

Journey towards “Her” Identity: Remedios Varo

Introduction

The paper consists of four parts: first, which is devoted to the question of gender in the context of surrealism and what kind of problems the view adapted by most male surrealists created for female artists; second, which addresses the life of surrealist painter Remedios Varo and how she coped with the problem mentioned above; third, where Jung’s concept of *Anima-Animus* and its feminist critique is presented; and fourth, which offers the interpretation of micro-dynamics of gender in Remedios Varo’s painting *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst’s Office*.

Surrealism and Gender

Important female artists played a role in the surrealist movement, as documented by several authors (Chadwick 1985, Sills-Whitman 1993, Aberth 2004, Raay-Moorhead-Arcq 2010). This is partly due to the fact that surrealism supported the idea that we should integrate all aspects of our soul: thinking, feeling and intuition, and they saw the unconsciousness as a source of artistic creativity. Surrealists praised intuition, feeling and proximity to the unconsciousness which all have been traditionally seen as feminine, and they aimed to incorporate masculinity and femininity into one integrated human being¹. However, the concept of gender within surrealism was not as simple as it might seem.

Whitney Chadwick states that male surrealists on one side admired the independency of women but on the other, they were not able to discard her image as a Muse². As they believed that women have a closer relation with intuition and the unconscious, they tended to “use” her as a guide in their own creative activity. Thus women lost their individuality and were subsumed under the vision of femininity (or woman) as such, useful to “add” above mentioned aspects to “man’s creative cycle” (Chadwick 1985, p. 12). Male surrealists were not able to solve the inner conflict between the image of a woman being passive, dependent and defined by her relation to man, and that of an independent and creative being. Their relationship toward female surrealists resembled the relationship of a father to his daughter³: they partly supported “her” individuality but were not able to value it entirely, stressing still the beauty and sexuality of women, mostly as dependent on the appraisal of a man. This situation was intriguing and complicated for female surrealists; they were confronted with potentially contradicting images of femi-

1 The analysis of surrealism as such is not the aim of the paper. A vast amount of literature dealing with this artistic movement has already been published. However, for the innovative account of surrealism in the broader context of the problem of an unconsciousness see R. E. Krauss: *The Optical Unconscious*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994, reprint edition.

2 Chadwick indicates that the first woman obtaining the role of a surrealists muse was Gala Eluard. She arrived into this group through her relationship with Paul Eluard and later became a partner of Salvador Dalí. Dalí described her as his muse as follows: “She teaches me all. She teaches me to dress up. She is an angel of balance and proportions which oriented me towards classicism”(Quoted by Chadwick 1985, p. 37).

3 We can support this idea by the fact that female surrealists were personally and intimately in relationships with some of male surrealists as their lovers, partners or wives. Apart from the relationship of Leonora Carrington and Max Ernst, we can also list here Max Ernst’s relationship with Dorothea Tanning, whom he married later. Remedios Varo was the wife of Benjamin Péret, Kay Sage married Yves Tanguy. Though most of these women undertook professional artistic schooling before meeting their future partners, the men were taken to be their initiators into this particular movement and thus their teachers and mentors (“fathers”).

ninity: one, in which a woman was viewed as the most important creative source of artistic activity, and the other, which considered a woman a beautiful, sexual object to be looked at⁴.

Whitney Chadwick suggests that we can assume that the needs of female surrealists of being accepted as independent and creative artists were not entirely fulfilled. For example, Leonor Fini never joined a surrealist group because she refused to become subordinate to André Breton. The society at that time, and the artistic world in particular, was more likely to be inclined to accept the "feminization" of men-artists than the "masculinization" of women-artists. The latter case was seen as a threat to the basic structure of the patriarchal system. However, in the case of surrealism, the main reason might lay in the fear that women would stop being perceived as keepers of unconsciousness, a role which led them to be viewed as the most important and valuable reservoir of creative energy and "soul" for men.

Partly for that reason, many female surrealists created their most valuable works at the time after the peak of the surrealist movement and after they left the group (see more in Chadwick 1985). That is also the case of Remedios Varo, whose artwork from 1960 is the subject of our interpretation.

Remedios Varo and Surrealism

Before discussing her art, let us look briefly at the course of the life of Remedios Varo with emphasis on what problems of hierarchy, and especially gender hierarchy, she faced and how she resolved them.

Remedios Varo was born in Spain, near Barcelona in 1908. Her father was a hydraulic engineer, and he had a profound influence on her life, education, and development as an artist: he taught her how to draw, trained her in mechanical draftsmanship and gave her novels to read, along with scientific, mystic, and philosophical texts. However, he was also quite authoritative, as Varo later acknowledged; gaining independence from his influence was one of her life struggles. We will return to this aspect later while interpreting her painting *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office*.

The Varo family traveled together across Europe and Africa before settling down in Madrid in 1917 where Remedios Varo was sent to a convent school to receive her elementary education. She was nine at the time, but rebellious; she yearned to escape the strictures and routines of what she saw as a narrow upbringing. Her experience with catholic convent schooling, and her wish to escape was later transformed into the theme of her triptych: *Toward the Tower* (1961), *Embroidering Earth's Mantle* (1961), and *The Escape* (1962).

For Varo, an opportunity to escape hierarchy of power was offered by art; at the age of 15 she became a full time student at the most prestigious art school in Madrid, the Academia de San Fernando for which she enrolled in 1924. There, she encountered Surrealism for the first time. Later, she continued her education at the San Fernando Roy Academy of Fine Arts, where she obtained her diploma as a drawing teacher in 1930, and at the same year she married a fellow artist, Gerardo Lizarrago. They spent their first year of married life in Paris, where Varo started attending to an art school. Nevertheless, she quickly decided that she was not looking for more restrictions; she preferred to paint, to wander the streets, and to hang out in the Parisian cafes instead. In 1931 the couple returned to Barcelona, to live among other artists; they separated in 1932. In the years 1932-1936, Varo was part of a group of artists with whom she shared studio space and ideas (José Luis Florit, Óscar Domínguez and Esteban Francés). In 1936, the Spanish Civil War began, as well as her relationship with Benjamin Péret, a Surrealist poet. In 1937 Péret returned to Paris, where Varo joined him. Through Péret she became connected with a circle of Surrealist artists and authors under the influence of André Breton (Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon, Joan Miró, Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington, Roberto Matta, Gordon Onslow Ford, Dora Maar and Victor Brauner). When

⁴ See more in Chadwick 1985. It is known that for example the surrealist female sculptor Méret Oppenheim was one of the models for the photographer Man Raye.

the Nazis took Paris in 1940, Varo together with Péret fled the city and after quite a thrilling journey they entered Mexico in 1941. Varo and Péret married in 1946 but a year later, by the time Varo had traveled to Venezuela with the French Institute of Latin America as part of a scientific expedition, they separated. From 1950 until her death in 1963, Varo lived in Mexico. In 1953 she began a relationship with an Austrian refugee and businessman Walter Gruen, who would become her third husband. In 1955 Varo had her first solo show at the Galería Diana; it was highly successful, as she sold all of her works and was thereafter able to devote herself entirely to art. Varo died of a heart attack in 1963, at the age of 55.

It was in Mexico that Varo's career as a surrealist developed fully. There, a very close friendship originated between Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington, the female painter who also escaped from France to Mexico, and a Hungarian female photographer, Kati Horna, who joined them later. Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington closely and "systematically worked together in a long run" (Saban, Mordant 2011, p. 118) creating their artworks, aiming at searching, individually or together, for women's identity which would get rid of forced self-interpretations offered to them by culture and society⁵. Like Carrington who used to say: "I do not want to be a Muse for anybody" Varo was in agreement with that idea, trying to find ways to oppose the preconceptions about women.

Varo is associated with surrealism because she lived and interacted with the surrealist circle in Paris but also because she married a surrealist. Her work often suggests the thoughts and ideas of the surrealist movement but at a closer look there are a few things that differentiate her from her fellow male surrealists. Varo created a corpus of mystical and alchemical art that stresses a personal, inner quest for spiritual truth over hierarchal dogmatic truth, whether that is of the Church, or the male Surrealists and their views on women. One of Varo's trademarks became the sense of gender ambiguity of her images, situated in places difficult to reach. They often have almond-shaped eyes and other features of Varo herself. She would often capture these characters as being involved in some sort of scientific research and place them in surreal environments. Though gender was not the ultimate goal in Varo's exploration as an artist, it became an important cornerstone in finding the creative outlet and imagery in the quest for spirituality. Her paintings became the space where she could explore the self and the universal freely through surreal imagery. A lot of her art questioned and challenged the patriarchy and through her art she dared to question the role and destiny of women.

One of the important steps toward her independency from image of woman envisaged by men, including surrealists, was to free herself from discourse imposed on women by psychoanalysis. Remedios Varo was deeply interested in psychoanalysis, as it is documented not only by her library including complete works written by S. Freud and G. Jung, but also from the title of the artwork we are going to interpret, *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office*.

As we can view this painting as a metaphor of women's (her own?) struggle to set out their own way towards women's unconscious in context of psychoanalysis, it would be useful to examine Jung's notion of *Anima-Animus* archetype. For, at that time, Carl Gustav Jung developed his analytical psychology, as well as his theory of archetypes and of psychic androgyny.

C. G. Jung's Anima-Animus Archetype

The *Anima-Animus* archetype appears in Jung's theory in the context of individuation that is the psychic development of human being. According to Jung, "Woman is compensated by a masculine element and therefore her unconscious has, so to speak, a masculine imprint. This results in considerable difference between men and women, and accordingly, I have called the projection/making factor in women *ani-*

5 Ody Saban and Thomas Mordant state that „Her art seems to be a prophetic from a point of today's problems – in its calling for magic connected with nature, as well as in its early – in the thirties – and strong refusal of patriarchy; only a part of our movement would meet about forty years later with broad and fertile river which is created (from all aspects of view) by feminism.” (Saban, Mordant 2011, p.119, own translation).

mus, which means mind or spirit. The animus corresponds to paternal Logos just as *anima* corresponds to maternal Eros..." (cited in: Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 8). Thus, in Jung's theory, *Anima* is closely connected with motherhood and sexuality. *Anima* has two aspects: negative, projected into the figure of femme fatale, and positive, allowing a man to connect himself to his unconsciousness. *Anima* tends to appear in the form of erotic fantasy to a man, while *Animus* tends to present itself in the form of "hidden conviction" to a woman. *Animus* could also appear negatively as a demon of death, or positively as a bridge enabling a woman to take part in creative activity. According to Carl Gustav Jung, a person who honestly copes with barriers and opposite tendencies of one's psychic life will achieve the stage called "the Self". "The Self" begins to operate as a dynamic center of one's psyche with potential to harmonize its opposite sides⁶.

On one hand, feminism appreciates the fact that Jung and his followers support tendency to value femininity positively – Jung explicitly states that it is especially dangerous for modern man to forget his feminine attributes (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 5). He also propagates the view that both poles – masculine and feminine – are reachable and even desirable for both sexes to integrate. However, what not only feminists do not agree with, is the ahistorical account of these traits, as described by Jung. They claim that these traits (described as feminine and masculine) are culturally formed and changed throughout history, because archetypes are symbolic expressions of events, situations and relationships pertaining in human history and connected with basic human experiences such as birth, death, sex, psychic development and others; they are not a priori or inherited aspects of psyche. For example, the follower of Jung, James Hall even claims that because „the roles of male and female become more diversified, as is now happening, the phenomenologist of the animus and the anima will undergo similar change consistent with their functional role in the psyche" (cited in: Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 12)⁷. Thus, we can rethink the contents of archetypes with the aim "to reformulate key Jungian concepts to reflect women's experiences more accurately" (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 3). As Lauter claims, all images of *Anima* presented by Emma Jung: "bird-monster, a chthonic fire spirit, and a dragon as masculine – all images that might also be interpreted as feminine in the light of current research on the mythology surrounding the goddesses" (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 64). Feminists reject the idea that it is possible to determine characteristics of these sexes in the way Jung does, following the long tradition of European philosophy: as oppositions of body and soul, matter and mind, nature and culture, passivity and activity, reason and emotion. Emma Jung has already pointed out to the problem that "women cannot afford to be permanently satisfied with the state of affairs where their spiritual values are projected onto men" (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 63)⁸. According to her, it is often the case that any expression of spiritual energy, strong persuasion, creative action or leading abilities in woman is interpreted as expression of her *Animus*, and considered, especially when these characteristics are dominant in woman's psyche, as potentially harmful to her femininity and womanhood. To overcome this view, "we must learn what women imagine, dream, fantasize, feel, and think" (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p.15). So, Lauter ascertains that a new, emerging archetype which she calls an archetype of an "independent woman" might emerge. This process is connected with the effort "to disentangle feminine archetypes from the masculine warp of culture" (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 19). As we would like to state later on, Remedios Varo can represent one among others helping to change traditional gender characteristics of *Anima and Animus*.

6 See more in Jung 1968, 1984, 1986.

7 See more in Hall 1986.

8 See more in Emma Jung 1974.

Remedios Varo: Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office⁹

Apart from the title, which explicitly addresses the relation between woman and psychoanalysis, we can find this link exemplified by the tag with the text *DOCTOR Von FJA Psicoanalista* placed on the door from which the woman is leaving: the first letters of the name Freud, Jung and Adler. There are also familiar Jungian symbols there: a mask as the symbol of the *Persona* archetype, and water symbolizing unconsciousness. The main compositional principle of her work is a circle, with a woman placed into its axis, and the narration is localized into night. Though, the narration leads us to different interpretation of woman's way towards her identity than that offered by psychoanalysis: woman resembling the artist herself does not appreciate her *Animus* (the head of a man) but the opposite – she is disposing of him by throwing the head into a well. According to Kaplan, the head on the painting is that of Varo's father as she made a remark to this painting saying that this is what every woman probably should do when leaving psychoanalyst (Kaplan, 1980/1981)¹⁰. However, there are different and ambivalent meanings associated to the symbols within the painting structure. We might interpret symbolic drowning of father's head as an act of getting rid of the woman's *Animus*-father (does she feel a little disgust when holding his beard in her fingers?) representing what made barriers for her to attain her identity (head as a symbol of rationality). On the other hand, the woman is giving her father a chance to connect with his unconscious and feminine aspect (water is the symbol of both – unconsciousness and femininity); but the head seems to be already dead.

Remedios Varo's painting can be seen as portraying the way toward giving birth to a woman's Self. This "new" Self might be symbolized by an emerging woman's head with white hair being the consequence of putting off her veils ("old" Self). This process is simultaneous with her emancipation from man's (father's) influence, and at the same time with her emancipation from psychoanalysis. It is significant that the psychoanalyst's office is located in the darkest part of the wall creating "black hole" in it. We are not able to decide if its door is open or closed; all we know is that a patient has to ring the bell (and ascend two doorsteps) in order to enter doctor's office. On the right corner of the painting we can see the other door located in the lightest part of the wall. We can only speculate what it could represent: it might allude to another office of someone "ready to help" a woman? Though the woman must have seen this door when leaving the psychoanalyst's office, she has not tried to enter it. Might it mean that she decided not to ask for another help but to search for "her" identity by herself?

Varo's woman passes along the well while disposing of a representative of *Animus* archetype. She also let her mask of *Persona* fall down making her "new" face visible, though not entirely, as the mouths of both faces are still covered by veil; however, the two pairs of eyes are looking directly at us¹¹. The woman's body is still covered by garment; according to Jungian psychology, garment is part of *Persona* figure with the task to hide individual "inner Self" prior to intriguing glance of others (Jacobi, 1984, p. 350). However, there are no other people on the painting, so Varo might insinuate that a woman should liberate herself from her own (adopted) look at herself, and change her self-understanding. The garment, a woman on her painting wears, and which might fall down together with the mask, might be associated with monk's dress (though monk's dress reaches the ground)¹². The shape of a garment might also allude to the shape of women's genitals; in this case, the head of a man can allude to the shape of sperm

9 Remedios Varo, *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office (Mujer Saliendo del Psicoanalista)* 1960, oil on canvas, 71 x 41cm.

Source: <http://remedios-varo.com/obras-remedios-varo/decada-1960/mujer-saliendo-del-psicoanalista-1960>.

10 In Jung's theory, the character of man's *Anima* is determined mainly by his mother, the character of woman's *Animus* is determined mainly by her father.

11 We can find Jungian archetype of *Persona* (a mask which an individual uses when dealing with others as an opposite to "the Self" hidden inside) at the bottom head of two-headed woman. The mask is a part of the woman's dress falling down (face and mask are similar), and enabling woman to move upward into an open air (the building has no roof).

12 As we mentioned earlier, Varo attended convent school in her youth and this type of a dress is often to be found in her paintings.

the woman is getting rid of it; this can be seen as symbolically working against prevailing identification of the woman with the mother.

The woman's flowing hair could be associated with several symbolic meanings: we can see them as wings of a bird representing free movement in an air that is in an element traditionally associated with masculinity. By dropping the man's head down to water and by the woman's hair moving up into air, Varo turns over the traditional connection between masculinity and air (upward), and femininity and water (downward)¹³. The metamorphoses of a woman into a bird (or fusion of woman and bird into one creature) plays an important role in the symbolic universe of Remedios Varo¹⁴. We can associate it with the words of Luce Irigaray: „Once we have left the waters of the womb, we have to construct a space for ourselves in the air for the rest of our time on earth-air in which we can breathe and sing freely, in which we can perform and move at will. Once we were fishes. It seems that we are destined to become birds.” (Irigaray, 1993, p. 66).

Lauter interprets the shape of the woman's hair as the crescent moon; the moon is the other traditional feminine symbol (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 69)¹⁵. We could also identify the woman's hair with horns of an antelope, an animal which need not hide itself relying on alertness, intuition and agility¹⁶. Its velocity is connected with air; for some African tribes antelope symbolizes spirit and wisdom. Clarissa Pinkola Estés points out to the fact that in mythology of goddess, hair represents thoughts. We can possibly use this explanation, as Remedios Varo herself was interested in symbols connected with femininity especially from the times of goddesses (before Antiquity) when femininity was associated with wisdom, knowledge, power and justice; in Tantrism with its orientation toward feminine; in theosophy of Helena Blavatsky focusing on integration of philosophy, science and religion using Egyptian and Eastern thoughts; in occultism and alchemy; and in myths of Pre-Columbus America.

Things we can identify in the woman's basket carried by her in her right hand – a pacifier, an alarm clock, keys and glasses together with a few strands of hair or beard – Varo referred to as “psychological waste” (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 69). Meanings of these items are ambivalent: a key is the symbol of opening as well as of closing (doors-possibilities); a pacifier is the source of pleasure but only a substitute for mother's breast; a clock might represent continuity as well as discontinuity; glasses enable us to have a better sight as well as they might cause a distorted vision. Moreover, we do not know if a woman is going to throw them away or to keep them.

The architectonic background resembling a citadel or fort together with pavement might suggest that psychoanalytical theory is also something like a fort defending itself against other theories. Remedios Varo often situated isolated figures in architectural environment symbolically associated with power of patriarchy. The walls in this painting are seemingly closed in a circle but they do not have any roof; they are opened towards the sky. A woman seems to be determined to leave this “vicious” circle (of the wall as well as of the psychoanalyst's interpretation of “her”)¹⁷. Her (four) eyes look strongly and firmly at us while she is stepping purposefully and decisively towards us. We almost feel her strong appeal for our understanding of her decision to liberate herself. However, her covered mouth reminds us of what Luce Irigaray claims: that there is no place for woman's voice in psychoanalysis. According to her, it is exactly the way how the psychoanalyst interprets what the woman is saying that often leads her to hysteric reaction (Irigaray, 1991). Lauter interprets a part of a garment covering the mouth of the woman as a sign

13 They are still embodied in the pictograms of male and female sex.

14 For example the paintings: *Creation of the Birds*, *Night-fighter*, *Character*, *Vegeta Vampires*, *Exploration Of The Source Of The Orinoco River*, *The World*, *Valley of the Moon*.

15 Moon is a part of the throne of the Egyptian goddess Isis, Greek goddess Artemis was associated with moon and night and her Roman version Diana was portrayed with half-moon on her head.

16 This association can be supported by the fact that an antelope appears together with birds also on her painting *Valley of the Moon*.

17 One of Remedios Varo's artworks is entitled *Breaking the Vicious Circle*.

that even though a woman is "being born" she cannot speak yet because a man-father is still present. (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 70)¹⁸. In spite of possible differences in an interpretation of the meaning of woman's covered mouth, it is clear that Varo's woman is leaving the fort – that is her definition in the context of psychoanalysis.

We can also interpret symbolically the colors of the painting, as Varo uses quite limited spectrum of almost "pure" colors. We are aware of the fact that symbolic meanings of colors are very unstable due to the magnitude of their nuances, contexts and cultural differences, so that we are performing a high-wire act here. With some reservations, we can connect colors in Remedios Varo's painting with four elements of our existence: black as a color of earth, red and yellow as colors of fire, white as a color of air and green as a color of water¹⁹. Color green is often interpreted as the color of hope, rebirth, new life, health, freedom (Biedermann, 1992). We can interpret the meaning of green color in a different way based on Remedios Varo's interest in alchemy: in European alchemy, green (color of the main figure) is the sign of a very strong dissolving agent, *aqua regia* (nitrohydrochloric acid) represented by (woman's) triangle with its apex heading down. *Aqua regia* had a privileged position in alchemy being the strongest dissolving agent ever known; it can dissolve hard metals including gold.

In conclusion, the painting of Remedios Varo *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office* is based on the principle of a circle from which the opposites and differences emerge (up and down, masculine and feminine, dark and light). These differences do not have a character of the contrary; they are intertwined instead (the sky is reflected in the well, feminine face and masculine head are intermediated by a gender neutral mask, colors of the fort are gradually changing, white color unites man's head, woman's hair, sky and pavement). Varo does not portray *Animus* (represented by man-father) as a spiritual part of a woman aimed to balance her inclination toward body. The opposite is more probable: Varo presents a woman releasing herself not only from psychological influence of her father but also from influence of the "fathers" of psychoanalysis, that is Freud, Jung and Adler, and their concept of gender differences and relations. She seems to start a journey toward self-knowledge and self-consciousness. The figure of the woman contains two figures inside (a woman and a *Persona*-mask) while the figure of a man is reduced to the head with eyes closed, allegedly dead. The head-*Animus* moves down towards the water, while the woman's head moves upwards to the air – this being in contrast not only with Jungian interpretation of *Anima-Animus* archetype but also to the traditional association of air and upper space with masculinity and water and lower space with femininity. However, regarding the role of psychoanalysis in this process, we can feel a certain ambiguity: a woman is leaving the psychoanalyst's office – cannot he be responsible for her journey toward her inner Self? It might be in concord with the fact that psychoanalysis, an even more, Jung's analytic psychology has motivated a movement to uncover deep feminine psyche – the psychanalytic "fort" has already been partly opened (the citadel is without roof). On the other hand, as we documented earlier, Jung was not able to transgress the traditional definition of femininity and masculinity.

It was due to the female artists, the artwork of one of which we have interpreted here, that the process of erosion of traditional understanding of feminine and masculine, that is also *Anima-Animus* archetype, began. These female artists were even ahead of its theoretical critique of Jung's theory from feminist point of view²⁰.

18 In the opposition, according to Clarissa Pinkola Estés, we can interpret the "veil" also positively as a choice of a woman to keep a part of her "Self" for herself.

19 The fact that Remedios Varo was interested in four elements is documented by her painting *The World*.

20 Remedios Varo's painting is dated 1960, the book *Man and His Symbols* was published in 1964, and the first feminist critique of Jung appeared in 1976 (Lauter-Rupprecht, 1985, p. 6).

Conclusion

According to Jung, it is extremely important for recent human being to keep the connection with energy of collective unconsciousness. Perceiving her art from that perspective, one may claim that Remedios Varo fulfilled the task; she intertwined her life experiences with archetypes and thus enabled us to connect with them too.

In her artwork, she used symbols in such a way that opens different possibilities of interpreting gender differences. She broke their patriarchal wrapping in which they were presented to us during a long time of European history, culture and art. She also challenged the surrealists' stereotype of woman as a muse and replaced it by creative woman with an autonomous voice.

In many of her artworks, she infused the female with the power of Creator, Scientist, and Artist. In terms of society, her female figures are never connected to domesticity and reproduction. In some of her artworks, persons portrayed look ambiguous from gender point of view and yet their resemblance to Varo herself and their characteristics (face, hands, feet) imply that they are female²¹. D. B. Haynes refers to her works as "gender masquerade", since Varo "gives the lie" to our inherited sex/gender system (Haynes 1995, p. 27).

The painting *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office* was created in 1960 when feminist discourse in the area of art and aesthetics has not been fully developed yet. Irrespective of this, we can call this work proto-feminist. Exploring Remedios Varo's *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office* from gender point of view might help to better understand how gender operates within the symbolic structure of artistic realm, and how Remedios Varo helped to open creative possibilities for women.

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²¹ See, for example, the painting *Harmony, Useless Science or The Alchemist, Solar Music or The Flautist*.

Summary

The aim of the paper is to examine the place of gender in the context of surrealism, to analyze its consequences for women surrealist artists, and to document how these artists dealt with the situation personally, and especially in their images (artworks). We focus on a particular case – the life and work of Remedios Varo – to reveal the function of gender on micro-level, influencing the development of Remedios Varo's individual identity, and especially the role gender plays in the images to be found in her artworks. In the first part, we analyze the reaction of Remedios Varo to the adopted view of male surrealists that a woman (even woman-artist and member of surrealist group) mainly plays the role of a Muse, adored for her beauty and some parts of her feminine psyche (intuition, closer relation to unconsciousness). In the second part of our paper, we analyze and interpret Varo's painting *Woman Leaving the Psychoanalyst's Office* with the aim to identify gender dynamics of the images to be found in this artwork and to show how gender operates on this "symbolic" level. In the process of interpretation, psychoanalysis and especially Jung's explanation of *Anima-Animus* archetype are taken into account in order to describe the background Remedios Varo worked with and against. This interpretation shows that Remedios Varo significantly contributed to the feminist critique of psychoanalysis and reinterpretation of Jung's *Anima-Animus* archetype. Remedios Varo created a particular type of gendered images which are worth examining in order to reveal how she participated in the process of changing the traditional notion of gender differences and characteristics. The examination of micro-cultural gender dynamics indicates that we cannot simply distinguish individual, social and symbolic aspects of gender. They are interconnected and mutually influence one another so it is hard to determine which of them plays the most important role in the construction of the (individual) gender identity.

Keywords: Anima, Animus, archetype, Carl Gustav Jung, feminism, gender, identity, psychoanalysis, Remedios Varo, surrealism, symbol, woman.