rest of the chapter will focus on the analysis of *El santo cuerpo grasoso*, looking closely at its plot, characterization, use of language, and setting — which, as will be seen, function as aspects that aid in seeing co-creation not only as a form of feminist coalition, but also as a process of artistic empowerment and agency.

[24] As Chadwick confirms: 'More significant for the history of women artists […] were the artistic results of the close emotional and spiritual relationship that developed between Carrington and Varo at this time and that propelled their work into a maturity distinguished by powerful and unique sensibilities newly independent of earlier influences of other Surrealist painters. The two, once friends in France, now became fellow travellers on a long and intense journey that led them to explore the deepest resources of their creative lives'; *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 194.

[25] Further possibilities emerge when collective art-making, or collaborative art is seen as a space where social, cultural and personal issues arise, transforming the art itself into a political act. As Stevens explains 'Collective art making is a space for the linking of personal and social concerns, and apparatus for political action', p. 11.

2.3. Setting the Context: Blossoming through art - A friendship in Mexico

> Sus vidas transcurren de manera paralela, […] ya que son múltiples sus lazos de unión: ambas son las hijas únicas entre hijos varones y su educación se realiza en colegios religiosos.
>
> Juncal Caballero Guiral[26]

Leonora Carrington and Remedios Varo are considered to belong to the surrealist movement, but if one is to look more closely at their works there are as many differences as there are similarities between their art and surrealist principles.[27] As Tara Plunkett explains: 'Each artist that made her way to the place of Surrealism par excellence conjured her or his own vision of this new home'.[28] There are also similar themes and imagery that emergein the study of Varo and Carrington's works; however, they both developed a unique artistic personality.[29] Varo and Carrington met sometime during 1942 but this was not their first encounter; they had previously met in Paris in 'una reunión llena de gente',[30] most likely in a surrealist meeting given both artists' connection to the surrealist circle: Varo's relationship with Benjamin Péret (1899-1959) and Carrington's relationship with Max Ernst (1891-1976).

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[26] Caballero Guiral, p. 18.

[27] 'The aesthetics of both artists fits comfortably within the focus of international surrealism at this time'; Plunkett, 'Dissecting "The Holy Oily Body": Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso', p. 76. Also note that in the case of Carrington, she 'regularly insisted that she never formally "belonged" to the surrealist movement; nor did she ever fully reject it', Plunkett, p. 9.

[28] Tara Plunkett, 'Dissecting 'The Holy Oily Body': Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso', p. 73.

[29] Some common themes include: metamorphosis, animal imagery and alchemy, as well as magic. There are also particular works that are astonishingly similar, further confirming the artistic relationship both artists shared at the time. See for example, Carrington's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1945) and Varo's *Ascensión al Monte Análogo* (1960), or Carrington's *Good King Dagobert* (1948) and Varo's *Papilla Estelar* (1958). Ara H. Merjian confirms that 'the two artists' *oeuvres* carry out an ongoing dialogue through a range of images, even as they differ in scale, subject and the handling of surface', 'Genealogical Gestation: Leonora Carrington between Modernism and Art History', in Jonathan P. Eburne and Catriona McAra, *Leonora Carrington and the International Avant-Garde*, p. 53.

[30] In an interview with Leonora Carrington, published in Mexico, she was asked '<¿Qué extraña de esa época? Extraño a Remedios. Era muy inteligente. Nos conocimos en París, en una reunión llena de gente. Aquí nos volvimos a encontrar>', A. Ponce, 'Leonora Carrington: El mundo es enormemente misterioso',*México su apuesta por la cultura* (México: Revista Proceso, 2011), p. 75. <https://www.proceso.com.mx/271180/el-mundo-es-enormemente-misterioso-carrington> [Accessed 23 December 2018].

While Varo, as has been explained in the introduction to this thesis, was born in Spain in 1908, Leonora Carrington was born in 1917 in Lancashire, England, to a wealthy family. She was the only girl among four brothers, and while they were all sent to school at an early age, she was educated in the home by a governess until the age of 12, when she was sent to have religious education at a boarding school.[31] However, she was expelled from two different convents, given that as, one of the nuns put it, she was unteachable.[32] Eventually, after acknowledging Leonora's artistic ambition, her parents agreed to enroll her in The Chelsea School of Art. In 1937 Leonora met German surrealist artist Max Ernst — 20 years her senior — at one of the main surrealist exhibitions in London.[33] The couple moved to Paris in August 1937, despite the strong and threatening opposition from Leonora's father. Later, in 1941, Ernst was taken as a prisoner to a concentration camp and Leonora escaped to Spain. After a traumatic experience in a psychiatric hospital in Santander, she eventually managed to flee to New York, and shortly after that, to Mexico in 1942.[34]

On their arrival in Mexico — Varo in 1941 and Carrington in 1942 — both artists became acquainted with other European exiles, and together, they formed a close and exclusive group whose friendships were to have an impact on the rest of their lives.[35] Although we do not have specific facts on how or where Carrington and Varo met, we do know that they both instantly established a close connection when they re-encountered again in Mexico. In this regard, Chadwick explains that,

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[31] The religious upbringing is something that the two artists have in common.
[32] Joanna Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington* (Virago, 2017), p. 45.
[33] These included works by several other surrealists such as Breton, Dalí and Magritte.
[34] For more on Carrington's traumatic experience in Santander, see her text, *Down Below*, with introduction by Marina Warner (New York: New York Review Books, 2017).
[35] 'Carrington and Varo soon became the centre of a group of European artists that included the Hungarians Günther Gerzso and Enrique "Chiqui" Weisz (who would become Carrington's second husband), the photographers Kati Horna and Eva Sulzer. Luis Buñuel was there periodically, as were former Surrealists now settled in Mexico like Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon, and a few years later, Gordon Onslow-Ford', Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 191.

> For the first time in the history of the collective movement called Surrealism, two women would collaborate in attempting to develop a new pictorial language that spoke more directly to their own needs. "Remedios's presence in Mexico changed my life," Carrington recently recalled, adding that she saw Varo and Péret almost every day.[36]

In general, gender subordination has been identified as a major factor of women's experience while in exile and was no less the case with Carrington and Varo — both in terms of their relationship with Mexican society and their position within their own exiled communities. However, together in Mexico they also had the opportunity for a fresh start, one that was not as restrictive to them as women or as surrealists. As Moorhead explains, 'domesticity seemed not to limit their lives, their outsider status, as Europeans, meant they were not bound by the usual rules ascribed to women in macho Mexican society'.[37] Hence they were somewhat inside a protective bubble in which they could have relatively more freedom than other Mexican women artists availed of at that time.[38] What is more, from an artistic perspective, now that they were away from Europe — and Paris — and the male-centred surrealist circle where women's role was recurrently either that of the *femme-enfant* or the *femme-fatale*, they could finally let their imagination and artistic invention run free of any conventions, and just create.[39]

Theatre is a genre that both artists were in contact with, before and after writing *El santo cuerpo grasoso*, but generally as costume and set designers. In the case of Reme-

[36] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 194.
[37] Moorhead, *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington*, p. 357.
[38] For example, Frida Kahlo was shadowed by Rivera. That freedom was within domestic space though, as they did not exhibit until the 1950s. Van Raay, explains that 'inevitably, the Europeans clung together and created their own world in Colonia Roma in Mexico City, where Varo and Péret, Kati and José Horna and, after her amicable divorce with Renato Leduc, Carrington and her new husband Chiqui Weisz settled in very close vinicity to each other', 'Surreal Friends: Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo and Kati Horna', ed. by Stefan Van Raay, Joanna Moorhead and Teresa Arcq, *Surreal Friends: Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo and Kati Horna* (Surrey: Lund Humphries, 2010), p. 14.
[39] 'Breton's very male group, well ensconced in Paris prior to the war, had maintained the women in a peripheral situation, putting them on pedestals as love-partners and muses, and had barely tolerated them as fellow artists and writers', Georgiana M.M. Colvile, 'Temple of the Word: (Post-) Surrealist Women Artists' Literary Production in America and Mexico', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 5 (2011), 1-18 (p. 2).

dios, Beatriz Varo confirms that in Mexico 'hizo siete proyectos de máscaras, realizándolas después, para la obra *La vida es sueño* (1635), de Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), puesta en escena por Álvarez Custodio'(1965).[40] There is also another theatre project by Varo under the name 'Proyecto para una obra teatral', also known as 'Lady Milagra', however, it is difficult to say if it was written before or after *El santo cuerpo grasoso*. In the case of Carrington, her connection with theatre became very strong, together with Octavio Paz, Héctor Mendoza, Juan José Arreola, among others,[41] she belonged to the group *Poesía en Voz Alta* from 1956, in September 1961, her play *Penélope*, directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky, was staged in the Teatro Orientación; and in 1968, she designed the costumes and the set for *El rey se muere* by Ionesco, under Jodorowsky's direction again.[42] It must also be noted that the works of both artists have inspired theatre productions in recent years. In the case of Varo, in July 1996, a play entitled *Visitas inesperadas*, was performed in the Teatro de la Paz under the direction of Martín Acosta. More recently, in 2016, the play *Remedios, una reflexión escénica sobre la vida de Remedios Varo* was staged.[43] The most recent example in relation to Carrington took place in June 2017 during a symposium dedicated to her work, where two plays were performed along with a screening of a short film, *Female, Human, Animal*, all inspired by the figure of the artist and her works.[44]

Another genre closely connected to theatre is, of course, cinema. The Spanish director Luis Buñuel, whose films are also considered surrealist, became acquainted with

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[40] Varo, *Remedios Varo: en el centro del microcosmos*, p. 160.
[41] Luis Mario Moncada, *Así Pasan: Efemérides Teatrales 1900-2000* (México D.F.: Escenología, A.C., 2007), p. 214.
[42] More examples of this could be included here. In fact, Carrington's *Penélope* was staged again in 1996. Finally, there are also plays inspired by their relationship as is the case this year in Multiforo Tlalpan, *Remedios para Leonora* <http://carteleradeteatro.mx/2016/remedios-para-leonora/> [Accessed 25 December 2018].
[43] "Remedios – La Capilla" <https://www.teatrolacapilla.com/remedios/> [Accessed 25 December 2018].
[44] "Female Human Animal review – a date with Leonora Carrington" <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2018/oct/03/female-human-animal-review-leonora-carrington-chloe-aridjis> [Accessed 15 December 2018].

both Varo and Carrington while in Mexico. They met Buñuel and even worked with him at different points: Varo created the cover for Buñuel's film, *Un chien andalou*, while Carrington shares a rather interesting story with the Spanish director:

> During a party, Luis Buñuel, seduced by Carrington's beauty and emboldened by the notion that she had transcended all bourgeois morality, proposed (with his characteristic bluntness) that she become his mistress. Without even waiting for her answer, he gave her the key to the secret studio that he used as a love nest and told her to meet him at three o'clock the next afternoon. Early the next morning, Leonora went to visit the place alone. She found it tasteless: It looked exactly like a motel room. Taking advantage of the fact that she was in her menstrual period, she covered her hands with blood and used them to make bloody handprints all over the walls in order to provide a bit of decoration for that anonymous, impersonal room. Buñuel never spoke to her again.[45]

Understanding Carrington and Varo's deep connection with theatre and the relevance of performance in their works is of critical importance. It is also an aspect that will emerge again in the course of this thesis. The next section will discuss the play as well as its performative elements which aid in the visualization of a very specific imagined performance and convert the play into a document that traces Varo's transitional period between Europe and Mexico, as well as her relationships in Mexico with the European exiled community.

[45] Alejando Jodorowsky, *The Spiritual Journey of Alejando Jodorowsky*, trans. by Joseph Rowe (Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2008), p. 38.

2.4. *El santo cuerpo grasoso*

> Ella [Varo] y Carrington ideaban toda clase de juegos, experimentos y obras de teatro de los que rebosan los cuadernos de Varo. Con una abierta afición a los cuentos de hadas, colaboraron en una farsa escatológica muy divertida […] a la que le dieron la forma de una complicada obra de teatro en tres actos con directrices para la puesta en escena y finales alternativos, en la que había papeles para muchos de sus amigos.
>
> Janet Kaplan[46]

As Kaplan explains above, *El santo cuerpo grasoso* was probably written as another of the artists' experiments, and is clearly an excellent example of how the exiles came together during their time in Mexico. Although there is not an exact date on the manuscript, Mendoza Bolio estimates that the play was written around 1947.[47] It is also interesting to note that originally the play was not given a title.[48] During this time, the artists did more than just write a play: they wrote letters to complete strangers, designed toys for their children (Horna's and Carrington's) and cooked and experimented with surrealist-inspired recipes, among other things.[49] For them, 'the kitchen was a laboratory', not a limiting space imposed by social conventions, but a place where they could freely carry out their artistic experimentations.[50] Katharine Conley also mentions this culinary

[46] Kaplan, *Viajes inesperados: …*, p. 96.
[47] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 104.
[48] Mendoza Bolio, p. 105.
[49] In a recent symposium in Edge Hill University dedicated to the centenary of Carrington's birth, I got the chance to speak with Carrington's eldest son, Gabriel Weisz Carrington. He confirmed to me that both his mother and Varo loved cooking and experimenting with cooking, more so than painting.
Chadwick also explains that during this time 'the two women built and furnished a small model living room, perhaps as a maquette for a design project but perhaps just for pleasure, filling it with painted cardboard and papier-mâché furniture', Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 195.
[50] Moorhead, p. 363. Much has been written on this connection between the culinary arts and other forms of domestic activity for both artists. In the case of Leonora, see, for example, Katharine Conley, 'Carrington's Kitchen', *Papers of Surrealism*, 10 (2013), 1-18; Chadwick also agrees that 'Cooking and eating play decisive roles in both women's writing; in one of Varo's unpublished stories, the characters are instructed to follow recipes (formulas) carefully to avoid bad consequences. Her notebooks contain recipes designed to scare away "the inopportune dreams, insomnia and the deserts of sands moving under the bed" and those arranged to encourage other kinds of nocturnal experiences', Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 201.

aspect of Carrington's work: 'Eating, if not cooking, plays a significant role in Carrington's short stories'.[51] The method in which by was written also reflects this experimental aspect of their work, and it allows us to further comprehend how it was that the artists created their vision of the play. It is the famous *cadavres exquis* taking place, but this time taking the form of a play: the manuscript is divided into three acts with a number of short scenes each, every scene containing either Carrington or Varo's handwriting alternately. Act I, Scenes 1 and 2 have Carrington's handwriting while Scenes 3,4 and 5 have Varo's; Act II is fully written by Carrington; and finally Act III has only Varo's writing.[52]

What is *El santo cuerpo grasoso* about? The play is set in a fictional place named Cacatorres, where there is a Queen — Nesfatalina — who organizes a contest to find a suitor for her daughter Pelomiel, the Princess. The contest is concerned with a magical substance that, when applied to the buttocks of the contestants, reveals their true soul. Matters become more complicated when the Queen and the Princess fall in love with the same man, a pilot who has crashed the plane into a nearby mountain. Different events unfold and the pilot ends up murdering the royal scientist, Scatijeras. However, the scientist comes back from the dead and, disguised as the pilot, manages to win the contest and marry the princess himself. The plot, and the different elements of the play, as will be seen later on, can be categorised, in tune with Plunkett's analysis, mainly as surrealist but also as containing traces from the traditions of Theatre of Cruelty, Theatre of the Absurd, Artaud's notion of alchemical theatre and some Brechtian characteris-

[51] Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Women in Surrealism* (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 54. This is an aspect also mentioned by Whitney Chadwick in *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, pp. 201-02.
[52] As published in Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, it is 48 pages long including the alternative ending to Scene III.

tics.[53] But there are also many other new elements that will allow us to understand further how these artists managed to build their own mattering map through the process of co-creation, such as the domestic relationships that emerge from the play, its transcultural/intercultural essence, language, music and hybridity, and overall its exotic setting and ritualistic aspect.

2.4.1. Characterization

> *En el Ms las autoras incluyen el nombre de las personas que representarían algunos de los personajes: Chiqui Weisz (esposo de Leonora Carrington) y José Horna (esposo de Kati Horna) se encargarían de los personajes femeninos, la reina Nesfatalina y la princesa Pelomiel, respectivamente; Leonora Carrington y Remedios Varo de los personajes masculinos, Perico Verde y Scatijeras; y el papel de Jon von Aguilota lo realizaría Jean Nicolle (amigo íntimo de Remedios Varo).*[54]

In the original manuscript, the authors included the names of the actors who would take on some of the main roles. There are seven main characters: the Reina Nesfatalina and her daughter Pelomiel; the 'leading man' Don Jon Von Aguilota; the court healer, Scatijeras, the royal scientist; a servant by the name of Perico Verde; a Chango negro — Scatijeras's soul; and the royal surgeon Doctor Pon Fruta. In the notes to the original manuscript, Carrington's husband and Horna's husband were to take on the feminine roles — the Queen and the Princess — while the authors themselves would play the male roles — Scatijeras and Perico Verde. Don Jon Von Aguilota was to be the only character faithful to its gender: the only male role played by a male actor, Varo's close friend Jean Nicolle. We are not told who would play Doctor Pon Fruta, or any of the

[53] The surrealists themselves had a controversial relationship with theatre from its beginnings in the 1920s. The notion of alchemical theatre fits very well with Carrington and Varo's play as one can say that at its foundation is the alchemical transformation thats takes place at the contest.
[54] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 233 (footnote 'a').

other ‘extras’, such as the guards or *zopilotes* as they call them, or the participants in the contest to win the Princess’s hand.

Regarding this role reversal, Plunkett asserts that,

> The artists make a wry statement on what they perceived as limiting caricatures of female identity, yet they anchored their subversion within a surrealist framework, thus demonstrating the ambiguous and at times contradictory nature of their relationship with the surrealist movement.[55]

This role reversal, as stated in the quotation above, can be interpreted as a caustic comment on the limitations of gender roles — both within and beyond the theatre, but one must also keep in mind that for the surrealists, performance was a very important aspect.[56] One way of achieving this was through becoming the ‘other’. Hence, the artists are taking gender, and in particular womanhood, to a performative level to play with limiting gender stereotypes but still keeping within surrealist ideals while at the same time negotiating their own identities as women artists. Furthermore, Alisa Salomon in her *Re-dressing the Canon* asserts that, as is usually the norm, ‘woman’s roles are male creation’.[57] However, in *El santo cuerpo grasoso* male roles are now woman’s creation; in particular, the burlesque roles of Nesfatalina and Pelomiel, which can be seen to take on two of the only roles assigned to women within the surrealist movement: the *femme-fatale* and the *femme-enfant*, given that ‘when males play women […] the male actor becomes the fetishized female’.[58] The genre of theatre plays a key role in allowing this role reversal to take place, as Solomon explains: ‘indeed the mutability of human identi-

[55] Plunkett, ‘Dissecting the Holy Oily Body: Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso’, p. 74.
[56] ‘By re-creating the unconscious world in a physical form, surrealism forms a bridge between the dream world and reality’, Jacquelyn Yvonne White, ‘The Surrealist Woman: the Art of Remedios Varo’, *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects* (2014), p. 6.
[57] Alisa Solomon, *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theatre and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 7.
[58] Solomon, p. 11.

ty promised by theatre […] is precisely what makes theatre the queerest art'.[59] As will be seen through the analysis that follows, this gender reversal may function equally as a subversion of surrealist conventions as well as constituting a form of hybridity and/or androgyneity, produced by the continuous use of mimicry and disguise that is present throughout the entire play and that must also be seen in relation to the place of creation, Mexico, considered to be the hybrid place *par excellence*. As Vasconcelos explains:

> Perhaps there is no other nation on earth where you can find, in the same accentuated form, a coexistence of human types separated by centuries and even by epochs of ethnographic development - people different in blood, race, tradition and habits.[60]

Let us now explore what kinds of relationships are forged among these characters.

2.4.2. Relationships

> ¡Silencio, hija! Pelomiel, peluda paloma, eres más idiota que un rábano.[61]

From the beginning of the play it seems clear that the Queen is the dominant character; however, as this section will explore in detail, things are not always what they seem. In Scene II, Nesfatalina appears with her daughter Princess Pelomiel enquiring about the magical elixir to the royal scientist, Scatijeras. It is obvious from the very beginning that the way Nesfatalina treats Pelomiel can be directly compared with the way Scatijeras

[59] 'The link between female impersonation and theatre - indeed, their codependence - remained a visible and potentially risible feature of Greek theatre', Solomon, p. 2.
[60] José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio, *Aspects of Mexican Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1926), p. 3.
[61] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 235.

treats Perico: Pelomiel and Perico are both continuously ill-treated and insulted throughout the play. As seen when the Queen investigates the elixir while Pelomiel refers to it as a colourless liquid with the smell of a sausage: '¿Para qué sirve esta grasa de olor de salchicha? No veo más que líquido. ¡Ni siquiera tiene color!'.[62] We could understand this as another 'game', one that has domestic relationships at its centre. If we consider that Perico seems to be the only 'sensible' character and that, in fact, as will be seen, has predictive powers as he foresees certain fatalities throughout the play, this ill-treatment or continuous dismissal mostly carried out by the scientist towards Perico, can be understood as an attempt to disregard 'the voice of reason', to allow the fantastic to take centre stage in the play. What is more, Perico Verde at times takes on the role that the chorus held in Greek tragedies. As is well known, the chorus was usually confined to the backstage or orchestra as an observer of events, a position adopted by Perico Verde who contemplates some scenes from 'his' egg, and although he does not dance and sing as the chorus used to do — maybe in keeping with his sensible and sane personality in the play — he does indeed act as a buffer between the actor and the audience.[63] In the case of Pelomiel, the fact that she is ill-treated can be read as more directly connected to the idea of a male actor dressed as a woman and taking on the role of the *femme-enfant*. As Xaviére Gauthier explains the role of woman-child in surrealism:

> To want a woman to remain a child is to want her to remain dependent. She is the lounge doll that is laced in a protective case for fear that she may get ruined […] If she seems out of time it is because she does nothing. Time cannot have a dimension or novelty or creativity for her; useless, with no project to occupy herself, her thoughts are in a perpetual dream-state. Moreover, man feels strong and virile in his role as protector of this weak ingénue.[64]

[62] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 235.
[63] For more on the role of the Chorus, see Albert Weiner, 'The Function of the Tragic Greek Chorus', *Theatre Journal*, 32. 2 (1980), 205-212 (p. 205).
[64] Xaviére Gauthier, *Surrealismo y sexualidad*, trans. by Oscar del Barco (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Corregidor, 1976), p. 79.

Hence, Pelomiel can be seen as this woman-child through her actions: dancing as if in a trance, playing with a ball, asking child-like questions, and so on. Also, this innocent childish attitude of Pelomiel is emphasised when contrasted with that of the Queen, who, as will be seen later on, acts as a type of *femme-fatale* in the play. Through this process, men become women who take on two of the only roles assigned to women in surrealism, and women become 'intelligent', androgynous individuals: one becoming a scientist (Varo) and the other a 'sensible bird' with powers of prediction (Carrington). Regarding this androgyneity, Katharine Conley explains that it was also an early feature taken on by surrealism:

> With the idealization of the Androgyne myth, male surrealists anticipate this fluidity of identity in woman in Surrealism by theoretically inviting a certain collapse of boundaries between themselves and their ideal, complementary.[65]

This statement speaks to both the surrealist context as already outlined and the performativity of surrealist practice more generally,[66] but also and perhaps more importantly, given the aims of this chapter, to the artist's socio-cultural and domestic context at that time in Mexico. By this I mean that, on the one hand, the authors were active and creative within their own lives and did not depend or rely on men to express and push their creative boundaries and, on the other, that they were forged within a certain European intellectual discourse of femininity which proved to be more malleable once in a Mexican context. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* also dwells on both personal experience and present and past connections to both people and history:

> The autobiographical experience is fundamental for Anzaldúa as she constantly refers to it in her work. But she does not forget the multiple connections she main-

[65] Katharine Conley, *Automatic Woman: The Representation of Woman in Surrealism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), p. 54.

[66] Read as a type of surrealist 'universal bisexuality' connected with the gender masquerade on which the play is strongly based. See Sigmund Freud, 'Hysterical Phantasies and their Relation to Bisexuality' (1908), in *The Pelican Freud Library*, ed. by Angela Richards, trans. by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 87-94 (p. 10).

> tains with other women, queer or heterosexual, with the land, with her family, with her personal past and the deep past of her people (reaching far back to the time of the Aztecs).[67]

In this sense, there is a certain kinship between Varo's new identity construction through the performative aspect of the play and Anzaldúa's notion of *mestizaje*, also seen in the notion of hybridity and transculturation that will be discussed later in the chapter. In *El santo cuerpo grasoso* it seems clear, that men — represented through Chiqui Weisz and José Horna — have now become contained within the same limits imposed on women at the time, and that the artists have granted themselves the right to be autonomous, independent selves, empowering themselves but most of all re-formulating relationships, in particular domestic ones, as a way to re-construct their identities through this process of co-creation.

Another important aspect at this point in the play is the Queen's role as a type of 'dictator': she is the sole ruler and decides and orders what, when and how things will happen in the play. We see this, for example, when she sends slaves to announce the contest throughout Cacatorres. However, the role of villain is continuously shifting in the play: at the start it seems that the Queen is the character who will dominate the events and actions of the others, but as things develop further, we also see the pilot as a temporary *galán* and then Scatijeras trying to manipulate the outcome of the contest. At the end, there is no clear hero/villain and both the Queen and the princess seem to have been the characters in the shadows, turned into passive victims as a result of the actions carried out by Scatijeras, played by Remedios Varo herself. This is interesting from different viewpoints; first in view of the fact that Varo was exiled from a country dominated by a dictatorship, and in the case of Carrington one could think that given the relationship she held with her dominant father, it might be possible to see the Queen as an

[67] Henríquez-Betancor, p. 38.

allegory of these dominant characters in both artists' lives. But as seen in the play, the dominant character is now parodied and made to think it continues to have its powers, while in reality it is the scientist and Perico who seem to be either in control or at the very least acutely aware of all the events that unfold. Secondly, the shifting and blurring of boundaries between gender, actors, character and roles allow us to read this play from a very different approach to that of a typical fairytale or love-story: things are not always what they seem, neither is the villain always a villain nor the hero always a hero. What seems to matter most to the authors is the use of science, humour, alchemy and imagination to overcome and achieve one's goal in life — to win the contest, as in the case of Scatijeras. Returning to the central concept of the mattering map, identities in the play are not only reversed, but are continuously shifting as a way to negotiate gender and artistic difference, to promote a space, embedded with surrealist features, that together with the other elements of the play, as discussed below, will create a space that is not only a figurative, but also actual, physical — the place where the play was being produced, a map that matters.

2.4.3. 'Transculturalidad':[68] Hybridity, Language, and Music

This section will discuss how the artists build up this mattering map by juxtaposing and appropriating different aspects of their past together with other elements of their new-found home. In the play, after the scientist Scatijeras explains to the Queen how the magical substance works, the latter announces that there will be a Royal competition in

[68] 'Transculturation involves ongoing, circular appropriations of elements between multiple cultures, including elements that are themselves transcultural', Richard A. Rogers, 'From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation, School of Communication', *Communication Theory,* 16 (2006), 474–503 (p. 491).

which they will use 'el santo cuerpo grasoso' to find the most beautiful soul and that whoever wins — man or woman — will marry Princess Pelomiel:

> -¡Y hablan tanto de sus almas! Entonces, mi buen Scatijeras, haremos un concurso imperial. Manda esclavos a la gran ciudad de Cacatorres, que anuncien en todas partes que las mujeres y los hombres que tengan almas tomen parte en el real concurso y el o la que tenga el alma más linda ganará la mano de mi chulísima hija Pelomiel.[69]

With the setting of the contest, the metaphysical is made palpable through this soul-extracting ritual, regardless of whether the subject is male or female.[70] This can be read as the effect of the transcultural essence of the play; as Haviland comments, "hybrid objects" […] emerge from "transcultural processes'.[71] In light of this, it is no surprise to see the play relying on and celebrating animal and gender hybridity, taking into account the cultural background of the artists and the context in which the play is written: Varo was born in Catalonia and mostly raised in Madrid, and was artistically formed in France and Barcelona but ended up living the rest of her life in Mexico; Carrington, had Irish roots but was born and raised in England and also artistically formed in France, but lived in Spain and New York for a short time before settling in Mexico. Regarding the context, Mexico was a country that had suffered the consequences of colonialism and had its own transcultural patterns within its society; furthermore, over the years in which Varo and Carrington themselves relocated in Mexico, had, as a result of the policies towards immigration and political refugees of Presidente Lázaro Cárdenas, become a new home for large numbers of Europeans.[72]

Returning to the play, before the preparations for the contest take place, an unexpected visitor arrives: a pilot named Don Jon Von Aguilota who accidentally crashes his

[69] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 236.
[70] The ritualistic aspect of the play will be further discussed later in the chapter.
[71] Maya Lolen Devereaux Haviland, *Side By Side?* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 132.
[72] For more on this, see for example, Sebastiaan Faber, *Exile and Cultural Hegemony* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002).

plane into a nearby mountain. At the beginning of Scene 3, the pilot is brought in by a group of *zopilotes* — hybrid black vultures with human features —[73] while harp music is heard in the background. Both the Queen and the Princess immediately fall in love with him; however, we learn that the pilot has loved the Princess from the moment he saw her in his dreams. The addition of music and other sounds in the play at crucial moments is an element that cannot be disregarded mainly because it adds to the ritualistic aspect, one that helps to shape their mattering map, as will be further discussed below. In regard to the role of music in indigenous cultures, Malena Kuss acknowledges that,

> In this context, music is mostly an essential form of energy, a kinetic and transformative vessel that communicates with ancestors and the supernatural, heals, manipulates the forces of nature, bonds communities, or reenacts social tensions.[74]

Other studies have already shown that both Varo and Carrington were interested and keen to explore the different cosmogonies of indigenous Mexico, hence the inclusion of sounds or particular music that manifests this aspect of their immediate context in the play. In this way, not only do they draw inspiration from their Mexican environment, but they also re-create that hybrid space through the process of sound further framing the mattering map. In the play, this can be seen in the opening scene as the snarling 'noises' resemble those of a volcano: 'Se oyen gruñidos profundos de la misma barriga de la tierra'.[75] Another example occurs in Act II scene ii, when the contest has

[73] Defined by the Real Academia Española as an 'Ave rapaz diurna que se alimenta de carroña, de 60 cm de longitud y 145 cm de envergadura, de plumaje negro irisado, cabeza y cuello desprovistos de plumas, de color gris pizarra, cola corta y redondeada y patas grises, que vive desde el este y sur de los Estados Unidos hasta el centro de Chile y la Argentina', from <http://dle.rae.es/srv/fetch?id=cUbGUL8>. [Accessed 2 March 2018]. It is obvious that these birds are presented with human characteristics as they perform human activities throughout the play as the Queen's servants.

[74] Malena Kuss, *Music in Latin America and the Caribbean: An Encyclopedic History: Volume I. Performing Beliefs: Indigenous Peoples of South America, Central America and Mexico* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004), p. ix.

[75] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 234.

been announced, 'se oyen voces y música de marimba'[76] from the Queen's balcony. This type of music is traditional in Mexico and Central America and represents a strong transcultural element as it evolved as a result of a mixture of African, European and Meso-American sounds.[77] However, in the play, it is surely to be understood as a Mexican type of music, for, as Robert Garfias confirms:

> The marimba has become so much a part of the culture and life of the peoples of Central America and southeastern Mexico that few of the inhabitants of these regions would consider it possible that the instrument was not always part of their culture.[78]

Finally, when Von Aquilota, the pilot, murders the scientist to steal the magic substance and escape with the Princess, the *zopilotes* — guards — enter the scene playing 'música fúnebre con sus flautas'.[79] With Scatijeras dead, lights go off and the guards sing a funerary song that speaks of the scientist's death and the rendering of his soul. This song helps to breach the boundaries between the world of the living and that of the dead, establishing for the first time in the play a supernatural element that will be complete when Scatijeras returns from the dead. This hybrid, liminal quality of music will later play a key role in Varo's paintings. This is the case with *El flautista* (1955), in which an androgynous figure seems to emerge from a rock, is playing the flute, and with its music moves stones/fossils to aid in the construction of a renaissance-style building. Similar motifs permeate *Música solar* (1955) and *Roulotte* (1955).[80]

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[76] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 242.

[77] 'La marimba surgió en Mesoamérica ente 1492 y 1680, como resultado de la fusión de elementos culturales de África, Europa y América', Edwin Castro, 'Historia de La Marimba | Símbolo Patrio', *Prensa Libre*, 15 September 2015 <http://www.prensalibre.com/vida/escenario/la-marimba-es-instrumento-nacional-y-simbolo-patrio-de-guatemala> [Accessed 21 December 2018].

[78] Robert Garfias, 'The Marimba of Mexico and Central-America', *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*, 4. 2 (1983), 203-228 (p. 203). Available at <https://escholarship.org/content/qt6d85q61v/qt6d85q61v.pdf> [Accessed 30 December 2018].

[79] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 246. In some Mayan cultures of Southern Mexico 'sound also could be used to bridge life and death', Robertson and Kuss, p. 10.

[80] See also *Vuelo mágico* (1956), *Armonía* (1956), and *Energía cósmica* (1956).

Another element that can be seen to represent the authors' interest in indigenous cosmogonies is that of time, which in the play can be perceived as circular, given the symbol of the egg and the resurrection of Scatijeras, as previously mentioned. This can be seen as a Latin American influence, somewhat reminiscent of works by Gabriel García Márquez (1927-2014), Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) or Carlos Fuentes (1928-2012),[81] though mostly it speaks to a pre-Colombian Mexican belief system: 'Maya astronomers of Southern Mexico saw the movement of the planets as an affirmation of the cyclical nature of time and the multidimensionality of space'.[82] In the play, there are indeed different dimensions; for example, the dimension perceived by the Queen and the Princess and, later, when Scatijeras dies, the dimension inhabited by the 'chango negro' which, although visible to the entire audience, can only be accessed by Perico as he is the only one able to interact with it. Overall, given that the substance manages to extract people's souls by being applied to their buttocks, the multidimensionality of real and oneiric spaces is always at play within the play. For the building of the mattering map, these two aspects are imperative in order to understand how this 'map' functions. It appears that, through the inclusion of these elements, both Varo and Carrington let their creative imaginations and their pictorial imagery infuse time with a cyclical essence and space as multidimensional. This way, the play serves as an insight into how they perceived their lives: a constant soul-extracting process of a feminine and artistic nature. These are all features strongly connected to both Varo and Carrington's imagery, in particular in the artwork that they produced post- 1950s:

> For Carrington and Varo, the path of spiritual evolution was woman's. During the early 1950s both women became involved with the followers of Gurdjieff, and with Tibetan Tantric and Zen Buddhism; prior to these involvements, however, their work was already revealing a sensitivity to the idea of an evolutionary femi-

[81] Both Varo and Carrington's imaginations share 'a common ground with the marvels of the Latin American Continent as imagined by their contemporary writers', Ferrero Cándenas, p. 79.
[82] Robertson and Kuss, p. 9.

> nine consciousness and to seeking out the sources of woman's creative impulses.[83]

This is interesting because there is, in fact, a direct reference to the 'Gran Diosa Madre' and the moon in the play,[84] indicating both artists' interest in re-constructing a space with femininity at its centre.

When looking at the language employed throughout the play, the first thing to point out is its multiplicity: not only in terms of the languages included but also in terms of its mostly Mexican, argot. The use of different languages throughout the play allows this transcultural essence of the play to become intensely apparent. It is first observed when the pilot Von Aquilota regains consciousness after crashing his plane and is brought into the presence of the Queen; he mumbles a traditional Bretonnia song until he acknowledges Scatijeras' presence:

> *Mon mari vient de partir*
>
> *A la peche en Islande*
>
> *Il m'a laissé sans le sou*
>
> *Mais avec mon petit… etc.*
>
> *Abre los ojos poco a poco y viendo a Scatijeras que lo mira con ojos inflamados se incorpora bruscamente y exclama:* ¡Tú! ¿Tú, aquí?[85]

It is suggested, and most likely understood as such by the audience, that the pilot has travelled from a European city to the fictional Cacatorres, which in turn presents more Mexican characteristics than European, and furthermore that the scientist and the pilot

[83] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 211.
[84] '¡Oh, sálvanos diosa Luna! ¡Una revolución!', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 258.
[85] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 238.

know each other from before, having met in the Court of King Prisma I.[86] French is not the only language that appears in the play: there are various separate instances where odd words are either French, English and even a type of made-up Latin:[87] such us '*monseigneur';* '*¡confiteus dei! ora pro nalgas miserium Amen',*[88] and '*Curtain'.*[89] Most predominant in the play is the constant use of Mexican argot, and this most certainly indicates the Mexican context. Examples include the word *tecolotes*, derived from *Náhuatl* and meaning 'owl', and used more widely to refer to members of the police,[90] and the already mentioned *zopilotes*. Other idiomatic Mexican expressions include *ay mamá, por favorcito, ay chihuahua*.[91] A forerunner of 'the new *mestiza*' notion of identity later developed in *Borderlands*,[92] language plays an imperative role in the construction of identity and thus the mattering map: 'The linguistic aspect goes hand in hand with the individual and collective Chicana awareness […] Hers is a language claim that invokes her sexual, gender, and writerly identities'.[93] The borrowing of music, these varieties of languages, a mixture of Mexican jargon and, at times, made-up words, are all the direct result of this transcultural process that juxtaposes several cultures at once in both of the artists' lives in Mexico and helps re-define their identities.

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[86] The RAE defines a 'prisma' as a geometric term: 'Cuerpo limitado por dos polígonos planos, paralelos e iguales, que se llaman bases, y por tantos paralelogramos cuantos lados tengan dichas bases, las cuales, según su forma, dan nombre al prisma: triangular, pentagonal, etc.' <http://dle.rae.es/?id=UCrVRfR> [Accessed 3 March 2018]. Geometry and geometrical forms make an appearance in Varo's paintings. See for example *Paisaje Torre Centauro* (1943), *Angustia* (1947) and *Dolor* (1948). Keeping in mind that this scene has Varo's handwriting, it is possible that Varo is referring here to her work with Bayer, discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[87] Remedios Varo will use similar device in her work *De Homo Rodans*, as discussed further in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

[88] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 235.

[89] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …,* p. 241.

[90] 'Tecolotes - del, búho - en México se usa para nombrar a cualquier miembro del cuerpo de policía', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 233.

[91] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 236.

[92] Anzaldúa defines the 'new mestiza' as 'kind of border woman who is able to negotiate between different cultures and cross over from one to the other and therefore has a perspective of all those different worlds that someone who is monocultural cannot have', Patti Blanco, 'Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa', *University of Arizona Poetry Center Newsletter*, 16 (1991), p. 4.
<https://poetry.arizona.edu/blog/interview-gloria-anzaldúa> [Accessed 5 November 2018].

[93] Henríquez-Betancor, p. 43.



Fig. 1 - *Tiforal* (1947)

©Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

2.4.4. Alchemical Theatre: Exotic Landscapes and Ritualistic Practices

> *En el cráter del lejano y alto pico Oripipí, hogar de la reina Nesfatalina. Hartitos murciélagos, tecolotes, mariposas negras y otros ganados nocturnos deambulando por los lujosos departamentos de la Reina. Del suelo de lava arrugada suben plumas de humo. Se oyen gruñidos profundos de la misma barriga de la tierra.*[94]

The setting for the play is described from the beginning as having strong Mexican features. As in the opening stage direction cited above, Nesfatalina's court is said to be

[94] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 233-234.

found in a faraway land in the hollow space on top of a volcano, inhabited by wild animals such as bats, black butterflies, and other nocturnals animals.[95] The name of the volcano is probably a reference to the Pico de Orizaba, the highest mountain in Mexico,[96] while the black butterflies can be seen to be of special significance in the Mexican context. Known by the name of 'mariposa maldita', given their ancient association with dark magic or even death, these are butterflies typical of the Mexican landscape and culture:

> En las creencias mesoamericanas se le asociaba con la muerte y el mal agüero. En náhuatl sus nombres eran *mictlanpapalotl* (mariposa del país de los muertos), *micpapalotl* (mariposa de la muerte), *miquipapalotl* (mariposa de mala suerte) o *tetzahupapalotl* (mariposa del espanto).[97]

Hence, the appearance of these elements makes this fictional space a Mexican one from the start. But there are further references in the play to the Mexican landscape. For example, Act III scene i, is set in an exotic paradise-like background with flowers and a 'cauliflower' tree:

> *La escena representa una pradera llena de margaritas y rodeada de árboles frutales cargados de grandes coliflores. Al fondo hay una baranda o parapeto que domina un lugar algo más bajo donde se situarán los concursantes invisibles y desde donde se arrojarán las almas.*[98]

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[95] Hollow spaces in which to hide or inhabit are a recurrent theme for both artists but slightly more strongly present in Varo's works. See, for example, her *Roulotte* (1955), *Exploración de las fuentes del Río Oniroco* (1959) or *Tailleur pour dames* (1957). In the case of Carrington, this aspect is more visually apparent in the clothing worn by her figures, as seen in *The Giantess* (1947); in the play, Perico also hides himself inside an empty eggshell: 'Todos salen menos Perico, que se oculta dentro de la cáscara vacía del huevo del gran ave roc', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo...*, p. 238.

[96] 'The Pico de Orizaba is among the more voluminous volcanoes of the Trans Mexican Volcanic Belt […]. It reaches an altitude of some 5700m, rising 3500m abive its surroundings […]', Armann Hoskuldsson and Claude Robin, *Bulletin of Volcanology*, 55 (1993), 571–587 (p. 571). <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00301810> [Accessed 10 October 2018].

[97] National Geographic Español, 'Mariposa maldita'. Photography section <http://www.ngenespanol.com/fotografia/lo-mas/11/09/21/mariposa-maldita-vida-salvaje/> [Accessed 20 December 2018].

[98] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 250.

This exotic landscape with surreal elements, such as the cauliflower tree or the invisible contestants, manages to convert the stage for *El santo cuerpo grasoso* into what would be a perfect stage set for Alice in Wonderland, and is a feature that both Varo and Carrington include in many of their paintings. Varo's painting *Tiforal* (Fig. 1) recreates such an atmosphere: a woman enters a labyrinthine park with exotic plants that seem to breathe and hybrid sculptures that seem to move.[99] Hence, it is this fusion of landscapes — surreal, fantastic, Mexican — that make up the mattering map for the artists at this point of their artistic trajectories. This kind of setting is reminiscent of the space represented in Carrington's *Temple of the Word* (1954): a hybrid space where nothing is what it seems. This mimicking or disguising effect is also present in Varo's *Mimetismo* (1961).[100] Varo's friend and surrealist writer Roger Caillois (1913-1978), wrote on this subject in his 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', his book ends with a section from Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of St Anthony*. The space is described as follows:

> The Dedaims of Babylon, which are trees, bear human heads for fruit; Mandragoras sing, the root Baaras runs through the grass. And now the vegetables are no longer distinguishable from the animals. Polyparies that seem like trees, have arms upon their branches. Anthony thinks he sees a caterpillar between two leaves: it is a butterfly that takes flight. He is about to step on a pebble : a grey locust leaps away. One shrub is bedecked with insects that look like petals of roses; fragments of ephemerides form a snowy layer upon the soil. And then the plants become confounded with the stones[101]

This process of disguise is not only seen in the landscape but also in the character of the scientist, who, as observed earlier, is played by Varo herself: when Scatijeras ap-

[99] Carrington also worked on several sculptures during her lifetime that might also shared some properties with this, see, for example, *Carved Decorated Woman* (1951).
[100] David Lomas sees Varo's *Mimetismo* as 'an example of the recourse by various women Surrealist artists to mimicry as a de-essentialising identity move', David Lomas and Jeremy Stubbs, *Simulating the Marvellous* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 129.
[101] Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, trans. by Lafcadio Hearn (New York and Seattle: The Alice Harriman Company: 1910), pp. 257-258.
<https://archive.org/stream/temptationofstan00flauuoft/temptationofstan00flauuoft_djvu.txt> [Accessed 20 March 2018].

pears and explains that he has managed to come back to life thanks to the help of a hermit who did some 'experimenting' on him; he is also disguised so that no one can recognise him while he looks for vengeance.[102] Varo makes recurrent use of this 'hiding' device when she models her androgynous figures nearly as self-portraits,[103] and, as Chadwick explains: 'In the work of women artists, the self-portrait became a telling metaphor for the woman artist's attempt to resolve the Surrealist polarities of inner and outer reality'.[104] Hence, recreating oneself over and over is a mechanism that women in surrealism used to explore their own identity as artists. Also this Mexican space Varo and Carrington created with other exiles allowed them to escape from the social and domestic restrictions in which they were confined.[105] Thus, the figurative space that the play manages to construct, 'includes places of change and spaces of transition towards a new way of thinking and feeling'.[106]

Another important aspect of the play that must be considered in relation to its hybrid and transcultural character is the role of rituals within it. Seen mainly in the proceedings of the contest, in the setting and also the manner in which Scatijeras comes back from the dead after Doctor Pon Fruta fails to resurrect him:

> Todos me creen muerto. Verdad es que sin la ayuda del venerable ermitaño que robó mi cuerpo del sepulcro para hacer sobre él ciertos experimentos coronados por el éxito, ahora continuaría muerto. Con este disfraz nadie me conocerá.[107]

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[102] 'Por detrás de un árbol aparece Scatijeras sigilosamente mirando a todos lados para ver si no hay nadie; llega completamente disfrazado, la barba ya no es roja, es negra y partida en dos con las puntas hacia arriba la cara bastante amarilla y una gran trenza que cae por detrás hasta las rodillas, sobre la trenza descansa un lagarto que reposa su cabeza sobre la de Scatijeras', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 250.

[103] Varo's paintings 'include over and over again the delicate heart-shaped with the long sharp nose and thick mane of hair that marked her own identity', Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 66.

[104] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 92.

[105] As Chadwick explains: 'In one sense, all Surrealist paintings are self-portraits, their sources internal rather than external, their imagery indistinguishable from the structure and functioning of their creator's minds, their goal self-knowledge', *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 66.

[106] Henríquez-Betancor, p. 41.

[107] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 250.

Although not further explained in the play, it can be assumed that some kind of metaphysical ritual has taken place for his soul or 'chango negro' to be reunited with his body. It is not entirely surprising to see this intense ritualistic aspect in the play if we consider that, in the case of Carrington, Ries confirms 'en repetidas ocasiones Carrington viajó a Chiapas acompañando a la antropóloga suiza Gertrude Blom, que le hizo posible observar los rituales de los curanderos locales desde cerca'.[108] Other works by Carrington reflect this ritualistic element, such as, for example, her tale *El mundo mágico de los Maya, Cuento mexicano / A Mexican Fairy Tale* (1970s), where many of her female characters are actually birds and, in the ritual that takes place, guided by *La Gran Diosa Madre*, Juan — who is about to be sacrificed, is told — 'No tengas miedo, Juan, ésta es sólo la primera muerte; pronto estarás vivo otra vez'.[109] Reminiscent of both the intense ritualistic nature of much surrealist practice as well as the reiterative nature of rituals themselves, the action is part of a process through which identity is cemented. Hence, it is also part of making the map real but with an emphasis on an identity that is hybrid and fluid. The continuous references to birds/animals, either through the metamorphosis of the characters or their names, may be linked again to surrealism. In this regard, they remind us of Max Ernst's "Loplop": 'Loplop has precisely this hybrid, metamorphic, assemblage (or collage) character, as do the animal identifications of Carrington, Toyen and other members of the Surrealist group'.[110] However, it can also be seen as another connection with the Mexican context, such as the 'papantla bird-

[108] Ries, p. 9. During this time -1950s - a new type of indigenous theatre developed in the Southern regions of Mexico and in particular in the Chiapas, known as Teatro Petul; it is possible that Carrington might have been in contact and therefore influenced by the performance movements in the indigenous communities at this time. For more on this, see Rosario Castellanos, 'Teatro Petul', *Revista de la Universidad de México*, 5 (1965), 30-31.
[109] Ries, p. 12.
[110] Lomas and Stubbs, p. 140.

men'.[111] Another example is found in the way the stage is being set up for the competition to resemble a pre-Columbian ritualistic setting:

> *Entran dos zopilotes con el trono y comienzan a arreglar el lugar del concurso. Disponen una mesa de forma sagrada con un solo pie en forma de pata de caballo; entra el tecolote y deposita sobre la mesa un rollo de pergamino donde están los hombres y la lista de los concursantes. Dejan todo preparado y se retiran.* (Act I scene iii).[112]

It is vulture-like and owl-like guards that are setting up this space for the competition to take place: both the zopilote and the tecolote being exotic birds that are usually connected with a Latin American context rather than a European one. What is more, the use of parchment where the name of the contestants is written further inscribes this contest/ritual as ancient. Another example of this is found in Carrington's *Syssigy* (1957), where an old-looking man with a white long beard seems to be carrying out some sort of experiment or 'magic' treatment in front of a group of elegantly dressed individuals. He may be healing a person of ambiguous gender, dressed in yellow, who in fact appears to be wearing a kind of crown made of plants. If so, we might assume that he is curing his/her blindness given that his/her glasses are thrown on the floor and that this 'doctor' is holding a thread with a mask at the end of it. Nevertheless, the whole scene has a mysteriously dark and ritualistic aspect that can be directly juxtaposed to that of the play and has a potent connection to Mexico's ritualistic past.[113] Hence, the ritualistic

[111] 'In 1612 Torquemada described the voladores as four principal participants who dressed up in different costumes as birds, some taking the form of royal eagles, others as griffins or other birds which represent grandeur and valor. They wore extended wings to imitate the appropiate and natural flight of birds. […] Through the bird dress of the flyers, the four men impersonated the souls of dead warriors and sacrificed victims who, after they had finished their service to the sun-god, returned to earth in the form of birds and butterflies to take the honey from the flowers', Rosemary Gipson, 'Los Voladores, The Flyers of Mexico', *Western Folklore*, 30. 4 (1971), 270-71 (pp. 269-78).

[112] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 253.

[113] This connection to Mexico's ritualistic past is also seen in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*, as Henríquez-Betancor explains: 'Acknowledging the culture's collective weaknesses and longings, Anzaldúa celebrates a culturally and spiritually compelling ritual for the Chicana/o collectivity', p. 46.

and experimental dimensions of the play are very clear from the beginning. These elements are not far either from surrealist tenets:

> Surrealism actively interrogated science as a dominant mode of truth and there is much to be learnt from close scrutiny of the procedures of parody, appropriation and deconstruction that characterise its complex relationship to science.[114]

The ritualistic dimension of theatre has long been acknowledged and the connection with surrealism and its investment in ritual and collective practice is of further significance here. All the more unusual, then, that the idea and practice of 'surrealist theatre' per se failed to gain traction or a position of dominance within surrealist discourse.[115] There were indeed several attempts to transfer surrealist principles to the stage, but 'only two names can be associated with a serious effort at the creation of a surrealist theatre: Roger Vitrac (1899-1952) and Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who together founded the Théâtre Alfred Jarry'.[116] Shortly afterwards, both Vitrac and Artaud were excluded from the surrealist group by Breton himself.[117] More interesting for the purpose of this chapter is the fact that Antonin Artaud visited Mexico in 1936 hoping 'to encounter in Mexico a revolutionary society built on ancient metaphysical foundations where he may

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[114] Lomas and Stubbs, p. 214.

[115] 'Anyone interested in the various programmes of surrealist revolt and in their interrelationship cannot fail to be struck by the fact that, although they protested against contamination of cinema by theatre, the early surrealists by no means eliminated the theatre from their own creative activities', J. H. Matthews, 'Spectacle and Poetry: Surrealism in Theatre and Cinema', *The Journal of General Education*, 27. 1 (1975), 55-68 (p. 57); 'The revolt was not against dada performance, or against the medium of theatre itself, but rather against the theatre's parasitic need for society once that theatre had been taken out of the context of the "groupe amical" […] which was capable of creating and maintaining a theatre without impresarios or box offices, without professional performers or a dependence upon an audience', Annabelle Henkin Melzer, *Dada and Surrealist Performance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 195.

[116] Philip Auslander, 'Surrealism in the Theatre: The Plays of Roger Vitrac', *Theatre Journal*, 32. 3 (1980), 357-69. See also Melzer, p. 164: 'After 1925, those surrealist plays produced were done by the avant-garde theatres outside the periphery of the group, by professional actors and often with the group's outspoken disapproval'.

[117] 'Any involvement with the theatrical world inevitably entails a degree of commercialization, something that was incompatible with the spirit of absolute freedom and revolution that Surrealism advocated', Rapti, p. 87.

apply his vision of healing the split between psyche and civilization through alchemical theater'.[118] As Artaud explains in his *Theatre and its Double*:

> There is a mysterious identity of essence between the principle of the theater and that of alchemy. For like alchemy, the theater, considered from the point of view of its deepest principle, is developed from a certain number of fundamentals which are the same for all the arts and which aim on the spiritual and imaginary level at an efficacity analogous to the process which in the physical world actually turns all matter into gold. But there is a still deeper resemblance between the theater and alchemy, one which leads much further metaphysically. It is that alchemy and the theater are so to speak virtual arts, and do not carry their end or their reality within themselves.[119]

This notion of alchemical theater fits very well with Carrington and Varo's play as one can say that at its foundation is the alchemical transformation that takes place in the contest. But there are further examples that also comply with this, such as in Act II scene v, which starts in total darkness, when Nesfatalina appears to find the dead body of the scientist, his body is illuminated by a weak green light, on top of which sits his soul - un changuito negro.[120] One of the elements of Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty,[121] is indeed this type of ambience:

> The spectacle: Every spectacle will contain a physical and objective element, perceptible to all. Cries, groans, apparitions, surprises, theatricalities of all kinds, magic beauty of costumes taken from certain ritual models; resplendent lighting, incantational beauty of voices, the charms of harmony, rare notes of music, col-

[118] Artaud travelled to Mexico in January 1936. Uri Hertz, 'Artaud in Mexico', *Fragmentos*, 25 (2003), 11-17 (p. 11). For more on Artaud's journey to Mexico, see Tsu-Chung Su, 'Artaud's Journey to Mexico and his Portrayals of the Land', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 14. 5 (2012) Article 17, 2-9.

[119] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. by Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1985). Reproduced online at <http://katarze.mysteria.cz/artaud/theatre_its_double.pdf> [Accessed 20 March 2018].

[120] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 247. Described in the play as a type of 'mono araña'.

[121] 'The Theatre of Cruelty is both a philosophy and a discipline. Artaud wanted to disrupt the relationship between audience and performer. The 'cruelty' in Artaud's thesis was sensory, it exists in the work's capacity to shock and confront the audience, to go beyond words and connect with the emotions: to wake up the nerves and the heart. He believed gesture and movement to be more powerful than text. Sound and lighting could also be used as tools of sensory disruption. The audience, he argued, should be placed at the centre of a piece of performance. Theatre should be an act of 'organised anarchy', Natasha Tripney, 'Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty', *Discovering Literature: 20th Century*, 2017 <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/antonin-artaud-and-the-theatre-of-cruelty> [Accessed 31 July 2019].

> ours of objects, physical rhythm of movements […], concrete appearances of new and surprising objects, masks, …'[122]

If theatre, generally speaking, is characterised by all of these elements, 'perhaps' in Theatre of Cruelty, as Paul Arnold suggests 'the novelty lies more in the intensity, the degree of incandescence of all these means'.[123] Regarding the 'chango negro', only Perico is able to see it and interact with him. Could, then, Perico, the Scientist, and even the 'ermitaño' that brings him back from the dead, be perceived in the Mexican context as shamans or Mexican 'curanderos'? Artaud himself commented on this aspect of Mexican culture:

> Artaud admits that his goal is the harnessing of shamanistic forces of pre-Columbian sorcery to subvert European ideology and heal what he perceived to be a plague threatening the collective body and psyche. [124]

Could Varo and Carrington in fact be attempting to achieve a similar goal with the setting of this ritual based around the extraction of the soul? If so, and coming back to Anzaldúa, the final objective of the contest can be perceived not so much as to find the perfect suitor for the Princess, but a process to uncover one's true-selves. As Henríquez-Betancor explains, 'the process of recreating identity that Anzaldúa proposes, whether that identity is individual or collective, is non-linear and progressive, fluid and concrete'.[125] Furthermore, this type of soul, shadow or 'chango' may be found in some of Carrington's paintings, such as, for example, *Labyrinth* (1991), where each figure seems to contain what looks like a black or red soul.[126] Related images can also be found in Varo's *Mujer saliendo del psicoanalista* (1960) and *Fenómeno* (1962).

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[122] Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: A Century of Isms* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), p. 454.
[123] Paul Arnold, 'The Artaud Experiment', *The Tulane Drama Review*, 8. 2 (1963), 15-29 (p. 25).
[124] Hertz, p. 13.
[125] Henríquez-Betancor, p. 53.
[126] This painting by Leonora is reminiscent of Varo's *Tránsito en espiral* (1962).

In all, the fact that Scatijeras's illogical theory on the workings of an oily substance on a body is positively and solemnly accepted by the other characters of the play, in particular the Queen, speaks of the burlesque tone of the authors' minds but also, as seen above, the adaptation of a surrealist device and of different aspects of pre-Columbian Mexico in order to subvert the at times illogical and serious nature of scientific procedures. Furthermore, the very name with of the substance brings into play a parody of religious structures by granting the substance the epithet 'santo'.[127]

2.5. Conclusion

> […] las artistas crean un nuevo, individual punto de orientación, que por un lado corresponde a un deseo de un hogar espiritual y por el otro evita cualquier subordinación ni a lugares concretos ni a ideologías políticas y religiosas.
>
> Olga Ries[128]

This chapter's aim was to investigate how Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington, through the process of co-creation, managed to construct a mattering map, a — figurative — place in which to temporarily feel at ease with the world and with their lives as artists in Mexico. It is through the play's co-creative process that a type of feminist coalition is formed, allowing the artists to create a new interartistic world, a reference point that, on the one hand, corresponds to their desire for a spiritual home and on the other, attempts to avoid subordination to a specific place, political and religious ideology, or artistic movement. Chadwick also mentions that the friendship between the two artists was 'the most intense and far reaching attempt to develop a new language through

[127] Furthermore, 'The rhetoric associated with the archbishop and the 'holy' oil resembles Latin to parody the traditions associated with the Catholic Church', Plunkett, 'Dissecting the Holy Oily Body: Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington and El Santo Cuerpo Grasoso', p. 78.
[128] Ries, p. 7.

which woman artist's 'other' reality might be communicated',[129] and this play is a perfect example of this new language that developed at the time in Mexico City, which may be seen as a 'post-surrealist Mexican affective alliance'.[130]

The play takes on many surrealist features to use them either to the plot's advantage, as is the case with the scientific essence of the contest, or to ridicule them through the process of performance, as is the case with the role that female characters have in the play. At the same time, the fact that the manuscript has such a strong fairy-tale format and flavour can be seen to represent feminine experience, and in particular that of child-rearing and/or storytelling. The intimate and hybrid character of the play suggests that it could have been written from Varo's or Carrington's kitchen — a private space of resistance, where the alchemical transformations and experimenting usually took place. Something similar occurs in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* were, as Sonia Saldívar-Hull confirms, 'By rewriting the stories of Malinali, La Llorona and the Virgin of Guadalupe, Anzaldúa is strategically reclaiming a ground for female historical presence'.[131]

The break-down of the different aspects of the play help uncover this process of home-making. A process mainly based on gender role-reversal, and the re-defining and shifting of domestic relationships. This mattering map is a hybrid and co-created space, a map constructed via the re-appropriation of Mexican elements — language, indigenous cosmogonies, gender hybridity, embedded within surrealist practices, and above all a map that has emerged from an intercultural artistic co-creative process that occurred in a specific location — Gabino Barreda street, and within a close group of female friends and artists. Female co-creation enables Varo and Carrington to re-make

[129] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p.191.
[130] Grossberg defines affective alliances as a 'particular segment or articulation of a culture formation', p. 398.
[131] Anzaldúa, Introd. by Sonia Saldívar-Hull, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p. 6.

and negotiate their own artistic personas within a universe ruled by themselves; as if to say: women can invent themselves, they can be men, they can be animals, they can be it all, at once. In Anzaldúa's words,

> Soy *un amasamiento*, I am act of kneading, of uniting and joining that not only has produced both a creature of darkness and a creature of light, but also a creature that questions the definitions of light and dark and gives them new meanings.[132]

In this chapter then, we have zoomed in on the relationship between co-creativity, home-making and interartistic practice in Varo's practice, and its contribution to a crossing and collapsing of disciplinary boundaries and hierarchies, that will characterise much of her subsequent work between the arts, and will culminate, as will be seen in Chapter Four, in her interdisciplinary project *De Homo Rodans* as well as in the analysis of *La creación de las aves* in Chapter 5. In Chapter Three, consideration will be given to the ways in which the body and architecture also play a key role in the reading and interpretation of Varo's interartistic dialogue.

[132] Anzaldúa, p. 81.

Chapter Three

The Body in Pain: Varo's Commercial Paintings for Bayer

3.1. Introduction

> Architecture operates 'to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them'
>
> Michel Foucault[1]

As outlined in the introduction to my thesis, Chapter Three focuses on Varo's illustrations for pharmaceutical company Bayer and sets out to counter extant scholarly disregard for these commercial works within Varo's *oeuvre*. I aim to remedy this by bringing into focus three of Varo's illustrations, while at the same time maintaining the interartistic element as the primary focal point. In the course of interpreting and discussing these works it will be necessary to make continuous reference not only to Varo's writings and paintings, but also to other artistic confluences commonly visible in her work: Medieval and Renaissance ideals, proto-surrealist artistic parallels, as well as contemporary Mexican and Latin American imagery and literature. The chapter will also provide an account of Varo's relationship with Bayer while making reference to other commercial endeavours and her time spent in Venezuela before re-settling in Mexico. The main critical frame used will be Foucauldian and feminist theories, as will be defended and explained in the paragraphs that follow.

[1] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 172.

In 1947 Remedios Varo's surviving family — her mother and brother Rodrigo — moved to Venezuela, and Remedios, who had not seen her family since leaving Spain, decided to join them. She traveled with her friend Jean Nicole as part of an expedition organised by the Instituto Francés de América Latina (IFAL).[2] During this time Varo was temporarily employed to undertake a series of drawings based on insects and microscopic organisms for the *División de Malariología del Ministerio de Salubridad*.[3] It was on the 21 February 1948, with Varo still in Venezuela, when Casa Bayer first contacted her:

> Estimada señora: conocemos algunos de sus dibujos y pinturas y francamente, hemos de felicitar a usted por su buen gusto, estilo original y riqueza de ideas. Estamos organizando un taller de litografía (*offset*) y pensamos que habrá posibilidades de emplear sus trabajos para las reproducciones de esta especialidad de las artes gráficas […] también sería conveniente que usted nos comunicara sus condiciones para volver a ésta y hacerse cargo de los trabajos artísticos de manera exclusiva.[4]

By July that same year, Varo was getting cheques for paintings reproduced in several calendars, and she was commissioned to produce some adverts to be published in health journals to illustrate various themes including malaria, pain, vitamins, rheumatism, anesthesia and the menstrual cycle.[5] This work with the Health Department in Venezuela and with Casa Bayer will be seen to influence her practice in the 1950s after her return to Mexico. As Arcq explains: 'en estas obras, empiezan a perfilarse la anatomía de los personajes, la delimitación de los espacios arquitectónicos, los motivos iconográficos y algunos de los temas que integrará en su obra de madurez'.[6] Although usually mentioned by other scholars, this commercial aspect of Varo's work has been mostly sidelined, as it has been seen primarily as a way for the artist to support herself economical-

[2] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 6.
[3] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 6.
[4] As cited in Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 7.
[5] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 7.
[6] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 7.

ly and therefore not as a product of original artistic expression.[7] As Vosburg has it: 'She was forced to do commercial work […] in order to support herself'.[8] The artist's niece, Beatriz Varo, also confirms that 'todas estas obras están firmadas con su segundo apellido, Uranga, por ser, según apreciación de Remedios, de segunda categoría'.[9] Both of these statements contribute to situating Varo's commercial paintings at a lower level to that of her other works, explaining why they have not yet been fully explored in comparison with her other artistic production. Natalya Frances Lusty shares the view that this neglect needs to be questioned:

> While commercial illustration is often positioned as less authentic than other forms of visual culture such as painting and sculpture, it appears that Varo derived immense pleasure and satisfaction from her commercial illustration work. Not only could she support herself and others through it, but it also provided an opportunity to utilize the technical drawing skills she had acquired as a young student at the prestigious Fernando Fine Arts Academy in Madrid.[10]

Not to include these works in the study of her interartistic output would be to devalue these paintings and this eminently interartistic and interdisciplinary facet of Varo's work. As Tere Arcq acknowledges, 'las colaboraciones para la Casa Bayer — que hasta la fecha suman treinta — iluminan un período primordial en su producción artística'.[11] As shall be seen, although commissioned and therefore subject to certain thematic restrictions, Varo was given a great deal of artistic freedom by Bayer in their production. For this reason, they can be considered an important aspect of her artistic output and deserve serious consideration. This chapter will focus on three of the Bayer works,

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[7] For more on the different approaches to the limit between what is considered fine art and the position of commercial art within art history, see Marina Vaney, 'The Cross-over from Commercial Art to Fine Art', *RSA Journal*, 137. 5400 (1989), 814-15.
[8] Nancy Vosburg, 'Strange Yet "Familiar": Cats and Birds in Remedios Varo Artistic Universe', in *Figuring Animals: Essays on Animal Images in Art, Literature, Philosophy and Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 81-97 (p. 82).
[9] Varo, *Remedios Varo en el centro del microcosmos*, p. 74.
[10] Natalya Frances Lusty, 'Art, Science and Exploration: Rereading the Work of Remedios Varo', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 5 (2011), 55-76 (p. 62).
[11] Tere Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 7.

namely *Dolor* (Fig. 2), *Dolor reumático I* (Fig. 4) and *Dolor reumático II* (Fig. 5), while also mentioning some of the other paintings produced as part of the series. These three paintings have been chosen as they present similar pictorial-spatial characteristics and because of their interesting approach to the depiction of the body — which will become a central concern of later work by Varo, as Arcq has indicated. Furthermore, they include a number of stylistic features that will later become trademarks of Varo's work. For this reason, they are also of interest to those studying her artistic trajectory.

In keeping with the interartistic, I will explore the relationship between bodies in pain and the environments they inhabit, both natural and constructed, using two different but complementary theoretical frameworks. First, I will follow a Foucauldian approach to discuss not only how Varo's bodies in pain are bodies that both undergo submission and provide resistance within the fields of medicine, illness, pharmacology and advertising, but also how the spaces, environment, and architecture produce these bodies in pain through what Foucault calls a process of 'normalization'.[12] Second, to look more closely at the feminine experience of pain I will draw on the work of two theorists, Cherie Ann Sayer's 'Body in Pain' and Elaine Scarry's concept of 'analogical verification',[13] as they will allow me to further investigate the process through which architecture and the environment work together with the objects placed in the paintings to make pain visible for the viewer. I will also scrutinise certain relevant artistic interconnections present in the paintings: with the Renaissance/Baroque in the case of the first painting; with surrealist masters, namely Magritte and Chirico in the second painting; and with religious iconographies, as well as painter Frida Kahlo, in the third .

A final aspect that has to be considered and that is usually left out in the theory and analysis of architecture is that of atmosphere. Within architecture, atmosphere plays a crucial role and is especially important for reading Varo's works, in which it is usually

[12] The theoretical framework will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.
[13] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

induced by the texture and medium selected by the artist. In Johannes Pallasmaa's words 'atmosphere is the overarching perceptual, sensory, and emotive impression of space, setting or social situation'.[14] Indeed, it is usually the first thing that is perceived when entering a place, and also when looking at a painting.[15] I will return to the relationship between architecture and atmosphere, from a humanistic and phenomenological perspective in Chapter Five, drawing extensively on Pallasmaa's illuminating study, *The Eyes of the Skin*.[16] I will now briefly consider some pain theory, artistic approaches to the feminine experience of pain, as well as Varo's immediate social, cultural and artistic context, before moving on to the analysis of the paintings.

3.2. Setting the Context: Bayer as Patron of the Arts

El fomento de la cultura es parte de nuestra filosofía empresarial.[17]

At the end of 1947 Varo travelled to Caracas, Venezuela for almost a year. With the illustrations produced for Bayer, Varo was entering into a dialogue with a specific aspect of popular culture, that of advertising, which, as Mark Dinneen explains, was rapidly developing in Venezuela.[18] This dialogue however, was embedded in the specific discipline of pharmacology, more specifically Bayer. Bayer's presence in Mexico dates back to 1921:

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[14] Pallasmaa, 'Space, Place, and Atmosphere: Peripheral Perception in Existential Experience', in Borch, p. 20.
[15] Some key thinkers on the philosophy of atmosphere include Gernot Böhme (1995; 2006), Herman Schmitz (1969) and Peter Zumthor (2006).
[16] Johannes Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Wiley-Academy: Chichester; 2005). A perfect painting for this title could be Varo's *Insomnio I* (1947). In this painting we see a domestic interior space, barely decorated, with its doors fully open, and a set of eyes in each door frame.
[17] From *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 5.
[18] Mark Dinneen, *Culture and Customs of Venezuela* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001), p. 70.

> Bayer en México era una empresa conocida principalmente por la Aspirina, la cual era importada por mayoristas. Después de la Primera Guerra Mundial, se introdujo la Cafiaspirina, cuyas ventas aumentaron de tal forma, que a finales de los años treinta logró una importante participación dentro del mercado mexicano. Para ese entonces, la compañía cambió su nombre a "Casa Bayer" y amplió su giro al distribuir productos químicos hacia Centroamérica.[19]

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, during the time that Bayer contacted Varo, the artist was also employed by the Instituto Francés de Malaralogía to carry out a series of drawings and paintings of microscopic organisms. So, although it was Bayer in Mexico that employed her, Varo was physically located in Venezuela. It is known that Spanish exiles had an important role in the development of medicine and physics in these countries during these years; in fact two Catalans were heads of the Health organizations in Venezuela.[20] All of this, along with the fact that Varo's brother was the head of epidemiology for the Ministry of Public Health in Venezuela,[21] suggests that the artist was well acquainted with both European and, particularly Spanish and Catalan exile communities, both in Mexico and Venezuela, but most of all that a sort of art patronage was taking place among these exiles and Mexican/Latin American companies like Bayer.[22] Mackenzie Clements also comments that given the popularity of aspirin worldwide, 'Bayer began targeting their advertisements for Bayer Aspirin toward the specific culture'.[23]

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[19] Bayer de Mexico, S.A., 'Historia en México - Bayer de México'. Website <https://www.bayer.mx/es/bayer-en-mexico/historia-en-mexico/> [Accessed 20 October 2018].

[20] Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[21] Carlota Caulfield, 'Chronology of Remedios Varo', *Corner*, 2 (1999) <http://www.cornermag.net/corner02/page04a.htm> [Accessed 21 October 2018].

[22] 'En 1921, F.R. Weskott y W. Matiz constituyeron una sociedad colectiva comercial en la ciudad de México bajo el nombre Química Industrial Bayer, Weskott y Compañia. Durante dieciséis años la compañía funcionó bajo ese nombre para pasar en 1937 a designarse Casa Bayer, S.A.', Caballero Guiral, pp. 68-69.

[23] Mackenzie Clements, 'Bayer Aspirin: The Wonder Drug an Analysis of Sales and Marketing in the United States and Germany' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ball State University, Indiana, 2016), p. 19.

It is not unusual, then, that these European artists were asked to perform what is called 'commercial art' in Venezuela or Latin America as a whole. In 1929, artist Tom Purvis already mentioned this aspect of advertising culture:

> Commercial art - that is, advertising art - is one of the great intersections of the immense and growing profession of advertising, which is a logical development of the spread of commercial enterprise in the last fifty years. [24]

Advertising, then, was going through significant development worldwide, not just in Mexico and Venezuela.[25] Even so, it is important to point out that this type of art for commercial/advertising purposes was not an entirely new phenomenon in the artistic world:

> Commercial art is the legitimate successor to the entirely different equally commercial art of the Middle Ages, where artists were employed to paint pictures and decorations for the great churches - one could say for the purposes of religious propaganda. Then again, they were employed by the great nobles on works of art; one could say, here, for personal propaganda.[26]

In the particular case of Venezuela and Mexico, other Spanish exiles were also heavily involved with this type of art.[27] Eduardo Mateo Gambarte explains that

> Aquella fue una época apasionante en la que la publicidad era concebida como un ocio que había acompañado al hombre a lo largo de su historia y que quería convertirse en arte. No es de extrañar, por tanto, que fuera una profesión de artistas de todo tipo..., pero sobre todo, históricamente, de escritores, poetas, dibujantes, pintores y cineastas.[28]

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[24] Tom Purvis, 'Commercial Art', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 77. 3990 (1929), 649-64 (p. 649).

[25] See, for example, the work of Andy Warhol (1928-1987).

[26] Purvis, p. 649.

[27] Such is the case of Valencian exiled artist Josep Renau (1907-1982). See Suzanne Schadl and Claire-Lise Bénaud, 'Josep Renau's Mexican Exile: Political and Artistic Crossings', available at <https://www.iai.spk-berlin.de/fileadmin/salalmdocs/Josep%20Renau%27s%20Mexican%20Exile.pdf> [Accessed 22 December 2018].

[28] Eduardo Mateo Gambarte, 'Jomí García Ascot en la publicidad', *Laberintos: Revista de estudios sobre los exilios culturales españoles*, 19 (2017), p. 289; 'Commercial art is the future field for artists, as it has been in the past, whether the artist devote himself to commercial advertising or to furniture, designing or mural decoration', Gambarte, p. 650.

Another relevant aspect of the context in which Varo was carrying out this work, is the study of women in marketing images. In Venezuela, for instance, in this period, images of women as care givers were used in order to sell medicine:

> Medicinas: Elixir "*para aliviar la agonía de esos días difíciles*", sal de fruta, purgantes, productos vitamínicos, píldoras para dolores y resfriados, jarabes para la tos, ungüentos para irritaciones y asperezas en la piel, etcétera.... Aun cuando no es la mujer la que aparece como la enferma en las imágenes, es ella la que encontramos, en su mayoría, dando el medicamento al esposo o al hijo.[29]

The way in which women are being depicted in the post World War II era as caregivers and in control of the dispensation of medicine, results in them becoming the target of medical advertising in a way that was entirely new. Also, from a wider economic perspective, the rise of the middle classes from the 1940s and 1950s onwards and new disposable income lead to more expenditure on drugs for pain control. What is interesting from a sociopolitical perspective is that the advertising industry perceives women to be in charge of this budget for the purchase of medication and drugs. Hence, they become powerful as consumers. However, these trends are not all that relevant in relation to Varo's illustrations of pain for Bayer, because her illustrations were mainly commissioned to be placed in specialized health leaflets and magazines; therefore the audience would mostly be constituted by men in this period.[30]

[29] Leyda M. Monsalve Nieto, 'Imagen publicitaria de la mujer venezolana en la prensa laica y católica del período de la junta revolucionaria de gobierno (1945-1948)', *Presente y Pasado. Revista de Historia*, 9. 17 (2004), 21 – 53 (p. 26).

[30] In email correspondence with a representative of Bayer's archive in Germany, Hans-Hermann Pogarell agreed that 'if they were mainly published in health care journals then I would agree with you that most of the readers of these journals were male', [15 June 2018].

3.3. Illustrating Pain: The Paintings

> The first of the great operations of discipline is, therefore, the constitution of *'tableaux vivants*', which transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities.
>
> Michel Foucault[31]

The commercial works that Varo produced for Bayer were not the first of their kind for the artist. During her years in Barcelona, when living with first husband Gerardo Lizarraga, Varo was employed by the advertising company Walter Thomson Company; and on her arrival to Mexico, Arcq explains that she was involved in war propaganda leaflets to help to communicate the European situation:

> Gunther Gerzso la enlistó en la oficina británica de propaganda antifascista donde, en compañía de su primer marido, Gerardo Lizarraga, y el pintor catalán Esteban Francés, realizaba maquetas y dioramas para atraer la atención de los mexicanos hacia la causa aliada en Europa.[32]

Hence, Varo had already used her artistic talents in a commercial way to support herself before finally focusing on her paintings in 1948. At the same time, we may reasonably infer that she also used this 'other work' as an opportunity to further develop her artistic ideas and influences: a type of amalgamation between her formation in Spain and in France with the surrealists, and the influence from her new Mexican context.[33] Regarding her work for Bayer, we know that she was

> given almost complete artistic freedom by Casa Bayer to illustrate a range of common ailments and diseases, [and] executed around thirty illustrations that often combined medieval or gothic architecture with melodramatic scenes of torture

[31] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 148.
[32] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 6.
[33] Kaplan believes that 'Varo also looked to work being done in Mexico as a source for her imagery in her commercial work', *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 106.

> and suffering in order to illustrate the unrelenting experience of pain and discomfort.[34]

Varo was commissioned to carry out several paintings to depict different conditions, such as pain, rheumatic pain and insomnia among others. The descriptions for these depictions usually included a type of architecture based on late medieval and gothic styles. Hence, if on the one hand Varo was given extensive artistic freedom to evoke the theme of pain, on the other, at times Bayer included more specific requirements. These requirements though were not too far from Varo's own pictorial interests as seen in her training at the Academia de San Fernando and her costumary visits to the Museo del Prado where she would have been well acquainted both with medieval and gothic styles. This makes the analysis of these paintings much more significant and allows us to read her depictions of spaces, buildings and figures as Varo's direct choices rather than imposed ones.

3.4. Pain and Feminine Experience

> From a metaphysical perspective pain prompts us to question our existence in this world as well as the space our mind inhabits in a transcendental context.
>
> Cherie Anne Sayer[35]

In tune with Cherie Anne Sayer's quotation above: it is through the experience of pain that we understand the world differently, that we are able to enter another dimension rather than the one we usually inhabit, and to question our own existence. This chapter will deal with images that were created to illustrate pain produced by 'non-visible' con-

[34] Frances Lusty, p. 62.
[35] Cherie Anne Sayer, 'Body in Pain' (Unpublished PhD Thesis: Georgia Southern University, 2006), p. 1.

ditions such as rheumatism. Hence, the resources that the artist will employ to evoke about the experience of pain will vary to arouse a different response each time, keeping in mind that pain, generally speaking, is invisible. In order for someone to understand someone else's pain, the most direct route is to represent it visually, although it is, of course, not the only one, as pain can also be heard and is often articulated through sound. In Varo's paintings, there is no attempt to depict pain as manifested through or in relation to noise such as screaming or shouting; instead, a strong sensation of silence permeates all of these works.[36] This sense of silence has an impact on the reading and interpretation of the pain events depicted, as will be discussed during the analysis of the paintings. For Sayer, however, images are the most direct route to pain: 'if emotions are held in the body-mind as images, then imagery rather than words would seem to be the most direct route for getting in touch with painful experiences'.[37]

Throughout history, the experience of pain has traditionally been associated with the public male — for example on the battlefield and on the hospital bed. Varo attempts to disrupt that history by offering us pain depicted through her eyes in a particular set of ways.[38] Regarding the feminine experience of pain, inevitably women's own invisibility has been compounded by the invisibility of pain itself, producing a sort of double invisibility. Diane Price Herndl identifies 'patriarchal culture as potentially sickening for women and as defining women as inherently sick, especially when they resist to norms', and further argues that 'illness can often be simply the label given to women's moves toward artistic expression'.[39] Beginning with pregnancy and including taboos about menstruation, women have often — even today in the twenty-first century — been

[36] Musical instruments are quite common in Varo's work, as discussed in the previous chapter, but not in the Bayer paintings.
[37] Sayer, pp. 18-19.
[38] '[I]llness historically has been both a method for repressing women as well as a mode of resistance available to women', Lindauer, p. 67.
[39] Diane Price Herndl, *Invalid Women: Figuring Feminine Illness in American Fiction and Culture, 1840-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), p. 7.

forced to suffer in silence or are ignored when it comes to the experience of pain. In Margaret A. Lindauer's view, 'The convolution of gender roles manœuvred through women's illnesses at once accedes to and subverts femininity'.[40] By this, she draws attention to the way in which the imposition of women's roles through the representation of particularly feminine illnesses exposes and exceeds the boundaries of femininity, making the relationship between women, bodies and pain indeed a complex and controversial one. This is one of the reasons why it is fundamentally important to look at the relationship between the experience of pain, femininity, the body, and the spaces it inhabits, in order to expose the way in which the discourses constructed to contain these experiences contribute to shape living bodies.

3.5. Varo's Foucauldian Bodies

> The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle.
>
> Michel Foucault[41]

There is an extensive body of scholarship dedicated to Foucault's theories and his influence on disciplines as diverse as philosophy, cultural studies, political science and anthropology is well established. In particular, focus has been placed on his theories on discourses of power and how these power structures exert a sort of invisible force upon its subjects, which are at the same time a product of it.[42] It is not my intention here to discuss or summarize such theories in full, as doing so would be beyond the scope of

[40] Lindauer, p. 68.
[41] Michel Foucault, 'Chapter Five: Two Lectures', *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, ed. by Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, Sherry B. Ortner (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 214.
[42] 'According to Foucault, subjects are produced by power', Neve Gordon, 'Foucault's Subject: An Ontological Reading', *Polity*, 31. 3 (1999), 395- 414 (p. 397).

this chapter, but I would like to select a particular set of ideas that are relevant to the reading of Varo's work for Bayer. This constitutes a novel approach to her Bayer paintings, in large part because, as stated earlier, her commercial illustrations continue to be frequently disregarded, or because, as discussed in Chapter One of my thesis, her art is all too often read within a frame informed by her exile condition, her gender or her involvement with surrealism. While not negating the importance of these elements, it seems clear to me that these frames produce a remainder that cannot be easily included within their purview. By exploring three of Varo's less considered works through a Foucauldian lens, it becomes possible to investigate more closely the relationship between the body and the natural and constructed space that it inhabits, thus revealing the ways in which her work contributes to challenge disciplinary norms.

One of the main ideas in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is the notion of power as discipline.[43] However, power is not something that one individual or a group of individuals possesses but rather, an invisible force that regulates the system. In Foucault's words:

> Power is not […] one individual's domination over others or that one group or class over others […] Rather power must be analysed as something which circulates […] which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never in anybody's hands.[44]

Within this process of self-regulation, as defined by Foucault, there exist two key elements, that of the body and the gaze. These two elements, as will be seen in the analysis that follows, play a crucial role in the way the figures are both positioned and depicted in Varo's paintings for Bayer. A third element that will define what happens within this process of self-regulation is the architectural settings as well as the environment in

[43] 'Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and instruments of its exercise', Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 170.
[44] Dirks, p. 21.

which these figures are strategically placed. For Foucault, bodies have a binary essence: they are both a product of this complex power that surrounds them but also a medium through which this power circulates. However, while describing the body with the adjective 'docile', he does not mean to say that 'bodies' are always passive and have no way to resist this system of power. In fact, he believes that it is the existence of power itself that produces the possibility of resistance: 'resistance to a given set of constraints or modes of production can occur only in the ambiance of power and in this sense, there is no exit from power'.[45] This idea of seclusion or even submission to power itself can also be seen in other paintings by Varo. For example in *Au bonheur des dames* (1956) we are presented with an interior space that resembles that of a parisian clothes shop. The figures portrayed by Varo are mostly women and according to Varo these are

> Criatura caídas en la peor mecanización; todas las partes de su cuerpo ya son ruedecillas, etcétera. […] Criaturas de nuestra época, sin ideas propias, mecanizadas y próximas a pasar al estado de insectos, hormigas en particular.[46]

According to Varo herself, as seen with the texts that accompany some of her paintings, it is clear that the figures presented in her work are not free. Another example of this is the text displayed alongside her painting *Vagabundo* (1957), where the artist repeats up to three times that the man depicted is not free: 'se trata de un vagabundo no liberado'; 'el hombre no está liberado'; 'No es verdaderamente libre'.[47]

The gaze plays a critical role in this formulation as it exercises this power and this discipline upon bodies. An example of this is Foucault's idea of the Panopticon 'architectural figure', a type of architectural structure common to prisons, where the guards

[45] Gordon, p. 414.
[46] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 71
[47] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 75.

can see the inmates without them knowing they are being looked at.[48] In this regard, John Rajchman explains: '"spatialization" is thus one technique in the exercise of power'.[49] Furthermore, this conceptualization of power through the control of space relies on an all-seeing eye and privileges the gaze as the site of control. The gaze is then really important to the idea and functioning of the Panopticon, as Betterton confirms: 'the dominant modes of looking in capitalist and patriarchal culture have been linked to surveillance and control over those perceived as inferior: children, servants, workers and women'.[50] A relevant example in the context of Bayer is how this Panopticon works within medical institutions to control and normalise the sick and mentally sick within clinics or mental institutions, factories, asylums and schools, leading to what Rajchman names the 'theatricalization of the sickness'.[51] The production of bodies has several other connotations, given that power not only produces them but defines them according to different distinctions: 'Power makes human beings into objects by giving them identities to which a set of categories are attached: woman/passive/lack, criminal/illicit/dangerous, and sane/reason/normal'.[52]

It is through the process of 'normalization',[53] of trying to fit in within those categories that are imposed on us, that we find our place and inhabit/design our spaces in

[48] 'Designed by Jeremy Bentham. It is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons', Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 205.
[49] John Rajchman, 'Foucault's Art of Seeing', *October*, 44 (1988), 88-117 (p. 104).
[50] Rosemary Betterton (ed.), 'Feminism, Femininity and Representation', in *Looking on: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media* (New York: Pandora Press, 1987), 1-17 (p. 12).
[51] Betterton, p. 107. Surrealists had a particular interest in the photography of hysterical postures, some of which were published in surrealist magazines and texts. It is possible that Varo was acquainted with some of these images when depicting pain, in particular for *Dolor Reumático II*. Undoubtedly there is a theatrical element in Varo's renditions of pain as I will explain in further detail later in this chapter.
[52] Gordon, p. 400.
[53] Normalization is defined as 'the process whereby the individual is not just categorized but also controlled and even constructed by the power vested in institutions and antecedent social practices', Richard Freadman and Seamus Miller, *Re-Thinking Theory: A Critique of Contemporary Literary Theory and an Alternative Account* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

our daily lives: to live and to fit in within those margins.[54] The Panopticon figure, the production and mediation of power through the body, and the production of the body itself by means of 'normalization' will play a major role in the analysis of Varo's works.[55] The following section will address the paintings directly.[56]

3.5.1. *Dolor*: The Panoptical as Health Preserving Mechanism

> By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery. They are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible.
>
> Michel Foucault[57]

Dolor appears to have been the first painting Varo did for Bayer on the theme of pain. As its title indicates, the type of pain here is not specified, it is just 'pain'. This pain is communicated through the image at the centre of the composition that shows a torture machine pulling the limbs of a lifeless person. In this painting, Varo situates a series of medieval towers to frame the composition. These tall monumental towers also enclose the single figure in the painting, situated just centre. This single figure is lying facing upwards on a torture-inflicting machine, with his/her ankles and wrists tied up to a wooden structure. There is an ambiguity surrounding the gender of the figure at the cen-

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[54] 'The power of normalization determines the "acceptable" limits of behavior by demarcating the normal and "respectable." Normalization "imposes homogeneity" on the subject both in thought and comportment; but at the same time it individualizes the subject', Gordon, p. 399.

[55] Foucault's theories have led to critical reflection in the field of the medical profession. For more information, see *Foucault, Health and Medicine*, ed. by Alan Peterson and Robin Bunton (London: Routledge, 1997).

[56] Another aspect that has come to my attention in my research into the history of Bayer is its controversial involvement with Nazi Germany during World War II; however, this is not an element we can confirm Varo was ever aware off. See 'Bayer-Monsanto merger can't erase Nazi chemists' past', available at <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/bayer-monsanto-merger-cant-erase-nazi-chemists-past/> [Accessed 22 December 2018].

[57] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 200.

tre of the image. On the one hand, the figure resembles that of a man; it is fully naked with just a small broken fabric covering its genitals. However, as is often the case with Varo's figures, its gender is not entirely clear: although its body shows some kind of muscular shape suggesting male characteristics, at first glance, its chest is particularly prominent, and its facial features and hair are more feminine. At the same time, there is also something puppet-like or doll-like about the figure that might suggest the docility or passivity of the subject towards the rigidity of the structures that surround it as well as the torture-inflicting device. This doll-like quality returns us to Foucault's notion of 'docile bodies' as well as the panoptical structure, in which 'the constraints and norms which this "gaze"projects upon the person sitting in a cell, permanently visible, render a prisoner docile'.[58]

Continuing the discussion about the body, we can see that the colour of the body nearly matches the grey tone of the circular structure on which it is lying. We could assume that we are looking perhaps at a dead body, given the pale grey and blue tones that contrast with the earthy orangey-brown of the towers that surround it. Even so, it is not unusual to see a figure in one of Varo's paintings sharing the qualities of inanimate objects, as seen for example in *Mimetismo* (1960). On the other hand, the torture device consists first of a wooden square structure, accessible by a set of stairs on the right, while on top there is a circular structure made of a different material, metal perhaps. The image offers a sensation of utter isolation and solitude, and also of coldness, conveyed by the combination of the cold colour palette and the naked body resting on top of the metal-looking structure. The fact that the towers have been placed to frame this figure to a certain extent allows this isolation and coldness to be contained, as if inside a cell. Furthermore, these towers, with their dark insides, imbue this space with the sound of silence, a silence produced by the suggestion of a possible echo. Regarding this, Pal-

[58] Gordon, p. 399. Will be discussed in more detail in due course.

lasmaa explains that ‘a space is understood and appreciated through its echo as much as through its visual shape, but the acoustic percept usually remains as an unconscious background experience’.[59] In other words, the absence of sound, and the possibility of an echo are not inmediate to the eye, but are subtly presented to the viewer visually while gently activating the sense of hearing. It is the architectural space, then, that produces this silence given that ‘a powerful architectural experience silences all external noise; it focuses our attention on our very existence, and as with all art, it makes us aware of our fundamental solitude’.[60] The absence of sound emphasizes the solitude of the figure in the composition as well as isolating the bodily experience of pain, drawing the viewer deeper into the canvas.

[59] Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 54.
[60] Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 55.



Fig. 2 - *Dolor* (1948)

©Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

Varo's depiction of the body can also be seen to contain a Renaissance influence, in that the machine and the figure are reminiscent of Da Vinci's Vitruvian man. Can this figure be seen then as a type of Vitruvian female? In Braidotti's words: 'The Vitruvian female forged a bond of solidarity between one and the many, which in the hands of the second feminist wave in the 1960s was to grow into the principle of political sister-hood'.[61] Although not visible here, undeniable Varo forged this bond that Braidotti re-

[61] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 21.

fers to with the female (and male) exiled friends on her arrival in Mexico. But, most importantly for the analysis, drawing on this image of the ideal proportion of man, Varo recreates a medieval setting with a Renaissance ideal at its heart. However, the most likely source and influence for this painting (given that Varo was asked by Bayer to draw inspiration from medieval imagery), is an illustration for the torturing wheel found in the Petit Larousse Dictionary (Fig. 3) (1912):[62]



Fig. 3 - Woodcut by Petit Larousse, 1912

In both images, the 'subjects' being tortured are in nearly the same position and the square of the platform and the wheel also match Varo's design. But unlike the woodcut, where the torture is being witnessed by a large crowd, in Varo's illustration, the figure is set in isolation within an abandoned landscape: all human agency for this pain has

[62] Paul Harding, 'Wheel Cross', in Seiyaku.com <https://www.seiyaku.com/customs/crosses/wheel.html> [Accessed 26 September 2018]. Gil and Rivera offer other possible sources of inspiration, see *El hilo invisible*, pp. 146-147.

been removed and the figure is left isolated to suffer in silence without an audience. Furthermore, according to Gil and Rivera, Varo is here depicting St. Vincent:

> El cuadro evoca a San Vicente, venerado y reconocido como primer mártir de Hispania. Según la leyenda, este santo murió luego de ser torturado, a principios del siglo IV d.C., por defender el cristianismo y por negarse a adorar estatuas. En España es el patrono de los sastres y modistas.[63]

Another possible source of inspiration could also be the legend of St. Catherine as explained by Jacobo de Voragine:

> And then a master warned and advised the king, being wood for anger, that he should make four wheels of iron, environed with sharp razors, cutting so that she might be horribly all detrenched and cut in that torment, so that he might fear the other christian people by ensample of that cruel torment. And then was ordained that two wheels should turn against the other two by great force, so that they should break all that should be between the wheels, and then the blessed virgin prayed our Lord that he would break these engines to the praising of his name, and for to convert the people that were there.[64]

In all of these scenes we encounter similar narratives of pain and martyrdom, and a sense of utter isolation. This isolation is further emphasised by the geometrical forms.[65] Geometrical forms, such as the circle and the square, and the elongated tubes and triangular roofs of the towers interconnect to offer the viewer a sensation of nearly flawlessly controlled pain.[66] But as will be seen later on, this sensation is a fake one given that medicine does not get rid of pain, but only manages to conceal it, to numb it. In the Foucauldian universe, torture rituals also have this binary character:

> When the moment of execution approaches, the patients are injected with tranquillizers. A utopia of judicial reticence: take away life, but prevent the patient from feeling it; deprive the prisoner of all rights, but do not inflict pain; impose penalties free of all pain. Recourse to psycho-pharmacology and to various

[63] Gil and Rivera, p. 145.
[64] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*, trans. by William Caxton (1483) <http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG1293/_P92.HTM> [Accessed 16 August 2019].
[65] For a study on the importance of the circle in Varo's work, see Magnolia Rivera, *Trampantojos: el círculo en la obra de Remedios Varo*. The wheel will also play a key role in the analysis of *De Homo Rodans*.
[66] 'Geometry has a privileged position as the fundamental mirroring of the natural order, since it is both an elaborated science of ordered forms and the present and manifest form of the order of the world', Brent L. Pickett, 'Foucault and the Politics of Resistance', *Polity*, 28. 4 (1996), 445-66 (p. 54).

> physiological 'disconnectors', even if it is temporary, is a logical consequence of this 'non-corporal' penality.[67]

If we consider that Varo was depicting the condition of pain for the purpose of illustrating medicine to relieve that pain, the connection with Foucault's theories is further strengthened here. In this composition, then, this individual is both being tortured and being saved from that torture. The event within this Panoptical-like space creates a show of both damnation and salvation. This can be seen in the staticity of the figure and the neutral tones and "calm" aspect of the scene overall.

The towers play a crucial role in this composition. There are five towers in total, four in the foreground and one in the background.[68] They are very austere and apart from the gothic shaped windows, present no type of decoration or embellishment. This type of architecture enhances the atmospheric eeriness, given that 'buildings and details that hardly possess any aesthetic values manage to create a sensorially rich and present atmosphere'.[69] In this regard, Borch mentions that 'overpowering atmospheres have a haptic, almost material presence, as if we were surrounded and embraced by a specific substance',[70] and goes on to specify that 'haptic and atmospheric architecture promotes slowness and intimacy, appreciated and comprehended gradually as images of the body and the skin'.[71] The unadorned towers framing the torturing machine and figure convey a specific type of atmosphere, one that takes on bodily characteristics, in particular that of the sense of touch. The sky also adds to the heaviness of the texture of the composition. It looks as if a storm is approaching and about to break above the torture scene. This type of sky, as will be seen in the other two works discussed in this chapter, is reminiscent of works by El Greco, as well as other illustrations of the Calvary as depicted

[67] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 11.
[68] Arcq connects these towers with the castle of Carcassonne in France, Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 9.
[69] Borch, p. 32.
[70] Borch, p. 34.
[71] Borch, p. 35.

during the Baroque.[72] We must take into account that the Baroque used painters and artists in general to create propaganda for religious education. In those images, there was a strong sense of theatricality in the manner in which the artist was asked to draw the viewer in, a drive to stimulate the five senses and convince him/her of the conversion taking place before them.[73] Varo is here achieving a similar goal; however her techniques are more subtle and embedded within a combination of perfect geometrical architecture and forms, heavy textures, an earthy colour palette and an isolated space surrounding an inanimate figure. With this, Varo, through the medium of art, is attempting to convey a rigid system that renders the subject as prisoner of his/her pain or even, if we look at some of Varo's other works, as a prisoner of his/her condition or gender. As seen, for example, in some of the 'explanatory' texts that accompany Varo's paintings. In *La revelación* (1955), she writes that 'cada reloj tiene una ventana con rejas, como en una cárcel';[74] and in *Tres destinos* (1956) according to her, the figures 'creen moverse libremente'.[75] As a consequence, one might say that Varo's figures, not only in the Bayer paintings, are portrayed within a set of constraints that although at times not visually obvious, are depicted as such by the artist thus perceived in the same manner by the viewer.

The four towers that stand closest to the viewer can be seen to exclude him/her from what is taking place right behind the towers. This positioning of the viewer, from an elevated angle, manages to emphasize further the architectural elements in the landscape ; while at the same time offering him/her a stronger feeling of control over the events. In other words, it allows us to see what is happening without being seen, as though we were peeking at the scene. Here we have the perfect panoptical figure, as

[72] See for example El Greco's *View of Toledo* (1600).
[73] This strong Medieval/Baroque and religious sense is an aspect that will be also discussed in the following paintings.
[74] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 62.
[75] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 70.

previously explained, given that Varo's setting is one where the viewer becomes a direct witness of the event of torture. In comparison with the 1912 illustration depicted above as possible source of inspiration, Varo's torture event is one in which the figure has been 'abandoned' and left to suffer. There is no one else there. In fact, if we consider that the towers have only windows and we can see no doors, this point is further emphasised: we can look but we cannot enter or exit this space. Furthermore, the empty dark windows in the towers give the impression that there might be someone looking even though we do not see them. Varo seems to be playing with different levels of looking: first the 'invisible' onlookers inside the tower that are perhaps looking at the torture taking place but are also, given the position of the visible windows, looking at us; and, second, us — the viewers — looking on but also being looked at. One could even say that it is some sort of optical game comparable to that of Velázquez in *Las Meninas* (1656), although here with a clear metaphysical and surrealist twist. This is reminiscent of both De Chirico and Magritte,[76] given the supernatural and dream-like essence of the painting, and the arrow-like roofs vigorously pointing at the sky, directed towards a space other than earthly. In addition, most of these windows are facing away from the spectacle, as if suggesting that this viewing is unidirectional, directed towards us, the viewers. As Foucault explains: 'In the perfect camp, all power would be exercised solely through exact observation; each gaze would form a part of the overall functioning of power'.[77] We, the viewers, both become the figure, and unknowingly, become agents of torture, which prompts further questions about who or what may be inflicting the pain. We are not shown. The body has been stretched and broken on the wheel, then abandoned. No one is there to help, bearing comparison again to images of the Calvary and the sense of being forsaken. This may cause the viewer to feel uneasy, but uneasiness and discomfort are inherent characteristics of pain, and seeing that this painting was an

[76] De Chirico and Magritte influences will be further discussed in the analysis of *Dolor reumático I*.
[77] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 171.

advertisement to sell aspirin, and its primordial goal was to engage with the viewer, these can be seen as part of the techniques that Varo employed to achieve this.

Natalya Frances Lusty reads this painting as Varo trying to recreate 'the surrealist fascination with the spectacle of violence, whereby the enigmatic eruption of trauma in the everyday invariably signals the acute violence of a repressed political unconscious'.[78] I suggest that Varo's painting includes a series of art historical references that move beyond surrealist ideas, given the meticulous architectural arrangement and the array of inter-pictorial references to Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque art. Also, given that this type of advertisement does not give any real information about the product being sold, the artist had to be able to make a strong connection between the idea of pain and its audience. It is through the inclusion of this isolated, genderless and lifeless figure trapped in a torture machine, framed in a tight geometrical composition under a nightmarish-looking sky that we all become witnesses of this pain and agents of pain at the same time. The emptiness of the space and the absence of sound invade all, and the austerities of the towers grant the painting with a quasi-haptic quality. The other two paintings differ in their inclusion of more distinctly feminine bodies, but nevertheless include a strong architectural presence as well as an isolated figure in pain as the foundations for their composition.

[78] Frances Lusty, p. 63.

3.5.2. *Dolor reumático I (Dolor reumático)*: The Columns of Power

> The clinical gaze enabled medical men to assume considerable social power in defining reality and hence in identifying deviance and social disorder.
>
> Bryan S. Turner[79]

This painting introduces a different source of pain: here, the object inflicting pain is not a torture machine but a knife. To illustrate the condition of rheumatism, Bayer asked Varo to draw inspiration from the Lourdes Sanctuary, crutches, and objects for the disabled.[80] As will be seen in the analysis that follows, Varo does not adhere entirely to these guidelines and, in any case, as Frances Lusty explains, 'it is difficult to ascertain how much irony Varo injected into this series on pain, or whether she simply felt constrained by the brief given to her by Casa Bayer'.[81]

[79] Bryan S. Turner, *Medical Power and Social Knowledge* (London: Sage Publications, 1987), p. 12.
[80] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 11 (footnote 9).
[81] Frances Lusty, p. 64. In this regard, Arcq comments that 'es claro que en estos cuadros, la artista realizaba un trabajo que no coincidía con su propia visión', 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 10.



Fig. 4 - *Dolor Reumático I*

© Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

At the centre of the composition we find a female figure with her back to the viewer: we cannot see her face, but we are able to see her back and her long hair falling down at the side of her body. She is wearing a white dress with her shoulders and arms on display. The knife is partially inside the right shoulder of the figure, and there is a small wound that contrasts with the bare shoulder and pale colour of her skin. Her long hair is unusual if contrasted with some of Varo's later work. The figures that appear

from the 1950s onward, are usually androgynous and depicted with short hair,[82] while the figures that are clearly female characters present unusual hair characteristics: bright red or blue hair with strange textures as is the case in *A la felicidad de las damas* (1956) and *La tejedora roja* (1956); or floating hair as in *La huida* (1961) or *La llamada* (1961). Hence, the fact that her hair is pale and lifeless and that her head seems to be tilted down and facing down, may be an indication of submission, surrender and suffering. Furthermore, the disposition of her hands and arms, almost relaxed and graceful, imbues this character with doll-like characteristics, similar to that of the figure being tortured in the first painting. What is different here, however, is that the body in this painting is clearly a female body of which we can only see the back. The female body has important connotations within medical disciplines. If, as according to Foucault bodies can be seen as objects of disciplinary manipulations,[83] the fact that Varo has chosen a female body to portray pain may be connected with the way in which 'clinical medicine isolates and observes bodily states and processes',[84] particularly women's. The woman's body as spectacle has been since the nineteenth century a source of curiosity, thus the way in which these women are depicted and the spaces in which these practices occur also become a way for doctors and practitioners to make sexuality visible.[85]

In addition, there is a strong sculptural or statuesque quality to the body in pain in this painting, maybe once again mimicking the architectural space that surrounds it in that it captures the idea of: 'body as columns/columns as bodies'. This is further confirmed by the fact that the tone of the skin of the figure and the columns is exactly the same: a very pale pink with brown undertones; but also, because this figure is located under the shade of the main column, almost becoming part of it. Arcq is of the same

[82] See for example *Música solar* (1955).
[83] See Johanna Oksala, 'Anarchic Bodies: Foucault and the Feminist Question of Experience', *Hypatia,* 19. 4 (2004), 99-121.
[84] Paul Hirst, 'Foucault and Architecture', *AA Files*, 26 (1993), 52-60 (p. 53).
[85] Rajchman, p. 106. The power of the gaze will be discussed further on in the analysis.

opinion: 'el piso de ajedrez se extiende indefinidamente, y el interior y el exterior se confunden'.[86] The experience of pain and the never-ending geometrical space help to blur these boundaries. In turn, the columns and architectural space might take on the inflicted pain and suffering of the figure, now becoming 'columns in pain'. Another salient element that further emphasizes this interconnection between body and architecture is the fact that the female figure is chained from both wrists to the tall central column of the composition. The viewer may ask him/herself who has stabbed this woman or who has enslaved her, again becoming a witness to the event taking place. A possible interpretation of this figure in pain could be that pain itself — here the condition of rheumatism — causes this trap, enslaving the body to its physical condition and its body, extending the borders of the body to the architectural space it occupies.

There are six columns in the composition that can be juxtaposed, following the Greek tradition, to that of the Tuscan type, but these ones are further elongated to the top part of the painting and unfold into a nearly gothic ceiling. Together with the chains and the knife these rigid columns become elements that further enslave the figure at the centre of the composition, given that, as was the case with the Gothic towers in the first painting, 'buildings or planned environments become statements',[87] and according to Foucault, statements are like discipline, imposing the power system onto the subject. Looking at the painting from the lower part to the upper part, it can be seen to have three different levels: first the lower part with the figure in pain; second, the middle part of the painting that presents the columns, the clouds and the empty spaces between them; and finally, the top part, that manages to enclose the space. Horizontally and vertically, the middle space is what dominates the scene, as it manages to convey an impression of space and amplitude, even of calmness, thanks to the nearly equal space be-

[86] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', in *Las cinco llaves…*, p. 9.
[87] Pickett, p. 53.

tween the columns. Furthermore, the pink clouds and sky are not only in the background but are also an active part of the architectural space, making these inanimate structures begin to look organic.[88] This scene is reminiscent of paintings from other surrealist artists such as Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978) or René Magritte (1898-1967).[89] However, their constructions of space differ slightly: for De Chirico, 'space […] is characterised by a sense of incompleteness: perspectives are deficient, temporal markers are imprecise and the animated occupation of space is never overt';[90] while Magritte 'renders space ambiguous […] he also goes on to deform it further by revealing it as paradoxical and fragmentary'.[91] What they do seem to have in common is the notion of metaphysical painting,[92] an aspect that can be seen to be very relevant in the analysis of Varo's commercial work.[93]

Other characteristics that are shared with De Chirico, and that can be observed in this painting, are the strong, dramatic shadows as well as the 'simple architectural forms, of space, and a dramatic side or back illumination to create a sense of mysterious

[88] This organic element will play a strong part in the analysis of Varo's *De Homo Rodans* in Chapter 4.
[89] Like Varo, Magritte, who also had to 'support himself […] painted posters and advertisements, and wallpaper designs for Peters-Lacroix', Clara Orban, *The Culture of Fragments* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), p. 114. The resemblance in this painting have more points of contact with De Chirico than with Magritte, this is why De Chirico's is exploited in greater detail, as seen, for example, in Chirico's *The Double Dream of Spring* (1915) or *Italian Plaza with a Red Tower* (1943). Arcq also mentions De Chirico in her comments about Varo's commercial work: 'La atmósfera evoca las pinturas de Giorgio de Chirico, con espacios enigmáticos que se prolongan hacia el infinito', Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 9.
[90] Silvano Levy, 'Menace: Surrealist interference of space', in *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. by Thomas Mical (E-Library: Taylor&Francis, 2005), p. 60.
[91] Levy, pp. 60-61.
[92] 'Metaphysical Art is the translation of the Italian Pittura Metafisica, a movement created by Giorgio de Chirico and the former futurist, Carlo Carra, in the north Italian city of Ferrara. Using a realist style, they painted the squares typical of such Italian cities but the squares are unnaturally empty, and in them objects and statues are brought together in strange juxtapositions. The artists thus created a visionary world of the mind, beyond physical reality […]', *Metaphysical Art - Art Term*, Tate, n.d. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/metaphysical-art> [Accessed 12 August 2019].
[93] What is more, during her time in Paris, before departing for Mexico, it is known that Varo used to produce copies of Chirico's work, so she was well acquainted with his stylistic features. For more on this, see Lauren A. Kaplan, 'Traces of Influence: Giorgio de Chirico, Remedios Varo, and "lo Real Maravilloso"', *The Latin Americanist*, 54. 3 (2010), 25-51.

continuum'.[94] However, while De Chirico introduced his human figures 'to give a sense of scale or emphasis',[95] Varo's figures seem to be real protagonists of the narrative taking place. The *Pittura Metafisica* of De Chirico was considered to be an important influence for the Surrealists, to the point that De Chirico's early paintings were considered to be proto-surrealist.[96] The Belgian surrealist artist Magritte also shared some of these ideas and concepts in his work and potentially has also influenced some of Varo's work. For instance, Varo's pink clouds invading the architectural setting can be considered to be reminiscent of Magritte's *A Storm* (1932). Magritte depicts three simple and unadorned rectangular buildings, with a series of clouds both in the foreground and in the background of the buildings. The strong correspondence between body, architecture, and clouds in *Dolor reumático I* give the whole structure a sort of biological air, as if what we are envisioning is the figure's view of that landscape while in pain. Thus, both this painting, as well as *Dolor*, could very well be seen as psychic landscapes of the figure portrayed. Here, Varo seems to be making a reflection, not only on the interplay between body and soul but also on gender structures, and their mutual interconnectedness. A further example of this idea can be seen in Varo's painting *Los amantes* (1963).

The combination of classical columns within a Late Gothic vault, the chequerboard floor, reminiscent of a palace or castle,[97] and the fact that there is a trapped female figure in it, confers this painting with a strong fairytale-like quality, as if we are envisioning a modern-day Rapunzel. This is further confirmed by the princess-like dress, the very long hair, as well as the high standing columns, as if in a tower. The presence of fairytale narratives was already discussed in relation to Varo's play *El santo*

[94] Marianne W. Martin, 'Reflections on De Chirico and Arte Metafisica', *The Art Bulletin*, 60. 2 (1978), 342–53 (p. 343).
[95] Martin, p. 344.
[96] Edward B. Henring, 'Metaphysical Interior': An Early Painting by Giorgio de Chirico', *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, 70. 4 (1983), 138-46 (p. 139).
[97] Arcq connects Varo's ceiling with the Late Gothic style of German architect Arnold Von Westfalen (1425-1480). See, for example, his vault at Albrechtsburg, Meissen, Germany (1471- completed 1525); Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 9.

cuerpo grasoso, in the previous chapter, indeed just before Varo's departure for Venezuela when she worked on these paintings. In the play, the fairy-tale structure allowed the authors — Carrington and Varo — to make fun of gender roles and position themselves within the Mexican artistic space. But here we are forced to reflect on the connection between a fairy-tale character, the female experience of pain, and prompted to reflect critically on the fairy-tale's function as a form of social control. In this painting, in contrast with the other two, the figure is clearly female while the architecture can be read as strong and almost masculine, given that Tuscan columns are said to have masculine characteristics.[98] Arcq also points out that Varo's feminine figures during her time in Venezuela 'aparecen atadas, atormentadas, torturadas, envueltas en redes y madejas o vendadas',[99] a tendency that might be seen to illustrate Varo's anxiety about gender more generally but also as a way for her to make pain visible in a graphic way.

Alongside the depiction of real female bodies in pain is a concern to show that pain is embedded within the architectural frameworks of the paintings. Here it is useful to turn to Scarry who explains that pain can be transferred to objects through a process of 'analogical verification':[100]

> The felt characteristics of pain […]- can be appropriated away from the body and represented as the attributes of something else (something which by itself lacks those attributes, something which does not in itself appear vibrant, real or certain).[101]

If space in general can be read as having a particular masculinity, this architectural space can also be seen as an 'agent of pain'.[102] Following Scarry and given the handcuffs chaining the woman in the painting and the knife, the masculine aspect of this

[98] Rufus Normanton (ed.), 'The Classical Orders: the key to traditional design'. Available online at <http://www.classicalproportions.com/classical-orders.html.> [Accessed 27 January 2018].
[99] Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 9.
[100] Scarry, p. 4.
[101] Scarry, pp. 13-14.
[102] Scarry, p. 40.

space traps both the internal experience of pain and femininity. But also because it reproduces the conventional male gaze of looking at the female victim entrapped and stabbed. Space then, becomes 'a space that can be walked around in though not walked out of'.[103] As a result, we find another panoptical type of structure here, one that controls the gaze of the onlooker through a series of columns and by including the roughly-cut Gothic ceiling as part of the landscape. This is something that refers back to the patriarchal space Varo inhabited both in Spain, artistic circles while in France and now in Mexico/Venezuela, as seen in the way women were depicted in ads, as the housekeepers and home carers.[104] The vault, a series of roughly cut diamonds, that resemble cut gemstones, mirroring the stabbed body at the lower part of the composition, further emphasizes danger and also promotes the idea of entrapment: trying to exit this space may indeed exacerbate the pain.[105]

Another strong contrast with the torturing event taking place in the first painting has to do with the colours of the composition. In this painting, the viewer is given the impression that there could be a sunset occurring on the right side, but we cannot see this: it is suggested by the shadows of the columns and the pink undertones of the sky and the yellow tones of the ground. Allow me to briefly comment here on the medium employed by Varo to produce this type of effect: *gouache* on cardboard.[106] This medium, which dates back to antiquity, seems to have been an appropriate choice for this type of work as 'the medium is favoured by designers and illustrators, who need to achieve flat, even fields of colour, and also by miniature-painters, who appreciate its

[103] Scarry, p. 55.
[104] See section 3.2. context.
[105] This type of vault will be repeated by the artist in other works but embedded into nature, columns as trees, for example in Varo's work, *Catedral vegetal* (1957).
[106] 'Gouache, also called bodycolor, is simply water-based paint rendered opaque by the addition of white paint or pigment […], or a white substance, such as chalk or even marble dust', Gerald W.R. Ward, *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 259.

possibilities for a jewel-like texture'.[107] While the painter used the same technique for all the paintings produced for Bayer, and hence all three of the paintings analysed in this chapter, that jewel-like feature can be predominantly noticed in this composition, especially in the flooring and the texture of the columns and clouds. In fact, there is a warmth and softness granted by the colours and the textures of this painting that was lacking in the previous painting. The combination of these colours, together with the effect of the gouache technique, and the strict classical geometrical forms, offer the viewer a false sense of calm and painlessness — most likely a similar sensation to that a painkiller might offer you. However, the figure is entrapped, and the labyrinthine space suggests once more that there is no way out. In his *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault mentions how the order of architecture works around the subject: 'The order of the architecture, which frees at its summit the figures of the dance, imposes its rules and its geometry on the disciplined men on the ground. The columns of power'.[108] Here, the disciplinary architecture imposes onto the 'manly' columns, and the whole structure then presses upon the female body. Power is everywhere, 'localised, dispersed, diffused and typically disguised through the social system, operating at a micro, local and covert level through sets of specific practices'.[109]

In addition, both the shadows of the columns and the suggested sunset on the right grant the composition dynamism and suggest movement, giving this scene a strong theatrical essence. Giuliana Bruno explains that 'the changing position of a body in space creates both architectural and cinematic grounds',[110] linking Varo's work to the world of theatre and also once again with De Chirico's paintings given that that both De Chirico and Varo, 'worked for the theatre and both made deliberate reference to theatri-

[107] Ward, p. 749.
[108] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, p. 188.
[109] Bryan S. Turner, 'From governmentality to risk, some reflections on Foucault's contribution to medical sociology', in Peterson and Bunton, pp. xi-xii.
[110] Bruno, p. 56.

cal scenery devices in their rendering of architectural space'.[111] Another effect produced by the shadows cast by the body and the columns has to do with the same quasi-haptic atmosphere that was present in the analysis of *Dolor*. As Pallasmaa explains, 'deep shadows and darkness are essential, because they dim the sharpness of vision, make depth and distance ambiguous, and invite unconscious peripheral vision and tactile fantasy',[112] as if touching through vision. This is further emphasized by the softness of the colours and the medium employed. Thus, rigid geometrical forms, the use of one-point perspective and the shadows delineate, control and condition perception.[113] This is another technique by which Varo powerfully engages with her viewers.

The relationship between pain and pleasure also has to be noted here. We are presented with a painting that evokes contradictory feelings: on the one side, there is a woman stabbed in her back and chained to a column, but on the other, the overall colour palette and harmonic forms offer a type of visual pleasure. But whose pleasure? Certainly, the strong theatrical aspect of this painting and the visual pleasure suggested by the painful event, could have to do more with the commercial aspect of the painting and its intended audience together with Varo's choice in placing a woman as the one in pain. In her essay on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', Mulvey suggests that 'in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'.[114] Taking this into account, and also as suggested by Foucault's notion of bodies as objects of discipline, Varo seems to be using women's passive and objectified role within a patriarchal society to illustrate a painful condition:

[111] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 208.
[112] Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 50.
[113] 'Perspectival representation itself turned into a symbolic form, one which not only describes but also conditions perception', Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 18.
[114] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. by Leo Braudy and Marshall Coher (New York: Oxford UP, 1999), 833-44 (p. 837).

rheumatism. For the male viewer, the female figure in the painting becomes the 'bearer of meaning, not the maker of meaning'.[115] The paradox here is that it is ultimately a woman, Varo, who is creating meaning by utilising images from popular imagery, dehumanizing them and endowing them with architectural features to make viewers reflect on the experience of pain, but also on the condition of femininity. The gaze, strictly controlled in the first painting, is now somewhat distributed thanks to the disposition of the columns, as well as the one-point perspective and the chequerboard floor. In this composition then, 'the apportioning of blame is redistributed'.[116] A further element that may induce a type of pleasure is the way in which the woman is depicted, fully submitted to the columns and the space that manipulates her. 'Torture', in this regard, 'becomes the product of a psychology of sadism',[117] a type of sadism that is connected once more, given the disciplines at hand — medicine and pharmacology — with the way women's bodies have been the locus of experiments and with it, sadomasochistic practices throughout history.

As already mentioned, Varo might have looked at the work being done in Mexico for her commercial paintings and an obvious source for this particular painting could be Frida Kahlo's *The Broken Column* (1944):

> The *Broken Column*, 1944, is one of Frida's paintings that depicts how her physical suffering was also a psychological torment. The column substitutes a broken Greek column, for her spinal column, which shows one of the sources of her pain.[118]

[115] 'Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning', Mulvey, p. 834.
[116] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 9.
[117] Arthur W. Frank III, 'The Politics of the New Positivity: A Review Essay of Michel Foucault's "Discipline and Punish"', *Human Studies*, 5. 1 (1982), 61-67 (p. 63).
[118] Sayer, p. 35

In this composition Kahlo situates the column on the inside of her body instead of her spine, referencing the pain she suffered after her accident. Both paintings share the theme of pain and the inclusion of the Greek columns as strong references for the female body and for pain, but are depicted in an entirely different manner: Varo decidedly positioned the classical columns as external references of the body mirroring pain, rather than an interior element of the female body, while for Kahlo the ionic column 'connotes an association between her body and the "official body" of patriarchal medical and political institutions paradigmatically housed in classical architectural structures'.[119] Nevertheless, architecture — and also nature — were recurrent images in both their works.[120]

We could surmise then that the relationship between architecture, body and pain in *Dolor reumático I* is established once more by the use of strict geometrical forms, but also by deeply embedding the airspace within those geometrical forms. The female body here both becomes an element of the architecture and submits to the powerful patriarchal columns that enchain it. However, this painting can carry other type of connotations given that this type of vision offered by Varo is an erotic one, one that connects the use of the female body with both pain and pleasure. The next section will analyse what role architecture plays by looking at a ruined structure within an arid desert landscape, and how it manages to also interconnect with the body in pain.

[119] Lindauer, p. 69.
[120] The role of nature will be further discussed in the next painting.



Fig. 5 - *Dolor reumático II (Reuma, Lumbago, Ciática)*, 1948

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3.5.3. *Dolor reumático II:* Theatricalization of Sickness

> […] when language, arriving at its confines, overleaps itself, explodes and radically challenges itself in laughter, tears, the eyes rolled back in ecstasy […]
>
> Michel Foucault[121]

Kaplan explains that Varo was given the following text for this commission: 'as if sharp nails are being driven into the flesh ... into the joints, into the bones, into the nerves...!! These are the sensations that one can suffer. Rheumatism ... lumbago ... sciatica…!!'.[122] Taking these words into account, it seems that the artist did follow the instructions as she used nails as referential objects for pain. But as this analysis will hope to prove, there are further elements that indicate that Varo once more, was also following her own artistic agenda.

To start with, the main figure takes on a stronger protagonist role than the bodies in her other depictions of pain, given its central and prominent position in the painting, which is now closer to the viewer. This body in pain is now positioned at the very centre of the canvas in a nearly ecstatic manner and levitating, as if in extreme pain. The whole body is covered in gauze. In fact, if we consider the colour of the hands and face, these bandages become a nearly flawless second skin given that the whole figure shares the same colour: a pale grey with pink/purple undertones, similar to that of the columns in the previous painting. The gauze covers the entire body, except the hands, feet and face, which may indicate that the pain is in the entire body, not just in the one place, it invades body and as will be seen, space. The body shape is reminiscent of other figures in Varo's works, given that it is not clear if this character is feminine or masculine. The theatrical aspect in this composition then, intensely enhanced both by the figure at the

[121] James D. Faubion (ed.), *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, II (New York: The New York Press, 1998), pp. 83-84.
[122] From Bayer promotional brochure, quoted in Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 104.

forefront and the landscape at the side and in the background of the body, creates a spectacle of agonizing pain, 'a space of the *incitement* to see'.[123]

The connection with time, decay and death also plays an important role in this painting emphasized by the depiction of a desert. A desert can be perceived as 'a place of death, silence, beauty, natural magnificence, human insignificance, and above all erosion'.[124] This aspect is further enhanced by the ruined architecture at the background of the figure: a medieval castle of which we are only able to see its structure. This is not a castle that people inhabit. It is clearly an abandoned structure left to erode with the passing of time.[125] The architecture in this painting takes on the qualities of the space it inhabits; it mimics the desert space and its gothic towers match up with the towers in the first painting, *Dolor*. However, in this illustration what controls and contains the body is not the towers or the columns, but the dangerous-looking grass that resemble needles on the ground. In fact, this 'is a segmented, immobile, frozen space', where 'each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at the risk of his life, contagion or punishment'.[126] Following Foucault's notion of power as 'everywhere' and of particular relevance to the interpretation of this painting, this 'tends to suggest the individuals are enmeshed in a sticky web of medical power from which they will never be able to emerge, their struggles only further imprisoning them'.[127]

The architectural structure is lying on top of a small hill and its bare ground is covered with the same lava-like ground and dangerous-looking grass found under the figure. There are two elements that appear to separate from and help to indicate perspec-

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[123] Rajchman, p. 106.
[124] 'A space specially charged and infused with time', Marguerite S Shaffer and Phoebe S. K. Younh, *Rendering Nature: Animals, Bodies, Places and Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), p. 219.
[125] This abandoned-looking castle in ruins is also seen in other works by the artist, such as *La batalla* (1947) and *Vuelo mágico* (1956).
[126] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 195.
[127] Deborah Lupton, 'Foucault and the medicalisation critique', in *Foucault, Health and Medicine*, ed. by Alan Peterson and Robert Bunton (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 101.

tive within the landscape: two rocks that show the same roughly cut sides as that of the ceiling in the previous painting. The castle in ruins helps to further emphasize the isolated event taking place in the foreground. What is more, 'ruination, destruction, weathering, and wear strengthen the atmospheric impact of architecture';[128] hence if what provided atmospheric tension in the other painting was the unornamented towers of the clouds surrounding the columns, here it is the desert landscape together with the ruined castle that build up that atmospheric eeriness.

The medieval structure and the levitating figure with its head tilted back about to be penetrated by arrow-like needles add a type of religious martyrdom, medievalist aspect to this painting. In other words, it indicates a strong relationship between pain and pleasure/ecstasy that can be seen to be reminiscent of some mystical poets, such as sixteenth-century Spanish poet Santa Teresa de Jesús (1515-1582), and in particular her description of the ecstasy, already depicted several times throughout the history of art:[129]

> Veíale en las manos un dardo de oro largo, y al fin del hierro me parecía tener un poco de fuego. Este me parecía meter por el corazón algunas veces y que me llegaba a las entrañas. Al sacarle, me parecía las llevaba consigo, y me dejaba toda abrasada en amor grande de Dios. Era tan grande el dolor, que me hacía dar aquellos quejidos, y tan excesiva la suavidad que me pone este grandísimo dolor, que no hay desear que se quite, ni se contenta el alma con menos que Dios. No es dolor corporal sino espiritual, aunque no deja de participar el cuerpo algo, y aun harto. Es un requiebro tan suave que pasa entre el alma y Dios, que suplico yo a su bondad lo dé a gustar a quien pensare que miento.[130]

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[128] Borch, p. 35.

[129] Further connections to Baroque sculpture could be made here. In particular Lorenzo Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (1647-1652), located in Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Indeed, one could say that the rays of light entering the composition space of the sculpture, understood under the Baroque's notion of *un bel composto*, can be juxtaposed with the arrow looking needles in Varo's painting. For more on Bernini and his practice of *un bel composto* see Colleen Murdock, 'Raising the Dead: Bernini, the Bel Composto, and Theatricality in Counter-Reformation Rome', (Senior Thesis, Trinity College, Hartford, CT 2017) Trinity College Digital Repository <https://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/660> [Accessed 29 December 2018].

[130] Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de la vida*, 'Capítulos 26 al 30' (Madrid: Real Academia Española, MMXIV). Reproduced online at <http://www.santateresadejesus.com/vida-capitulos-26-al-30/> [Accessed 27 January 2018].

Varo may in fact be making a direct reference to mysticism or to Santa Teresa herself, given that the artist received a strong religious education and will be seen to include religion as a strong reference-point in some of her other works.[131] Examples include her painting *Tres destinos* (1956) where three figures are at work: one seems to be writing, the one at the centre is painting, and on the right the third figure seems to be about to talk into some sort of device. Their activities are all interconnected through a series of quasi-transparent strings that come to meet at the very centre of the composition. These strings then take the shape of a circular construction and stretch in such a way that connects them with the sky, or the divine. These figures are reminiscent of monks or religious figures as they are all wearing long tunics. There is much more that could be said about this painting, but what is important for the discussion at hand is that these three figures inhabit a perfectly designed medieval city and are engaged in some type of religious writing. Such images of pain and martyrdom have been and are still today very popular in art history:

> The presentation of bodies in pain has been a major concern of Western art from the Greeks onward […]. The Christian tradition is closely entwined with themes of pain and suffering, from the central images of the flagellation and crucifixion to the many representations of bloody martyrdoms.[132]

An example of this could be depictions of St Sebastian throughout history of art, but in particular during the Renaissance.[133] The Saint is usually portrayed in a similar manner and pose as Varo's figure: standing in a nearly ecstatic state, head looking up while narrows pierce his torso. Furthermore, in some of these depictions, the Saint is also shown with his hands tied to his back and against a column, bringing us back all together to the

[131] Kaplan also notes that 'It is with a similar spirit that Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, […] offered a passionate defense of a woman's right to a life of the mind by invoking the kitchen as laboratory of imagination and observation', in *Catálogo Razonado*, p. 40.
[132] Maria Pia Di Bella and James Elkins, *Representations of Pain in Art and Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. xi.
[133] Some Renaissance names associated with paintings of St Sebastian include Titian, Tintoretto, del Sarto, Mantegna, del Castagno and Perugino.

earlier discussed painting: *Dolor Reumático I*. By recreating this martyr-like scene, Varo, as was the case with the fairy-tale essence in the second painting, takes on and adapts images that have become part of the stock imagery of art history, moulding them for the particular Bayer agenda. It is as if the scene was taken from the Baroque where, as claimed by the Council of Trent, the viewer had to be fully drawn in and convinced by the religious conversion taking place in front of him/her. Religion as well as medical institutions — two key fields in the reading and interpretation of these works — are according to Foucault, directly related to the structures of power.[134] Bryan S. Turner explains that, for Foucault

> These institutions are coercive in the sense that they discipline individuals and exercise forms of surveillance over everyday life in such a way that actions are both produced and constrained by them.[135]

Given that, as already mentioned, Varo was raised within a religious household and that she attended a religious school while in Spain, she — as a subject of that institution — would have been constantly aware of the power system within religion. The way in which religious and medical institutions work to subjugate the individual, and in particular women, is broadly similar, because 'power is embodied in the day-to-day practices of the medical profession within the clinic, […] and through the religious practices of the church as they operate through such rituals as the confessional'.[136]

Artist Frida Kahlo also used a religious source of inspiration for some of her works, in particular for her painting *El ciervo herido* (1946), which draws on the seven-

[134] 'The body was clearly of a major significance in *Discipline and Punish* but it also continued to play a crucial role in the larger project of *The History of Sexuality*, where Foucault was concerned with the body in relation to medicine and the body in relation to the development of the self within a Christian Paradigm', Turner, p. xv.
[135] Turner, p. xiv.
[136] Turner, p. xii.

teenth-century Mexican philosopher and poet, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695).[137] This is an extract taken directly from one of the sestines of her *Liras que expresan sentimientos de amor*:

> Si ves el ciervo herido
> que baja por el monte, acelerado,
> buscando, dolorido,
> alivio al mal en un arroyo helado,
> y sediento al cristal se precipita,
> no en el alivio, en el dolor me imita.[138]

Kahlo's life was, in the words of Margaret Lindauer, 'an entrenched narrative of suffering', given her health condition.[139] Thus, it is not difficult to see how, in her paintings, pain and the expression and illustration of suffering become one of the main subjects.[140] Varo's painting and Kahlo's *El ciervo herido* were produced only two years apart, but we cannot know for sure if Varo had the opportunity to see this work. Regardless they share similar imagery in their perception and interpretation of pain, which can be seen not only in the use of needles/arrows as the referential objects for pain but also in the hybrid character at the foreground of the canvas, invading the composition space.[141] For Lindauer, '*The Little Deer* depicts the artist's persistent resistance to gender dichotomy. […] In essence, she is a bisexual hybrid, a masculinized female, thereby defying patriarchal prescriptions for strict gender distinctions'.[142] The continuous use of hybrid bod-

[137] 'Frida Kahlo painted the wounded deer as an inspiration from her research on Sor Juana'; Feminist Humanities Project, Center for the Study of Women in Society, 'Frida Kahlo: from Martyr to Revolutionary', in *Kahlo Galleries online* <http://server.fhp.uoregon.edu/dtu/sites/kahlo/images/fkdeer.html> [Accessed 27 January 2018].
[138] Ángel Flores, *Poesía Española: A Dual-Language Anthology, 16th-20th Centuries* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1998), p. 178.
[139] Lindauer, p. 3.
[140] '[H]er paintings accordingly are interpreted as documents of her pain', Lindauer, p. 3.
[141] 'the arrows […] represent patriarchal prescription', Lindauer, p. 76.
[142] Lindauer, pp. 72-73.

ies in Varo's work as well as the depiction of images that challenge familiarity and unity becomes one way for the female artist to stand against the patriarchal and religious structures of power they inhabited. But Varo does so by re-using and adapting those traditional structures in particular bodies and architecture and re-designing the spaces in which they are embedded. In his *Discipline and power*, Foucault mentions the process by which an individual deals with its own bodily pain and physical struggles: 'The relation of each individual to his disease and to his death passes through the representatives of power, the registration they make of it, the decisions they take on it'.[143] Both artists, but in particular Kahlo, had to endure not only a life of artistic exclusion and subjugation to their male counterparts but also a life of physical suffering, one in which the doctors, who exercised knowledge and with it power, were not able to solve it. Examples of this are the many surgeries that Frida underwent and the many specialists she visited during her life.[144] Therefore, the artist/individual becomes the passive subject and the decisions and compromises he/she makes are all both controlled and manipulated by the exercise of those representatives of power. As mentioned before, within this scenario women undergo a particular type of subjugation, one in which their illnesses and suffering are usually not taken seriously instead often even related to some type of mental instability and/or hysteria.[145] In Varo's illustration we find both this passive subjugation and surrender towards the pain inflicted by the needles, but also as will be discussed later, a certain type of resistance, seen in the way the body is powerfully depicted both showing religious ecstasy and triumph, an element that was not present in the previous illustrations of the body in pain.

[143] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 196-97.
[144] For more on this see, for example, Andrea Kettenman, *Frida Kahlo, 1907-1954: Pain and Passion* (Köln: Taschen, 2003).
[145] For a discussion on pain, gender and hysteria see, for example, David B. Morris, *The Culture of Pain* (London: University of California Press Ltd., 1991).

The suspended body within an arid surrounding is barely touching the floor possibly because the ground seems to have bizarre and dangerous-looking grass growing out of it. This strange-looking grass not only resembles but also mirrors the needles in the upper part of the painting about to penetrate the body. In fact, it is hard to tell them apart given that they share not only the same colour and shape but are depicted in vertical position as if the needles are the rain that inflicts the body and then enter the ground or earth. Danger seems to be everywhere, as is pain:

> The space where pain exists cannot be confined to the inside of the body. It may be considered outside the body, or generated in the mind. This acts as *prima facie* evidence that pain may be felt outside of our physical body and is further evidence that our understanding of the inside and outside dissipates when we are in pain. [146]

Pain here causes the boundaries between interior and exterior states to blur producing another psychic landscape, a view within the figure's mind. But in this composition, there are other elements that emphasize the experience of pain. The fact that the needles are entering the ground as if also hurting the earth and all exterior space outside the body, suggest that extreme pain blurs the limits of the physical body, blending interior space and exterior space. In this regard, not only architecture but also nature seems to take on an important role in this composition and indeed in the relationship between the body and/in pain: the earth also seems to be in pain. It is not unusual to find plants and nature embedded within Varo's buildings and landscapes. For example, in *Hibernación* (1942), Varo depicts an unclothed woman lying in a fetal position on the ground, with her back to the viewer, and she seems to inhabit a type of transparent-cocoon, while a plant (maybe wild ivy) covers her lifeless looking body. In *El Relojer*o (1955), a painting that portrays the moment at which a clockmaker at work pauses to observe a transparent entity entering his workshop, Varo has plants growing out of the corners of the

[146] Sayer, p. 23.

room. Architecture and nature are also interconnected in some of her later works as in the paintings *Arquitectura vegetal* (1962) and *Visita al pasado* (1957) where the architectural spaces are in fact either made out of plants or entirely inhabited by plants. The ecological aspect of Varo's work is something else that the artist shares with Kahlo. As Tere Arcq confirms:

> Hay otro aspecto importante que vincula las obras de ambas creadoras: el uso de ramas secas que se enredan en los cuerpos. Ese recurso aparece frecuentemente en las obras de Kahlo asociado al dolor, la enfermedad y la muerte.[147]

This relationship is further associated here with nature and earth-like elements.[148] Varo's 'nature in pain' could, then, be interpreted from a clear ecofeminist angle. Ecofeminism, 'explicitly works to challenge dominant ideologies of dualism and hierarchy within Western culture that construct nature as separate from and inferior to human culture (and woman as inferior to men)'.[149] For Varo, the recurrent use of nature embedded into her architectural landscapes, and indeed her particular depictions of the body, can be read as an attempt to challenge the patriarchal power structures she inhabited. In other words, by making explicit and visible the connection between pain, the female body and nature, Varo attempts to transform the structure of power itself. Zanetta is of a similar opinion: 'las mujeres surrealistas reconocen el poder de esta asociación {woman/nature} y la utilizan subversivamente para representar el poder creativo de la mujer'.[150]

The way in which Varo has depicted the figures as puppet-like, nearly dehumanized, individuals, which was not — as far as we know — a request by Bayer, might

[147] Tere Arcq, 'Remedios Varo y la Casa Bayer', p. 10.
[148] 'Kahlo often used nature metaphorically, painting herself in subjective landscapes which refelected her emotions, psychic states and sexuality', Nadia Choucha, *Surrealism & the Occult* (Rocherter, VT: Destiny Booksm 1992), p. 97.
[149] Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecofeminist Literary Criticisms: Theory, Interpretation and Pedagogy* (Chicago, USA: University of Illinois Press, 1998), p. 98.
[150] Zanetta, p. 167.

have to do with the aforementioned process of normalization. According to Foucault, and especially relevant to the field of medicine, 'normalization' or the desire to fit in within the established norm, not only defines the individual but at the same time it imposes a series of categories upon him/her.[151] Deborah Lupton explains this aspect of power:

> power as it operates in the medical encounter is a disciplinary power that provides guidelines about how patients should understand, regulate and experience their bodies. The central strategies of disciplinary power are observation, examination, measurement and the comparison of individuals against an established norm, bringing them into a field of visibility.[152]

Varo, by depicting a painful condition within a natural and architectural environment that evokes Foucault's power structures, is making a direct statement on the condition of the subject within medical institutions, and with it on the positioning of women within it all, a condition that is both the product and the result of those power structures. Medicine in this sense can be apprehended as a means for both curing and worsening that condition. However, it is not simly a negative process of surrendering and objectification from which the subject can never escape. According to Foucault, 'where there is power, there is resistance'.[153] In some ways, then, the disposition of the body in contrast with the other paintings discussed, suggests triumph, like an athlete reaching the finishing line: there is a strong tension between surrendering and resisting, one that forcefully impacts on the viewer.

The mise-en-scène is completely different as a result of the particular way in which the elements in the painting are configured within the frame. Firstly, the architec-

[151] 'The "normalisation" of attributes permeates social practices via a complex network of power relations, which in his later years Foucault also described via the term "games of truth". Scientific model, medical and legal discourses, economic institutions, etc. are constituted by games of truth', Gordon, p. 400.
[152] Lupton, p. 99.
[153] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction (1976a),* trans. by Robert Hurley (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 95.

tural setting is in the background; secondly, the figure is placed directly in front of the viewer and its abdomen the focal point of the painting; and thirdly, the landscape seems to expand further out to the sides and front of the painting. The experience of pain in this painting is depicted more directly than in the others, given its strong connection with mysticism and common religious imagery. The needles act as objects in the process of analogical verification, as the knife did in the second painting. The fact that there are so many needles invading the body, and the space as a whole, marks this experience as a true illustration of the culmination of pain for Varo, especially when juxtaposed with the other paintings done for Bayer as well as her later works. Of all the paintings that Varo produces on the theme of pain, then, this can be seen as to contain all the elements in one. This is particularly the case when we observe the isolation, solitude and devastation produced by the experience of pain through the use of dehumanized bodies and the role of architecture/nature both as point of reference and reflection for the body in pain. The amalgamation and juxtaposition of body/building/nature in the process of the pain event grants the painted space with a metaphysical essence and eeriness comparable to painters such as El Greco, Velázquez and Leonardo Da Vinci.

3.6. Conclusion

> From being an art of unbearable sensations punishment has become an economy of suspended rights.
>
> Foucault[154]

The analysis of the paintings presented in this chapter has offered renewed insight into Varo's transitional years between the time she arrived in Mexico and her trip to Vene-

[154] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 11.

zuela, before settling in Mexico with partner and friend Walter Gruen. As seen, the works present an array of characteristics that differ both from her early work in Europe and her later work in Mexico, after the 1950s. The elements that invade these paintings, although seen as recurrent in the imagery of the artist, such as buildings/organic architectural settings and hybrid bodies, are here presented and depicted in such a way as to offer or induce the experience of pain for the viewer. But, the events presented do more than illustrate pain: they make us wonder about the essence of being human, and about the relationship between the body, pain and indeed gender within particular power structures. Varo's work for Bayer has to be seen as more than mere commercial work that the artist undertook to support herself. This can be so, but this work also granted her with the opportunity to portray her views — consciously or unconsciously — towards what being in pain actually meant for her.

The elements that Varo employed to suggest pain have to do first and foremost with the environment and settings in which the figures are placed. Varo has granted architecture similar characteristics to those of the bodies in pain, projecting invisible, interior states onto visible and exterior spaces but also offering them an organic essence, like that of the skin of the figures, or the nightmarish sky that is above and in-between those structures. However, the spaces portray much more than just a setting to contain the figures in pain. In the first painting, the rigidity of the architecture, the way the Medieval-like square suggests quasi-geometrical perfection and the empty dark windows in the tall-standing towers, perfectly combine to become Foucault's Panopticon, a place where subjects become passive objects by means of the powerful power structures and gaze that control them. As seen, there is a strong visual game in which, we — the viewers — both become agents of that power system and also passive subjects of it, given that the windows are powerfully directed at us, facing us, looking at us. In the second painting, the Tuscan columns and the elevated Gothic ceiling within a clear dream-like

setting, manage to enslave this woman's body. Here, we have another Panoptical view but the gaze seems to have been re-distributed. Although the one-point perspective focuses our eyes onto the doll-like female body, the chequer-board floor and the columns, manage to spread our view towards the entire space, as if to suggest there is something (terrible?) hidden behind the columns. Here, as in the first painting, the architecture as well as the chains produces a nearly claustrophobic effect: there is no way out. The architecture in the final painting, although placed at the back of the body, subtly emphasizes weathering, ruination and with it, death. At the same time, the deserted landscape with lava-looking floor produces an intense sensation of anguish and desolation, further emphasized by the ghastly-looking sky. The arid desert space and the ruined castle in *Dolor reumático II*, not only emphasize the isolation and harshness of living with pain but reminds us of the brutality of the passing of time, transforming the painting into a *memento mori*. In the three illustrations, the spaces and the architectural/natural elements that occupy those spaces, enact the experience of pain, how one feels being 'sick', as a passive subject enslaved to not only pain but also to medical institutions.

The interconnection between body-architecture-pain occurs through different processes and at different levels. First, this occurs by a process of 'analogical verification': Varo chooses particular devices to allow pain to become visible for the viewer. In the first painting, it is a torture machine; in the second one, it is a knife, and in the last one, the referential objects of pain are needles. However, these objects or devices open up further interpretations, affecting how the viewer reacts to the scene taking place. The torture machine forces the viewer to ask who is inflicting pain on this figure, and indeed what might have this person have done to be tortured. Similarly, the knife in the back of the woman in the second painting and the chains also indicate some sort of punishment. However, in the last painting, the needles about to penetrate the levitating body covered

in gauze show a nearly ecstatic-experience, connecting pain to religion and the experience of religious or spiritual ecstasy and transcendence.

Religion then, is another important aspect that has developed from the analysis of the paintings. All three illustrations present some type of reference to epochs where religion was key to the power systems within society. For example, the source of inspiration for the first painting and the torturing wheel, reminiscent of Medieval times, the cathedral-like space in the second painting, or the Baroque imagery in the ecstatic figure in the third image. As stated earlier, Bayer did ask Varo to take inspiration from such sources to depict pain in some of these illustrations; however, it is also known that Varo, having trained in the Academia de San Fernando, and having visited the Museo del Prado numerous times with her father, was already known for using that type of imagery as a source for her work. The analysis of the paintings through a Foucauldian lens, has allowed us to apprehend how these are not innocent pictorial references, but can be read as political statements against those institutions, in this case, religion and medicine: institutions and disciplines by then fully dominated by males, that subjugate the individual and in particular women. In this regard, and this is an aspect of Varo's work that will be discussed further in the following chapter when analysing *De Homo Rodans*, Varo is overtly expressing a critique of the power structures that she inhabited, disguised under the depiction and the invisibility of pain.

Furthermore, the atmosphere suggested by the architecture as well as the mirroring between body-space, and the paint medium and techniques used by the artist, endow the paintings with a type of mysterious aura and hapticity that will become trademarks for her later works. These scenes about the body in pain, recreate dream-like or — more appropriately — nightmarish visions for the viewer. But also they suggest that what Varo is depicting here are psychic landscapes of the figures in pain, as understood by Varo. These images may seem innocent at first, but ultimately awaken in the viewer conflict-

ing sensations: uncertainty and certainty, familiarity and strangeness, as well as pain and pleasure. The interplay between pain and pleasure in the illustrations, particularly in the second and third works, can be read on the one hand as a certain type of tension or resistance between the negative aspect of pain, and the power to subvert and resist both physical pain and those structures in which power, as understood by Foucault, travels inherently to both restrain us, but also granting the individual with the possibility for freedom. The fact that Varo has managed to express pain — to make the invisible, visible — as seen with the analysis of these paintings, suggests not only that they were satisfying in their role as advertising but also that they work as powerful statements of a woman's understanding of both pain and the settings she inhabits.[155] The next chapter will continue with a Foucauldian reading of Varo's work by looking at her only published work, the pseudo-anthropological *De Homo Rodans*. The chapter will further explore the ways in which disciplinary statements and institutions can be challenged through the use of a series of techniques such as humour and intertextuality that together form and perform Foucault's *dispositif*, a new and alternative way in which to envision evolution and anthropological discourse.

[155] 'Varo creates a powerful and unique form of surrealist advertising', Frances Lusty, p. 65.

Chapter Four

The Quest for Origins: Varo's *De Homo Rodans*

4.1. Introduction

Building on the Foucauldian analysis carried out in the previous chapter, this chapter takes on Varo's only self-published manuscript *De Homo Rodans* (est. 1959) to perform a discursive analysis of its diverse elements. Although already discussed extensively by other scholars who have celebrated its playful nature and pastiche of different disciplines (see Chapter One), my reading is underpinned by the need to fully account for its interartistic nature and force; the way in which, like the Bayer paintings, it exposes and transgresses disciplinary and artistic limits. By foregrounding Varo's 'surrealist experiment', as some critics have referred to it, this chapter will show how Varo's connection with anthropology and science was much more than just a game or simple interest. The manuscript contains a series of features that emerge as a type of Foucauldian dispositif that together perform a transgressive practice, comparable to that of other Mexican women writers and artists of the time.

Remedios Varo's strong connections with anthropology and science may be seen as a surrealist influence, given her acquaintance with the surrealist group and the high esteem in which these disciplines were held within surrealist practices.[1] As Frances Lusty explains:

[1] 'The years between the two wars, which saw the flourishing of the surrealist movement, were a time of momentous discoveries in the physical sciences', Chiara Ambrosio, *Papers of Surrealism*, 8 (2010), 1-4 (p. 1).<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/bcoppola/wp-content/uploads/sites/469/2017/02/Ambrosio.pdf>. See

> even before her arrival in Mexico, Varo had shown a keen interest in conversations around science and metaphysics that preoccupied not just surrealists but many of the smaller avant-garde groups flourishing across Europe.[2]

However, it was on her arrival in Mexico that Varo's interest in anthropology and science began to solidify. Another influence at this time in Mexico was her friendship with painter, sculptor and art philosopher Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959).[3] In Mexico, Paalen published the journal *Dyn* (1942-1944), a platform to develop his own artistic theories on the relationship between art, nature, science and primitive art.[4] But, as Frances Lusty asserts, Varo's 'interest in science was far more wide-ranging than his own pursuit of the implications of quantum physics for a new kind of pictorial representation'.[5] In fact, it is known that she took part in several anthropological trips as well as collecting a variety of pre-Columbian figures, and restoring 'found' objects.[6] Her interest in these disciplines is something that can also be seen in the repeated use of scientific and anthropological related imagery, in particular in her later paintings during the last two decades of her life, such a *Ciencia inútil* (1955), *El flautista* (1955), *Hallazgo* (1956), *Exploración de las fuentes del río Orinoco* (1959), *Descubrimiento de un geólogo mutante* (1961) and *Planta insumisa* (1961), but also in some of the images she did for Bayer, involving the depiction of the seasons, and that contain direct references to Pre-Columbian images.[7] All of these works illustrate in one way or another the artist's at-

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also Gavin Parkinson, *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science, Relativity, Quantum Mechanics, Epistemology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008).

[2] Frances Lusty, p. 58. According to Chadwick, Varo's 'vision of the Surrealist "marvellous" built on the principle of scientific illustration', Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealists Movement*, p. 177.

[3] 'It was with Varo's move to Mexico that the ideas informing a synthesis between art and science began to crystallize in her work, […]. Under the influence of Wolfgang Paalen and his new post-surrealist journal DYN, a reconciliation between art and science became a defining feature of this late phase of surrealist artistic practice in Mexico', Frances Lusty, p. 62.

[4] For more on this, see, for example, Amy Harriet Winter, 'Wolfgang Paalen, "Dyn" and the American Avant-Garde of the 1940s' (Unpublished Dissertation, City University of New York, 1995).

[5] Frances Lusty, p. 62.

[6] '[E]lla era muy aficionada a la arqueología y tenía una buena colección de objetos precolombinos', Beatriz Varo, p. 88.

[7] As seen, for example in *Invierno* (1943-1944), *Primavera* (1943-1933), and also in *Alegoría de invierno* (1948), *Cambio de tiempo* (1948) and *El hombre de la guadaña* (1947).

tempt to engage pictorially with anthropological and/or scientific endeavors, either by showing some sort of pursuit of a truth, or a quest for origins — paintings that depict a figure in motion within a wild and oneiric landscape — as in *Exploración de las fuentes del río Orinoco* —, or by introducing individuals actively experimenting within laboratory-type settings — as is the case with *Planta insumisa*.[8] However, Varo's fascination with anthropology and science was not just a concern in her paintings but was also used by the artist as a tool to challenge the boundaries between such disciplines and the absence of women in the disciplines traditionally, as well as the limitations between reality and fiction. A clear example of this is her only self-published manuscript *De Homo Rodans* (1959).

Although *De Homo Rodans* is considered by scholars to be one of the best-known literary texts by Varo, given that it was her only published text and, therefore, often included in extant studies,[9] the importance of this manuscript within the artist's *oeuvre* as well as within literary and philosophical fields has not yet been fully highlighted. All of the analyses carried out to date tend to agree that *De Homo Rodans* was written as a sort of experiment, following surrealist fashion, to parody scientific discourse using the artist's imagination. In this regard, Lourdes Andrade categorizes it as an example of 'antropología imaginaria',[10] while, in her analysis, Isabel Castells concludes that *De Homo Rodans* is,

> una parodia desde la primera línea hasta la última: parodia de la pedanteria y la erudición […]; parodia de lo que supone la 'transmisión textual' en estudios pretendidamente documentados; parodia de las interpretaciones – o malinterpretaciones – filológicas y parodia, en fin del pretendido rigor de ciertas investigaciones que se apoyan en pruebas no siempre fidedignas.[11]

[8] For an analysis of these works see Frances Lusty.
[9] See, for example, Andrea Luquín Calvo (2008), Janet Kaplan (2000), Beatriz Varo (1990), Edith Mendoza Bolio (2010), Carlota Caulfield (1999) and, more recently, Juncal Caballero Guiral (2018).
[10] Lourdes Andrade, 'Los tiempos maravillosos y aquellos que los habitaron', *Remedios Varo. Arte y Literatura*, Teruel, España, 1991 [Exhibition Catalogue], p. 35.
[11] Castells, p. 43.

Along the same lines, Carlota Caulfield looks at the relationship between Varo's text and sculpture but from a stronger surrealist angle given that she explores how Varo transforms a common everyday object — a series of chicken and turkey bones attached by wire and an umbrella — into a marvelous one: 'the surrealists believe that any object, no matter how common-place it might be, could become a marvelous object'.[12] In tune with this, Mendoza Bolio considers this semi-scientific treatise as evolving from both surrealist ideals and Varo's own interest in science.[13] A different approach is offered by Andrea Luquín Calvo, who goes as far as to define this 'experiment' as 'el primer tratado posmoderno del pensamiento español',[14] and links Varo's 'ready-made' figure with a type of ecofeminist figuration, namely that of Donna Haraway's cyborg'.[15] It is even possible, as mentioned by Kaplan, that a reference point for Varo's sculpture of the Homo Rodans could potentially be that of the Piltdown Man hoax — exposed in 1949: the 'fake' discovery of part of a human skull that was believed to be the 'missing link' between ape and man.[16]

While not refuting these previous interpretations of *De Homo Rodans*, what distinguishes my analysis is that I will use a Foucauldian framework, and in particular Foucault's concepts of discourse and the *dispositif*, to show how Varo's 'bizarre' method of interconnecting anthropology and science can be seen as part of a feminist and decolonial project of rewriting, reconfiguring and of challenging masculinist discourse

[12] Carlota Caulfield, 'Textual and Visual Strategies in the World of Remedios Varo', *Corner*, 2 (1999) <http://www.cornermag.net/corner02/page04.htm> [Accessed 24 December 2018].
[13] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 55-56.
[14] Luquín Calvo, p. 395.
[15] '[L]a obra de Varo se adelanta más de treinta años a los planteamientos de la pensadora norteamericana, e incluso llega a construir físicamente el primer esqueleto cyborg del que se tenga constancia a través de su escultura titulada Homo rodans', Luquín Calvo, p. 388.
[16] National History Museum, 'Piltdown Man', The Collections <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/departments-and-staff/library-and-archives/collections/piltdown-man.html> [Accessed 20 August 2018].

of knowledge formation. In brief, my aim is to show, through the analysis of the figure, the drawings and the manuscript, that Varo's construct should not only be seen as a critical and parodic exercise *vis-à-vis* the scientific and anthropological communities but that the artist's work produces a series of dialectical interconnections with other Mexican women writers/artists who also pushed the boundaries between art and science and between science, power and knowledge. My main focus will be to identify and explore the particular features that place *De Homo Rodans* within its theoretical and artistic context; how it manages to bend the boundaries between the fictional and the real; how it challenges the borders between anthropology, science and gender; before juxtaposing Varo's textual and intertextual/discursive techniques with those utilised by other Mexican women writers such as Elena Garro (1916-1998), Josefina Vicens (1911-1988) and Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974). First, I will situate the anthropological discipline in Mexico at the time and show how surrealist artists came to play a role within it; then, I will briefly discuss the notion of discourse, knowledge/power and that of the apparatus or *dispositif* as understood and explained by Foucault. Following this, I will explore the place of women within these scientific and anthropological discourses — here, I will follow Micaela Di Leonardo's *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge* as well as Sarah Williams's *Paleoanthropology and the Construction of Mankind* to explore the role of women within these disciplines.[17] The final section will focus on the analysis and interpretation of *De Homo Rodans*.

[17] Micaela Di Leonardo, *Gender at The Crossroads of Knowledge* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011); Sarah Williams, 'Paleoanthropology and the construction of mankind: An Outline', paper on file with the author (History of Consciousness Program, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1986).

4.2. Setting the context: Early Mexican Anthropology and its Relationship with Surrealism

> The colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony. The relationship is intimate, an open secret that cannot be part of official knowledge.
>
> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak[18]

Following the triumph of the Mexican Revolution in 1918, many institutions and organizations were founded explicitly intended to establish a form of common Mexican identity, and to reconcile with Mexico's colonial past.[19] These institutions included: the Escuela Internacional de Arqueología y Etnología Americana (1910) with directors Eduard Seler and Franz Boas; Dirección de Antropología (1918), under Manuel Gamio; the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas (1938-1946); and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, known as the INI (1948-2003). However, as Guillermo de la Peña asserts, the Mexican anthropologists who ran these institutions were heavily influenced by European and international theorists and ideas, in particular those from Germany, the United States, Great Britain and France,[20] while also attempting to enter into dialogue with some Latin American intellectuals.[21] This 'adoption of the traditional European utopian image of ancient Mexican civilization by the proponents of indigenismo',[22] as Keith Jordan explains, together with the arrival of a great number of European exiles during

[18] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 203.
[19] 'The Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920 had involved the mobilization and self-activity of indigenous peoples in far greater numbers than any previous social movement', Keith Jordan, 'Surrealist Visions of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and the Legacy of Colonialism. The Good, the (Revalued) Bad, and the Ugly', *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 2. 1 (2008), 25-63 (p. 41).
[20] '[L]os antropólogos méxicanos del siglo XX manifestaron poderosas influencias académicas originadas (por ejemplo) en Alemania, Estados Unidos, la Unión Soviética, Gran Bretaña y Francia', Guillermo de la Peña, 'La antropología social y cultural en México', *Anthropology in Europe*, Madrid (2008), pp. 1-2.
[21] See, for example, the ideas of Andrés Molina Enríquez, as portrayed in his book *Los grandes problemas nacionales* (Mexico: Imprentade A. Carranza, 1909).
[22] Jordan, p. 41.

the first half of the twentieth century, resulted in a peculiar and fruitful collaboration between Mexican anthropologists and European surrealist artists.[23]

As already discussed in Chapter Two, 'the Surrealists valued positively, and drew formal, iconographic and conceptual inspiration from pre-Columbian Mesoamerican art',[24] but they treated it as a source of primitive, pre-civilizational ideas rather than seeing it as a living culture. On their arrival, European exiles and in particular artists who had been involved with the surrealist movement, expressed an intense fascination with Mexico's indigenous past. They included Wolfgang Paalen and Varo's partner on her arrival to Mexico, Benjamin Péret.[25] The latter was asked to write the introduction to 'Los tesoros del Museo Nacional de México: escultura azteca' (1943) for a collection of photographs by Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002).[26] However, their writings about art and anthropology did not only focus on official commissioned works. An example of this is Paalen's journal *Dyn*.[27] The journal, published between 1942 and 1944, can be considered to be a collection of essays on art generally, but there are some articles that show a clear anthropological flavour.[28] As Lourdes Andrade's words about Paalen's arrival in Mexico elaborate:

> En México, se interesa por el arte prehispánico, entrando en contacto con especialistas tales como Miguel Covarrubias. No tan solo inicia una importante colección de piezas precolombinas, algunas de gran calidad, sino que acumula una serie de conocimientos que, aunados a su gran sensibilidad, le permiten compenetrarse

[23] Nevertheless, when approaching Mexico's past and when writing about it, these European artists and writers were not capable of detaching themselves from Western-centred perspectives that tend to exoticise Mexican art and society in general. For example, 'Paalen, like Bataille, is consistent with the anthropological theory of his times, and reflects that discipline's struggle to emancipate itself from colonialist and evolutionist models', pp. 28-29. See Keith Jordan's article for more on this.
[24] Jordan, p. 25.
[25] While in México, Péret compiled an anthology of indigenous folkrore: 'Anthologie des mythes, légendes et contes populaires d'Amérique' (France: Bibliothèque Albin Michel, 1989).
[26] Dawn Ades, Rita Eder and Graciela Speranza (eds.), *Surrealism in Latin America: Vivismo Muerto* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2012), p. 63.
[27] According to Jordan, 'Pre-Columbian connections are commonly presented in the literature for the works of artists whose relation to the Surrealist movement was marginal', p. 25.
[28] '*Dyn* included articles by archaeologists and anthropologists alongside the literary, artistic and philosophical contributions of Surrealists and members of the emerging New York School', Jordan, p. 49.

> íntimamente en el mundo de nuestros ancestros. Tanto es así, que en su revista, *Dyn*, publica diversos e interesantes artículos sobre el mismo.[29]

Paalen moved to México with his wife at the time, French painter Alice Rahon and her friend, photographer Eva Sulzer.[30] It is known that both women were active collaborators in the journal from its inception.[31] The main contributors were European exiles and US intellectuals — with the exception of Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Brazo and Guatemalan born artist Carlos Mérida (1891-1985). *Dyn* seemed to have been conceived not only as Paalen's attempt to break with the surrealist movement,[32] but also as a series of interdisciplinary discourses about art, anthropology and science, among other disciplines.

It is useful to envision Varo's anthropological and scientific manuscript within this Mexican context. If Mexicans were on a journey to establish a national identity, through the founding of a series of official institutions and organizations that attempted to focus on the research and visibilization of the indigenous population and culture, European exiles were in their own way embedded within this process. This is a feature that can be seen in their own personal fascination and interest in Mexico's past as shown in their writings, including those of Remedios Varo. In the next section, we will proceed to explore how this wider interest in the anthropological is embedded within *De Homo Rodans*.

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[29] Lourdes Andrade, *Para la desorientación general. Trece ensayos sobre México y el surrealismo* (Aldus: México, 1996), pp. 56-57.

[30] Ellen G. Landau, 'Review of Wolfgang, *Form and Sense*, Introduction by Martica Sawin (Arcade Publishing, 2013), p. 112', in *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 9. 1 (2016), 67-72 (p. 68).

[31] Moreover, both Eva Sulzer and Rahon were close friends with Varo during her time in Mexico. So much so that Sulzer was buried with Varo.

[32] 'From 1942 to 1944, Paalen published the journal *Dyn*, which served as a platform to advance his own artistic theories. Inspired by Native American art, quantum physics, and Marxist critique, he announced his break from Surrealism in favor of a less cerebral art form that captured the dynamism of the world and the interrelationship between humans and nature', available at Guggenheim Foundation. Online website: <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/wolfgang-paalen> [Accessed 26 December 2018].

4.3. Varo's Discursive Strategy: the *Dispositif*

> […] our challenge is to look for manifestations of the apparatus-assemblage dialectic in the worlds we research.
>
> Stephen Legg[33]

In the previous chapter, I looked at the relationship of the body to natural and constructed landscapes through a Foucauldian lense, and undertook an analysis of Varo's illustrations for Bayer looking at how invisible structures of power act upon the subject. In tune with this, in this chapter I will also use Foucault's work as the main theoretical framework for my analysis. However, this time I will concentrate on a different — but connected — aspect of his theory on discourse as the basis to understand Varo's discursive strategies and how they manage to challenge the same invisible power structures that were discussed in Chapter Three, through the notion of the *dispositif*.

Michel Foucault offers different accounts of 'discourse' at different periods in his career.[34] It is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss the different notions that Foucault granted this term, but more generally to come to an understanding of what discourse is for the analysis. I will draw from Seumas Miller in his article 'Foucault on *Discourse and Power*' and consider 'discourse' as 'all that we can discuss or know'.[35] This is a relevant definition for the subject at hand here, Varo's *De Homo Rodans*, given that it not only invokes the concept of scientific discussion but also the notion of knowledge. The question here is who controls this knowledge and for what purpose?

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[33] Stephen Legg, 'Assemblage/apparatus: using Deleuze and Foucault', *Area*, 43. 2 (2011), 128-33 (p. 131).
[34] Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock, 1972), p. 27.
[35] Seumas Miller, 'Foucault on Discourse and Power', *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 76 (1990), 115–25 (p. 116).

Knowledge plays an important role within discourse. As Foucault claims: 'Every point in the exercise of power is a site where knowledge is formed. Conversely every established piece of knowledge permits and assures the exercise of power'.[36] Hence, there is a close relationship between power, control and knowledge. If we consider that discursive strategies involve the use of knowledge as a weapon of control, irremediably, 'discourses have an impact on individuals as they are discursively constructed and constituted'.[37] The subject thus 'is constituted by the rules of discourse'.[38] In Varo's manuscript, as will be seen in the analysis that follows, the artist makes use of her imagination to come up with very specific knowledge to dismantle other knowledge that has been established by specific disciplines, constructing not only a new subject, but also a new reality. As Diaz-Bone proclaims: 'discourses produce a perception and representation of social reality. This representation forms part of hegemonic strategies of establishing dominant interpretations of "reality"'.[39] However, Varo's discourse challenges those hegemonic discourses by exposing and playing with their constructedness and by exposing them as *dispositifs.*[40]

In Foucault's words, a *dispositif* is

> an absolutely heterogeneous assembly which involves discourses, institutions, architectural structures, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific enunciations, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions; in short: as much the said as the un-said, these are the elements of the dispositive. The dispositive is the network which is arranged between these elements.[41]

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[36] Michel Foucault, 'Power and Norms', in *Power, Truth and Strategy*, ed. by M. Morris and P. Patton (Sydney: Feral, 1979), p. 62.
[37] Rainer Diaz-Bone and others, 'The Field of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis: Structures, Developments and Perspectives', *Historical Social Research*, 33. 1 (2008), 7-28 (p. 10).
[38] Miller, p. 116.
[39] Diaz-Bone and others, p. 12.
[40] '[A]n assemblage/deployment of different elements operative in a juridical, military or technical context. The important point is the net which holds its different parts together', in Staf Callewaert, 'Foucault's Concept of Dispositif', Praktiske Grunde. Nordisk tidsskrift for kultur- og samfundsvidenskab, 1-2 (2017), 29-52 (p. 45) <http://praktiskegrunde.dk/2017/praktiskegrunde(2017-1+2f)callewaert.pdf> [Accessed 10 October 2018].
[41] Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, vol. III as quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo?* (Roma: Notte- tempo, 2006), pp. 3-4.

Varo's scientific treatise, as will be seen via the different elements that emerge in the analysis, constitutes this network of enunciations that manages to both set and transgress a new reality, one that produces an alternative way to look at the universe. What is more, if we consider that 'the dispositif responds to an urgent need at a given moment in the community',[42] Varo's *De Homo Rodans* can be seen as a response to crosscurrents in feminist thinking in 1950s Mexico. Texts like Varo's respond to the need to not only challenge and subvert disciplines, but re-think, re-interpret and re-write current reconfigurations of knowledge, from both a decolonial and a feminist perspective. The following section will examine the specific disciplines that Varo engages with along with an overview of the role of women within them in order to establish the anthropological and scientific context in which Varo sets *De Homo Rodans*.

4.4. Physical Cosmology and Paleoanthropology as Philosophical Discourses

> Evolutionary and archaeological narrators have written a not-her-version of our past.
>
> Micaela di Leonardo[43]

It is no longer unusual for women within any discipline, and in particular in anthropology, to question and revise the founding tenets of the discipline in order to reveal their masculinist construction of knowledge and also to stake a claim for women's voices and place.[44] However, what is revealing in this case is first that Varo did it well before the advent of second wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s and, second, that she used a particular set of tools when writing *De Homo Rodans*, tools that can be linked to other

[42] Callewaert, p. 44.
[43] Di Leonardo, p. 122.
[44] 'Early social-cultural feminist anthropologists responded enthusiastically to the challenge of rewriting anthropology', Di Leonardo, p. 8.

Mexican writers of the time, as will be discussed below.[45] One of the reasons why Varo's writings are usually disregarded is because, more often than not, they have been grouped under the umbrella of 'experiments' and, more explicitly in the case of Varo, as 'surrealist experiments', as already stated above. However, as will be shown in the analysis that follows, *De Homo Rodans* contains many elements that, although fictional, could very well be read as a serious attempt to invent a new type of anthropological language from a feminist viewpoint. In fact, what Varo has in common with later female anthropologists who were rewriting texts, such as Michelle Rosaldo, Nancy Chodorow and Sherry Ortner, among others, is that they all 'in the process of rewriting subdisciplines and ethnographies, […and] were also rewriting theory'.[46] It is important at this stage in the chapter to distinguish what kind of science and anthropology we are dealing with in the manuscript, given that Varo is giving us a very specific array of ideas. Undoubtedly, within these ideas she is also touching upon different disciplines. While she clearly starts by dealing with anthropology and mentions 'seemingly' well known but fictitious experts, she then goes on to discuss physical cosmology, and theories of evolution, while at the same time focusing on what will be later on become as paleoanthropology as the basis for her discussion.[47] I will now briefly discuss both of these disciplines before moving on to the analysis of the manuscript.

The borders between the scientific disciplines of physics and cosmology are in themselves, and from their very origins, blurred.[48] In the case of physical cosmology, two terms come into play: first, that of 'cosmology', defined by the Oxford Dictionary

[45] *De Homo Rodans* could also be further linked to other post-war figures and movements like 'Arte Povera' (<https://www.theartstory.org/movement-arte-povera.htm>) or Henri Michaux (1899-1984), among others. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to go into these in adequate detail.
[46] Di Leonardo, p. 9.
[47] Note that the term did not appear until the 1980s.
[48] 'Physical cosmology has been, still is and, from its very nature, will, I believe, remain a border-line subject between the special sciences and philosophy', See G. J. Whitrow and H. Bondi, 'Is Physical Cosmology a Science?', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 4. 16 (1954), 271-83 (p. 277).

as 'the science of the origin and development of the universe';[49] and that of 'physical' derived from 'physics', which is defined as

> the branch of science concerned with the nature and properties of matter and energy. The subject matter of physics includes mechanics, heat, light and other radiation, sound, electricity, magnetism, and the structure of atoms.[50]

Physical cosmology can thus be seen as a scientific discipline that studies the order of the world through the use of physics. These are concepts that play a central role in Varo's manuscript, as well as in other works by the artist. Tere Arcq discusses these influences in *Las cinco llaves del mundo secreto,* and in particular Varo's interest in the teachings of Russian esotericist P.D. Oupensky (1878-947). In the words of Arcq:

> El arte es una vía del conocimiento, y el artista, al dedicarse a la creación, abre su mente a multiples posibilidades, […]. El artista necesita alcanzar la unidad en sí mismo y con el cosmos para crear su propio 'modelo del universo', […][51]

In the manuscript, Varo attempts to invent a new model of the universe using scientific terms from within the history of evolution, as well as revising the narrative of evolution itself. Another influence, mentioned by O'Rawe among others, is that of G. I. Gurdjieff (1866-1949).[52] In fact, Varo was commissioned to design a piece of furniture — *Icono* (1945), an oval shaped wooden box with a set of doors that open to reveal an enneagram — by Enrique Caraminola, the founder of Gurdjieff's group of followers in America. O'Rawe further explains that 'Ouspensky affirmed that the enneagram encapsulates the link between the microcosm and the macrocosm, underlying the relation of

[49] Oxford Dictionaries, 'Cosmology | Definition of cosmology in English', online edition <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cosmology> [Accessed 22 April 2018].
[50] Oxford Dictionaries,'Physics | Definition of physics in English', online edition <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/physics> [Accessed 22 April 2018].
[51] Tere Arcq, 'La llave esotérica', p. 21.
[52] Also noted by Kaplan, Rivera and Caulfield.

the one to the other in spiritual evolution'.[53] Varo's connection and interest in cosmology and alternative theories of the universe could already be seen in earlier works. Additionally, some of the symbolism used in this emblematic piece of furniture also appears in some of her paintings, such as the wheel, which is also an inherent part of the *De Homo Rodans*.[54]

Another important discipline on which the manuscript bases its argument is that of paleoanthropology, defined as 'the study of human origins. […] particularly relating to the earliest millennia of hominids and their development toward anatomically modern humans'.[55] However, this subdiscipline within anthropology did not appear as a distinct field until the 1980s,[56] following a series of discoveries that can be seen as hidden references behind Varo's findings. The most important of these is, of course, that of the Piltdown Man, as mentioned earlier, but to this can be added the findings at the Royal Cemetery of Ur [dating back to 800BC]: a series of bones and ornaments that led to the discovery of Queen Puabi, and on display at the British Museum.[57] While we cannot know for sure that Varo was aware of these anthropological discoveries, it is intriguing to note that she does mention an Egyptian Queen, by the name Tool in the manuscript, whose remains are kept in the British Museum. In fact, as is the case with Varo's *De Homo Rodans*, the series of ornaments that were found with Queen Puabi has been a matter of discussion and disagreement up to the 1990s. These references undoubtedly grant an (anti)imperialist and nationalist framework to the manuscript.

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[53] O'Rawe, 'Ruedas metafísicas: "Personality" and "Essence" in Remedios Varo's Paintings', p.10.

[54] O'Rawe, 'Ruedas metafísicas: "Personality" and "Essence" in Remedios Varo's Paintings', p.10.

[55] Margaret W. Conkey with Sarah H. Williams, *Part I: Gender in Colonial History and Anthropological Discourse*, 'Chapter 2: Original Narratives: The Political Economy of Gender in Archaelogy', in Di Leonardo, p. 108.

[56] 'Paleoanthropology is a new field of anthropology from around the 1980s', Di Leonardo, p. 108.

[57] The British Museum, 'ribbon / head-dress'. Collection Online: <http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=368440&partId=1> [Accessed 20 September 2018].

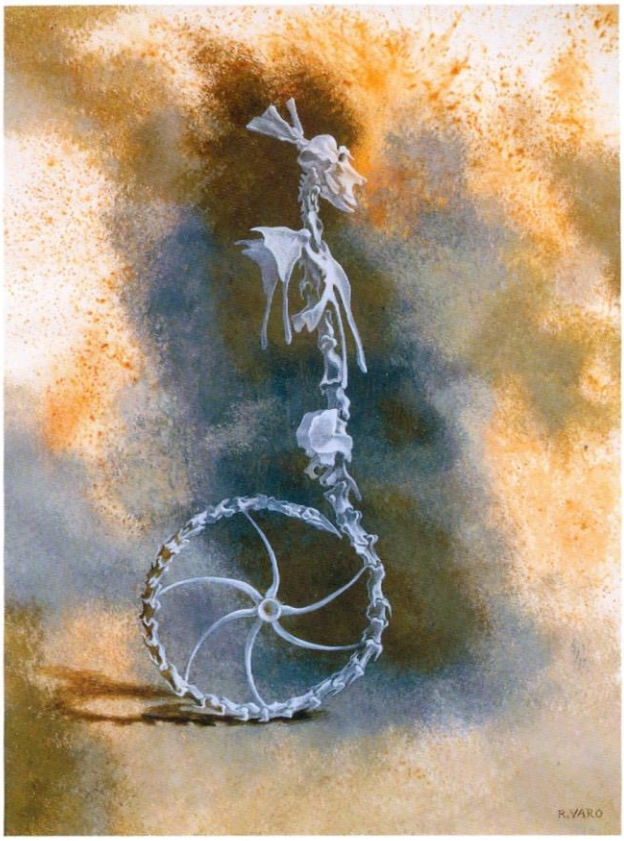


Fig. 6 - *Homo Rodans* (Drawing), 1959

© Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

Varo's *De Homo Rodans* bases its argument around a group of bones that were supposedly found centuries ago and that in the opinion of the 'narrator' of the work were wrongly interpreted. The manuscript makes a clear case to dismantle what 'everyone' in the field believed up to now, by providing its readers, together with the manuscript, with a sculpture made up of 'huesos de pollo, de pavo y raspas de pescado unidas

por alambre',[58] as well as a series of drawings. These illustrations and figure not only act to make real what is not by providing spurious proof of these new findings, but they also form the basis for the study of paleoanthropology, as 'the principal objects of paleoanthropology are fossil bones and other "durable residues" of hominids'.[59] As well as showcasing Varo's restless interdisciplinary creativity, the work confirms the value of an interartistic approach, because it allows us to draw all these distinct elements into dialogue, within a long tradition of feminist critique that rejects both subjection and hegemonic power structures. The next section will offer a brief overview of the anthropological situation in Mexico during the early 1900s to further situate the manuscript within its immediate socio-scientific and anthropological context.

4.5. *De Homo Rodans*

4.5.1. The manuscript

> Writing is, […] intended to be read, discussed, and evaluated, and it is in these activities that women's work is marginalized - that is, treated by authoritative evaluators as peripheral to the field's centre or as less significant than men's work.
>
> Catherine Lutz[60]

Thanks to a letter Varo wrote to her mother, we know how *De Homo Rodans* came to be. In the midst of a bout of lower back pain, the artist decided to write some anthropological notes:[61]

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[58] 'Esta forma de esculpir recuerda la obra de Wolfgang Paalen, *El genio de las especies*, que simula una pistola construida también con huesos de ave', Luquín Calvo, p. 393 (footnote 25).
[59] Conkey and Williams, pp. 115-16.
[60] Catherine Lutz, 'The Erasure of Women's Writing in Sociocultural Anthropology', *American Ethnologist*, 17. 4 (1990), 611-27 (p. 616).
[61] Mendoza Bolio explains that Varo suffered a 'dolencia en la vertebra lumbar', *A veces escribo …*, p. 51.

> Eso de la figurita... no te lo había contado porque no sabía bien cómo explicártelo, ya que se trata de antropología y no de pintura. Resulta que hice con huesos de pescuezo de pollo y de pavo, después de limpiarlos muy bien, una figura, y escribí un pequeño tratado de antropología (imitando un viejo manuscrito) para demostrar que el antecesor del Homo sapiens fue esa figurita que hice, a la que llamo Homo rodans (porque termina en rueda). Se me ocurrió llevar el manuscrito y la figurita a la librería de un amigo, y resulta que vino un señor, lo vio y le encantó, y le hizo mucha gracia (todo está hecho y escrito en broma). Ese señor, que resultó ser secretario de un ministro, fue a buscar al ministro, lo llevó a la librería, y tanto le gustó la figura y el manuscrito que los compró, nada menos que para ofrecérselos como regalo de Navidad al Presidente de la República. Ya te puedes figurar que me quedé pasmada. No te doy detalles de lo que escribí o de la figura, pues todo está hecho imitando las cosas y palabras científicas que casi nadie entiende y muchas partes del escrito están en un latín inventado que ni yo misma entiendo, pero el conjunto resultaba gracioso.[62]

As outlined here, the manuscript was written after she made a figure of chicken and turkey bones attached together by wire. Varo herself confirms that she was 'imitating' an old manuscript, to prove that the predecessor of the Homo sapiens was the Homo Rodans: a one wheel-legged figure. Much to her surprise, her experiment was well received even though, as she says, it was written with scientific words and invented Latin that she herself could not understand, thus emphasizing its ludic essence.[63] The manuscript was published in a facsimile edition after the artist's death and sold 150 copies — 250 copies more in a second edition in 1970.[64] This was a small print-run probably because it only circulated among a small group of intellectual elites, namely Varo's exile community and the humble but growing Mexican followers she had at the time. What is more, the first buyer of the manuscript, she explains, was so impressed with it that he decided to give it as a present to the president of the Republic, at the time Adolfo López Mateos (1909-1969). The fact that she mentions this event adds another layer of fram-

[62] Luquín Calvo, p. 396. 'Declaración de la propia Remedios Varo en una carta a su madre recogida en Varo', p. 227.

[63] 'En 1965, dos años después de la muerte de Remedios Varo, el Dr. Juan Somolinos prologó la primera edición facsimilar de *De Homo Rodans*, con un tiraje de 150 ejemplares numerados. Posteriormente, en 1970, se hizo una segunda reedición, numerada también de 250 ejemplares. En noviembre de 1991, se publicó la transcripción del manuscrito a partir de la edición facsimilar de 1965, en el catálogo *Remedios Varo, Arte y Literatura* de la exposición realizada en el Museo de Teruel, España', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 51-52.

[64] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 53.

ing to the manuscript, one that has to do with the authority and legitimization of the work. The text was hand-written and 10 pages long and included a series of drawings.[65] Following Varo's words, Mendoza Bolio, confirms that it was elaborated to parody scientific discourse.[66] However, there is also another interartistic confluence: the artist left a series of absurd guidelines on how the manuscript should be read publicly.[67] There can be, then, a strong performative element in which parody also takes on an important role.[68] The guidelines are as follows:

> 1. Lectura, con voz de tenor, ante 25 auditores numerados de 1 a 25.
>
> 2. Lectura con voz de falsete, ante 130 auditores numerados de 25 a 155.
>
> 3. Lectura con voz gangosa, ante 260 auditores numerados de 156 a 415.
>
> 4. Lectura, con voz melosa, ante una comisión de la prensa compuesta de 11 miembros numerados de A a K[69]

Thus, the manuscript should be read differently depending upon how many people are in the audience, distinguishing between different types of audiences. The more listeners, the more parodic and absurd the voice gets. If presenting in front of the press, the voice adopts a pleasant rather than idiotic tone. These instructions indicate that the first 25 attendees are getting 'real' art, while the others are getting progressively cheaper 'imitations'. This can come across as another type of surrealist game, as was the case with the gender reversal in Varo's play, in Chapter Two, but also as a sort of child's play, as understood by the surrealists.[70] Hence, here is another hybrid text, a juxtaposition between

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[65] '[E]scrito a mano, con 10 folios tamaño carta, sin enumerar', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 49.
[66] '[E]laborado a manera de parodia de un discurso científico', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 49.
[67] 'Para abrir boca nos da algunas instrucciones absurdas para la lectura de este tratado en una conferencia en público', Luquín Calvo, p. 397.
[68] 'Performance can also be a space where identity categories are renegotiated, struggled over, and challenged', Patricia Leavy, *Method Meets Art* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2009), p.139.
[69] Luquín Calvo, p. 397.
[70] 'The avant-garde belief in the open, imaginative capacity of childhood, the unspoiled Eden of "primitive" societies… were as highly valued and desired by Paalen as by the European Avant-garde', Jordan, p. 52.

texts intended for oral performance, lectures or speeches, while clearly perceived initially as something else, a play or an anthropological manuscript.

As can be seen, the artist had a specific vision in mind for performing a reading of the manuscript, although she herself suggests, as seen earlier on in the letter to her mother, we should not take it/her too seriously. There is further evidence for that; in a letter to one of her clients, Varo explains in French why she wrote the *Homo Rodans*:

> *ma cinquième vertebra lumbaire était tres rebelle et dolorouse, cela ma empeché de faire de la peinture mais j'ai profité pour écrite certaines notes antroplogiques très documentées car il y a déjà longtemps que je voulais signaler le fait jusqu'a present ignore que l'anteceseur de l'Homo Sapiens etait l'Homo Rodans, je ne sais pas si vous aurez de l'interet pour connaître ces notes, mais dans le cas ou il en serais ainsi et puisqui'il s'agit seulement de quelques pages, je le ferais traduire et vous l'enverrais de toutes façons je vous envoie une photographie de l'Homo Rodans que peut être vous interesera etant donné que vous étés un homme de science.*[71]

What is most intriguing here is the use of 'très documentées' as a rational back up for her 'made up' hominid, broadening the parody and fictionality further. Also, her words in this letter can be seen as a matter-of-fact allusion to an established reality, a feature of 'lo real maravilloso'.[72] Something similar occurs with some of the texts that accompany her paintings, where she attempts to explain to her brother Rodrigo what her work is about. For example, of *Robo de sustancia* (1955), Varo wrote the following: 'Este personaje del fondo **sencillamente** se apropió de la sustancia de esos otros cinco y por eso se quedaron las túnicas vacías'.[73] I have highlighted the word 'sencillamente' here, as it produces a similar effect to 'très documentées' by bringing into focus its burlesque essence.

Regardless of whether Varo's works appear simple or not at first sight, looking at this painting the viewer is struck by a set of empty cloaks around a campfire, and anoth-

[71] Beatriz Varo, p. 231 (orthography as per original).
[72] Reminiscent of both Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez's writings. For more on similarities between Varo's work and 'lo real maravilloso' see Cándenas (2007).
[73] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 162.

er single-headed but multi-bodied, figure in the background all in a composition reminiscent of Goya's *El aquelarre* (1798), one of the series of the Black Paintings on display at the Museo del Prado (Madrid). Both paintings present a group of figures in a circular shape as if performing some type of ritual that also includes an animal. In Goya's composition there is a bull, while in Varo's it is hard to tell what kind of animal we are envisioning. What is remarkable is that, regardless of the painting technique — Goya's style being sharp and presenting undefined brush-strokes in contrast with Varo's usual palette of earthy green, brown and orangey tones — both compositions present a certain atmospheric eeriness that grants mystery to the most likely interpretation of the paintings: a powerful ritual where dark forces are at play. Thus, Varo's explanation is very much 'underselling' this scenario.

Another example of Varo's tendency to under-explain and, deceptively, over-simplify her work is her commentary for the painting *Sea usted breve* (1958):[74]

> Aquí no sucede nada de muy particular. Esa señora se pasea con un talismán en la mano; el sombrero es una nubecilla que va dejando trozos tras de sí; en el primer piso de la casa de atrás, a la derecha, vive un caballo.[75]

In this painting, even though Varo suggests that nothing spectacular is taking place, a woman is walking within a set of organic-looking buildings and has a cloud surrounding her head. The obvious contradiction between Varo trying to 'normalise' the mystery of her work, by way of short notes to her brother, may serve as proof of her predisposition to not talking about her work, but at the same time it grants the viewer/reader the

[74] Varo's link to both the fantastic and the marvelous, and to the worlds of Borges and Gabriel García Márquez, is something that has already been noted by Isabel Castells, for example. It can also be seen in some of her works such us *Mimetismo* (1960). For more on this, see also Octavio Paz and Juliana González, *Remedios Varo* (México: Era, 1972).
[75] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 177.

freedom of their own interpretation.[76] Regarding these notes or commentaries, Gil and Rivera assert that

> No debemos tomar como verdades todas las aseveraciones de los 'comentarios de Remedios Varo a algunos de sus cuadros'. Aunque hay algunas ideas puntuales, la mayor parte de lo escrito es superfluo […] se refiere solo a un primer nivel de interpretación, al aspecto literal de lo pintado.[77]

We might wonder, given the many layers and disciplines involved in Varo's work, whether this way of 'hiding' the real meaning of her work under a series of jokes and the use of parody, can be seen as a way to inherently subvert and question the absurdity of certain disciplines, in the case of *De Homo Rodans*, those of science and anthropology. In this regard, Kaplan explains that 'despite her sarcastic tone in *De Homo Rodans*, Varo felt that science needed the softening and humanizing that myth, poetry and the arts could offer'.[78] Perhaps, then, the interartistic for Varo is more about how one discipline speaks to another, what one discipline has to offer another, and what it means to be within this dialogue of disciplines, all under the umbrella of the *dispositif*.

In the manuscript, as is the case in her paintings, where she takes on different roles, Varo disguises herself as a German anthropologist, in this way challenging notions of authorship/agency within scientific and anthropological discourse. If seen from the performative aspect of the text, a key element of the critique comes under the name of this German narrator, Hälikcio von Fuhrängschimidt. The pronunciation of the first name in German sounds somewhat like 'elixir' while the first part of the second name comes from the German word 'führer' meaning leader/power, followed by 'smith'. This can be seen as part of Varo's 'game', as it points out the gendered/patriarchal transmis-

[76] In interview, Varo said: 'No quiero hablar de mí porque tengo muy arraigada la creencia de que lo que importa es la obra, no la persona', see Raquel Tibol, *Diversidades en el arte del siglo XX. Para recordar lo recordado* (México: Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, 2001), p. 127.
[77] Gil and Rivera, p. 30.
[78] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 144.

sion of scientific authority. While we manage to detect Varo's voice through irony, an aspect that will be developed in more detail shortly, we also need to ask how the fact that the text appears to be written by a man, while clearly an experiment by a woman, affects the reader's response to the manuscript? We might not have an answer for this, but Lutz explains that 'previous research has demonstrated that readers' or listeners' assessments of the value and importance of a statement are definitely influenced by the gender of the author of that statement'.[79] Varo, aware of this, and following a long tradition of other women writing with male pen-names, decided to fabricate a male persona, with none other than a German surname. The parody, then, about anthropology, evolution and science, takes on a strong decolonial and feminist angle: feminist because she's playing with the concept of authority as vested in the male writer, and decolonial because of the authority and credibility invested in German anthropologists during this era.

[79] Lutz, p. 616.

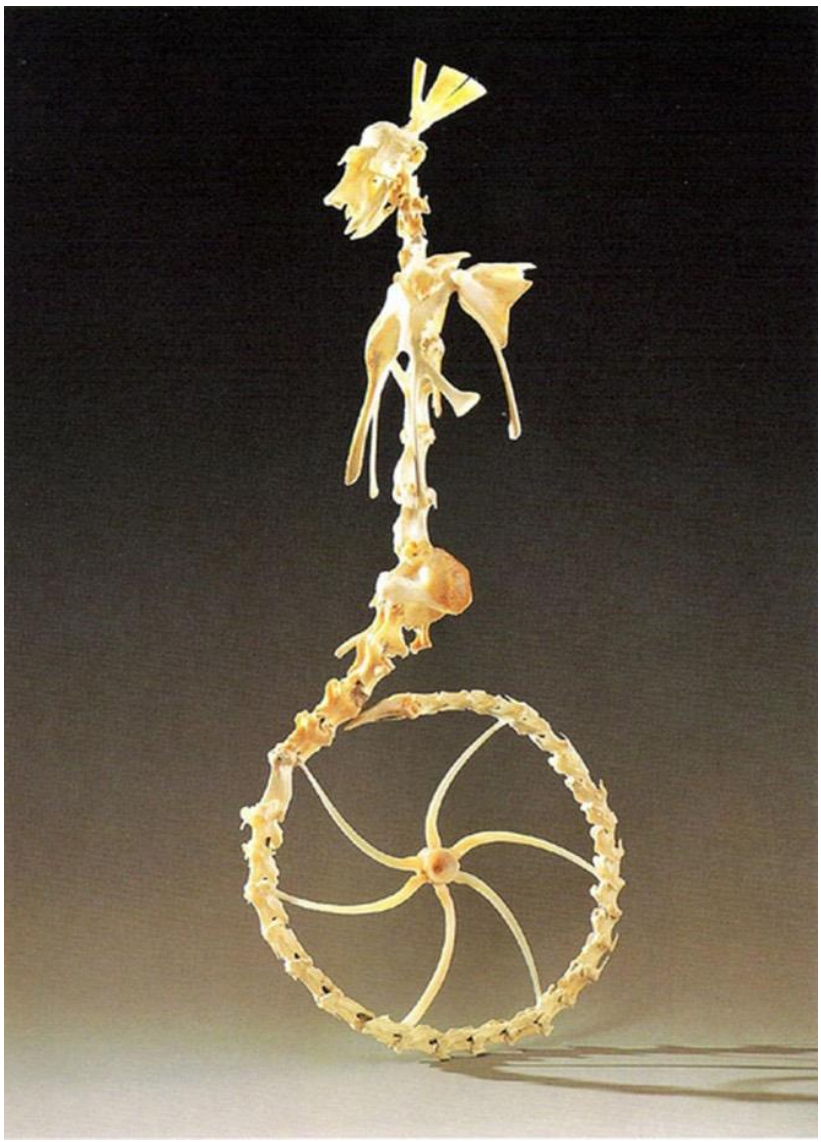


Fig. 7 - *Homo Rodans* (Sculpture), 1959

© Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

4.5.2. 'Eso de la figurita…': Varo's Sculpture and Drawings

The figure that accompanies the manuscript is believed to have been made by Varo as a 'game' with Lizarraga's children.[80] However, we cannot know for sure if its making precedes the writing or the other way around. What is important about this sculpture is the fact that it accompanies the text and that it is a visual 3-D-like representation of the fictional Homo Rodans.[81] Thus it grants the manuscript an extra level of framing while it adds credibility to the new evolutionary theories being presented. These bones attached by wire can be touched and seen in real life and the figure together with the text become an interactive experience in which the five senses as well as the performance aspect, as discussed earlier on, play a very important role.

The *Homo Rodans*, as its name implies — 'rueda' from the Latin word *rota/rotae*, meaning wheel —[82] is a symbol seen in several paintings and works by Varo.[83] Luquín Calvo also agrees:

> la imagen de la rueda es frecuente en muchos de los trabajos de Remedios Varo, en donde sus personajes tienen, en vez de las piernas, una rueda que les permite realizar sus movimientos.[84]

However, circular shapes or wheel are not only shown as part of these figures but are also seen, for example, in paintings that are highly geometrically charged, such as the breaking wheel depicted in *Dolor* (Chapter Three). What is certain is that these one-

[80] See Beatriz Varo.
[81] In the fashion of Paalen's 1938 sculpture, also made of bones, *Genius of the Species*.
[82] Edward A. Roberts, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Spanish Language* (US: Xlibris, 2014), p. 883.
[83] For a comprehensive study on the symbol of the circle in Varo's works, see Rivera, *Trampantojos*. Castells also agrees that 'en efecto, la rueda […], es quizás la imagen que más se repite en toda la obra de nuestra autora', p. 45.
[84] Luquín Calvo, p. 405.

wheeled figures make stronger appearances in Varo's later works. For example, Varo's *Animal fantástico* resembles the *Homo Rodans* itself, but is this time dressed in a brown tunic that looks like the bark of a tree. Another example is the painting *Au Bonheur des Dames* (1956), in which a series of one-wheeled figures occupy the interior of an architectural space. In this composition, if we look closely, there appears to be a clear distinction between the 'female' characters that possess the one wheel and are depicted in orangy-red tonality, with the 'male' ones, in which a series of smaller wheels are part of the legs that allows them to 'roll' about. What all of Varo's wheel-legged figures have in common common, however, is the blending of these bizarre-looking characters with the organic, and with nature itself. In the sculpture of the *Homo Rodans* (Fig. 7), this mixing between the organic and the inorganic takes on a fundamental role, because it was made, as previously mentioned, of turkey, chicken and fish bones.[85] The importance of the wheel in the manuscript is also seen in the names selected to represent the different male 'authorities'; for example, the Italian Cardinal, Avelino de Portocarriere — name reminiscent of 'carriage'— and the French Jean François de la Croupiette — reminds one of a 'roulette' wheel. Hence, there are continuous references in the text to wheels and different forms of locomotion.

Taking the manuscript and the sculpture as parts of the same interartistic construct, Varo re-assembles scientific/anthropological discoveries and fabricates a world apart, acquiring inspiration from her own artistic imagination and intellect, but drawing on nature itself. This is a world where organic/inorganic, reality/fiction merge, but also female/male identities become one and the same. The fact that the sculpture both organically expands and frames the written manuscript, then, has a clear genealogical essence, given that 'genealogy traces the way in which discourses constitute these objects

[85] This has already been discussed in Chapter Three, in the analysis of the bodies in pain, and in particular of painting 3, *Dolor reumático II.*

as subjects of statements which can themselves be judged as "true" or "false" according to the logic, syntax and semantics of the empowered discourse'.[86]

That same year, 1959, Varo created a series of drawings that must be read as part of the Homo Rodans construct. These are *Animal fantástico, Pterodáctilo, Cabeza de Homo* as well as the *Homo Rodans*. All of these drawings included preparatory drawings that allow us to further envision Varo's creative process. These preparatory drawings were all carried out on vegetable parchment and in pencil while the final paintings were in Varo's preferred medium: gouache on cardboard. In *Animal fantástico,* the standing figure is situated in the foreground of an empty and hollow space, with haptic qualities, reminiscent of the sky in the pain paintings discussed in the previous chapter. This 'animal' body is covered by a bark-like cloak from which branches emerge, juxtaposing the organic qualities of nature with the inorganic and static qualities of a painting. Its body is covered in hair, while its ears are big and elongated. In fact, given its characteristics, this figure could very well be seen as Varo's version of how the Homo Rodans looked, previous to its extinction. In *Cabeza de Homo,* we encounter a close-up of the bone structure of the face of the Homo Rodans. The figure presents a dark outline, while the contrast between dark and shade grant the structure the impression of space and cavities. The preparatory drawing for this painting does not differ much from the final drawing; indeed, the contouring lines are well defined indicating a firm and strong hand behind them. The drawing of the Homo Rodans itself — that is the whole bone structure — is also shown as a profile 'portrait'; however, this time it is facing right while all of the other drawings are facing left. It shares the rest of features that the other drawings present, but here one can see some sort of wings at the back of the figure. It is possible that these wings were hidden under the cloak in the *Animal fantástico*

[86] Paul A. Bové, *Mastering Discourse: The Politics of Intellectual Culture* (London/Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), p. 9.

painting. Another painting that belongs to the same series is *Pterodáctilo*. This extinct flying reptile, as will be explained in more detail later on, is behind one of Varo's arguments when suggesting that the bones found in Mesopotamia were believed to be an umbrella or the wing of a young pterodactyl, theories that are eventually discarded. The high level of detail and precision in all of these drawings is proof that Varo was well acquainted with anthropological drawings. What is more, the time dedicated to the preparatory drawings and the variety of pictures presented of the Homo Rodans functions as a basis for further dismantling evolutionary theories and emphasizes the interplay between truth and reality in the manuscript.

4.5.3. Towards an understanding of *De Homo Rodans*

Initially the manuscript may seem to be chaotic. However, the text contains a series of different theories and ideas challenged by Varo, not only in this work but also visible in other works. In this section, I will attempt to summarise these ideas. The manuscript starts by referencing a text written by the anthropologist W.H. Strudlees. The narrator openly declares that Strudlees' ideas are wrong and feels the subject of anthropology to be very personal to him, hence backing up his reasons for writing *De Homo Rodans*. After a first quotation in invented Latin, he goes on to revise the current anthropological situation. The narrator reminds the viewer that the biggest discoveries have been made by putting aside the concept of 'mito' (myth) for that of 'mirto' (a myrtle tree). The manuscript moves on to discuss the subject of evolution, which in his words is wrongly understood and the origin for all the ignorance and confusion. The universe as we know

it, he says, can be divided into two tendencies: 'one, which tends to harden and the other, that tends to soften'.[87] In the first attitude everyone opted for that, which hardens:

> Las grandes masas de tejido conjuntivo se separaron a trozos de durezas diversas después de reñidísimos combates, y las partes más ambiciosas no cejaron en su empeño hasta constatar con espanto que el límite conveniente había sido horriblemente sobrepasado.[88]

Some of these groups that opted for hardening tendencies refer back to Roman rhetorician Quintilianus (35AD-100AD).[89] However, that which softens, although conceived at first as 'dangerous', was only so when it was attempted to adopt hardening tendencies that developed into natural disasters:

> Tenemos muchos ejemplos de los terribles resultados del reblandecimiento transcendental de los abismos minerales cuando éstos comenzaron a retroceder en su equivocado y audaz camino hacia la dureza absoluta.[90]

Some examples of these 'disasters' or mistakes are the eruptions of volcanoes, most of them fictitious. However, some of the examples provided by Varo have real life references, such as the Moolokao, that might reference the Molokai volcano in Hawai,[91] and the most direct reference to Mexico in the manuscript, El Pedregal.[92]

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[87] Translation by Carlota Caulfield.
[88] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 194-95.
[89] Note that this is an intertextual reference by a real figure and not a made up one; however, the citation that follows in Latin is made up by Varo.
[90] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 195.
[91] 'East Molokai volcano was constructed along an E-W trending rift zone. The northern half of the volcano is truncated by a cliff more than 1 km high resulting from the massive Wailau debris avalanche that extended more than 100 km N (Moore et al. 1989). The youngest eruptive products formed the small Kalaupapa shield volcano that created a peninsula off the north coast between about 0.57 and 0.35 million years ago (Langenheim and Plague 1987)', in Global Volcanism Program, Smithsonian Institution, 2013 <https://volcano.si.edu/volcano.cfm?vn=332805> [Accessed 15 September 2018].
[92] 'Xitle volcano. Located in the southwestern part of Mexico City, Xitle is a monogenetic volcano, having only erupted during one period, between 245-315 AD. The lava flow that was extruded during this eruption travelled north and engulfed the city that was located there, CuiCuilco. The resulting lava field that is still present there today is known as the Pedregal de San Angel lava field. The extent of the lava flow field is around 80 square km', Volcano World, 'Xitle: The Volcano that Engulfed a City', Oregon Space Grant Consortium, Department of Geosciences, Oregon State University <http://volcano.oregonstate.edu/xitle-volcano-engulfed-city> [Accessed 15 September 2018].

Another example of this failure to try to harden that which softens are the findings in the excavations in Lilibia, Mesopotamia: a safe box made of hypogenic rock, an ancient diary belonging to Queen Tool, and an umbrella. As earlier stated, this can be a direct reference to the Puabi findings kept in the British Museum. However, the specific mention of hypogenic rock might also refer to the Caves of Naica in Chihuahua (Mexico) discovered in 1912.[93] The umbrella found is a controversial object and 32 essays have been written on it, but 'todos ellos están equivocados',[94] he exclaims. Some say it is not an umbrella but a wing of a young Pterodactyl;[95] others say it is a common umbrella that got buried by the movement of the land. However — and this becomes the climax of the manuscript — the fact that the umbrella was surrounded by a type of coal only found in the stone age, together with at least fifty lower back bones belonging to the same individual, has not EVER been mentioned, and it is time to talk about it. As is explained in the manuscript, the first hominids used to walk with the help of a 'stick', and this 'stick' became a part of their body as a 'tercer miembro locomotivo'.[96] Some of the sticks then became the wings of the pterodactyl, and this is why they were found buried in Mesopotamia. If Strudlees had bothered to check ['se tomase el trabajo de

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[93] 'The Naica caves and their amazing gypsum crystals were discovered almost a century ago inside a silver mine in the state of Chihuahua (Mexico) (Degoutin, 1912)', Giovanni Badino, José Maria Calaforra, Paolo Forti, Paolo Garofalo and Laura Sanna, 'The present day genesis and evolution of cave minerals inside the Ojo de la Reina Cave (Naica Mine, Mexico)', *International Journal of Speleology*, 40, 2 (2011), 125-131 (p. 125).

<http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=ijs> [Accessed 15 September 2018].

[94] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 196.

[95] 'The first pterosaur discovered was *Pterodactylus*, identified in 1784 by Italian scientist Cosimo Collini, who thought he had discovered a marine creature that used its wings as paddles. A French naturalist, Georges Cuvier, proposed that the creatures could fly in 1801, and then later coined the term "Pterodactyle" in 1809 after the discovery of a fossil skeleton in Bavaria, Germany. This was the term used until scientists realized they were finding different genera of flying reptiles. However, "pterodactyl" stuck as the popular term. *Pterodactylus* comes from the Greek word *pterodaktulos*, meaning "winged finger," which is an apt description of its flying apparatus. The primary component of the wings of *Pterodactylus* and other pterosaurs were made up of a skin and muscle membrane that stretched from the animals' highly elongated fourth fingers of the hands to the hind limbs', Joseph Castro, 'Pterodactyl, Pteranodon & Other Flying "Dinosaurs"', 18 March, 2016 <https://www.livescience.com/24071-pterodactyl-pteranodon-flying-dinosaurs.html> [Accessed 15 September 2018].

[96] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 19; It is intriguing to note that some of these pterodactyls 'had a third membrane between their legs, which may have connected to or incorporated a tail', Castro, 'Pterodactyl, Pteranodon & Other Flying "Dinosaurs"'.

consultar']97 an old book called the 'Multimirto Cadencioso', he would have known about those lower back bones, it is alleged. These human bones prove that the Homo Reptans did not exist previous to the Homo Sapiens, only the Homo Rodans. At the end, the narrator hopes to have illuminated the current anthropological situation created by Strudlees and advises caution and distrust in future expeditions. This is especially true in relation to an upcoming expedition to Eritrarquia, given that in this region people would dedicate their time to burying all types of bones, objects and ceramics, further provoking confusion in the reader. In sum, then, the manuscript is written as a response to a text written by fictional anthropologist W.H. Strudlees, in order to prove that his ideas are wrong. The accidental linguistic confusion which caused the words 'mito' and 'mirto' to be used wrongly in the history of anthropology is shown to have had lasting repercussions. Moreover, the role that alchemy and gender play in the universe has its consequences, as seen in some natural disasters throughout the history of mankind. Another idea is that the current theory of evolution is ill-conceived and must be revised by anthropologists and challenged by the readers. The text as a whole promotes caution and doubt in present and future archaeological excavations and scientific/anthropological findings. The following analysis will offer an interpretation of these series of events as narrated by Hälikcio.

97 Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 197.

4.5.4. Analysis: 'Y ahora pasemos al análisis historico-óseo de la situación antropológica actual…'[98]

De Homo Rodans moves from the introduction to the main body of the text to the conclusion, with keywords and expressions that act as connectors and endow the manuscript with its formality and 'academic' status such as: 'Y ahora pasemos', 'En primer lugar', 'Continuando con mi análisis' and 'Y termino recordando'.[99] At the beginning, before discussing the 'matter at hand', Hälikcio writes: 'antes de entrar en materia, permitidme que os recuerde aquellas palabras que el venerable y sabio cardenal Avelino di Portocarriere pronunció en el famoso concilio de Melusia',[100] and goes on to cite him in an invented Latin.[101] Throughout the manuscript, the narrator addresses the readers directly and assumes that they also 'knowledgeable' people in the field. In fact, taking this into account along with the aforementioned instructions, the format looks more like a set of notes for a lecture than a scientific text for publication. For example, at the beginning the narrator reminds us that

> la mayor parte de los que se consideran grandes hallazgos […] han sido hechos cuando se ha dejado de lado el equivocado concepto actual sobre los <Mitos> y éstos han recuperado su verdadera significación de <Mirtos>.[102]

This type of statement suggests that we, the readers, need to be reminded of something we already knew; the fact that the most important findings took place when one returned to the true meaning of 'mito', that is 'mirto'. Symbolically, the myrtle tree has been connected with the goddess Venus and used throughout the history of art as an

[98] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.
[99] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193; p. 193; p. 194; p. 198.
[100] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.
[101] The citation process in the text is a very important in the analysis that will be discussed later on.
[102] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 193-94.

emblem of love and the feminine.[103] This adds a gender dimension to the notion of mythology, as if reclaiming a feminine genealogy to contribute to the understanding of human tradition and evolution. Its name, as the narrator proclaims in the manuscript, contained a second meaning, that of telling a story either verbally or in written form, given that this plant was consumed during ceremonies centuries ago and passed on by the 'nodrizas'.[104] Thus, the importance of gender comes through by the deployment of these particular symbols as well as intertexts and the play between hard and soft, as will be discussed in a later section. However, when a historical and 'wise' figure by the name of Abencifar ebn el Mull — and here we note the pre-Christian reference as a sign of historicity and tradition —[105] gave an anthropological talk on <*De los usos ambarinos en los pueblos de Tulzur*>,[106] while suffering from a heavy head cold which made his words muffled, the attendees understood 'mito' instead of 'mirto':

> El venerable Abencifar ebn el Mull padecía fuerte coriza y ronquera y al empezar su alocución: […], su voz no era clara y algunos escribas venidos de Calcaréa para tomar nota de sus palabras entendieron mal y anotaron la palabra 'Mito' en lugar de 'Mirto'.[107]

The linguistic conversion of the word thus happened, by accident, and has survived until today. This is interesting from different viewpoints: first, the fact that the reader could actually be convinced by this story, given that Varo produces a convincing account of

[103] 'In Greco-Roman antiquity, the common myrtle was held to be sacred to Venus and was used as an emblem of love in wreaths and other decorations', The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, 'Myrtle', April 24, 2014 <https://www.britannica.com/plant/myrtle>; 'The myrtle is a sacred tree associated with goddess Venus […].
You can see the myrtle as a symbol of love'; Elena Nastyuk, 'Tree as Symbol in Art'. Available at Arthive.com<https://arthive.com/encyclopedia/123~In_the_shadow_of_the_sacred_grove_Whats_behind_the_symbolism_of_trees_in_painting> [Accessed 15 September 2018].

[104] The dispute over the meaning of these words brings to mind some debates provoked by Spanish historian Américo Castro (1885-1972) and that of Medieval historian and President of Spanish Republican government in exile, Claudio Sánchez Albornoz (1893-1984). Both were contemporaries of Varo; however we cannot know if she was aware of these disputes.

[105] Gil and Rivera also mention this aspect of Varo's work in their book *El hilo invisible,* 'con el anacronismo, Remedios crea su propia máquina del tiempo', p. 18.

[106] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.

[107] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.

events and that she is using a set of conventions of authoritative academic language adds weight to that; second, it also foregrounds the arbitrariness of language itself and the very essence by which stories are passed on, and with it the fictional character of stories regardless of the discipline.[108] In tune with this is the separation of eastern/western traditions and the role of *ars amatoria* in each, connected to both the feminist and the decolonial angle, such as the tendencies in theories of evolution to privilege the 'hard' and reason over the 'soft' and the arts — as well as men's voice over women's. In addition, we might mention the fact that all discoveries denounced here excluded the feminine, through the adoption of the word 'mito', instead of that of 'mirto'. Varo, then, is showing us an alternative construction through which to envision science and anthropology. She manages to normalise the bizarre nature of these events, not only by sharing them with the reader but also by 'reminding' us of something that, allegedly, we already knew. More examples of this throughout the text are the repeated use of the word 'recordar': 'recordar a los lectores'; 'quiero recordaros'; 'y termino recordando a todos'.[109] Equally, expressions like 'como sabemos muy bien' and 'como es natural en nuestros días',[110] further normalise the fiction into some sort of reality.[111] This constitutes a way of setting up a new reality through this network of interdisciplinary connections that together form the *dispositif:*

> The dispositif itself is the relation between the elements. The question is to know the nature of this connection, what it is meant to justify, to mask, to reinterpret that which is creating a new form of rationality.[112]

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[108] 'All fiction is a falsehood of sorts because it relates events that never actually happened to people (characters) who never existed, at least not in the manner portrayed in the stories. However, fiction writers aim at creating "legitimate untruths," since they seek to demonstrate meaningful insights into the human condition. Therefore, fiction is "untrue" in the absolute sense, but true in the universal sense', in Dr Julie Hallet, 'Elements of Fiction', in carrollwooddayschool.org <https://www.carrollwooddayschool.org/uploaded/documents/ElementsofFiction6-4-10.pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2018].

[109] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193; p. 195; p. 198.

[110] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 196.

[111] 'The power of discourse is the power to normalize, to make the arbitrary appear natural', Frank III, p. 66.

[112] Caillewaert, p. 44.

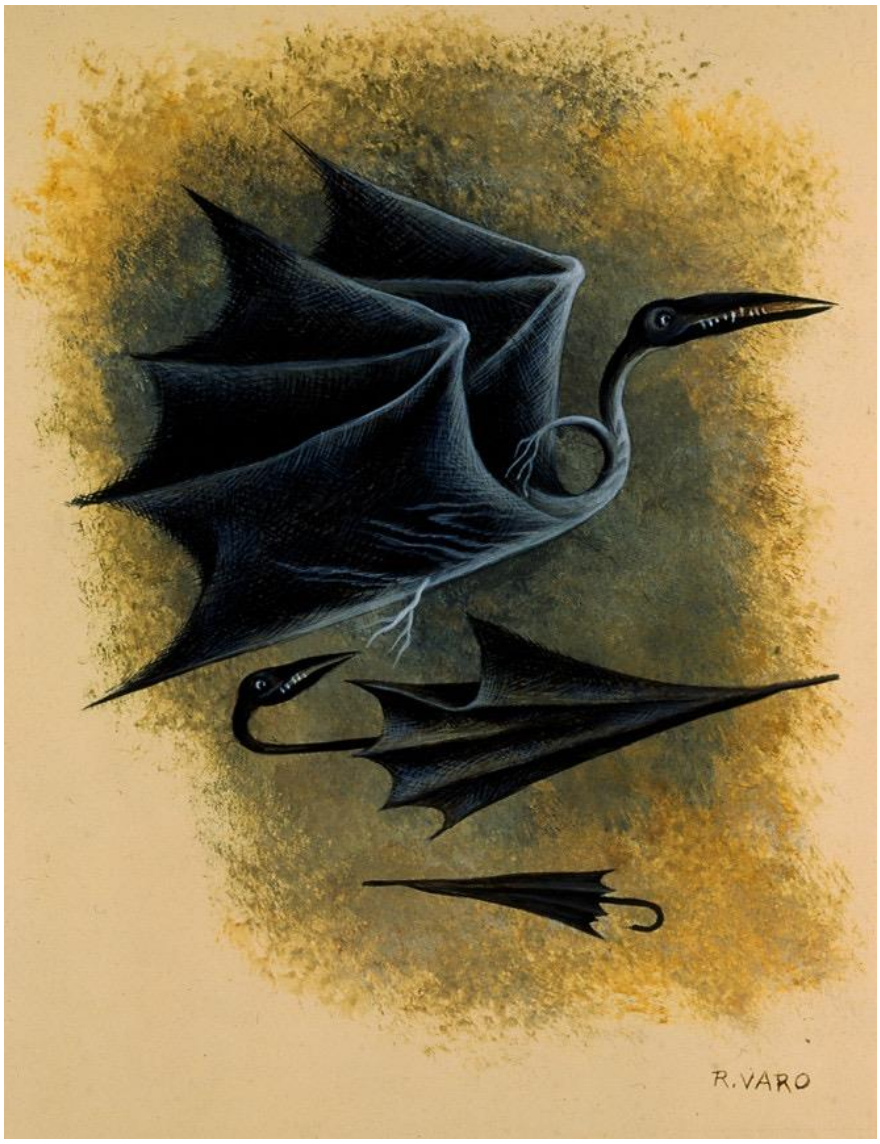


Fig. 8 - *Pterodáctilo*, 1959

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In tune with the performative character and gender reversal in *El santo cuerpo grasoso*, Varo creates a narrative persona, that of German anthropologist Hälikcio von Fuhrängschmidt, to give a personal account of what he believes are 'disastrous' anthopological failures. Varo's voice is disguised under this narrative voice, in this way emphasizing not only the performative element but also the gender critique through the use of humour and irony. As seen earlier, the language used by Hälikcio attempts a reg-

ister of both formality and authenticity, but it also grants the text an unusual tone for scientific discourse given that it is replete with personal opinions, and presented from the beginning as highly condescending. This is another way that the manuscript challenges the seriousness of science, given that objectivity has been widely presented as an inherent quality of scientific writing since the Enlightenment:

> Scientific objectivity is a characteristic of scientific claims, methods and results. It expresses the idea that the claims, methods and results of science are not, or should not be influenced by particular perspectives, value commitments, community bias or personal interests, to name a few relevant factors. Objectivity is often considered as an ideal for scientific inquiry, as a good reason for valuing scientific knowledge, and as the basis of the authority of science in society.[113]

In *De Homo Rodans*, this can be seen, for example, when the narrator speaks of the softening and hardening tendencies of the universe:

> La unánime tendencia hacia el endurecimiento – mejor que tendencia, el anhelo, diría yo – que reinó durante la primera Actitud o el Primer Movimiento, […] ¿qué es sino el irrefrenable deseo de trascender que anima a todas y cada una de las cosas?[114]

Hence, at times, the narrator seems to be more interested in dismantling scientific discoveries and making judgements about evolutionary theories than in the Homo Rodans itself. Furthermore, the original manuscript when published had both Remedios Varo's name and that of the fictional narrator on the cover. Varo, then, did not attempt to hide the fact that the text was a construct of her imagination through the voice of a made-up first person narrator. Other writings by Varo are also 'mediated' by made-up male characters for example *Carta 6*, as arranged by Castells, named 'Tribulaciones de un adepto del grupo "los observadores de la interdependencia de los objetos domésticos y su influ-

[113] Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 'Scientific Objectivity', online edition <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-objectivity/> [Accessed 18 September 2018].
[114] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 195.

encia sobre la vida cotidiana"', is signed as Fernando González.[115] Relevant here is the fact that other artists and writers that shared Varo's intellectual space in Mexico at the time, namely Paalen and collaborators of the *Dyn* journal, also used pseudonyms to publish controversial articles:[116]

> Es interesante el caso de los seudónimos en la revista; aunque, también, mientras se ilumina el problema de la identidad verdadera de los colaboradores-editores originales de la revista Dyn, uno empieza a advertir que resulta difícil desenmascarar sistemáticamente los incesantes juegos de escondidillas manejados por los autores de la revista, […] personajes que se cambian el nombre o cambian de idioma.[117]

In Varo's case, the fact that she did not conceal her name speaks of the openly critical and playful value of the work. Some of the personal judgments at the beginning when she condemns Strudlees's treatise to be 'lascivo e inexacto',[118] or when Hälikcio asserts that everyone is wrong in their belief that the bones found in Mesopotamia are either the wing of a pterodactyl or an umbrella:

> Todos ellos están equivocados. Los unos pretenden que no se trata de un paraguas, sino de un ala bastante completa y bien conservada de un joven pterodáctilo; los otros afirman que es un paraguas ordinario arrastrado hasta allí por un deslizamiento subterráneo de tierras arcilloides.[119]

Another example of this critical stance towards scientific/anthropological discoveries occurs against Strudlees again:

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[115] Castells, pp. 77-80. This letter originally written in French but translated by Walter Gruen, seems to echo some of the elements of the *De Homo Rodans*.
[116] An example is the 'seudónimo Charles Givors, bajo el cual Wolfgang Paalen edita y publica artículos arriesgados, a veces polémicos en su revista', Juan Pascal Gay and Philippe Rolland, 'La revista Dyn (1942-1944) sus principales contenidos', *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 84 (2004), 54-92 (p. 69).
[117] Gay and Rolland, pp. 87-88.
[118] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.
[119] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 196.

> Si el señor W.H. Strudlees se tomase el trabajo de consultar el *Multimirto cadencioso*, sabría inmediatamente la verdad sobre la inexplicable abundancia de vértebras lumbares pertenecientes a un solo individuo, […].[120]

According to the narrator, if Strudless had checked this ancient manuscript, he would know the truth about those bones found in Libya. The word 'truth' here can be linked to both knowledge and power: those who possess the 'truth' can claim to hold a certain power within discursive practices, and over those who can access it. The manuscript here is making a strong point about what can be considered to be original knowledge and who controls it, but the fact that it is all fictional actually dismantles its own theoretical anthropological discourse. It is as if the manuscript is in itself an example of what it claims.

The notion of a search for some kind of truth or discovery is already a theme present in many of Varo's works. For example, in one of Varo's dream narratives 'Verdad absoluta', the main character — the artist herself — has suddenly discovered an important secret: 'Yo había descubierto un importantísimo secreto, algo así como una parte de la "verdad absoluta"'.[121] Because of this discovery she gets taken by the authorities and condemned to death, but not before knitting a type of egg-shaped nest around her. Some pictorial examples of this truth-searching 'obsession' include *Hallazgo* (1956), where three figures are seen on a boat in the midst of an oneiric, semi-architectural landscape following what looks like some kind of bright sphere that guides their travels. This also occurs in *Exploración de las fuentes del río Orinoco* (1959), where an individual moving through a river seems in search of what looks like the holy grail. All of these examples may suggest that for Varo the search for truth was a never-ending process, but most of all a journey of self-discovery in which art and imagination

[120] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 197.
[121] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 210.

played a crucial role and where natural, supernatural, scientific, artistic and the esoteric are all combined.

An interesting example for the discussion at hand on the subversion of disciplines is the reference to the 'Multimirto Cadencioso', a made-up collection of scientific poems and songs. The narrator refers to it as a text that has been neglected within scientific and anthropological discoveries given that it was something artistic and performative, in fact rather interdisciplinary: 'Como es natural en nuestros días, todo ese conjunto de poemas históricos y de cánticos científicos se considera solamente como una curiosidad para bibliófilos y no como un libro útil de consulta'.[122] This not only serves as an example of Varo's interest in the interartistic but also an example of what art and imagination can offer to the scientific community. In the case of this manuscript, it allows Hälikcio to clarify something as relevant as the theory of evolution itself. Hence, in Varo's view, as seen here, as well as in the array of interartistic displays throughout her career, there are alternative ways to envision the world if one is open to the juxtaposition of the disciplines. It also calls to our attention the dichotomies between high art and low art, Primitive art and European Art, and even women's art and men's art, pushing the reader to collapse the boundaries between them.

Another important aspect of the manuscript is the use of references to other 'people' in the field.[123] The process of citation grants the text on the one hand, pseudo-academic status,[124] and on the other, attempts to bestow some type of veracity to the new theories being presented. In her analysis of gender and scientific writing, Lutz explains that

[122] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 196.
[123] 'The citation is an index of a judgment, made by the author of the article in which the citation appears, that the person cited has been taken seriously', Lutz, p. 617.
[124] 'The citation is a central part of all academic writing and is one of the most important ways in which academics evaluate the written work of others', Lutz, p. 617.

> Citations can serve many different rhetorical functions. They can be used to suggest that the cited work (1) supplies supporting evidence or data for one's argument, (2) provides theoretical ideas that inspire one, (3) is important but flawed and requiring revision, and/or (4) is significant to a particular subfield.[125]

In the case of the manuscript there are references being made to no less than ten 'invented' scientists and anthropologists. In fact, some of their work is directly cited; for example, at the beginning of the text when we are reminded of cardenal Avelino di Portocarriere's words:

> <*…et de fragmentus oseud lumbaris non verbalem non pensarem, conditiona umanitas Luciférica est. Et de pensarem ou parlarem lumbarismus pericoloso et cogitandum est…*>[126]

Or to finish off the manuscript, with Augurusthus' prophecy;

> "*…et de materia preteus, nefanda et scabrosissima trascendentia producerese, et de tiernam elastiqua materia movimiento petrificatore adrivate. Tempora murallis separatum duos et rebotandum majesticamenta con fungoide uminaria, petreus materia et elastiqua substancia, ocuparem suos lugarem naturalis ad majorem comprensionibus mutual per milenaria tempora…*"[127]

These citations although impossible to decipher for the audience, are strategically written in invented Latin, a language chosen throughout the ages by well-learned individuals. What is more, they place the narrative voice within the field of anthropology regardless of them being fictitious:

> The citation list can be said to consist of the social community to which the author sees him — or herself as belonging, even if some of those cited are authors with whom she or he wants to be affiliated and others are those from whom she or he wants to be distanced.[128]

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[125] Lutz, p. 618.
[126] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.
[127] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 198.
[128] Lutz, p. 618.

By mimicking scientific discourse and modes of writing — its formality, {male}, language and citation system — Varo succeeds in situating the manuscript within anthropology and science, disciplines rarely accessible to women in the 1940s and 1950s, particularly in Mexico. Its overt fictionality and parodic essence, makes this new reality 'safe' for anyone to inhabit, not just those within those disciplines; from here it unfolds its inclusive ethos.

Linguistically, the manuscript is replete with not only invented Latin as already mentioned, but with an array of specialised scientific terms. For example, after clarifying the linguistic confusion between 'myth' and 'myrtle', Hälikcio goes on to challenge directly the concept of human evolution itself:

> creo muy urgente dejar bien establecido que la palabra "evolución", con su contenido de ideas erróneas sobre la posible mudanza de las cosas en forma mecánicamente desprovista de voluntad trascendental, es el origen de la ignorancia y confusión reinantes.[129]

The term evolution is linked to the reading of Varo's understanding of the 'wheel' as seen in the figure and the drawings that were included in the manuscript. The importance of the wheel not only in the *De Homo Rodans*, but as key to other of her works is of relevance here. According to sacred symbolism, 'el nombre mismo de la rueda (rota) evoca de inmediato la idea de rotación; y esta rotación es la figura del cambio continuo al cual están sujetas todas las cosas manifestadas'.[130] Following this definition of the wheel, Kaplan and Castells as well as Rivera, see Varo's use of such device as 'el viaje metafísico, la evolución, la posibilidad del crecimiento interior a través de un dinamismo espiritual ascendente'.[131] While not refuting this interpretation, the fact that

[129] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.
[130] René Guénon, *Símbolos fundamentales de la ciencia sagrada* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1988), p. 101.
[131] Rivera, *Trampantojos*, p. 122; in pages 124 and 125, Rivera provides a list of Varo's works that contain a wheel or some sort of circular shape that resemble a wheel.

in the manuscript the wheel is described as a 'forma mecánicamente desprovista de voluntad trascendental' brings about further possibilities. One can well be that the unique wheel that drives the figure of the Homo Rodans is somewhat lacking what is necessary for a predetermined and conscious trajectory, thus linking with the concept of evolution in the manuscript. As a whole, the text critiques and makes fun of 'hard' scientific discoveries, therefore anthropology as well as the term evolution, are also 'lacking' what other disciplines, gender and imagination can offer.

The recurrent use of adjectives and superlatives when referring to the different intellectuals or anthropologists quoted in the text is also worthy of mention. Some of these are: 'venerable y sabio';[132] 'erudito y sabio';[133] 'el gran Algecífaro';[134] 'el iluminado Augurusthus'.[135] These seem to play a double function within the manuscript: on the one hand, Varo, through the voice of Hälikcio, is mimicking the way in which scientists and 'knowledgeable' people might talk to one another as to show respect towards each other's work; however, as I will explain momentarily, they can also be perceived as ironic elements that further criticise the disciplines at hand and in their form imply esoteric forms of knowledge. This is emphasized further by the names chosen by Varo for the different characters that inhabit the universe of the Homo Rodans as if she herself appears to be softening their 'hard' science exterior. These names not only suggest possible nationalities: the Italian Cardinal Avelino de Portocarriere, the 'wise' Arab Abencifar ebn el Mull, or the French Jean François de la Croupiette. It is not unusual to find these playful and parodic names in Varo's work, as was seen in the play written with Carrington in Chapter One. What could be interesting to point out is the possible significance of 'Mull'. Considering Varo's past and the time spent as a child in Anglès

[132] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.
[133] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.
[134] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.
[135] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 198.

(Girona) and then later on in Barcelona, it would not seem surprising if Varo would have made used of the Catalan word of 'Mul' (donkey) as a source of further irony. Thus, she would be saying 'the wise mule' when referring to Abencifar.

The ironic and parodic nature of the manuscript is closely related to the citations in the manuscript, as Hutcheon explains:

> Irony makes these intertextual references into something more than simply academic play or some infinite regress into textuality: what is called to our attention is the entire representational process – in a wide range of forms and modes of production […][136]

Parody and irony then, play a crucial role in how the manuscript is constructed, and therefore how it should be understood. It is important at this stage to distinguish the different styles of humour deployed in the text, for example that of parody.[137] The narrator's tone is parodic in nature as seen in the way it tries to devalue and deconstruct scientific methodology. Moreover, given that the reader is offered specific details of the discoveries, for example, the exact place where these set of bones were discovered — 'en el vertiente sur de los Cárpatos' —[138] links us to the geography of anthropology, and more specifically to Mesopotamia, Africa and Carpathian Mountains. Taking this into account, together with the reference to Queen Tool, signals a decolonial subtext, as mentioned earlier. Varo, by making reference to fictional but possible discoveries, brings forward the way in which colonialism exoticised the colony and its inhabitants, its knowledge and its culture. These discoveries made by the colonisers, were now seen as valuable additions to disciplines such as anthropology or science given that they were now theorised through a Western/European eye.

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[136] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 91.
[137] 'often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality', Hutcheon, p. 89.
[138] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 197.

Varo's writing style forces the reader to believe her side of anthropological discoveries over any other through the use of the *dispositif*, but the ironic display of this permits us to see a different alternative or way to look at things behind it, one that embraces the feminine and that is more inclusive, as it questions single, hard truths in favour of the multiple, the soft, the layered and the interdisciplinary. She does this by strategically guiding the reader from theory to theory, demonstrating that the narrator is aware of the latest 'trends' in the matter, and finally bringing them back to his theories as the only possible ones to accept. This is evident, for example in the many names and references to other 'important' people in the field. Also, we must consider the fact that these references date back to 850BC, as is the case with Abencifar el Mull, to future expeditions:

> No quiero terminar sin poner en guardia a la expedición creada por Mr. Frederik Zathergille, que se dirige a la region de Eritrarquia para realizar excavaciones, a los cuales aconsejo infinita cautela y mucha desconfianza.[139]

Parody is also used in the manuscript to speak of the arrogant and exclusive nature of scientific disciplines and their disconnection from other fields such as art, writing and imagination, elements that were imperative for Varo when approaching her idea of art. This intense parodic essence of the manuscript is also found in other writings and paintings by the artist, for example some of Varo's surreal recipes. Although these recipes were never published by her and were only made available after her death, they are clear examples of Varo's sense of humour. In *Para provocar sueños eróticos* she uses a third person narrative voice to guide the reader to follow a series of bizarre instructions to induce erotic dreams. Some of the instructions include the boiling of three plucked hens while you situate your bed under the window facing southeast for half an hour and

[139] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo…*, p. 197.

then place a brick under one of the legs of the bed.[140] In another of Varo's texts, a letter to a stranger [Carta 2] the artist makes use of invented mathematical formulae embedded within the text as examples of her poetry.[141]

Another element of humour in the manuscript is that of irony. Irony relates to a particular situation rather than a mode of expressing ourselves: 'situational irony is the discrepancy between appearance and reality, or between expectation and fulfillment, or between what is and what would seem appropriate'.[142] Some of the statements included in *De Homo Rodans,* fall into the realm of irony, given the sarcasm which the narrator places at certain moments of the manuscript. If parody enables one to challenge the disciplinary, irony/sarcasm further pushes the boundaries between scientific/humoristic discourses and allows Varo to 'make fun of' these fictional anthropologists. Examples of irony in the text include 'erudita pluma',[143] when referring to Strudlees as a 'brilliant', writer when one of the main points of the manuscript is to dismantle his theories; and also, when quoting the 'distinguished and wise' Cardinal Avelino di Portocarriere, as she proclaims that his words are 'austere' when for the reader they sound anything but that.

The use of moles as the animals that were trained to excavate the land at the end of the manuscript is connected to the use of satire in the manuscript:

> En época muy anterior al Multimirto Cadencioso, la buena Sociedad de Eritarquia se interesó sobremanera en las excavaciones antropológicas, convirtiéndose este gusto en un deporte o juego […]. Como no deseaban hacer ejercicios violentos ni ensuciar sus suntuosos atuendos, pronto surgió una industria ingeniosa que consistía en la educación de cierta raza de topos, particularmente inteli-

[140] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 212.
[141] This is also reminiscent of exquisite corpse practice.
[142] Dr Julie Hallet, 'Elements of Fiction', in Carrollwooddayschool.org <https://www.carrollwooddayschool.org/uploaded/documents/ElementsofFiction6-4-10.pdf> [Accessed 22 August 2018].
[143] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 193.

> gentes, a quienes se enseñaba a perforar rápidamente un túnel hasta encontrar algún objeto […][144]

Other examples of satire in the manuscript include: Varo's instructions on how to publicly read, or 'perform' the manuscript in different voices, depending upon who the audience is, as well as Abencifar's voice in his public reading of 'Mirtitrología Necrófila'. The use of humour, and with it parody, sarcasm and satire, can be seen, according to Patricia Martínez Lozano, to be a liberating tool for women.[145] More particularly, a resource already utilised by other previous as well as contemporary women writers. This aspect will be developed in more detail in the following section.

The key sentence that dismantles evolutionary theory is: 'la palabra "evolución" […], es el origen de la ignorancia y confusión reinantes'.[146] From here onwards, the narrator moves to construct a new set of theories backed up by a series of fictional discoveries and textual references, in particular that of the Homo Rodans, the discovery that gives the manuscript its name. Hence, given that in the *De Homo Rodans* all of the characters and events are fictional, as well as the narrator, Varo is able to safely explore scientific writing while at the same time, point out its ludicrous essence. But by rewriting different theories and with it, evolution, Varo reminds us of the fact that every narration is ultimately a fiction. This fictional aspect of discourse was explored and mentioned by Foucault.[147] Nancy Isenberg also agrees that 'what anthropologists or historians call reality is a constructed reality whether one talks about language or material conditions'.[148] However, Varo not only re-writes evolutionary theories but also takes apart what appears to be her own cosmological model, and she does so by adopting a

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[144] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 197.
[145] 'De qué manera las mujeres utilizan el humor como arma liberadora', Patricia Martínez Lozano, 'Género y humor. La ironía y el relajo femenino en la búsqueda del sentido libertario', *Debate Feminista*, 41 (2010), 136–62 (p. 145).
[146] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 194.
[147] 'For post-structuralists, all "truths" are relative to the frame of reference which contains them, […] these discourses "constitute" the truths they claim to discover and transmit', Bové, p. 8.
[148] Nancy Isenberg, 'The Personal is Political: Gender, Feminism, and the Politics of Discourse Theory', *American Quarterly*, 44. 3 (1992), 449–58 (p. 452).

new model that contains a latent eroticism and a series of embedded sexual connotations.

The most relevant example of this sexual essence of the manuscript occurs when Varo refers to the Universe's tendencies towards that which hardens and that which softens:

> No hay duda de que nuestro Universo conocido se divide en dos claras tendencias: la de aquello que tiende a endurecerse y la de aquello que tiende a ablandarse. […] El endurecimiento cobra cada día más prestigio: músculos duros, carácter inflexible, ejercicios destinados a endurecer las superficies y volúmenes anatómicos femeninos, etc.[149]

However, the erotic tone as well as the sexual connotations in the manuscript can be another way by which Varo, through the narrator's voice, makes fun of masculinist discourses and the privileging of a certain form of knowledge construction over the others. Here produced by the combination of specific words that, under the innocent veil of science, refers to physics and in particular to that of evolutionary theories if we think of the matter that also transformed during the chemical reaction that produced the earth as we know it. However, the sexual undertones become more apparent with the following section written in invented Latin:

> "*…et procer venerabile et vetustus caminandum natuta vislumbratum virgo impúdica virgo tórbida et ornata duobus globis durissimos et homo vetustus appetitum venere ardencens luxuria et sudore sua atque recondidit membra simulacris voluptatem consumatum est".*[150]
>
> 'un anciano venerable que en su camino vislumbra a una mujer impúdica y turbadora, adornada con un par de turgentes globos que provoca que su apetito sexual arda en lujuria'[151]

[149] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 195.
[150] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, pp. 194-95.
[151] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 57.

Taking Mendoza Bolio's translation as the possible meaning of what Varo had in mind, the sexual could be also understood as a way for Varo to play with gender roles to poke/fun critique gender stereotypes. In the manuscript the tendency for that which hardens is seen as harming and dangerous and there are clear examples for this — some real and some fictitious: natural disasters like the ones that occurred in Pompeii, Moolookao in Central Africa, Herculano, and El Pedregal.[152] Castells also mentions this aspect of the manuscript:

> Todo el tratado se basa en un deliberado equívoco, de connotaciones claramente sexuales, en la descripción de los procesos de 'reblandecimiento' y 'endurecimiento\, como lógica causa del nacimiento de especies.[153]

The whole discourse appears to be one that questions origins and focuses on the performative seen not only with these sexual connotations and in the clear instructions to read the treatise, and genealogical, but also the exclusion and disappearance of the word 'myrtle' to speak about anthropological findings. Varo's strategy of bringing in sexual connotations to explain scientific/evolutionary terms is something that other artists employed, as Rosalind Krauss confirms 'broadening the reference from Mexico to de Sade was characteristic of the intellectual field of 1920s ethnological thinking'.[154] Within surrealists, Marquis de Sade (1740-814), was widely read and recognized. As Cortès i Giner explains, 'Tots apreciaven molt l'obra de marquès de Sade, definit com un fantas-

[152] Pompeii and Herculano refer to real events in Roman towns destroyed by volcanic flows. El Pedregal, Xitle, very important in Mexican tradition. El ombligo; key eruption of Popopcatepecl in 1947.
[153] Castells, p. 44.
[154] Rosalind Krauss, 'Giacometti', in *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. by William Rubin (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 503-635 (pp. 510-11). For example, for Georges Bataille: 'It is sufficient to not […] the positive revaluation of Sade by Bataille. The latter saw the violence of the "Divine Marquis" as a model for the orgiastic revolutionary violence of the proletariat against a ruling class', Jordan, p. 32.

tic i revolucionari escriptor'.[155] Varo is once more using a surrealist feature and adapting it to her own purpose.

4.6. *Prácticas transgresoras*

> Each one in her way and in her own circumstances denies the conventional, making the foundations of the establishment tremble, turning hierarchies upside down, and achieving authenticity.
>
> Rosario Castellanos[156]

Referring to the stylistic and narrative features of writers such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the fictional Ana Ozores and Anna Karenina, Rosario Castellanos in the quotation above talks about the strategies that female writers and artists, as well as some fictional characters deploy to create an alternative way to see the world in order to incorporate women's voices within socio-historical and artistic narratives. Connections between Varo's *De Homo Rodans* and strategies used by other writers could be traced from Santa Teresa de Jesús (1515-1582) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695) up to contemporary writers in Mexico, such as Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974), Elena Garro (1916-1998) and Josefina Vicens (1911-1988). It is not within the scope of this chapter to compare and contrast each of these writers' works with Varo's *De Homo Rodans*; however, I would like to trace the specific elements that make such comparison possible: how each of these women can be seen to have carried out an array of 'prácticas transgresoras' in their work.

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[155] Cortès i Giner, p. 75. 'Bataille consideraba a Sade como un 'precursor ejemplar del inconsciente moderno que, al igual que el pintor Goya, habia puesto de manifiesto los rostros terribles de los sueños' bajo las apariencias de las cosas', Fer Briony, 'Surrealismo, mito y psicoanálisis', in *Realismo, racionalismo, surrealismo. El arte de entreguerras (1914-1945)*, ed. by D. Batchelor and others (Madrid: Editorial Akal, 1999), 175-253 (p. 212).

[156] 'Woman and Her Image' in *A Rosario Castellanos Reader*, ed. by Maureen Ahern (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988), 236-44 (p. 244).

These practices include the use of unconventional first person narrators, as seen in *De Homo Rodans*, Vicens's *El libro vacío* (1958), where the main protagonist is a fictional masculine voice, and Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, where the main narrator is the collective voice of the village of Ixtepec. Regarding the use of masculine narrators, in the case of Vicens, David Lauer concludes that, she 'uses the I to challenge collective problems and employs masculine characters to dismantle the world they have created'.[157] Oscar Barrau is of a similar opinion:

> la fingida voz masculina que facilita la difusión del libro sirve para minar el mismo sistema patriarcal que lo publica. […] la intención probable de dirigirse al hombre frontalmente, en su propio idioma, para dejar la lectura entre líneas al público femenino.[158]

The layering of discourses is another feature of these transgressive narratives. For instance, in Rosario Castellanos's, 'Lección de cocina' (1971), included in the collection of short stories *Álbum de familia*, the writer uses a discourse traditionally connected to women, that of domestic space and the kitchen, with time-honoured recipes reflecting back on her condition as woman. The text functions as a type of interior monologue in which the protagonist travels back and forward in time while cooking steaks. The communal space of the kitchen — or that of craft-making — plays a relevant role in the development of these 'prácticas transgresoras'. Other comparisons could be made here with, for example, Kahlo, Carrington or even Italian-exiled artist Leonor Fini (1907-1996). Courtney Lee Weida agrees in the necessity of pin-pointing women's communal practices and spaces for both cooking and craft-making:

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[157] Josefina Vicens, *El libro vacío*, ed. by David Lauer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), p. xiii.

[158] Oscar Barrau, 'Josefina Vicens y José Ortega y Gasset o la imposibilidad de diálogo sobre género', *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero22/vicens.html> [Accessed 20 October 2018].

For more gender-inflected approaches to Vicens, see Alessandra Luiselli, 'La bitextualidad en las novelas de Josefina Vicens', *Revista de Humanidades*, 2 (1997), 19-36, and Leticia Seymour, *El poder, el cuerpo y el deseo femeninos: El libro vacío de Josefina Vicencs, Los recuerdos del porvenir de Elena Garro y Arráncame la vida de Ángeles Masttreta* (Unpublised Thesis, Emory University, 1998).

> Communal, artistic bonds arounds acts of cooking, caregiving and consumption are important to recognize as counternarratives in art histories that focus predominantly on singular (often male) artists producing work apart from their families and homes […].[159]

In regards to temporal anachronism, the way in which the protagonist of 'Lección de cocina' travels back and forward in time, can also be found in Vicens's *El libro vacío*: 'mediante las anacronías (las analepsis y las prolepsis), los recuerdos se fusionan en una especie de isocronía temporal, donde la voz enunciativa es ya una especie de Dios creador'.[160] By way of these particular references, these women writers manage to alter the way in which memory has been constructed within patriarchal structures that privilege masculine genealogies over female ones. The most important example of such narratives is of course, that of the origin of 'man', as critiqued by French Feminist writer and philosopher Hélène Cixous: 'the origin is a masculine myth: I always want to know where I come from. […] the quest for origins illustrated by Oedipus, doesn't have a feminine unconscious'.[161]

Humour and irony play a crucial role within these 'prácticas transgresoras'. As Patricia Martínez Lozano wonders, considering that humour and irony are socially — and gendered — constructed:[162] how do women use humour as a liberating tool? These women utilised the discourses and spaces imposed on them by society to bring about change or transformation through the use of parody, irony/sarcasm and satire. In the case of Castellanos, for instance, Saneleuterio explains that:

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[159] Courtney Lee Weida, 'Frida Kahlo, Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, and Leonor Fini: Feminist Lessons in Chimerism, Corporeality, Cuisine, and Craft', *Visual Culture & Gender*, 11 (2016), 42-51 (p. 48). Communal art practices connects these 'prácticas transgresoras' with Chapter 2 and will also be discussed in Chapter 5.

[160] Adriana Sáenz Valadez, '*Los años falsos* y *El libro vacío*: la ciudad, la muerte y los roles de género en Josfina Vicens', *EN-CLAVE del pensamiento*, VII. 13 (2013), 149-71 (p. 158).

[161] Hélène Cixous, 'Castration or Decapitation?', *Signs*, 7. 1 (1981), 41-55 (p. 53).

[162] 'La ironía y el humor son construcciones sociales, y […] en ambos también existe (o forman parte de) una configuración de género', Lozano, p. 145.

> frente al aburrimiento del saber masculino, ya tan arcaico, sin novedad más que en sus sucesivas yuxtaposiciones, emerge la mujer sabia, intelectual, como la verdadera salsa de los saberes: que vuelve sobre lo ya aceptado comúnmente para desencajarlo, que ridiculiza las convenciones con una pátina de sarcasmo, que se come los latines mojaditos en salsa.[163]

Yet perhaps the most emblematic of responses to the 'aburrimiento del saber masculino' can be found in Sor Juana Inés's *Respuesta*, which contains many, if not all, of the features present in Varo's *De Homo Rodans*:

> MUY ILUSTRE Señora, mi Señora: No mi voluntad, mi poca salud y mi justo temor han suspendido tantos días mi respuesta. ¿Qué mucho si, al primer paso, encontraba para tropezar mi torpe pluma dos imposibles? El primero (y para mí el más riguroso) es saber responder a vuestra doctísima, discretísima, santísima y amorosísima carta. Y si veo que preguntado el Ángel de las Escuelas, Santo Tomás, de su silencio con Alberto Magno, su maestro, respondió que callaba porque nada sabía decir digno de Alberto, con cuánta mayor razón callaría, no como el Santo, de humildad, sino que en la realidad es no saber algo digno de vos. El segundo imposible es saber agradeceros tan excesivo como no esperado favor, de dar a las prensas mis borrones: merced tan sin medida que aun se le pasara por alto a la esperanza más ambiciosa y al deseo más fantástico; y que ni aun como ente de razón pudiera caber en mis pensamientos; y en fin, de tal magnitud que no sólo no se puede estrechar a lo limitado de las voces, pero excede a la capacidad del agradecimiento, tanto por grande como por no esperado, que es lo que dijo Quintiliano: *Minorem spei, maiorem benefacti gloriam pereunt*. Y tal que enmudecen al beneficiado.[164]

The first of these elements is the use of hyperbolic or bathetic adjectives to emphasise or criticise an aspect of a person, event or thing. For example, when referring to the letter that the Bishop of Puebla sent to Sor Juana: 'the first — and for me the hardest — is knowing how to answer your totally learned, very prudent, extremely holy, and immensely loving letter'. Gerard Flynn agrees that in Sor Filotea, the 'string of superla-

[163] Elia Saneleuterio, 'Rosario Castellanos: la salsa del latín', in *A través de la vanguardia hispanoamericana,* ed. by Manuel Fuentes y Paco Tovar (Tarragona: Publicacions de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2011), 749-54, (p. 583). Also connected here to Varo's recipes as discussed in Chapter 2.

[164] Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, 'Respuesta de la poetisa a la muy ilustre Sor Filotea de la Cruz', Original edition. Reproduced in Biblioteca Virtual Universal, 2006 <http://www.bdigital.unal.edu.co/39758/1/132027.pdf> [Accessed 28 April 2018].

tives excites our wonder'.[165] Something similar occurs in Varo's *De Homo Rodans* when Varo uses hyperbolic adjectives to describe the many 'brilliant' men she references (venerable; wise; erudite; the great). Another of these features is the use of parodic pseudonyms also involving gender reversal as an overt element of the texts. These are overt because in both cases the readers would have known who Sor Filotea was — the Bishop of Puebla — and who Fuhrängschimdt was — Varo. In *De Homo Rodans* this can be seen in the adoption of a 'German' *persona*, that of Hälikcio von Fuhrängschimdt, while in Sor Filotea it comes in the use of an 'absurd' female name for a male Bishop. In a similar vein, the fact that both writers speak about 'serious' matters using ironic discourses in order to make fun of authorities, and undermine patriarchal voices, subverts the supposedly authorised knowledge within those specific disciplines.

The use of intertextual references is also an important aspect.[166] As observed in the analysis of *De Homo Rodans*, philosophers, one of which is the Roman rhetorician Quintilian, also present in Sor Juana's text. Moreover, the latter in her *Respuesta*, quotes a great number of Christian and Pagan figures, situating herself in relation to high religious authorities. Hence, both Sor Juana and Varo, thanks to their specific and 'singular' discourses, prove that they are on the same level as their male counterparts.[167]

All of these elements contribute to situate Varo's *De Homo Rodans* in relation to a wider project of transgressive writing:

> la de las mujeres escritoras hispanoamericanas que se han intentado desmarcar tanto de la tradición de roles sociales femeninos como de las convenciones impuestas por un canon literario masculino.[168]

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[165] Gerard Flynn, 'A Naïve Reading of the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*', *Letras Femeninas*, 11. 1-2 (1985), 36-41 (p. 37).
[166] Sor Juana 'quotes the Bible four times, in Latin', Flynn, p. 36.
[167] '[B]y her argument and quotations, Sor Juana has just shown that she knows the Sacred Books!', Flynn, p. 36.
[168] Elia Saneleuterio, 'La subversión de conciencia en Rosario Castellanos: un acercamiento didáctico a "Lección de cocina"', *Literatura Mexicana XXVIII*, 1 (2017), 99-116 (p. 111).

Together, these women writers alter, deconstruct and dismantle the reality that has been imposed upon them to incorporate marginal voices, particularly those of women. This is achieved through the use of a series of tools including the use of unconventional first-person narrators; the implementation of a particular type of parodic language and the incorporation of deliberate temporal anachronism to question the linear narratives of progress, and, in particular the master narratives of 'origins'. These strategies can be understood to work as counter-*dispositifs*, in Foucault's terms, as discussed earlier.

4.7. Conclusion

> I said that the dispositive is by nature essentially strategic, which indicates that it deals with a certain manipulation of forces, of a rational and concerted intervention in the relations of force, to orient them in a certain direction, to block them, or to fix and utilize them. The dispositive is always inscribed in a game of power and, at the same time, always tied to the limits of knowledge, which derive from it and, in the same measure, condition it.[169]

As uncovered within this chapter, *De Homo Rodans* is in fact a well-prepared and carefully planned work that challenges the seriousness of anthropology and science, pushes at the relationship between gender and authorship within disciplines, and deconstructs and dismantles the foundations of human evolution, ultimately becoming a sort of philosophical statement that can be usefully compared with the transgressive narratives of other women writers. The use of parody, irony or satire; the blending of the organic/inorganic; the use of the disguised feminine voice as the main method of orientation to situate our place within the world: all these contribute alternative ways in which to think about all aspects of life in the world that we inhabit. The style and structure of the

[169] Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, pp. 3-4.

manuscript is written, its language, apparent formality and intertextual references, manage to not only situate it within scientific discourse but also provide proof that Varo was well acquainted with current scientific and anthropological writings, as seen in the references to the Puabi findings and Mexican expeditions and volcanoes.

The first-person narrator may at first appear primarily as a strategy intended to break with the seriousness and objectivity of scientific writing, but breaking those boundaries is what actually pushes the readers to be actively involved in the fictional narrative, to begin to recognise the rules of the game. Readers are forced to ask themselves what is real and what is not, to question the very basis for objective judgement, and hence to take a critical standpoint towards scientific and anthropological discourse, one that brings them towards a quest of their own. The adoption of a male narrative voice allows Varo's voice to confront male writers/readers directly, both facilitating the distribution of the manuscript, by fitting in within the patriarchal system that en-genders scientific knowledge, and exposing the contingencies on which this 'fiction' is based. Varo is not openly critical in the text of the social and disciplinary construction of gender roles, the way in which the two tendencies in the universe are described and the subsequent 'disregard' for female genealogies suggested in the sidelining of stories passed on by ancient nurses ('nodrizas'), contributes to subvert the 'normal' order of things, as was the case with the gender reversal in *El santo cuerpo grasoso*. This more performative aspect of the manuscript is further emphasised in the instructions for 'staging' and distribution that frame it.

The different intertextual references to ancient authorities function as anachronistic allusions that both attempt to legitimize and grant authority to the manuscript, however humorous and parodic they seem. Parody and irony take part in the way this gender subversion and discipline transgression occurs, for, as Hutcheon explains, 'parody is a kind of contesting revision or rereading of the past that both confirms and subverts the

power of the representations of history'.[170] Varo's parodic exercise is not only about pointing out the ludicrous essence of scientific discourse but also about putting forward alternate ways in which to think about our past as well as possible new theories of human evolution through the *dispositif*. This *dispositif* entangles all of these different elements that become visible at a particular moment in time in a given specific set of circumstances. These 'prácticas transgresoras' function as a catalyst by which Varo is able to challenge patriarchal discourse, writing as a 'woman', although here as a woman in disguise:

> Escribir como mujeres implica alterar la piedra angular del 'sentido histórico de tradición […]. […] escribir desde la sexualidad femenina, transcribir la diferencia, es también derruir el monumento, derrumbar un modelo de texto masculinamente connotado'.[171]

The interartistic reading of the manuscript side by side with the drawings and the sculpture expands the overall interpretation of the work. Varo offers us a holistic construct of an alternative theory of evolution, one that imitates the supposedly 'real one'. While the narrator, Hälikcio, suggests that the movement towards integration and interchangeabilty is something he hopes can be avoided, Varo's parodic exposure of the contingency of his voice clearly encourages us to take an opposing view. We can see this in both in her subversive crossing of disciplinary boundaries, but most of all with the symbol of the wheel throughout the piece, and how this links to her other works. The wheel indicates continuous movement and with it an amalgamation of opposites; it brings us back to the notion of interconnectivity mentioned in Chapter Three, which we might see exemplified in Varo's painting *Los amantes* (1963). In this painting, two figures, one male and one female, are looking at one another; however, their faces are mirrors that in fact reflect one another, both becoming one. Whilst this could be read as the blurring of

[170] Hutcheon, p. 91.
[171] Valadez, p. 845.

the boundaries between self and other produced by desire, it provides a significant image in the context of discussion within this chapter of the questioning and collapse of 'hard' binaries between male and female: the desire to blend both in a new narrative, consciousness or, to use Foucault's terms, *dispositif*. In the following chapter, we will see how this interartistic dialogue and interconnectivity finds its 'home' through the exploration of Varo's dreams together with one of Varo's most known paintings, *La creación de las aves.*

Chapter Five

Interartistic Spaces in Varo's Dreams and *La creación de las aves*

5.1. Introduction

Having considered the ways in which Varo's different artworks enter into dialogue with one another in the previous chapters, this final chapter brings together many of the lines of enquiry that have resulted from these interartistic explorations. Here I develop the phenomenological readings commenced in Chapter Two, complemented by some queer feminist insights, to explore the interartistic construction of space in two of Varo's works, the first, a dream narrative and the other, one of her best-known paintings, *La creación de las aves* (fig. 9). Varo's dream narratives, though mentioned at times in secondary criticism,[1] are not usually included in the study of her paintings. It is my view, however, that the dreams enhance our understanding of Varo's interartistic practice by providing an account of her inner and subconscious thoughts regarding her approach to art and her immediate artistic community. Both of the works studied in this chapter take space as the focus for discussion.

The majority of studies on Varo have given some consideration to the importance that space as well as architecture play in her paintings, as well as in her writings, as discussed in the literature review of this thesis. Many of these studies agree that the ways in which space is represented in Varo's works have to do with her exiled condition, both

[1] Exceptions include Fariba's analysis in the volume *Las cinco llaves secretas del mundo de Remedios Varo* as well as studies by Mendoza Bolio, Kaplan and Castells. According to Castells, however, these narratives are 'repartida[s] en catálogos generales, algunos de dificil acceso, o [...] integrada en biografías o en estudios globales', Castells, p. 11.

geographically and from a gender-inflected perspective.[2] My investigations into her work do not refute these findings, nevertheless my approach places a greater focus on the interartistic processes through which that gendered and exiled space is constructed. The depiction of space in Varo's art cannot and should not be seen as accidental, as Varo herself indicates she always had a particular agenda in mind when creating paintings, masks, furniture designs or texts. In an interview, when asked if she planned her painting before starting or if it was a spontaneous process, the artist responded: 'Sí, lo visualizo antes de comenzar y trato de ajustarlo a la imagen que me he formado'.[3] It is important then to interpret Varo's dreams as a source of revelation of ideas around the process of space creation given that the places that appear in our dreams are strongly connected to our daily life and bodily experiences. Castells confirms the primacy and importance of Varo's dream narratives when she says that dreams

> parecen ser la expresión más nítida de todos los temas e ideas que gravitan en la obra de Remedios y porque en cierto sentido suponen, principalmente el último, una culminación de todo un proceso realizado a través de la lectura y la creación, tanto pictórica como literaria.[4]

This final chapter draws from the rich body of scholarship currently existing on the relationship between esotericism and Varo's artistic practice but departs from these esoteric readings of Varo's *La creación* to focus most particularly on how spaces for interartistic creation are represented. To do this, I will draw on spatial theory as well as insights from phenomenology and queer feminism. The spaces that we encounter, especially in

[2] See for example Vives and Ramírez (all included in Chapter One of this thesis). One must not forget the burden that leaving behind friends and especially family also brings to the exiled individual; as Michael Dorris puts it: 'To be apart from extended family is an almost incomprehensible hardship', 'Home', *The Threepenny Review*, 54 (1993), 16-17 (p. 16). Also, Kaplan confirms that Varo 'was to dwell on the impact of this abrupt and painful break throughout the rest of her life, expressing deep remorse at having thus separated herself from her family', Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected journeys*), p. 53.
[3] Castells, p. 67.
[4] Castells, p. 32.

her later works,[5] as will be demonstrated here, are often communal spaces where art-making practices and crafting can safely take place. They are both communal in the sense witnessed in the mattering maps in Chapter 2, as shall be seen also in her dream narratives, and in the sense of portraying ecological community: spaces that are shared by different species at once.[6] The analysis that follows is divided into three sections that scrutinize first, how these spaces are interartistic in nature — looking closely at the relationship between artist's body and space — either by imitating space or blending with it; second, what kind of processes are involved in the transformation of these spaces — in particular objects that aid in the process of creation; and third, the importance of gendering those spaces — feminine spaces — being the kitchen or the artist workshop.

[5] Hence, the chronological ordering of the chapters in this thesis.

[6] 'An ecological community is the aggregate of groups of various species in ecological system', Ichiro Aoki, 'Entropy Principle for the Development of Complex Biotic Systems', *Ecological Communities*, 6 (2012), 63-71. Accessed Online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-391493-4.00006-8>. Here, of course, I am not using the strictly scientific sense of the term, but employing it in a more allegorical fashion.



Fig. 9 - *La creación de las aves,* 1957

© Estate of Remedios Varo, VEGAP Madrid / IVARO Dublin, 2018

5.2. Varo's Dreams

> Dichos escritos tienen un valor inestimable […] no sabemos, […] qué fue primero, si la imagen o la palabra […] más importante es, […] comprobar hasta qué punto la obra de Remedios se nos muestra como una creación literaria visualizada.
>
> Carmen V. Vidaurre Arenas[7]

I have decided to focus on one of Varo's dreams, 'Los cuadros de Paalen', to explore the processes by which Varo presents spaces oneirically, but I will also be making reference to other dreams and artworks. It is not known when exactly the dreams were

[7] Vidaurre Arenas, p. 18.

written, but it can be assumed, given the references to places and people in the dreams, that they were all written once Varo returned from Venezuela and moved in with Kati Horna, in 1949.[8] We do know that these dreams are in the form of short stories but they where never written with the intention of being published, they were written by the artist in different notebooks and then put together by Gruen, posthumously. In 1997 Castells published ten of these dreams along with other of the artist's writings. I focus here on 'Los cuadros de Paalen', little studied by Varo enthusiasts and never before included in an academic study, given that it can be perceived as a prototype as it contains most of the characteristics shared with all the other dreams: the presence of her surrealist friends, events that might produce a sense of anguish or confusion to Varo, references to cooking and art, as well as humour. 'Los cuadros de Paalen' references other exiled figures that Varo became acquainted with while in Mexico, and with whom she established a close relationship, namely Eva Sulzer and her husband Walter Paalen. Dream narratives are in some ways complex to interpret but they can also be more revealing than other forms of narrative, given that 'dreams and their accounts not only update an individual's sense of self but also depict and develop cultural models of self'.[9]

Dream-telling, like art, given its symbolism and multi-layered quality, also allows the dreamer to explore 'anxiety-provoking thoughts like gendered identities under the cloak of obscurity'.[10] From a stylistic perspective, Varo's dream narrative is written in a very informal and anecdotal style. In this regard, Mendoza Bolio sees most of Varo's dreams as mini-fictions that take on specific structures.[11] To briefly summarise the dream: Varo, as the main protagonist, is situated inside her house and through a window

[8] Mendoza Bolio confirms that (indeed) 'Su datación, aunque difícil de precisar, se puede ubicar entre 1941 y 1963, período de tiempo que abarca los años que Varo vivió en la ciudad de México', 'Los <bocetos> de Remedios Varo', 141-59 (p. 152).
[9] Jeannette Marie Mageo, 'Figurative Dream Analysis and U.S. Traveling Identities', *Ethos,* 34. 4 (2006), 456-87 (p. 456).
[10] Mageo, p. 480.
[11] '[L]os relatos de sueños por su extensión pueden ser considerados […] como "minificciones" que se estructuran bajo ciertas estrategias narrativas', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 70.

she can see how a group of people are extracting a wheeled-platform from a hotel along with a series of art-related objects such as an easel. Shortly after this, Varo is at her house again and she has some sort of beauty mask on her face while walking around the house. Varo is preoccupied as the kitchen is very messy and Paalen has arrived with some 'important' people to collect some paintings.

However, how does a dream become a dream-text and ultimately, a dream narrative? While it is not my intention to examine dream narratology theory in detail, I feel it is imperative that these terms are clarified for the purpose of the present analysis. According to Patricia Anne Kilroe, when we are dreaming, the dream itself is not a text yet but becomes a text when dreaming ends and we try to recall — whether in written or any other form — our dream. In Kilroe's words:

> The dream while it is being dreamed is experience, not text. Our memory of that experience, whether we report is or not, is the text of the dream. […] The experience becomes a text once it is a completed product; we recognize it as a cohesive phenomenon bounded in space and time, having form as well as content.[12]

When recollecting our dream, we endow it with a coherent structure, having a beginning, development and an end. As well as that, we tend to locate the experience within a fixed time and space frame. But how does this dream-text become a narrative? By expanding what we consider as narrative, as in the work of Roland Barthes:

> Numberless are the world's narratives. First of all in a prodigious variety of genres, themselves distributed among different substances, as if any material were appropriate for man to entrust his stories to it: narrative can be supported by articulated speech, oral or written, by image, fixed or moving, by gesture, and by the organized mixture of all these substances; it is present in myth, legend, fable, tale, tragedy, comedy, epic, history, pantomime, painting..., stained-glass window, cinema, comic book, news item, conversation.[13]

[12] Patricia Anne Kilroe, 'The Dream as Text, The Dream as Narrative', Dreaming, 53 , 10. 3 (2000), 125–37 (p. 127).
[13] Roland Barthes, *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), p. 95.

A dream-text can very well be added to Barthes' list. For the remainder of this chapter, then, I will employ the term 'dream narrative' when referring to Varo's dreams, given that although not initially written to be read as a whole but dispersed into different notebooks, individually become coherent narratives and they manage to convey 'something about textuality and narrativity as mental processes that provide frameworks for the representation of experience'.[14]

5.2.1. Craftwomanship: The Kitchen as Artist's Workshop

> Space is the ongoing possibility of a different inhabitation.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz [15]

As Grosz explains in her *Architecture from the outside*, the ongoing relationship between bodies and the spaces they occupy can potentially give place to new possibilities of inhabitation. This section will see how the dream space, in particular the kitchen, as described by Varo, becomes a space where more than one activity can occur. The narrative starts as follows:

> Estábamos Eva y yo en mi casa, en la sala. Era esta casa, pero sin embargo diferente a como es; por la ventana se veía la avenida, que era muchísimo más ancha, los edificios de enfrente estaban algo lejos. Mirábamos por la ventana y de repente Eva me dijo: '¡Ah! Paalen acaba de entrar en ese hotel de ahí enfrente' (en realidad no hay ningún hotel).[16]

[14] Kilroe, p. 128.
[15] Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), p. 9.
[16] Grosz, p. 205.

Varo explains that she is at her house — described as the same but different —[17] with her friend Eva Sulzer, both of them looking through the window. Other individual dream narratives that include this obvious differentiation between spaces are 'Domingo', 'Lunes' or 'Paseíto por Londres'. In 'Domingo' Varo's dream takes part inside a friend's house, and there are specific details of the décor and furniture: 'observo un tapete muy extraño que hay en el suelo y que tapiza toda la sala; es de un color garbanzo y está formado por pequeños rectángulos unidos con algún procedimiento que hace que no estén todos planos sino que algunos sobresalen más que otros'. The narrative of 'Lunes' also starts with 'Me asomo a la ventana'; and in 'Paseíto por Londres', Varo enters a boat with 'ninguna cubierta, ni aire, ni mar, ni nada' but on her arrival to London she looks out to a terrace 'Mientras buscaba mi vestido me di cuenta que junto al barco estaba la terraza'.[18] Also, in the dream, both friends are inside a house that both resembles and does not resemble Varo's real house in Mexico. Varo's positioning in the dream narrative at the window can be interpreted as defining her relationship to the other outside buildings and objects, but also, in the process, delineates the limits of home and allows the artist to acquire and confirm her artistic identity. As Terkenli suggests: 'Individuals define and redefine their lifeworlds as home by assigning the unfamiliar or the foreign to "them," the other, […] and by creating distance between the two sides'.[19] Varo, then, could be re-ordering the boundaries between outside/inside, self/other and subject/object and negotiating the relationship between them to construct her space. What is more, given that 'the home stands not just for one's representations of one self

[17] Familiar feature of dreams and their dreamers; Carl G. Jung explained one of his dreams as follows: 'Era […] una casa que yo no conocía y que tenía dos plantas. Era "mi casa"', cited in Pallasmaaa, p. 161. This confirms the sensation that we all have when dreaming of a house/place; usually it looks different to reality but we know it is 'our house'. This may be explained because as Pallasmaa confirms architectonical images in dreams connect with the mind of its inhabitant, as a historical being. Bolio explains this phenomenon for Varo as in her dreams, 'las imágenes que se suceden están en un tiempo y en un espacio diferente, de manera que los lugares son y no son al mismo tiempo', Mendoza Bolio, p. 72. See also Varo's dream, 'Domingo', A veces escribo …, p. 203.
[18] Mendoza Bolio, …, p. 203; ibid, p. 204; ibid, p. 207.
[19] Theano S.Terkenli, 'Home as a Region', *Geographical Review*, 85 (1995), 324-34 (p. 326).

[…] for others',[20] we can envision Varo's idea of her place in the world as an intrinsic one: a place from the inside that allows her to control and secure what is on the outside.[21] This disposition of the relationship between inside and outside prefigures what we will later see in Varo's painting *La creación de las aves*, where, due to the colour palette and the architecture depicted — the interior setting and the window — there is also a clearly defined differentiation between spaces: giving a sense of order and geometry but also a space physically resembling a woman's womb.[22]

Furthermore, the kitchen in the dream is described as being large in size and tiled with black and white marble: 'tenía una cocina grandísima con el suelo de mármol blanco y negro'.[23] This type of chequerboard floor can be directly juxtaposed with that of *La creación*; hence the principles of order and geometry can be applied to both spaces. This type of floor is often repeated in Varo's creations, as we have seen, both in her paintings and her writings.[24] However, Varo enters the kitchen and she gets upset because it is untidy and dirty and covered with the peel from the *jitomate*.[25] The fact that Varo wants the kitchen to be tidy and organised suggests an interpretation in line with the representation of normative notions of femininity. On the one hand, the often perceived communal place of the kitchen plays a key role in Varo's art-making practices.[26] In this regard, Lee Weida explains that 'kitchen spaces become studio spaces that culti-

[20] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 57.
[21] In another one of Varo's dream, 'No quiero que despiertes', Varo writes: 'Di un más hacia adelante, y en ese momento sentí con horror espantoso algo detrás de mí, que más bien salía de mí misma', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 209.
[22] Kirsten Jacobson sees home as a 'second body'; 'A developed Nature: A Phenomenological Account of the Experience of Home', *Continental Philosophy Review*, 42 (2009), 355-73 (p. 356).
[23] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 205.
[24] See for example *El relojero* (1955), *Ciencia inútil* (1955), *Armonía* (1956), *Cazadora de astros* (1956), *La tejedora de Verona* (1956), *Retrato de los niños Andrea y Lorenzo Villaseñor* (1957), as well as *Dolor reumático I* (1947); Written examples include 'Domingo', see Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 203.
[25] Fruit similar to tomatoes.
[26] As seen in Varo's regular meetings with Carrington and Horna where they created their own experiments and recipes. Rebecca Seferle mentions one of these experiments: 'the two women, along with the photographer Kati Horna became known as "the three witches" and engaged sometimes in elaborate pranks, such as putting ink in tapioca pearls to serve as caviar at parties to guests like the noted poet, Octavio Paz', 'Remedios Varo Artist Overview and Analysis' (2017) <https://www.theartstory.org/artist/varo-remedios/life-and-legacy/> [Accessed 16 August 2019].

vate the essential nourishment of bodies, friendships, cultural traditions, and communal ritual of artmaking'.[27] It also offers a more radical gendered reading, as indicated in the work of Grosz: 'we may see the place of femininity as that which the architectural cannot contain within its own drives to orderliness and systematicity, its own specifically architectural excesses'.[28] Viewed in this way, we might see Varo's dream space as one uncontainable by traditional and conventional architecture; hence the artist has to make use of her own body to transgress order and cleanliness, which here represent clear societal and patriarchal impositions. As observed in previous chapters, the pull between order, harmony, calm and entropy is a recurrent feature in Varo's work that we find both in *La creación* and her dream narratives. On the one hand, the geometric order present in *La creación* is reminiscent of Renaissance features, thus both encouraging the viewer to connect with familiar spaces and endowing the entire scene with order and harmony. This desire for order can also be seen in another of Varo's dream, Sueño 8: in this dream Varo first describes the house she occupies and gives further details of some of the objects inside the house, such as, for example, a carpet: 'era una alfombra roja y de pelo muy suave y sedoso, seguramente oriental'. She goes as far as to give instructions on how to clean it: 'la mejor manera de limpiarla y colocarla era cortándola en rectángulos un poco alargados, que colocamos unos junto a otros irregularmente'.[29] The concern about the carpet's cleanliness and position re-appears later on in the dream: 'yo le dije a Leonora que lo mejor sería recibirlos en su recámara, ya que la alfombra estaba limpia y recién arreglada'.[30] In addition, the kitchen space is presented to us as covered by a reddish-looking peel reminiscent of that of a woman's bleeding uterus. Such images in the kitchen space are particularly unsettling, and are reminiscent as in other works,

[27] Lee Weida, p. 49.
[28] Grosz, p. 155.
[29] Castells, p. 128.
[30] Castells, p. 128.

of aspects of the female body. This connection was already discernible in her play *El santo cuerpo grasoso* in Chapter Two, with Varo describing the main setting as follows:

> En el cráter del lejano y alto pico Oripipí, hogar de la reina Nesfatalina. Hartitos murciélagos, tecolotes, mariposas negras y otros ganados nocturnos deambulando por los lujosos departamentos de la Reina. Del suelo de lava arrugada suben plumas de humo. Se oyen gruñidos profundos de la misma barriga de la tierra.[31]

From this extract it is particularly significant to note the lava-like ground and the snarling sounds as if coming from the 'belly' of the earth. What is more, one of the characters of the play inhabits an empty egg shell — Perico. In another of her dreams 'Paseíto por Londres', Varo finds herself in a tiny boat 'El barco era muy pequeño y ancho y sólo vi pasillos interiores pero ninguna cubierta, ni aire, ni mar ni nada'.[32] In her painting *Armonía* (1956), an androgynous-looking figure is creating music at its desk, the space contains different elements that might connect to the feminine, but the most striking connection is the shape of the 'bunk-bed' in the foreground of the painting: it clearly resembles a woman's vagina. As a consequence, it may be possible to suggest that Varo's spaces can all be interpreted as containing a strong feminine presence hidden in the shape and colour of the elements/objects either inhabited by the characters — as is the case with the egg-shell — or sharing the pictorial or written space with them. The representation of female reproductive organs as part of an alternative vision of creation sees feminine space as a place of gestation, questioning once again traditional discourses of order/disorder/entropy already part of my discussion of the *De Homo Rodans* manuscript, in Chapter Four.

Returning to the dream, we read that someone knocks at the door and it is Paalen with a group of visitors. Eva and Remedios are confused because it appears that Paalen is coming to collect some of his paintings to show them to some buyers and the paint-

[31] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 126.
[32] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 207.

ings are scattered chaotically, as is the easel in the kitchen. Also, Varo is concerned because she still has the mask on her face and does not want Paalen to see her in this state. Because of this, she runs to the bathroom to wash her face but stumbles across him. Paalen reacts as if everything is normal and tries to introduce her to a short man with a round head.[33] Varo manages to wash her face beforehand, but when finished, she sees with concern that Paalen is walking towards the kitchen with a woman dressed elegantly in a mink coat. Both Varo and Eva are upset that Paalen is going to see the place in such chaos but Varo takes comfort in the idea that all in all, 'era una cocina muy hermosa con suelo de mármol y con una mesa grandísima y sólida y algunos otros muebles de buen aspecto, todos ellos antiguos y hermosos'.[34] This reference to old furniture can be traced back to Varo's own interest in the collection of pre-Columbian artefacts discussed in the previous chapter. Objects then, are of fundamental importance in Varo's work, and their function in relation to the body-space dichotomy will be discussed in the section that follows.

5.2.2. Space, Body, Things

> The thing is "made" for the body, made as manipulable for the body's needs. And the body is conceived on the model of the thing, equally knowable and manipulable by another body. This chain of connections is mutually confirming. The thing is the life of the body, and the body is that which unexpectedly occurs to things.
>
> Elizabeth Grosz[35]

If in the previous section we looked at how traditional spaces such as the kitchen, can potentially become spaces for other type of practices according to the way these spaces

[33] Freud famously associated round shapes to genitalia and related long sharp objects with the phallus. For more on this, see Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg, *The Scientific Evaluation of Freud's Theories and Therapy: A Book of Readings* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).
[34] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 206.
[35] Grosz, p. 182.

are used and depicted, in this section I will demonstrate how the objects that occupy those spaces, play a part between the body-space-thing dynamic. In the dream, Sulzer tells Varo that their common friend Paalen enters a hotel right across from where they are, at which point, Varo clarifies that in reality there is no hotel in front of her house. Following this, both Sulzer and Varo observe people removing a drawing table, a narrow and tall piece of furniture resembling a bookcase, and an easel. These objects are taken away rapidly by a platform on wheels and, to their astonishment, the objects remain on top, not falling off it: 'Todo lo ponían rapidísimamente en una plataforma con ruedas y se lo llevaban velozmente, todo bamboleándose y con riesgo de que se cayesen las cosas. Nos quedamos perplejas'.[36] These structural objects, all connected to the process of creation, can therefore be seen to aid in the process of transformation of space and are key to reading Varo's interartistic approach to art. When discussing Varo's painting *La tejedora de Verona* (1956), Lee Weida also mentions this crafting aspect of the artist's work: 'this image honors the legacy of women weavers throughout folklore and fiction, but also proposes craft as a creation of an alter ego';[37] an alter ego possibly that translates into the figure of the owl in *La creación de las aves*. This may be seen as yet another element that will resonate with the depiction of space in *La creación*: the display of certain objects that mimic the purpose for which they were made. In *La creación*, it is the 'table', while in Varo's dream, it is not only a table but also 'un mueble alto y estrecho, como biblioteca; un caballete, etc'.[38] Of relevance here also and connected to the importance of the wheel in Varo's work, as discussed in the previous chapter, is the wheeled platform in the dream. The wheel as symbol of movement, travel and journey has already appeared in this thesis in my discussion of the Bayer images and *De homo rodans* elsewhere; yet O'Rawe explains that 'wheels appear throughout

[36] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 205.
[37] Lee Weida, p. 49.
[38] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 205.

Varo's work to signify the mechanical disposition of the human automaton'.[39] His esoteric interpretation of the function of the wheel in her work as pointing to 'the Gurdjieffian quest for self-actualization' which 'begins with the battle to overcome mechanization', is by no means in opposition to the Foucauldian readings of Varo's works presented in this thesis. On the contrary, it further elucidates and corroborates Varo's belief in resisting external power and normative conventions while developing one's own true self through the process of art-making.

5.2.3. Mimesis

> Like an actress taking on roles, Varo consistently used these self-portrait characters as a way to explore alternative identities, both personal and universal, in a style that quickly became her signature.
>
> Janet Kaplan[40]

As discussed in other chapters, most of Varo's figures seem to resemble the physiognomy of the artist herself. However this likeness is not perfect. The artist is seen to make use of masking devices that allow her to subtly deceive and trick viewers to deepen the contrast between exterior/interior – inside/outside – body/mind. Masks then, seem to play a significant part in Varo's work. In the dream the action comes back suddenly to the house, where Varo has covered her face with a facial mask that gives her a salty-dry feeling: 'yo me había puesto en la cara un producto de belleza para el cutis, que era un agua que al secarse, me dejó la cara como cubierta con sal (algo así como las lágrimas cuando se secan)'.[41] In this regard, Castells asserts that 'many of [Varo's] paintings do share the facial features of their creator,...to read them merely as self-

[39] O'Rawe, 'Ruedas Metafísicas: "Personality" and "Essence" in Remedios Varo's Paintings', p. 452.
[40] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 147.
[41] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 205.

portraits is to miss a great deal of what they are conveying'.[42] But, according to O'Rawe, this changing of roles can also be read from an esoteric point of view, particularly with Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* where he explains that 'human beings possess no permanent I but rather many different selves that jockey for position, a different one taking control from one minute to the next, depending on influences external to them'.[43] In *La creación*, as we shall see, there is also a clear ambiguity between the objects/animals in the space and the human qualities of the protagonist which in turn, all resemble Varo. Octavio Paz reflects on this mimicry, which he presents as common to Mexicans, in his famous essay 'Máscaras mexicanas':

> En sus formas radicales el disimulo llega al mimetismo. El indio se funde con el paisaje, se confunde con la barda blanca en que se apoya por la tarde, con la tierra obscura en que se tiende a mediodía, con el silencio que lo rodea. Se disimula tanto su humana singularidad que acaba por abolirla y se vuelve piedra, pirú, muro, silencio: espacio.[44]

As Paz also confirms, masks can be seen to be central to Mexican identity: 'Viejo o adolescente, criollo o mestizo, general, obrero o licenciado, el mexicano se me aparece como un ser que se encierra y se preserva: máscara el rostro, máscara la sonrisa'.[45] We may interpret this from a dual perspective: firstly as an early symbol of forced politeness to potential outsiders entering her home, and, secondly, as a desire to keep appearances either to protect herself or as being an inherent quality to all beings, because as Pallasmaa suggests we are in constant dialogue with our environment and sometimes it

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[42] Ferrero Cándenas, 'Reconfiguring the Surrealist Gaze: Remedios Varo's Images of Women', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 88. 4 (2011), 455-467 (p. 456).
[43] O'Rawe, p. 452. For more on this, see P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977 [1940]).
[44] Octavio Paz, 'Máscaras mexicanas' <http://www.unive.it/media/allegato/download/Lingue/Materiale_didattico_Regazzoni/Lingue_lett_ispano_americane1/Octavio_Paz.pdf> [Accessed 20 Abril 2016].
[45] Octavio Paz, 'Máscaras mexicanas'. Notwithstanding the problematic nature of Paz's thesis on Mexican identity with its emphasis on essences and his reductive analyses of both women and the Pachuco figure, the insistence on the importance of the mask — and therefore multiple identities as part of a post-colonial, mestizo nation in formation remains central. For critiques of Paz, see Margo Glantz (1930) and Agustí Bartra (1908-1982).

is impossible to distinguish one from the other.[46] Varo's interest in masks and multiple identities is also clear from her involvement in the design of masks for Calderón de la Barca's play *El gran teatro del mundo* (1958), which function as devices that enlarge or expand some of the features of the character's personality. This adds a performative element to the dream which can be seen to reflect some of the ideas already explored in Chapters Two and Four.

The objects play an important role within the process of transforming the dream into an interartistic space as will be the case with *La creación*. Also, if we conclude that the entire dream is written from the perspective of a female first person narrator, in which Varo herself is the main character, and that the chronotopes presented — the house, the street, the kitchen — seem to be clearly specified, but that at the same time, there is a certain ambiguity for the reader regarding time and space of the event, Varo's dream could be read as an expression of her own feelings, desires and fears at that time and place. Looking from the outside, Varo's construction of home consists in the placing of interartistic objects, ambiguity as regarding time, places that are and are not, (…) all in all, a number of elements that transform the place of her imagination — into a space of her own, where her craft-making and friendships are instrumental. In the analysis of the painting that follows, we will see how these features will reappear, and that although we will encounter a figure in isolation, the interartistic dimension of the painting's spatial configuration manifests itself dramatically.

[46] Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Imag*e, p. 159.

5.3. *La creación de las aves*

5.3.1. Embodying Space

> Making a place feel like home, or becoming at home in a space, is for me about being at my table.
>
> Sara Ahmed[47]

La creación de las aves (1957) cannot but remind the viewer of this sitting at a table and of this making that Ahmed refers to when she talks about transforming places into homes. The focal point of *La creación de las aves* is a figure that has feminine features but also owl-like characteristics. The creature's qualities are challenging to read: the feathers seem to be part of her skin but around the arms, under the feathers, we can see a white blouse and human hands. Its legs are, once again, covered with trousers that appear as feathers and bare human feet under the desk at which this figure is seated. This figure may be seen to be transforming while in the process of creation. On that note, in her book on *Queer Phenomenology*, Sara Ahmed confirms that, indeed, 'when women write, when they take up space as writers, their bodies in turn acquire new shapes'.[48] In this regard, Varo's image seems to be like a visualization of Ahmed's statement. For example, in Varo's painting this figure/woman's body is creating birds and has taken a new shape — namely that of an owl — because she is taking up space as an inventor/creator. From an esoteric point of view, the transformations taking place in this painting — the human/owl and art/bird —can be read as alchemical ones. As Lee Weida comments 'the bird-human figure magically generates a collection of small birds in a

[47] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2006), p. 11.
[48] Ahmed, p. 61.

process of artistic and biological alchemy'.[49] Alchemy and indeed esoterism have generally guided the analysis of Varo's *La creación;* however, while these esoteric perspectives provide an insight into the artist's psyche, a queer feminist phenomenological reading also illuminates this process of psychic construction. Terkenli, speaking from a phenomenological perspective, reminds us that

> Humans occupy space and use symbols to transform it into place; they are creatures of habit who appropriate place and context as home. Every activity or experience in which people engage to some degree affects their geographical delineation of home. […] These patterns become part of home because they represent current, familiar points of reference in time, space and society.[50]

Perhaps, then, one may consider this transformation not only as a result of the space, but a combination of the activity that is performed and the objects depicted in that space. The mimetic aspect of Varo's work, already mentioned in the analysis of the dream, further connects body-space, from this figure is obvious that for the artist 'spaces are not exterior to the bodies, instead spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body'.[51] In the painting, this bird-like figure that is creating birds in turn becomes them: the feathers of the birds become her second skin.[52]

[49] Lee Weida, p. 44. Furthermore, 'one of the most compelling commonalities of Kahlo, Varo, Carrington, and Fini lies in their use of totemic animals as feminist symbols of and in contrast with nature, opening up interesting possibilities for dialogues about mythology, birth, the body, food, and craft', Weida, p. 43.
[50] Terkenli, p. 324.
[51] Ahmed, p. 9.
[52] For a close study of animal symbolism in Varo see: Nancy Vosburg, 'Strange yet "familiar": Cats and Birds in Remedios Varo Artistic Universe'.

5.3.2. Objectifying Space

> Objects not only are shaped by work, but they also take the shape of the work they do.
>
> Sara Ahmed[53]

As was the case in the analysis of the dream above, objects also play a role in the space depicted in *La creación*. In the painting, objects not only interconnect figure-space by performing a type of dialogue between them, objects also mutate according to the creative activity envisioned. Hence, the artist/creator's body is not the only thing that changes in this painting: from the figure's neck, taking the shape of a necklace, hangs a violin-shaped necklace: one of its strings extends further to become the brush with which she creates the birds. This object, initially read as a garment of embellishment, is also shaped by the activity it performs, becoming an active part of that space. Hence, this necklace has taken the shape of a violin as it is giving the bird its voice. One hand is holding this brush while the other holds a triangular shaped magnifying glass that catches/refracts the rays of a star onto the bird giving it life. Moving on to the creator's face, her eyes are looking down, in concentration. Her features appear to be in total harmony: her mouth displays a half smile of contentment. In all, it looks like every feather, part of the body, embellishment and detail are connected to one another. Haynes also mentions this quality of Varo's work, naming it the 'interconnectedness of all things'.[54] We are not only envisioning someone sitting at a table, creating, but a domestic familiar place that expands in such a way that it manages successfully to include

[53] Ahmed, p. 44.
[54] Haynes, p. 28.

all practices of art in it: drawing, painting, writing; but also performance art and music. The reading of Varo's dream alongside the painting reveals an artist preoccupied about depicting space as the place of creativity, as a place that is communal (with other women), interartistic (with other forms of creation) and full of dialogue. As a consequence, *La creación de las aves* represents Varo's interartistic approach to art in its purest form.

The entire artistic process is ultimately controlled by space, as proposed by Lefebvre:

> activity in space is restricted by that space; space 'decides' what activity may occur, but even this 'decision' has limits placed upon it. Space lays down the law because it implies a certain order — and hence also a certain disorder [...]. Space commands bodies, prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes and distances.[55]

Ahmed emphasizes the importance of the objects in that space which she likens to the importance of bodies; as she explains, 'objects and bodies "work together" as spaces of action'.[56] That is to say, this idea of interconnectivity works simultaneously for the objects in the painting, the figure of the female-looking owl and the creative process in order to at once feed from, and create that space in which it is all taking place. Following Lefebvre: 'space — *my* space — … is first of all my body…: it is the shifting intersection between that which touches, penetrates, threatens or benefits my body'.[57] Furthermore, Ahmed reminds us 'how important it is, especially for women, to claim that space, to take space through what one does with one's body',[58] and this is exactly what Varo achieves: her craft practices are the process through which interartistic space is constructed. In the far background two other objects can be distinguished, painted with the same brown and green of the walls: two ceramic vases are connected by some type of liquid that appears to flow bidirectionally and that is shared between them, as

[55] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 143.
[56] Ahmed, p. 57.
[57] Lefebvre, p. 184.
[58] Ahmed, p. 11.

well as a trunk-like machine with a crank on the side and an opening on the top. Janet Kaplan, in *Unexpected Journeys*, mentions these vessels as recurring symbols in Varo's work and further explains that they function as 'vessels in which the alchemical transformation takes place'.[59] What is important to note about these seemingly unimportant pictorial additions is the fact that they appear to be not only connected with a nearly cosmological process but are within the wall itself: not an arbitrary addition but fully integrated and embodied within the architectural setting. As Kaplan explains:

> Here is the true interconnection of art, science, alchemy, each nurturing the other in a cycle symbolically represented by the two vases in the corner, which feed their golden contents back and forth to each other.[60]

This symbiosis between objects and spaces is a recurrent element in Varo's paintings. For example, in *Mimetismo* (1960), a lady is sitting at a chair and her skin takes on the patterned fabric of that chair producing a type of masking effect in the figure. As we saw previously in Varo's dream, Varo herself as the main character of the narrative puts on a facial mask. For Chadwick, *Mimetismo* can be seen to represent a vital characteristic of surrealism: the 'metamorphic process that lies at the heart of the surrealist vision of an art of fantasy, magic and transformation'.[61] In contrast, for Ferrero Cándenas, in this painting, Varo's 'consciousness and humanity have disappeared within domesticity'.[62] Taking this insight into account, this might have been Varo's way to contest the patriarchal society she inhabited, showing the way in which an unexpected figure occupies a space it is not intended to occupy. Extending this idea further we see that, through her depiction of a woman creating/painting in a time when only males held creative authority, something more than just a bird is created; rather the subversion of realities

[59] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 169. As Kaplan explains, alchemy has been seen as a predominant influence in Varo's *oeuvre*. See also *Armonía* (1956) and *Tránsito en espiral* (1962).
[60] Kaplan, *Remedios Varo: Unexpected Journeys*, p. 181.
[61] Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 180.
[62] Ferrero Cándenas, 'Reconfiguring the Surrealist Gaze: Remedios Varo's Images of Women', p. 464.

generates the possibility of new realities and new perspectives. Josefina Ludmer is of the same opinion:

> […] desde el lugar asignado y aceptado, se cambia no sólo el sentido de ese lugar sino el sentido mismo de lo que se instaura en él. Como si una madre o ama de casa dijera: acepto mi lugar pero hago política o ciencia en tanto madre o ama de casa. Siempre es posible tomar un espacio desde donde se puede practicar lo vedado en otros; siempre es posible anexar otros campos e instaurar otras territorialidades.[63]

Varo accepts her place within the domestic realm, but through her art-making practices one can envision that the place she inhabits is much richer and far less constrained and conventional than that imposed on women, both personally and artistically. This is also reminiscent of the previous analysis of the dream where Varo presents the kitchen as an interartistic space of art-making, not just a place for cooking, but for experimenting, writing, painting and indeed craft-making; although, as we know, cooking is also presented as creative play in her work as seen in her recipes.

Another salient element of the painting is the desk. Positioned at the very centre of the composition, this desk looks like one of those old desks to be found in a primary school or as used by medieval scribes: the seat is directly attached to the table. I would like to briefly comment on the strong connections with the medieval artistic tradition given that, at least in this instance, this connection with medievalism is directly connected with the interartistic discussion at hand, and which have also been touched upon by other scholars.[64] These connections can be seen in the relationship between text and images. More specifically, if we look at illustrated texts such as medieval bestiaries — 'a book of real and imaginary beasts, though its subjects often extend to birds, plants

[63] Josefina Ludmer, 'Tretas del débil', in *La sartén por el mango*, ed. by Patricia Elena González y Eliana Ortega (Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1985), 47-54.
[64] As discussed in Chapter Three. See analysis of *Dolor*, p. 93.

and even rocks'[65] — the similarities with Varo's pictorial style and interartistic vision are striking. As mentioned in previous chapters, it is known that Varo had a tendency to write short descriptions or commentaries on some of her works, and that some of her written works included other types of artistic addition to complement those texts.[66] Bestiaries also included text and image side by side.[67] But a resemblance more directly connected to the discussion here is that of the owl in *La creación* with some of the owls that appear in Medieval bestiaries: because they are also depicted with strong human qualities. In particular an owl known as *noctua* as depicted in the Aberdeen Bestiary:

> in a mystic sense, the night-owl signifies Christ. Christ loves the darkness of night because he does not want sinners - who are represented by darkness - to die but to be converted and live. ... The night-owl lives in the cracks in walls, as Christ wished to be born one of the Jewish people... But Christ is crushed in the cracks of the walls, because he is killed by the Jews. ... Christ shuns the light in the sense that he detests and hates vainglory. ... In a moral sense, moreover, the night-owl signifies to us not just any righteous man, but rather one who lives among other men yet hides from their view as much as possible. He flees from the light, in the sense that he does not look for the glory of human praise.[68]

This final statement about praise and glory is very much in tune with Varo's own beliefs about the life and condition of the artist. In a letter to Gerardo Lizarraga, Varo writes:

> Me cuesta mucho comprender la importancia que parece tener para ti el reconocimiento de tu talento. Yo pensaba que para un creador lo importante es el crear y que el devenir de su obra era cuestión secundaria y que fama, admiración, curiosidad de la gente, etcétera, eran más bien consecuencias inevitables que cosas deseadas.[69]

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[65] 'Long perceived merely as rudimentary natural histories, medieval bestiaries actually reflect the belief that the natural world was designed by God to instruct mankind. They describe the physical nature and habits of animals in order to elaborate on the moral or spiritual significance of these characteristics'; British Library Online, 'The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts' <https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/TourBestiaryGen.asp> [Accessed 20 April 2016].

[66] See 'Notas escritas al reverso del dibujo para Juan Soriano y de las fotografias de los cuadros que Remedios Varo enviaba a Rodrigo Varo', Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 38.

[67] 'The sequential arrangement of animals in bestiaries lends itself well to illustration, and medieval bestiary manuscripts are among the most vividly illuminated books of their era. In contrast to most contemporary encyclopaedias and beast tales, bestiaries typically contain abundant depictions of animals that reinforce or add to their description in the text. Word and image work together and individually to communicate morally edifying material, such as might be included in medieval sermons, in an appealing and accessible manner' from British Library Online, 'The British Library Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts'.

[68] David Badke, 'The Medieval Bestiary: Animals in the Middles Ages' (2011) <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast245.htm> [Accessed 16 August 2019].

[69] Castells, p. 69.

Read this way, Varo's choice to represent herself as an owl has very much to do with the idea of the owl as someone self-effacing and uncomfortable with fame and glory, features that are more often than not also associated with women artists, and that also connect to Varo's usual mimicking devices as well as the austere and crafting objects that constantly appear in her work.

Coming back to the table in the painting, on top of it there is a piece of white material where the 'creator' undertakes his/her creation. It is indeed a writing table: 'different tables have different functions […] if our object is a writing table, then our table is specifically adapted for convenience in writing'.[70] Similar tables can be found in other paintings by Varo, for example in *Tres destinos* (1956), *Armonía* (1956) and *Papilla estelar* (1958), but also in her writings. In the dream narrative 'Los cuadros de Paalen', Varo as the main character in the dream sees how a group of people remove a writing desk, along with other objects. The table itself is therefore presented as an interartistic object, where although designed for writing, any other creative activities can take place, as in this painting. Ultimately, as is the case with the necklace, the shape of the desk is also determined by the activity performed on it.

On the right hand side of the figure, a palette with the three primary colours is being automatically fueled by an oval/egg-shaped artefact, which in turn is simultaneously connected to the exterior through a perfectly circular window. This artefact's egg shape is reminiscent of the female reproductive organs. In this regard, objects not only take the shape of the activity they are intended to do, as mentioned earlier, but also may change shape depending on whom they are intended for. As Ahmed explains, 'objects may even take the shape of the bodies for whom they are "intended", in what it is that

[70] Ahmed, p. 49.

they allow a body to do'.[71] Through the process of objects becoming an extension or prosthesis, one may say, the painter is somewhat expanding her world, as Tuan claims: 'A tool or machine enlarges a person's world when he feels it to be a direct extension of his corporeal powers'.[72] This, together with the one point perspective device and the chequerboard floor, creates a space that expands beyond what the viewer initially expects to perceive. The next section explores how the orderly depiction of space together with the familiarity of the elements grant both and interartistic and gendered reading to the representation of that space ultimately transforming it into the artist's workshop.

5.3.3. Gendering Space: The Artist's Workshop

A further topic of interest in the painting that connects with previous discussions in earlier chapters is the way in which space is represented geometrically.[73] Here we see that the entire space is represented in a linear fashion thanks to the floor, which is tiled and painted in such a way that is aligned with Brunelleschi's one point perspective,[74] and recalls Varo's commercial painting *Dolor Reumático I*, discussed in Chapter Three. In fact, many of Varo's works are seen to contain 'left-overs' of Renaissance architecture.[75] Estrella de Diego comments on this aspect of Varo's painting, seeing the architecture as containing 'rastros arquitectónicos de la infancia — espacios del románico'.[76] Tuan associates this effect as a type of visual pleasure: 'the sensual delight of physical

[71] See Rivera, *Trampantojos: el círculo en la obra de Remedios Varo*.
[72] Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 53.
[73] In her study on the symbol of the circle in Varo's work, Magnolia Rivera confirms that for Varo 'La geometría es el principio de todas las cosas', *Trampantojos*, p. 36.
[74] 'Brunelleschi's architecture aspired to make clear this one-to-one correspondence between space represented and space perceived', Lorens Holm, 'Reading through the Mirror: Brunelleschi, Lacan, Le Corbusier: The Invention of Perspective and the Post-Freudian eye/I', *Assemblage*, 20 (1992), 20-39 (p. 22).
[75] Salomon Grimberg also comments on this aspect of Varo's paintings. See Salomon Grimberg 'Remedios Varo and the Juglar: Harmony, Balance and Unity', in Ovalle and Gruen, p. 27. See also Magnolia Rivera, *Trampantojos*, p. 36.
[76] As cited in Vives, p. 182.

contact; the fondness for place because it is familiar, because it is home and incarnates the past, because it provokes pride of ownership or creation'.[77] Vives also mentions this placement of familiar settings/objects but she relates it with the idea of *after-image*: a recreation of a space out of the memory of the real thing, which in turn produces that sense of *déjà vu* in the viewer. Although it is not our memory but Varo's, she manages to transform that pictorial space in such a way that produces familiarity in the viewer. How does that personal domestic space resonate with others? Alain de Botton in his *The Architecture of Happiness* comments that:

> Insofar as buildings speak to us, they also do so through quotation that is, by referring to, and triggering memories of the contexts in which we have previously seen them, their counterparts or their models. They communicate by prompting association. We seem incapable of looking at buildings or pieces of furniture without tying them to the historical and personal circumstances of our viewing; as a result, architectural and decorative styles become for us, emotional souvenirs of the moments and settings in which we came across them.[78]

This passage helps us to see that by utilising her personal memories of the places that have helped to construct her artistic identity, Remedios Varo is also recalling known history of art emblems or what is known in phenomenology as historical consciousness.[79] This can be seen, for example, in the Romanesque style of the architecture, the shape of the windows, and undoubtedly the strict use of perspective not only in this painting but also in all of her compositions. In this regard, Tuan claims that indeed 'enchanted images of the past are evoked not so much by the entire building, […], as by its

[77] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 247.
[78] De Botton, p. 95.
[79] 'The term historical consciousness also is problematic, and I use this term as a neutral alternative to historicity and historicality. Historical consciousness generally refers to the reader's awareness of the work as bound to a historical matrix, its interpretation therefore being subject to a historically informed preunderstanding. Moreover, historical consciousness implies the reader's awareness of the distance separating current reception from earlier receptions. The sense of history which acts as a foundation for this historical consciousness is that outlined by Hegel: history is a continuous process of becoming, so no moment in history can be bracketed or treated as privileged. Indeed, the present must be seen simply as a temporary culmination of the still-evolving process', Michael Eckeri, *Hermeneutics and Phenomenology of Reception* in <https://archive.org/stream/hermeneuticsphen00ecke/hermeneuticsphen00ecke_djvu.txt> [Accessed 10 October 2018].

components and furnishings'.[80] And as seen in the painting, the viewer is not given a glimpse of the outside setting. This humanistic outlook will impact on a specific type of viewer, and perhaps that is one of the reasons why her work appeals differently to different audiences, as this artistic memory will vary depending on the context/cultural background. Certainly, one may think that those that inhabited her hometown Anglès or other places where Varo travelled to with her father as a child, would most likely have a stronger sense of familiarity than those Mexican viewers she encountered when in exile as well as other European expatriates with whom it is known, she spent most of her time.[81] This is because multiple strong architectural similarities between many of Varo's background settings and the buildings and landscapes of this small town of Girona/Catalunya can be observed.[82] In fact, in tune with phenomenology 'familiarity is shaped by the "feel" of the space or by how spaces "impress" upon bodies'.[83] Read in such a way, this space has fully imprinted on the body's figure by means of the creative process. Pallasmaa explains the process as follows:

> the most deeply existentially and experimentally rooted architectural experiences impact our minds through images which are condensations of distinct architectural essences. Lasting architectural experiences consist of lived and embodied images which have become an inseparable part of our lives.[84]

In fact, he goes as far as to state that true architecture forces us to remember other buildings: by framing the present, they evoke past memories and allow us to entrust in the

[80] Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 144.
[81] For example, Leonora Carrington, Juan Martin, Eva Sulzer, among others. In fact her first exhibition was in a Gallery run by Catalan exiles (Galeria Diana). In this regard, Bolio explains 'Varo y Péret consideraban su estancia como un refugio temporal, de manera que, más que integrarse a los círculos sociales e intelectuales mexicanos de la época, procuraban la convivencia con los europeos con los que compartían un pasado común y con los que formaron un grupo muy cercano y solidario', p. 31.
[82] Not only does 'La arquitectura deja en Remedios imágenes que sugieren el origen de algunos escenarios para su obra posterior' but also 'podemos percibir el paisaje de esas tierras misteriosas para algunos, inspiradoras para otros, en los espacios pintados por Varo', Gil and Rivera, pp. 53-54.
[83] Ahmed, p. 7.
[84] Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image*, p. 8.

future.[85] Varo in her paintings can be said to achieve something similar, not only in *La Creación* but also other paintings such as *Ruptura* (1955), *El Relojero* (1955) and *Tránsito en espiral* (1962).

Looking closely at the disposition of the elements in the painting, the ceiling is not included in the composition hence we cannot confirm if this is taking place in a fully enclosed space. Two windows appear on the left hand side of the figure.[86] Through them we may deduce that it is night time, although it is not entirely certain, as was the case in Varo's dream. As a consequence, the artist does not seem to be interested in referencing a specific time, instead choosing to give the scene a dream-like aura.[87] By doing so, time is objectified into another aspect of space: time is also shaped along with the objects and the activity that is being performed.[88] In his speech after Varo died, Octavio Paz said of her that, 'No pintó el tiempo sino los instantes en el que el tiempo reposa'.[89] This quotation may refer to the static quality of place, in Tuan's words: 'if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place'.[90] This 'pause-movement-pause' sequence can also be seen as repetition of actions, and repetition — routinary acts — as Michael Dorris confirms, 'is an essential element in the transformation of place into home'.[91] In this way, the repetitive, recurrent aspect of the work may be read as an inevitable reminder of female domestic routine and can be perceived as Varo's continuous ambivalent relationship with her condition as a woman. But most

[85] True architecture makes us remember other buildings [...] By specifying our present, they evoke our conscience of the past and our trust in the future', Pallasmaa, *The Embodied Image*, p. 159.
[86] The window can also serve, according to Lorens Holm, as 'the site, in architecture, of the subject-object relation', 'Reading through the Mirror: Brunelleschi, Lacan, Le Corbusier: The Invention of Perspective and the Post-Freudian eye/I', *Assemblage*, 20 (1992), p. 34.
[87] Since Einstein the distinction between time and space has been collapsed and is physically indistinguishable. As Einstein himself famously claimed 'Time has no independent existence apart from the order of events by which we measure it', Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einsten* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1949), p. 14.
[88] Susan Bordo, Binnie Klein, and Marilyn Silverman, 'Missing Kitchens', in *Places Through the Body*, ed. by Heidi Nast and Steve Pile (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005), p. 76.
[89] Castells, p. 18.
[90] Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 6.
[91] Dorris, p. 326.

importantly, it grants painting/creating the same status as domestic labour, and the other way around, confirming these spaces as both interartistic and feminine in nature. But how can domestic work be envisioned as creative activity? Bachelard explains this process in his *Poetics of Space*:

> The minute we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture, or practice phenomenology while polishing a piece of old furniture, we sense new impressions come into being beneath this familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions. [92]

Even so, this place can be seen both positively and negatively: 'From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa'. [93]

5.4. Conclusion

> Existe una asombrosa unidad entre su pintura y su escritura porque en efecto, aparte de la existencia de imágenes y motivos comunes […], quizás la coincidencia más llamativa consiste precisamente en la utilización de un estilo transparente, académicamente perfecto, para la presentación de un universo siempre inestable y mutante, angustioso e impredecible la mayoría de las veces.
>
> Isabel Castells[94]

According to Castells, the relationship between Remedios Varo's paintings and writings is harmonious not only because they share common motifs, as observed in this chapter, but also because in both her paintings and writings a transparent style is applied to a universe that is constantly mutating and unstable. However, we may question the extent to which Varo's style actually is transparent; it is certainly the case that the symbiosis between painting and writing is upheld in this analysis through the imagining of space – in both dream and pictorial form — as a potent interartistic tool. Indeed, these settings, or spaces — painted or dreamed — become the very mechanisms through which every-

[92] Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, p. 67.
[93] Tuan, *Space and Place*, p. 9.
[94] Castells, p. 31

thing else comes to be: things, events, experiences, or creations. This final chapter, in dialogue with the chapters and themes so far in this thesis, sought to further elucidate how and through what means spaces for interartistic creation are represented, by applying various insights from feminist phenomenology to analyse one of her best-known paintings in tandem with one of her dream narratives. While acknowledging the esoteric and alchemical analyses already carried out by other scholars, this phenomenological feminist approach to space has successfully allowed us to observe the ways in which Varo uses interartistic art making-practices to first, critique normative structures through the use of order/disorder/entropy in her work; second, claim domestic space/acts as communal and feminine in nature; and third, suggest an alternative vision of creation, through the metaphor of space as creative wombs. As well as that, the objects that occupy both her dreams and *La creación* further strengthen the sense of 'interconnectivity' and the interartistic, as seen for example with the symbol of the wheel. At the same time, it helps to see the process through which Varo is both consciously transforming space and herself, by means of the activities performed in that space, embracing it, and yet at the same time resisting and opposing any notion of a fixed or stable reality. It is perhaps in acknowledging the centrality of space as integral to the moment of artistic creation, that we can get a vivid sense of the interartistic essence of Varo's art.

Conclusion

> El estudio de los escritos de Remedios Varo nos han llevado a pensar que la comprensión del universo artístico de Remedios Varo será más amplia y profunda en la medida en que se consideren todas las huellas de su quehacer creativo.
>
> Edith Mendoza Bolio[95]

As Mendoza Bolio asserts in the above quotation, our understanding of Varo's artistic universe will expand if we consider all of her practice. The interartistic elements in Varo's paintings and writings have been acknowledged by many scholars, as the literature review chapter of this thesis demonstrated. However, my research has been the first to undertake a sustained analysis of the diverse aspects of interartistic practice throughout her entire career. Rather than just focusing on one aspect, such as the relationship between her paintings and the literary or intertextual, as has been most common in extant criticism, my thesis has sought to uncover dialogue between different forms and practices: including the literary and ekphrastic, but going beyond these to consider work across a variety of media and disciplinary boundaries. This has been achieved either by taking one or two works and juxtaposing them while 'connecting the dots' with other media — ie: plays, recipes, dreams, masks,… — or by taking into account works that are usually overlooked, as is the case with Varo's commercial work.

My research reveals a typology that goes beyond categorization in terms of different genres and forms. In Chapter Two, *El santo cuerpo grasoso* relates to what might be seen as her intimate, amateur and ludic domestic practice, alongside the recipes and games and cookery and crafts she created with her friends, and other such experiments. It both allows us to tap into the spaces of cohabitation and co-creation associated with

[95] Mendoza Bolio, *A veces escribo …*, p. 135.

the notion of mattering map, and shows Varo's willingness to cross the boundaries between art and craft, the aesthetic and the ludic. Working in different forms here provided emotional, psychological and personal sustenance and survival, as well as a remapping of interpersonal and domestic space to interrogate the boundaries between public and private, all within a safe place of 'play'. In previous scholarship, as discussed, the focus had been on the play's relationship with the literary, but arguably the performative element is significant given that the text itself emerged from an eminently performative process of collective writing and creative imagination between friends. In fact, the collaboration with Carrington and Horna, and as we see in later chapters, with Sulzer, Rahon and Paalen, amongst others, frees Varo to explore other ways of being.

The Bayer paintings discussed in Chapter Three provide an opportunity to reflect on Varo's varied commercial work — that spans earlier work for Walter Thompson, as well as commissions for plays, murals and portraits. Here we witnessed the interartistic as a form of economic survival and sustenance, as well as exploring Varo's critique of the authority and norms of different normative practices, always exceeding the limits of the commissions, and using them to explore ways of challenging economic and disciplinary power. Intermediality also played an important role in her work for Bayer, as Varo drew on many different media to create her visual portrayals of pain, a practice reminiscent of her earlier collages with her friends from the surrealist movement in Barcelona and Paris in the 1930s. But most important is the way in which this exploration and interrogation of different artistic, discursive and disciplinary boundaries in this supposedly subordinate and derivative commercial work for Bayer allows her to interrogate more closely the relationship between body and space: the way in which bodies are shaped and constrained by the places they inhabit, and different modes of resistance to these normative pressures. Like Arcq, then, I draw attention to the most important formative contribution of her work for Bayer to her later treatment of body and figure in

her paintings. However, unlike Arcq, I trace its relationship to her other interartistic practice, uncovering the way through which the negotiation of the relationship between body and space/place is key to clarify her work between disciplines.

In Chapter Four, we see how *De Homo Rodans* uses the interartistic to deliberately enter into dialogue with and deconstruct from within the authority of scientific and evolutionary discourses, as well as to explore alternative ontologies and worldviews. This brings it into dialogue with many of her paintings, where there is exploration of the limits of discourses such as psychiatry, but also, as discussed in the other chapters, with the limits of national and gender identity, as underlined by comparison with Mexican women writers from the same period, as well as the limits of art itself. In relation to *De Homo Rodans*, my chapter focused in the main on uncovering the methods used by Varo to challenge interdisciplinary boundaries, whilst recognising the importance of humour and the centrality of the ludic and the performative in her work. The relationship between different forms in this text allows us to further comprehend Varo's blurring of artistic boundaries, while also making a case once more for her commitment to the necessity of gender transgression both in art and life.

Finally, in Chapter Five, Varo's dreams and *La creación de las aves* are seen as works that reflect on the creative process, and in effect portray the kind of interartistic practice uncovered elsewhere in this thesis. While acknowledging that *La creación* is usually read in terms of alchemy and esotericism, I here interpreted these works in terms of the interartistic practices that are at the centre of my thesis, pulling out the themes and modalities that emerged in my analyses in other chapters: Varo's interest in exploring the relationship between body and space; community-making though communal art practices; her challenging of the limits of identity, gender, disciplinarity, religion and scientific discourse; the collapsing of boundaries between public and private,

interior and exterior, human and non-human, as well as between the fictional and the real, the imagined and the actual.

Regarding the question of what type of interartistic relations can be seen to emerge from the analysis of the works of Remedios Varo, overall what I have found in my analysis of a range of works is her focus on artistic connections, collaborations and on co-creation: on making mattering maps. As far as the question of how to respond to these relations is concerned, I believe that my thesis has proven the need to approach her work from an interdisciplinary perspective, to avoid containing her work within limiting frameworks, and to honour the challenges it presents to categorization. Rather than seeking to represent a totalising view of Varo's artistic universe, I have highlighted the multiple possibilities that arise from focusing on the interartistic, dwelling on the ways in which different and alternate realities, discourses and hierarchies are brought into relation by her work, and how these defy the application of narrow lenses with which to envision women's place within art history. As displayed within this thesis, the interartistic practice of Remedios Varo gives rise to a never-ending interrelation of artistic knowledge and play that cannot be contained or restrained in any way. By following the different traces of her practice, and reading them in relation to the multiple histories, geographies and disciplines they bring into play, I hope to have shown how her art calls on us to devise new ways of writing art history, that are 'inter' in character, and capable of crossing the boundaries between different languages, nations, disciplines and media.

WORKS BY REMEDIOS VARO

Primavera (1943-44). Gouache on paper, 23.7x26.2 (Galerie 1900-2000, Paris)

Verano (1943-44). Gouache on paper, 23.7x26.2 (Galerie 1900-2000, Paris)

Otoño (1943-44). Gouache on paper, 23.7x26.2 (Galerie 1900-2000, Paris)

Invierno (1943-44). Gouache on paper, 23.7x26.2 (Galerie 1900-2000, Paris)

Tiforal (1947). Gouache on cardboard, 24.5x32 (Unknown location)

Laboratorio (1947). Gouache on cardboard, 31.5x24 (Unknown location)

Insomnio I (1947). Gouache on cardboard, 28x22 (Private collection)

La batalla (1947). Gouache on cardboard, 38x38 (Unknown location)

Dolor (1948). Gouache on cardboard, 24.2x20.5 (Private collection)

Dolor Reumático I (1948). Gouache on cardboard, 25x19.2 (Private collection)

Dolor Reumático II (1948). Gouache on cardboard, 25x19 (Unknown location)

Frío (1948). Gouache on cardboard, 33x25 (Private collection)

Alegoría del invierno (1948). Gouache on cardboard, 44x44 (Private collection)

Premonición (1953). Gouache on paper, 36x24 (Private collection)

Tejido espacio-tiempo (1954). Oil on masonite, 66x54 (Private collection)

Revelación o El relojero (1955). Oil on masonite, 71x84 (Hanni Bruder Kafka, Mexico)

Creación con rayos astrales (1955). Oil on masonite, 67.4 x 42.6 (Unknown location)

Ciencia inútil o El alquimista (1955). Oil on masonite, 105 x 53 (Private collection)

Ermitaño (1955). Oil and nacre embed on masonite, 91 x 40 (Private collection)

El flautista (1955). Oil and nacre embed on masonite, 77 x 95 (Private collection)

Robo de sustancia (1955). Oil on masonite, 58 x 82 (Private collection)

Música solar (1955). Oil on masonite, 91 x 61 (Private collection)

Ruptura (1955). Oil on masonite, 95 x 60 (Private collection)

Roulotte (1955). Oil on masonite, 78 x 60 (Private collection)

Simpatía (1955). Oil on masonite, 95 x 83.5 (Private collection)

La tejedora roja (1956). Oil on fabric, 43.5 x 28.5 (Private collection)

La tejedora de Verona (1956). Oil on masonite, 86 x 105 (Private collection)

Tres destinos (1956). Oil on masonite, 90 x 108 (Private collection)

An bonheur des dames (1956). Oil on masonite, 88.6 x 60.3 (Hanni Bruder Kafka, Mexico)

Vuelo mágico (1956). Oil and nacre embed on masonite, 86 x 105 (Private collection)

El malabarista o El juglar (1956). Oil and nacre embed on masonite, 91 x 122 (Private collection)

Les feuilles mortes (1956). Oil on cardboard, 54 x 60 (Sra. de Antonin Besse, Paris)

Armonía (1956). Oil on masonite, 76 x 94 (Unknown location)

La creación de las aves (1957). Oil on masonite, 54 x 64 (Private location)

Catedral vegetal (1957). Gouache on paper, 38 x 27 (Banco Nacional de México)

Tailleur pour dames (1957). Oil on masonite, 77 x 95 (María Rodríguez de Reyero)

Vagabundo (1957). Oil on masonite, 56 x 27 (Private collection)

Caza nocturna (1958). Mixed media on cardboard, 49.5 x 23.5 (Private collection)

La despedida (1958). Oil on fabric, 34 x 24 (Private collection)

Papilla estelar (1958). Oil on masonite, 92 x 62 (Private collection)

Locomoción capilar (1959). Oil on masonite, 83 x 61 (Private collection)

Exploración de las fuentes del río Orinoco (1959). Oil on fabric, 44 x 39.5 (José Luis Martínez. México)

Encuentro (1959). Oil on fabric, 40 x 30 (Private collection)

Ritos extraños (1959). Oil on masonite, 28 x 50 (Private collection)

Homo Rodans (1959). Sculpture made of chicken, turkey and fish bones, 41 x 17 x 65 (Private collection)

Homo Rodans (1959). Gouache on cardboard, 29 x 22.2 (Private collection)

Pterodáctilo (1959). Gouache on cardboard, 29 x 22.2 (Private collection)

Animal fantástico (1959). Gouache on cardboard, 29 x 22.2 (Private collection)

Mujer saliendo del psicoanalista (1960). Oil on fabric, 70.5 x 40.5 (Private collection)

Mimetismo (1960). Oil on masonite, 48 x 50 (Private collection)

Hacia la torre (1960). Oil on masonite, 123 x 100 (Private collection)

Bordando el manto terrestre (1961). Oil on masonite, 100 x 123 (Private collection)

La huida (1961). Oil on masonite, 123 x 98 (Museo de Arte Moderno, México)

Descubrimiento de un geólogo mutante (1961). Oil on masonite, 60.2 x 50.6 (Private collection)

Planta insumisa (1961). Oil on masonite, 84 x 62 (Private collection)

Personaje (1961). Oil on masonite, 58.5 x 39.5 (Private collection)

La llamada (1961). Oil on masonite, 98.5 x 68 (Private collection)

Arquitectura vegetal (1962). Oil on fabric, 57.5 x 44 (Private collection)

Camino árido (1962). Vinyl on cardboard, 70.5 x 21.5 (Private collection)

Fenómeno (1962). Oil on masonite, 55 x 40 (Private collection)

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