



***FRIDA KAHLO, REMEDIOS VARO, LEONORA CARRINGTON, AND
LEONOR FINI: FEMINIST LESSONS IN CHIMERISM, CORPOREALITY,
CUISINE, AND CRAFT***

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Abstract

What visions (and versions) of feminism and motherhood are revealed by four women artists in the psychologically-laden genre of Surrealism? Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) stands out posthumously in contemporary art education lessons (Carroll, 2015; Hubbard, 2005; Koonlaba, 2015; Ward, 2005) perhaps not only because she was an accomplished Surrealist painter, but also her autobiographical paintings—of deep fragmentations of Mexican culture, female sexuality, and the female body—resonate with many feminist artists and educators in the 21st century. Spanish-Mexican Remedios Varo (1908-1963) painted works influenced by mysticism and philosophy, often including richly colored androgynous figures and paintings with complex feminist themes. British-born Leonora Carrington (1917-2011), a founding member of 1970s Mexico's Women's Liberation Movement, sought refuge in Mexico and drew artistic influence from Mexican folklore and mythology. She is notably an exile, expatriate, and creative collaborator/friend to Varo. These three artists are deeply connected to Mexico, while Argentine-born Leonor Fini (1908-1996) felt a continuing affiliation with Latin America. Carrington, Varo, and Fini are grouped together in writings on Latin American women artists exploring identity (Congdon & Hallmark, 2002). In addition, Fini and Carrington have been noted by art historians for their representation of matriarchal societies (Belton, 1995). Like Varo, Fini depicted androgynous characters in vividly colored paintings. The alchemically rich Surrealist paintings examined in this essay are of female or androgynous bodies becoming (or (be)longing with) animal bodies, domestic life including the Latin American kitchenspace as feminist cultural space of production, and the storied, mythic roles/representations of women and handcraft traditions.

Keywords: Surrealism, Latin American women artists, motherhood, nature, mysticism, feminist art education

**Introduction: Intersections of Feminism, Motherhood,
Surrealism, and Art Education**

Inspired by texts such as Whitney Chadwick's (1985) history of women in Surrealism and my travel to Mexico and exchanges with other art educators there, I have expanded my teaching of Surrealists in art education courses to include artists Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, and Leonor Fini, alongside Frida Kahlo. Particularly within art historical contexts, I believe these four women can be examined in art classrooms as feminist artists and for the vivid, often mythic or astral feminist ethos across their works. Their spiritual and magical representations of female selves, birth, and motherhood have intrigued and encouraged me as a new mother, and I wish that I had encountered these gendered images as a high school student and as a university student during my preparation to become an art teacher. Further, these artists can be studied simultaneously to appreciate the remarkable, often salon-like community of artistic discourse they shared. Art educators may even wish to present and promote this communality and collaborative creative spirit within the artroom, in contrast with the solitary master male maker so commonly represented in art history, and even in many contemporary exhibitions.

Surrealist artist, Salvador Dali spoke with great condescension and sexism of the work of Leonor Fini: "Better than most, perhaps. But talent is in the balls" (qtd. in Kent, 2009). Although this prejudice was articulated in the past, some more recent experiences reflect the same dismal dismissal of women artists today. For example, while researching numerous fellow female ceramicists, I remember one of my art education professors praising my closest female friend and colleague within my earshot as the "only woman doing interesting work in feminist art." At first I felt torn between admiration for my friend and my own pangs of jealousy and despair about my work being disregarded outright, but then I realized the crux of the issue was the perpetuation of sexist tokenism. Why were women presumed as competitors (even as students, before entering the field)? Why must there only be one acknowledged female scholar or artist in any given genre, when multiple male peers were able to study the same topics and receive acceptance if not praise? How might this prejudice also impact women's relationships, mentoring, and teach-

ing? As a feminist art educator, I encourage my students to examine more closely and more often how and why such tokenism impacts already marginalized women artists, particularly people of color, and how they can impact relationships and even feminist coalitions/activism. I hope that we can look to arts educators and critics like the [Guerrilla Girls](#) and feminist teacher/author/scholar, [bell hooks](#) for frameworks to pose these questions and begin to respond to them collaboratively.

With these aims in mind, this essay addresses works by four women Surrealist artists (Kahlo, Varo, Carrington, and Fini) in terms of the feminist principles and practices conveyed in their artistic representations of the female body and domestic life, including the Latin American kitchen/kitchenspace as feminist cultural space of production. This study suggests implications of feminist art education in forming craft and artistic communities. 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.

Animals as Surrealist Symbols of Chimerism and Feminism

Art educators might consider the parallel borders of the body between public and private parts, with symbolically animal and more human parts/zones through Surrealism. What parts of our bodies and selves are most associated with the facades we show others? What parts of us are perhaps more wild/animal-like? For example, in high school, I reimagined myself as Medusa in attempt to claim both a maiden self and a monstrous, powerful one adorned by snakes (Figure 1). Introducing the following surrealist paintings to students, I invite them to explore contradictions and dualities in identity to appreciate and represent their own complexities artistically.

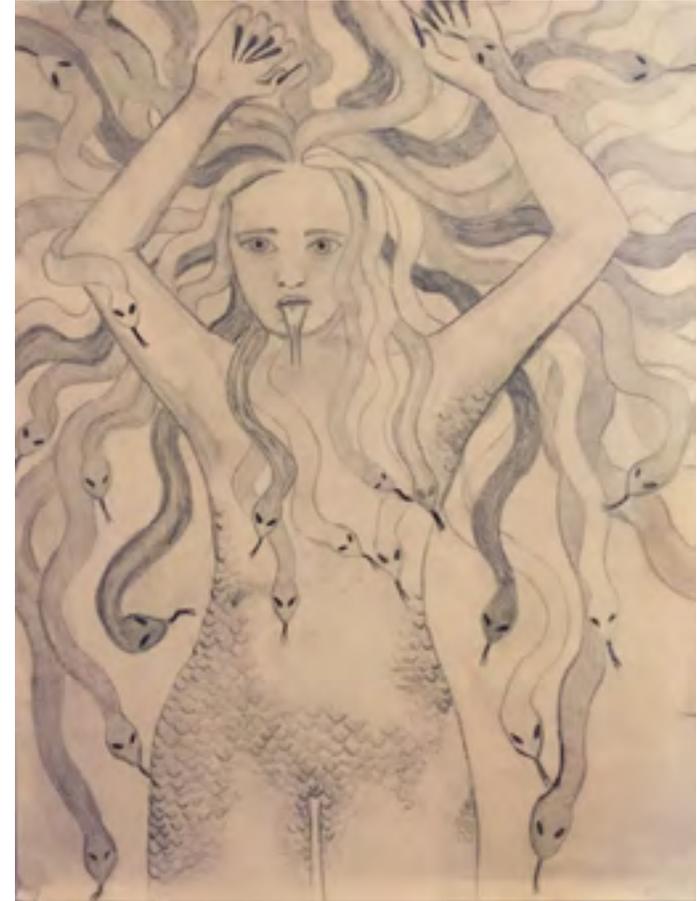


Figure 1. *Self-portrait as Medusa* by the author, circa 1999.

Kahlo depicted a vulnerable, wounded Frida Kahlo-deer chimera in *The Wounded Deer* (1946). The human-animal hybrid has her human head atop its impaled, bleeding animal body. Kahlo's other work often alludes to Aztec mythological chimeras (half-human, half-beast). Theorist Annette S. Levitt (2000) observed "art connected [Frida Kahlo] with her animal nature," for Kahlo's depictions of animals represented the hope of freedom from or transformation of her ailing human body (p. 34). In scientific inquiry, there is a compelling biological connection recently established with micro-chimerism and women through pregnancy that may

be considered in Carrington's and Kahlo's works, for it is now known that blood from fetuses pass along DNA into the mother's body which lingers years after to create a sort of mosaic of genetic identity and even healing for the mother through fetal cells (Zimmer, 2013). This discovery illuminates the symbol of the chimera as a richly feminine figure and restorative force, yet chimerism also reflects complex bonds of mothers and children, knit together at the cellular level.

Kahlo's other paintings of animals are often more straightforward and directly autobiographical, as in *Self Portrait with Monkeys* (1943), *Self Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird* (1940), or *Self Portrait with Small Monkey* (1945). In these self portraits, the animals have a totemic quality, posed protectively near Kahlo, wrapped in ribbons and thorns or gesturing towards amulets. Although they are not chimeras, the animals seem closely linked to Kahlo, almost like an aspect or double of her. They correspond with her 1939 painting, *The Two Fridas*, where Kahlo depicts herself holding hands with a twin. We might invite students to consider animal symbols and selves in their art in a parallel fashion as power animals, alter egos, reflections, spiritual guides, or simply "others," or as symbolic contexts of cultural, political, and/or gendered meanings.

Also addressing chimerism, Remedios Varo painted half human-half horse centaurs alongside portals and keys poised on the threshold of moon-lit magical realms, perhaps also alluding to unlocking/unpacking the tensions between the worlds of nature, spaces occupied by humans, and spiritual realms. Her *Centaur Tower Landscape* (1943) reveals a liminal creature, precariously poised on the border of merging universes/cosmoses: of interior, human-made spaces, and overgrown, thorny woods. As the inverse of creatures with the heads of women, Varo's *Creation of the Birds* (1957) is a minotaur-like figure with the inverse chimerism of human hands and feet with a feathered, bird-like torso. Using musical instruments, paintbrushes, and what appears to be reflected starlight, the bird-human figure magically generates a collection of small birds in a process of artistic and biological alchemy. This scene could evoke richly symbolic and Cartesian meanings in creative practice: what is it like to mix the mind of an animal with hands of a human?

Levitt (2000) explains that Leonora Carrington utilized the

symbol of the horse artistically throughout much of her work as another example of the chimera, evoking the centaur, and providing a meaningful mentor figure for female characters in her paintings and writings. The horse also represents tensions between the wild and free natural being with the isolated, domesticated human woman (e.g., mother, wife, caregiver, housekeeper).

Like Kahlo, Varo, and Carrington, Leonor Fini painted women alongside animals. Her paintings included women who appeared to be twins and chimeras: sphinxes, mermaids, and female centaurs, often with bright jewelry adorning their lush and softly colored bodies befitting as subjects of a fashion designer turned painter. Fini's depiction of animals in *Sunday Afternoon* (1980) is a lighthearted composition of strangely lit women and human-sized cats who appear to be inhabiting a kitchen cupboard together.

I have asked high school students what they think about the idea of animals and women on display in this way, inviting them to explore ambiguously open-ended art historical reference points like curio cabinets as well as fashion runways. Young artists begin to take on the role of director or magician/chemist in framing curious objects and making constellation-like connections of their juxtapositions of humans and nature. Along these lines, some of my art education students have explored the tarot as a sort of collection in which to theorize and represent women, focusing on female figures of the major arcana in surreal contexts (Figure 2). This is particularly notable in comparison to Dali's 1970 hand-drawn and collaged *tarot deck*, with its substantial focus on male imagery (e.g., *The Magician card*).



Figure 2. *The Sun Tarot Card* by Nicole Leyland, 2016.

Feminist Surreal Symbolism of (re)Birth: Institutionalized, Exiled, Trapped Maiden-Mother-Muses

Crossing seamlessly into the realms of domesticity and nature in ways their male Surrealist counterparts often did not, each of the four artists in this study wielded fluidity in use of female and feminist symbolism and spaces. Levitt poignantly asserted that Varo, Carrington, and Fini have lived in several worlds. So too, Kahlo used painting as place of refuge to confront (and at times, exorcise) pains of her daily life. Each of these artists faced the threat of institutionalized/incarcerated lives that they represented and reconciled as both spiritual and embodied surrealities of womanhood in painting and prose.

Kahlo extensively painted her own painful operations and captive, bed-ridden medical experiences from childhood injury to childbirth. Levitt (2000) noted “Art could never replace the reality of motherhood for Frida, but it helped her to bear the contradiction, the curse” (p. 34). Her paintings provide a visible medical timeline: *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932), *Broken Column* (1944), *Without Hope* (1945), and *Tree of Life* (1946). Kahlo was often confined to her bed due to chronic health problems, unflinchingly painting her painful medical experiences, including miscarriage.

Varo’s work, like Kahlo’s, examined birth, but through metaphorical, healing rebirth and in a more mystical and luminous style. Her 1960 painting, *Born Again*, reveals a woman emerging out of the wall, drawn to what appears to be a scrying bowl (used for divination or fortune-telling) on a nearby table. Throughout Varo’s work, she uses water and emergence from water, walls, and other parts of the landscape as feminine themes that are imagined as magical. In this work, there is a powerful claiming of the symbolism of rebirth and healing, significant in the context of her wartime escape to Mexico City and artistic growth there.

Importantly, both Carrington’s particular artistic cosmology and her friendship with fellow artist Varo served as support systems through her psychic and psychiatric traumas. Carrington was disowned by her family at the age of 23, and then detained in a Spanish mental hospital. Her family also made plans for her to later be committed to an asylum in South Africa, but Carrington escaped and sought sanctuary in Mexico by

marrying an ambassador who was a friend. We can trace her experiences of depression, imprisonment, and psychiatric medication in her 1945 memoir *Down Below*. A fascinating narrative among a small (but growing) genre of works by institutionalized women, Carrington's memoir illuminates interwar Surrealist art history and her own development of cosmological philosophy as a means of healing. From an interdisciplinary and/or feminist disability studies perspective, art teachers might consider teaching Carrington's paintings and her memoir alongside literature by women addressing creativity, mental illness, and recovery including *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964), to *Girl, Interrupted* (1999) and *Musical Chairs* (2009).

Fini's work also addresses healing. She experienced a period of sightlessness due to an eye disease. Upon the removal of bandages that obscured her vision, Fini hungrily sought museums. Fini's paintings are linked to healing and rebirth, but with a marked emphasis on resurrection through color. Her paintings juxtapose an atmospheric dreaminess with crisp and startlingly use of bold pigments in works such as *The Red Vision* (1984). Her artworks may point to her early experiences and the inner life of vision she cultivated. Fini's paintings also highlight the body in her more erotic compositions, often with water, that allude to lesbian fantasies or encounters (and may also suggest baptism/birth) rarely seen in Surrealism, such as *Le Entré Deau* (1968), *The Bathers* (1972), and *Hurry, Hurry, Hurry My Dolls are Waiting* (1975). Though these works' full contexts are perhaps not explicitly appropriate for inclusion in all K-12 art instruction, the presence of LGBT+++ and disability artists in art curriculum is of ever growing importance in the rich representation of myriad human experiences.

In a meaningful contrast to Kahlo's difficulties bearing children and Fini's choice to live primarily in the company of cats, art historian Susan Aberth (2010) noted that "motherhood was a profoundly positive experience for Carrington; however, she objected to the workload that fell on women with child rearing" (p. 64). Carrington lamented that she did not have a wife (or supportive spouse) as male artists often do, a notion echoed recently and resoundingly by several contemporary women artists whose partners were unsupportive of their work in the feminist documentary, *Who Does She Think She Is* (Dunning & Boll, 2009). This

concern is of note for art education in examining the roles of women artists and the restrictions that they often faced, and still encounter. At the same time, women artists do offer alternative ways to balance the work of family and producing art that can serve to mentor new mothers who are artists. Carrington delightfully observed that she painted well while pregnant because she "did nothing but eat" (qtd. in Aberth, 2010, p. 6). Supported by her close friendship with Varo, Carrington's work celebrates motherhood's connections to food consumption, magical rituals, and painting.

Beyond motherhood-related representations in food and feminism, it is important to examine experiences of Surrealist women who chose to remain childless so that students observe many models of adulthood, family, and human care, as deeply personal choices of contraception and motherhood. The late art historian Janet Kaplan (2000) writes,

Significantly, Varo had no children herself, a choice echoed by most of the women of the Surrealist movement. Key to Surrealist theory, which devoted considerable energy to defining the role of Woman in the creative process, was the image of the femme-enfant, the naive woman child whose spontaneous innocence, uncorrupted by logic or reason, brings her in closer contact with the intuitive realm of the unconscious. . . Surrealist theory left little room for maturity or motherhood or the aging process. (p. 121)

It is perhaps the ultimate exclusion by male Surrealists artists to include token women artists in their ranks, but preclude the sex and sexuality of those women within such a highly psychological and sexual cultural movement. There is little possibility to be a visionary and fulfilled artist if one's artistic power is inextricably linked with spontaneity, innocence, and youth.

Women Surrealists can become trapped within a sort of maiden-mother-muse restriction. The archetypes and stereotypes of virginity and pregnancy reemerge frequently. For example, cultural scholar Emma Sepulveda-Pulvirenti (1998) writes that Kahlo was seen as the impregnable tiger-Abbess, yet was "the only woman painter to ever give birth to

herself” (p. 42). Certainly, Kahlo’s work is rife with re-births and resurrections. Works like *Self Portrait With Cropped Hair* (1940) may be associated with both destruction and rebirth through gendered signification, for this casting off of feminine hair and, simultaneously, of her marriage to Diego, also marked an immense creative period for Kahlo. Others, like Carrington, were often known as mistresses/muses and Pygmalion figures to famous male painters, and not widely recognized as artists in their own right until recently (Bernstein, 2011).

Kahlo offered a vibrantly youthful flowered and bejeweled persona coinciding with male obsessions with youth, yet she used painting to depict deeper pains and nuanced gender issues. She painted a rare motherhood experience: the feminist subject of the balm and intimacy of breastfeeding. Her 1937 painting, *My Nurse And I*, documents her memory of being breastfed by an indigenous woman who served as her wet nurse while her mother was pregnant with her younger sister. Key surreal features bring ambiguity to the intimate maternal interaction: a mask blocking the face of the woman, and Kahlo’s adult face, in contrast to her infant body. Notable for motherhood representations is Kahlo’s rich, lacy, x-ray view of the mammary glands of the breast, delicately and rather accurately revealing the biological process and network of anatomy involved with lactation. In our era of “breelfies” (breastfeeding selfies) and social media revolutions dedicated to normalizing breastfeeding, these earlier art images may be of great importance to mature students investigating a range of human experiences. So too, as a new mother, I often wish for younger students to also encounter a range of images in the museum or gallery that include motherhood in the context of infant feeding. In examining works such as Kahlo’s depictions of pregnancy and birth or Fini’s representations of romance, we can discuss Surrealism as a feminist framework for women’s reproductive experiences and more mythic, embodied sensibilities of sexualities.

The Kitchenspace as Feminist Surrealist Studio

Beyond caretaking and breastfeeding often linked with the body of the mother, food and nourishment take on notable feminine and feminist meanings in artistic representations for many women painters. Generally speaking, feminist references to food and preparing meals permeate much art by women from Judy Chicago’s iconic 1974–1979 feminist project *The Dinner Party* to Betty Hirst’s meat art in homage to [Meret Oppenheim](#). Food is particularly symbolic in the work of Surrealists.

For Kahlo, fruits and vegetables as still-life subjects were a part of both her rich engagement with the craft of cooking and her personal style of fashion and interior design, drawn from Mexican fruit markets and local craft culture. She encouraged younger Mexican artists to look to Mexico itself for inspiration, rather than adopt often European ideals and inspirations. Works like *Pitahayas* (1938) show alien-looking desert fruits full of seeds and tendrils that are associated with Mexican celebrations, with her signature Dia de los Muertos iconography of a tiny skeleton figure above the fruit. The luscious red plants can be connected with sexuality and love, yet the skeletal figure holds a scythe threatening this fertility and fecundity in ways that might also echo Kahlo’s own life, with its miscarriages and medical difficulties.

Similarly, the still-life paintings of Varo reveal a great deal of her surrealist signature. While Kahlo’s flowers and vegetables are grounded with roots, Varo’s fruits magically levitate, circle, and burst apart with ripeness in twinkling candlelight. In *Still Life Resuscitated* (1963), even the tablecloth springs to life, in a magical, spell-like dance.

Topics of food, consumption, and nourishment are not only themes in the work of the four Surrealist artists discussed in this essay, but also threads within their artistic friendships. Researcher and curator Stefan Van Raay (2010) records that Varo and Carrington’s friendship was “not only on a domestic level but also artistically. They sat around one another’s kitchen tables, cooked for one another, went shopping together” (p. 16). Domestic acts were linked with their artistic lives, rather than in opposition to creativity. Art historian Maria Elisa Christie (2011) has usefully theorized the possibilities of overlapping rituals, crafts, aesthetics, and cultures of the kitchenspace in her research of Mexican

cooking spaces. Communal, artistic bonds around 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 (even as solitary expatriates abroad), and often within less literally and metaphorically nourishing salons. In contrast, Carrington and Fini were photographed together in beautiful fashions suiting Fini's vocation. Carrington attended the wedding of Kahlo and Rivera. These meetings and documentary images inform viewers about gendered stories, nurturing interactions, and unexpected Surrealist salons of women that most art history texts do not reveal.

For these four artists, the depiction of food was not a simple still life, but a deep expression signifying complexities of both gender and culture. Aberth (2010) points out the symbolism of Carrington's food imagery in painting:

In both public and private domestic spheres Carrington encountered in Mexico a type of hybrid Catholicism . . . Keeping with the Catholic calendar, holidays in Mexico are often accompanied by elaborate decorations that combine folkloric and traditional religious objects carefully arranged and supplemented with flowers, incense, and food stuff . . . she was impressed by such remnants of indigenous practices. (p. 69)

This tableau of indigenous, Latin, and European influences can be particularly resonant for these four artists who felt connected (by birth or by choice/association) to multiple cultural groups. The kitchen and the home become powerful, intercultural, and border spaces of alchemy, transformation, and creation. So too, the potential for (and problems with) mixing and combining artistic and culinary elements can be metaphorical for those of us with multiethnic or multicultural backgrounds.

Further, the four artists discussed in this essay typically focused on interior spaces and internal scenery in magical and lush ways, depicting inner visions of nature and women too readily overlooked. The work of the female Surrealists often blended serious magic and alchemy in art with the localized life of the home and domestic tasks. Their relationships, particularly between Varo and Carrington, were keys to these

endeavors. As Aberth (2010) noted, "together they began to experiment with cooking and, with a penchant to experiment and a taste for the ludicrous, they conducted pseudoscientific investigations using the kitchen as their laboratory" (p. 60). Food is not only life-giving, but also a tool of transformation within the self that these artists explore in their daily life and art. Given the difficulties with nutrition, obesity, and other disorders pertaining to eating that young people face, the art of the four artists discussed here can re-envision the vegetal still-life as richly meaningful. Although nearly all K-12 students adore art projects planned around decadent desserts, the deeper linkages among nature, culture, food and the generation of symbols and images is rarely explored extensively in art rooms. These possibilities can be embraced through connections to care, family, and the parallel transformations of elemental ingredients of art and those of food with bodily nutrition. For example, unique vegetables from First Lady Michelle Obama's healthy school lunch program, associated with the 2010 Hunger-Free Kids Act, could be investigated in the art room through still-life inspired by the Surrealist symbolism of Kahlo, Varo, Carrington, and Fini's paintings.

Framing Feminist Folklore, Fairy Tales, and Handcraft

Considering the feminized roles of women throughout history in food preparation, caregiving, the education of young children, and the passing along of craft, folklore, and fairytales, the works of these female Surrealists creates an elevated, feminist space for these forms. Kahlo's paintings include several images of children. *Her Girl With Deathmask* (1938) honors the Mexican legacy of young people paying tribute to their deceased ancestors through hand-crafted masks and home-made rituals. Perhaps a veiled portrait of young Kahlo, this painting has both a sense of unease from pairing of the troubled background with so small a child, and a certain calm in the demeanor of the child's body language and stance.

The complex and enticing imagery that Remedios Varo created predates surreal and fantasy-based contemporary children's books, and also anticipates their more multigenerational and multicultural audi-

ences. Varo takes up the symbols of weaving in a fantastic narrative of her painting *The Weaver of Verona*. This image honors the legacy of women weavers throughout folklore and fiction, but also proposes craft as a creation of an alter ego. The grey weaver creates a luminous, vibrant red figure from the fiber, who surges from the weaver's hands through space to fly. Works of art such as these enable us to consider compelling, metacognitive representations of art and artists themselves.

Like Varo, Carrington's work celebrates craft. Aberth (2010) explains that Carrington created a symbolic vocabulary in her painting that refused to acknowledge any "hierarchical distinction between sipping tea and infusing an alchemical broth, or between knitting children's sweaters and spinning cosmic wool" (p. 104). This craft sensibility and aesthetic as a broader approach to daily life, with immersive craft projects/objects, predicts brilliantly many craftswomen of today, from the Maker Movement to yarn bombing.

Carrington's paintings include fairytale subjects within feminist contexts. Her painting *Sidhe, the White People of the Tuatha de Danaan*, (1954) was inspired by her readings about goddesses, and also hearkens back to her grandmother's Irish fairytales. Her work *Body Giant* (1947), takes on the unusual subject of the female giant surrounded by Lilliputian creatures, perhaps inviting review and revision of additional male-dominated fairy tales. Other works like *Adelita Escapes* (1987) capture the whimsy and dream-like mystery of a child flying from bed, bathed in a blue light. It is rare that Surrealism can be blended with themes of childhood so well, and this connection can be explored provocatively in art teaching in terms of unexpected gendering of familiar characters and feminist fairy tale revisions. I have encouraged my own art education students to consult these works to guide their efforts in authoring and illustrating children's books for their students (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Etching from a children's book entitled *Mousefeathers* by Clare Marco, 2008.

Leonor Fini similarly created a fairy tale-inspired painting for the Mexican actress María Félix, entitled *“Les Sorcières”* (“The Witches,” 1959). The swirling black and red churning of the witches on hybrid broomsticks/dousing rods is intoxicatingly dark and less characteristic of Fini's usual luminous style, highlighting her ability to depict various women in many different ways. I have already mentioned Leonor Fini's painting, *Red Vision*, which comparably shows a young looking figure confronted by serious matters of the supernatural. Such young women figures provide interesting female characters to consider in stories of Surrealism and human experiences of childhood, love, and death. Referencing craft like the other three women artists, Fini's youthful female figures often sport ornately hand-crafted clothing, drapery, and headdresses. All four of these Surrealists' works remind us to consider including images of children in our art historical references in the art room, revealing females as makers and as protagonists.

Concluding Reflections: Women Surrealists Predicting Feminist Futures

From human/animal hybrids to meditations on motherlands and motherhood, to food and fairy tales, this study of four Surrealist artists considered their work for application in K-12 feminist art education. Animals are revealed as mythic and symbolic creatures that represent these artists and complex aspects of motherhood, spirituality, and the animal self from their experiences. Kitchenspaces become studio spaces that cultivate the essential nourishment of bodies, friendships, cultural traditions, and communal rituals of artmaking. These painters also present us with valuable, oft-overlooked images of young women, craft, and folklore that pay tribute to lineages of women as heroines and makers. Contemporary artists are still finding relevance in these artists: specifically, Judy Chicago has collected and curated the works of Kahlo in a sort of retablo-hybrid book of dialogue with her own artistic life (Chicago & Borzello, 2010), an approach that could be adapted to the P-12 artroom.

It should be noted that these women's creative work encompasses not only Surrealism, but also impacts spheres of fashion, literature, and philosophy. By reviewing the numerous feminist contributions of Kahlo, Varo, Carrington, and Fini in dialogue, art educators can begin to understand more about the rich histories of women in Surrealism through unique and often liberatory mystic visions of spaces of the body, natural world, kitchen/studio, and nursery. Perhaps Carrington best describes the rationale for recognizing these Surrealist works in reclaiming feminist, mystical power (quoted in Van Raay, 2010):

woman should not have to demand Rights. The rights were there from the beginning; they must be Taken Back Again, including the Mysteries which were ours and which were violated, stolen, or destroyed . . . History has a habit of making gaps where they appear convenient . . . curiosity can only be satisfied if the millennia of false data are turned upside down. (p. 102)

When we teach as feminist educators, the inclusion of diverse and complex works by Surrealist women artists fills particular gaps in art history,

enriches curricula (often turning it on its head), and cultivates students' curiosity about works of art providing resonant representations of marginalized topics and individuals.

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