



A Visual World: Leonora Carrington and the Occult

WOUTER J. HANEGRAAFF

THE ENGLISH PAINTER, sculptor and writer Leonora Carrington (1917–2011) is a textbook example of how difficult it is to say anything meaningful about visual art in relation to Western esotericism. Among the women artists associated with the Surrealist movement, she is widely perceived as a particularly clear example of ‘art influenced by the occult’, and yet it remains difficult to pinpoint the exact nature of this influence, and even harder to define its relevance to our understanding of Carrington as an artist.

Most attempts at analysing the esoteric elements in Carrington’s work have focused on her literary production, particularly her memoir *Down Below* (1943–4), her novel *The Hearing Trumpet* (1974), and her initiatic love story *The Stone Door* (1976). These writings contain multiple references, veiled or less veiled, to themes associated with esotericism or the occult, and provide indispensable information about the development of Carrington’s interests in these domains. But when we move from the written word to her most important medium – painting – the voices of scholarship largely fall silent, and almost no one goes much past pointing out the obvious fact that traditional alchemical, Kabbalistic or magical symbols and references appear quite frequently in her paintings.¹ But what is the point of those references? What should we make of them? Why are they there? What do they signify? What, if anything, do they really tell us about Carrington’s oeuvre and its meaning? Do they contain some esoteric message? If so, can that message be deciphered?

Carrington herself has not exactly been helpful in answering such questions. She was known for her stubborn refusal to explain her paintings in any way. For instance, when in a highly interesting video interview her cousin Joanna Moorhead tries to get her to talk about her influences or the ideas that inspired her paintings, Carrington reprimands her sternly, in her characteristic low voice: ‘You’re trying to intellectualise something, desperately, and you’re wasting your time. . . . You’ll never understand by that road. . . . No, it’s a *visual* world. You want to turn things into a kind of intellectual game, it’s not. A visual world is totally different.’ When Moorhead seems not to listen and just rambles on, Carrington almost loses her patience: ‘Now remember what I just said now! Don’t try to turn it into a game, into

fig.1. Leonora Carrington.
The Chrysopoeia of Mary the Jewess, 1964. Oil on canvas,
150 × 90 cms. PRIVATE
COLLECTION.



a kind of intellectual game. It's not! It's a visual world. Which is different.²

In contrast to her close friend Remedios Varo, whose work is somewhat similar in its tantalising suggestions of esoteric scenarios but more intellectual and didactic in its approach, Carrington claimed not to plan or design her paintings in advance, and always insisted that 'it just happened to her'.³ We may certainly take this with a grain of salt: for instance, her *Burning of Bruno* was created in 1964, right after the appearance of Frances Yates's classic *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*, and incorporates several diagrams taken from the book.⁴ But even

so, as pointed out by Whitney Chadwick, attempts at decoding her writings seem to lead nowhere: 'interpreting too literally results in amusing but futile attempts to determine whether one is confronting the goose sacred to Isis, or the Irish goose of Michaelmas legend, or the alchemical goose of Hermogenes. The answer, in many cases, is all of the above.'⁵

It is unlikely that the riddle of Leonora Carrington's visual world will ever be solved – in fact, I very much doubt whether she believed that anyone, herself included, held the key.⁶ However, it may be useful to approach her relation to 'the occult' from a perspective somewhat different from the usual one, by focusing on personal experience rather than esoteric symbolism. While making such an attempt, the rest of this short article rests upon two assumptions. The first is that Carrington's paintings are, indeed, a quite direct reflection of visual experience – but one that most of us would probably describe, rather, as *visionary* experience. I suggest that she may have seen little point in differentiating between the two. My second assumption is that she saw this type of visual/visionary experience as the foundation of some privileged kind of knowledge or insight, in a sense that is quite close to traditional understandings of 'gnosis'.⁷ Interestingly, however, Carrington does not seem to have believed that she – or, indeed, anyone else – could claim to have access to *perfect* or *absolute* knowledge of the true nature of reality. As observed by Chadwick,

she is never seduced into believing that she has found Truth. Her intellectual and spiritual devotions are leavened with a refreshing dose of scepticism and not a little Irish humour. She remains vested in the need for the search, not in a belief in the answers. Indeed, she says, 'It is quite possible that there are no answers which are both profound and comprehensible at the same time.'⁸

fig.2 Leonora Carrington.
Burning of Giordano Bruno,
1964. Oil on canvas, 60.5
× 80.5 cms. PRIVATE
COLLECTION, MEXICO.

Let me get back to my first assumption, namely that for Leonora Carrington, the conventional distinction between visual and visionary experience had little meaning. One important source in this regard is Elena Poniatowska's biographical novel about Carrington, *Leonora*, published in the year of Carrington's death, 2011. The two women had been friends for half a century, and although we are dealing with a novel rather than a historical narrative that claims factual accuracy, the book does reflect an intimate familiarity with the details of Carrington's life – so much so that the manuscript seems to have shocked Carrington herself, and large parts of it have remained unpublished.⁹ It would seem that since a very early age, her daily world was inhabited not just by human beings and animals but also by mysterious entities that were not visible to others. As she confirmed in an interview published in 1985:

From a young age, and I believe this happens to many people, I used to have very strange experiences with all sorts of ghosts, visions and other things that were generally condemned by Orthodox Christianity. . . . my first inexplicable experiences began when I was two. I've had it all my life. . . . I couldn't tell you for certain why I have this mentality, it just came naturally to me.¹⁰

The relevance to Carrington's art would seem obvious: strange ghostlike beings are omnipresent in her paintings, and they seem to share some kind of hidden understanding or complicity with the animals and human–animal hybrids that are so prominent in her work. The all-important point here is that Carrington never seems to have accepted the idea that such beings were just fantasy. Why would they be, since she saw them with her own eyes? They were as much a part of her visual world as everything else, so they must obviously be real in some sense. Such a perspective of 'radical empiricism' fits perfectly with her refusal – surprising as it might seem at first sight – to look at art as a 'creative' endeavour: rather than as an instrument for creating something new that did not exist before, she saw painting as a way of *revealing* something that was already there.¹¹ Another way of saying this is that for her, the visual imagination was not a creator of illusions but an instrument of perception.

The dramatic events of Carrington's early life have often been recounted. Raised as the rebellious daughter of a wealthy and powerful businessman, her meeting with Max Ernst in 1937 was decisive. She ran off to join him and the other Surrealists in Paris, and gained quite a reputation there because of her radiant beauty, her rebellious spirit and her unconventional behaviour. Eventually, to escape from Ernst's wife Mary-Berthe Aurenche and the in-group quarrelling of the Surrealists, the two lovers moved to the village of Saint-Martin-d'Ardèche in southern France, where they spent a blissful season living and working together. At one point the idyll was interrupted by the arrival of Mary-Berthe, who was in such a fragile state that Ernst had to accompany her back to Paris to try and find some way of resolving the situation. This experience of sudden abandonment seems to have hit Leonora very hard: in all likelihood, it set in motion her eventual descent into insanity.¹² Ernst returned, but in 1940 the French authorities had him arrested because of his German ancestry.

This second experience of sudden abandonment pushed Leonora over the edge into a full-blown psychosis, later described in chilling detail in her autobiographical novel *Down Below*. To stay out of the hands of the Nazis, she and a befriended couple fled south by car, finally ending up in Madrid, where Leonora's behaviour became so extreme that she was finally



placed in a mental hospital in Santander. Classed as 'incurably insane', she was treated with a chemical shock therapy (Cardiazol), resulting in extreme bodily contortions and experiences of identity dissolution so horrific that she would remember them for the rest of her life. Whether due to this therapy or in spite of it, she did eventually return to sanity. Having escaped the agents of her powerful father, who wanted to have her institutionalised in South Africa, she ended up marrying a Mexican diplomat in order to gain a visa. After a stay in Lissabon, followed by a sojourn in New York, she finally ended up in Mexico City, which would remain her chief residence until the end of her life.

Addressed to Pierre Mabille, the author of a quintessential Surrealist text titled *Le Miroir du Merveilleux* (1940), *Down Below* frames Leonora's psychosis as an initiatic event that 'led [her] across the initial border of Knowledge'.¹³ However, it is important to emphasise that for the rest of her life, she would have no patience with André Breton's romanticising of madness as a state of higher visionary consciousness, and his (and many other Surrealists') tendencies of idealising her psychosis as a supreme example of the Surrealist ideal. I emphasise this point because we need to differentiate clearly between Carrington's lifelong visual/visionary experiences on the one hand, and

her temporary state of insanity on the other. She had always seen things that according to others were not there, and would continue to do so for the rest of her life. This I see as an essential clue to her oeuvre as a painter. During her period of insanity she kept having such visions, and they seem to have become much more intense; but in addition, she now lost the ability to engage in normal inter-subjective communication with the people around her. Rather than inhabiting our consensual world while seeing things in it that others did not see, she was swallowed up in a deeply meaningful but extremely frightening world all of her own. At Mabille's instigation, and with the help of his wife, Carrington wrote down the hundred pages of *Down Below* in 1943, apparently in a therapeutic attempt at exorcising the memories that kept haunting her. 'I can assure you,' Poniatowska has her say, 'that I have written it in a trance and have suffered like a Prometheus'.¹⁴

Gradually, Leonora Carrington's life returned to some kind of normality in the years that followed, but it seems that the fear of relapsing into insanity never quite vanished. She met and married a Hungarian photographer, Emerico 'Chiki' Weisz, and had two sons, born in 1946 and 1948. The experience of motherhood seems to have transformed and inspired her deeply – see her ecstatic painting *Amor che move il Sole e l'altre Stelle*, finished two days

fig.3 Leonora Carrington.

The Chair, Dagbda na Tuatha Dé Danann, 1955.
Oil on canvas, 49 × 39 cms.
PRIVATE COLLECTION

before she gave birth to her first son – and her period of full productivity as a painter began only around this time. This point is important to emphasise. In the secondary literature about Carrington, at least in the anglophone world, most attention has gone to her dramatic early years with Max Ernst and the Surrealists in Paris and her experience of insanity in Spain. But this period lasted no more than four years, and the number of paintings created during this time is limited. About her more than six decades in Mexico, with an abundant production of paintings that should perhaps be categorised as ‘magical realist’ rather than ‘Surrealist’, our information remains quite scanty.¹⁵

Elena Poniatowska writes that ‘Celtic Mythology is Leonora’s only faith’, and Carrington herself claimed that ‘The closest thing that [ever] came to convincing me was Tibetan Buddhism’.¹⁶ She never joined any organisation, but together with Remedios Varo and (sometimes) Kati Horna she did participate for a while in Gurdjieffian/Ouspenskyan meetings led by Rodney Collin-Smith and Christopher Fremantle – only to describe them with characteristic sarcasm in her published work, notably *The Hearing Trumpet*.¹⁷ Speaking of her interest in the occult, and mentioning influences such as her friend Kurt Seligman, whose well-known *History of Magic and the Occult* was published in 1948, Susan Aberth notes that Carrington ‘was fully versed in a number of esoteric traditions and her work fluidly employed a vast repertoire of subjects and symbols’.¹⁸ This is correct as far as it goes, but does not teach us very much: after all, such interests were quite common in Surrealist circles at the time. To gain a deeper understanding, one would like to know *what* she read exactly, and *when* she read it. We have some scattered information about her esoteric and occult readings, but not nearly enough, and most scholars are frustratingly lax with questions of chronology. In any case, it is evident that whereas the Bretonian Surrealists rejected any kind of occultist metaphysics¹⁹, a world inhabited by invisible entities such as spirits or demons was entirely natural to Leonora Carrington.

One title that does appear to have been crucial to her development is Robert Graves’s famous *White Goddess*, first published in 1948. Carrington read it one year later, and according to Chadwick she once called it ‘the greatest revelation of my life’.²⁰ Presumably, it allowed her to interpret the Celtic mythology that had fascinated her since childhood from the wider perspective of an alleged suppressed underground tradition of feminine spirituality focused on the worship of the ‘Great Goddess’ and opposed to the reign of patriarchy. Various Western esoteric traditions could then be seen as participating in this occult underground. The peculiar atmosphere highlighted by Graves as a sign of the Goddess’s invisible presence – ‘when owls hoot, the moon rides like a ship through scudding clouds, trees sway slowly together above a rushing waterfall, and a distant barking of dogs is heard’ – is certainly very congenial to that of Carrington’s paintings.²¹ In view of her fascination with the Celtic lore about the Sidhe or Túatha Dé Danann (see below), one would like to know much more about the extent of her familiarity with such influential classics as Evans Wentz’s *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*.²²

Based on the fragmented evidence available to me, it would seem that Carrington, together with Remedios Varo, developed some kind of personal occult practice at least from the 1960s and probably much earlier. Rita Pomade recounts this memory from the late sixties:

I visited her on a day she had [been] taken ill and was confined to her bed. The bedroom is on the second floor and there is an outside walkway to reach it. As I approached her room, a black cloud floated out the door and rose into the clear, blue afternoon sky. I entered the room determined to say nothing, not even sure that I had actually seen anything. I sat on the only chair next to her bed. ‘You saw it,’ she said. ‘Yes,’ I answered. She went on to say she had brought on her illness through negative use of her powers and was exorcizing herself to get well.



According to Pomade, Carrington ‘claimed a legacy of ancient knowledge’ that she was unable to pass on to her sons because it could only be transmitted from woman to woman:

she believed me to be a good candidate. I was given a task. ‘I’m planning to paint my own Tarot deck,’ she said, ‘and I want you to dream images for me to draw.’ She suggested an astral visit from her. I didn’t relish an out of body visitor and asked her to stay home. I promised to dream, and I did.²³

Carrington’s visual world seems to have been based on the idea of a fluid continuity between waking reality and the reality of dreaming, with astral travel as a possible way of mediating between the two – the world of the imagination being no less real than the world of matter. Such a conviction may well reflect the influence of Pierre Mabille’s monism, which recognised no ontological difference between mind and matter, or between the products of the imagination and our normal consensual world.

Another account comes from the well-known film director Alejandro Jodorowsky, but this one is so spectacular that one hesitates to trust it at face value.²⁴ Jodorowsky claims that, presumably at some time in the 1960s, Carrington sealed an occult bond with him by exchanging blood and nail clippings, after which, the following night, he was mysteriously

fig.4. Leonora Carrington.
Are you Really Sirius?,
1953. Oil on canvas,
53 × 91 cms. PRIVATE
COLLECTION

‘called’ towards her home. He found her sitting on a winged throne, while her husband and children were fast asleep, dressed only in a Jewish prayer shawl and reciting a mysterious litany while apparently in a trance state – until her husband came to bring her to bed. Jodorowsky claims to recall the following lines of the litany verbatim:

I, the eye that sees nine different worlds and tells the tale of each.
 I, Anuba who saw the guts of Pharaoh, embalmer, outcast.
 I, the lion Goddess who ate the ancestors and churned them into gold in her belly.
 I, the lunatic and fool, meat for worse fools than I.
 I, the bitch of Sirius, landed here from the terrible hyperbole to howl at the moon.
 I, the bamboo in the hand of Huang Po.
 I, the queen bee in the entrails of Samson’s dead lion.
 I, the tears of the archangel that melted it again.
 I, the solitary joke made by the snow queen in higher mathematics.
 I, the gypsy who brought the first greasy tarot from Venus.
 I, the tree of wisdom whose thirteen branches lead eternally back again.
 I, the eleventh commandment: Thou shalt despise no being.

Later, Leonora told him that his name was no longer Alejandro but Sebastian, and ‘to seal their union’ they had to commit ‘a sacred misdeed’. He had to meet her in a hotel in room number 22, dressed in black. As it turned out, the ‘sacred misdeed’ did not, as Jodorowsky first suspected, involve adultery. Leonora arrived in black, her head covered by a veil, carrying two cubical boxes, one wrapped in gold and the other in silver, which contained small skulls made of sugar with ‘Alejandro’ (not ‘Sebastian’!) and ‘Leonora’ engraved on their foreheads. They proceeded to ‘devour each other’, and while each of them ate the skull with the other’s name, Jodorowsky saw her face replaced by his own. Leonora commented that ‘From now on, your face is my mirror.’ In a letter that he claims was passed on to him by a friend, the photographer Kati Horna, we read mysterious passages like the following: ‘I have discovered the marvelous qualities of my shadow. Lately it has been detaching itself from me by virtue of its powers of flight. Sometimes it leaves wet footprints. But I confess: I constantly sleep wrapped in it, and the moments when I am able to awaken are rare.’ While painting, she would ask Jodorowsky strange questions that he understood as ‘surrealist koans’:

Every thing lives because of my vital fluid. I wake up when you sleep. If I stand up, they bury you. Who am I? . . . We shall transform ourselves suddenly into two dark, dashing Venezuelan men drinking tea in an aquarium. Why? . . . A red owl looks at me. In my belly, a drop of mercury forms. What does it mean? . . . A transparent egg that emits rays like the great constellations is a body, but it is also a box. Of what? . . . Only bitter laments will enable us to cry a tear. Is this tear an ant?

How far can we trust Jodorowsky’s account? That he remembered the litany so exactly stretches credulity; and if we read his text in tandem with Carrington’s initiatic story *The Stone Door*, we find the same mysterious language, the same dreamlike atmosphere, and some of the same symbols (notably the transparent egg that emits rays).²⁵ Do Carrington’s



fig.5. Leonora Carrington.
ABEO QUOD, 1956. Oil
 on canvas, 71 × 61 cms.
 PRIVATE COLLECTION

story and Jodorowsky's recollections both have their origin in her real life and thought at the time, or did the Chilean trickster take inspiration from *The Stone Door* to create a partly fictional account? If so, how much is invented, and how much has a factual basis? In all likelihood, only Carrington's closest friends and family might be able to shed light on such questions. But even if we err on the side of caution and dismiss Jodorowsky's account as exaggerated, embellished, or influenced by his knowledge of her writing, still the question of Carrington's personal practice and experience may be at least as relevant to interpreting her oeuvre from the 1950s on as the esoteric theories and symbolism she encountered in books.

Can we go any further in our attempts to interpret the 'occult' or 'esoteric' dimensions of Carrington's work? She herself insisted, as we have seen, that her paintings will be misunderstood if one tries to reduce them to mere didactic allegories or parables with some message that can be translated or decoded into verbal language. Must they ultimately be understood, then, as the reflection of intimate personal experiences that are now lost to us for ever, except for

some scattered memories or anecdotes from her close friends and relatives? In spite of Carrington's protestations, perhaps a bit more can be said.

Gloria Feman Orenstein has provided a detailed interpretation of Carrington's 1964 painting *The Chrysopoeia of Mary the Jewess*.²⁶ She claims that the spider-like furnace in the background stands for the ovens of the holocaust, and Mary the Jewess is engaged here in a ritual of alchemical magic designed to undo the negativity of the reigning patriarchal order represented by the Nazis. As a Jew and a woman, we see her evoking the powerful positive and protective energies of patriarchy's traditional 'Others', that is to say, of all the suppressed minorities of Western culture: the Jews, the adherents of the Celtic mother goddess, women persecuted for witchcraft and, last but not least, people classed as insane. It is not hard to see how such a scenario could reflect Carrington's own life history: her flight from Nazism, her descent into madness, her lifelong battle with patriarchy and its powerful representatives (such as her father or the psychiatrist Morales at the Santander hospital), and finally her marriage to a Hungarian Jew who had escaped the Holocaust. While some aspects of Orenstein's interpretation might seem overly speculative, its general approach should be

taken seriously – after all, she was in close contact with Carrington for many years and published her analysis while the painter was still very much alive and capable of protesting.²⁷

If there is, after all, a precise esoteric scenario behind *The Chrysopoeia of Mary the Jewess*, then the same could be true for many of Carrington's other paintings, although she might have preferred to keep it secret. Particularly attractive candidates for such esoteric exegesis are several canvases from the mid-1950s that share the motif of moisture dripping from the ceiling, a white rose and a large egg. While Susan Aberth is doubtless correct in suggesting that *The Chair, Dagha Tuatha dé Danaan* (1955) contains references to some kind of alchemical marriage of opposites, this conclusion is hardly enough.²⁸ The title connects the chair with the Dagha, the father god of the Celtic Tuatha dé Danaan evoked by Robert Graves; and Diana or the goddess of the moon is sometimes depicted as sitting on a silver chair, as in Ben Jonson's 'Hymn to Diana': 'Queen and huntress, chaste and fair, / Now the sun is laid to sleep, / Seated in thy silver chair . . .' But none of these possible references is conclusive; and what about the black gloves or hands and the small egg on the floor, or the misty substance that swirls between chair and table? Clearly we are missing a big part of the puzzle.

And what about her related 1956 canvas *AB EO QUOD*? Will we ever find out what is really happening in this room? First of all, we must correct Susan Aberth's suggestion, in her otherwise very valuable study of Carrington, that the Latin text on the left derives from a supposed alchemical text of 1351 ungrammatically titled *Asensus Nigrum*.²⁹ It has its origin in Marsilio Ficino's Latin translation of a Pythagorean passage, which had been quoted by Carl Gustav Jung in his book *Psychology and Alchemy*, well known to Carrington. It says *Ab eo quod nigram caudam habet abstine, terrestrium enim deorum est*: 'Stay away from anything that has a black tail, for it belongs to the terrestrial gods' (that is, demons).³⁰ And sure enough, a black tail is prominently visible in the painting, next to a demonic-looking face under the table. The butterflies could be read as symbols of the soul; but what should we make of the wall paintings, the objects, and the food on the table?

At present I have no answer to these questions, and perhaps I never will. I would suggest, however, that we must combine two approaches to better understand such paintings. On the one hand, we need to know more, not just about Carrington's readings, but about the chronology of those readings: *which* books were essential to her, and *when* did she read them? On the other hand, in so far as possible, we need to learn more about her intimate personal experiences of and experiments with the occult during the 1950s and 60s. This avenue can only be explored by consulting primary sources and through interviews with surviving relatives, friends and associates. In trying to better understand paintings such as *AB EO QUOD*, we should not assume too automatically that Carrington thought of this red room with its frightening demonic presence as a 'creative invention'. Rather, at some level it seems to have belonged to her visual world, the world of her daily experience. We should therefore try to understand, as intimately as possible, what it would mean to inhabit a world like Leonora Carrington's: a world in which the visual blends imperceptibly into the visionary, where nothing is entirely what it seems, and where the demons of madness – or any other creature, known or unknown – may always be waiting just around the corner. It is through such a bewildering world that Carrington steered her life's course, with admirable courage and a delightful sense of humour, in search of the elusive door to Knowledge.

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NOTES

- 1 See e.g. Warner, 'Introduction'; Byatt, 'Introduction'; Noheden, 'Leonora Carrington, Surrealism, and Initiation'. For explicit attention to esotericism/the occult in Carrington's work, see especially Orenstein, 'Manifestations of the Occult'; Chadwick, 'Pilgrimage to the Stars' and 'El mundo mágico'; Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, ch. 4 (chapter 5 is titled 'Esoteric Interests' but contains almost no information on that topic); Arcq, 'Mirrors of the Marvellous'.
- 2 Moorhead et al., 'Leonora Carrington'.
- 3 This was confirmed once again when I met her at her home in Mexico City, on 3 June 2008. We had tea in her kitchen and she showed me her atelier, but refused to say anything about the influences on her work, reiterating her claim that 'it just happens'. I distinctly remember her reaction to the recently published volume *Esotericism, Art, and Imagination* (ed. Arthur Versluis, Lee Irwin, John Richards and Melinda Weinstein), which I gave her as a present: she politely leafed through the collection, but stared long and intently at the cover image (a coloured alchemical image from the University of Glasgow Library, Ferguson MS 6, fol. 4v). It looked to me as if she was making a mental picture of it.
- 4 See Yates, *Giordano Bruno*, fig. 11.

- 5 Chadwick, 'Pilgrimage to the Stars', p. 30.
- 6 Cf. Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, p. 9.
- 7 For an overview, see Hanegraaff, 'Gnosis'.
- 8 Chadwick, 'Pilgrimage to the Stars', p. 32.
- 9 Joysmith, 'The Last Surrealist'.
- 10 De Angelis, 'Entrevista a Leonora Carrington'; cf. Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, p. 15.
- 11 Interview fragment in [no author], *Apropos Leonora Carrington*, p. 37; cf. Hanegraaff, 'From Imagination to Reality'.
- 12 See Noheden, 'Leonora Carrington, Surrealism, and Initiation' (with reference to Carrington's story 'Little Francis').
- 13 Carrington, *Down Below*, p. 163.
- 14 Poniatowska, *Leonora*, p. 327.
- 15 But see e.g. [no editor], *Leonora Carrington: The Mexican Years*; van Raay, Moorhead and Arcq, *Surreal Friends*.
- 16 Poniatowska, *Leonora*, p. 361; cf. Kissane (ed.), *Leonora Carrington*; De Angelis, 'Entrevista a Leonora Carrington'.
- 17 Arcq, 'Mirrors of the Marvellous', p. 100.
- 18 Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, pp. 66, 97; cf. Arcq, 'Mirrors of the Marvellous', pp. 102, 106.
- 19 Bauduin, *Surrealism and the Occult*.
- 20 Conversation between Chadwick and Carrington, New York, April 1984 (Chadwick, *Women Artists*, p. 186).
- 21 Graves, *The White Goddess*, p. 25.
- 22 For the Sidhe/Tuatha De Danann, see Evans Wentz, *Fairy Faith*, ch. IV.
- 23 Pomade, 'Leonora Carrington in Mexico City'.
- 24 Jodorowsky, *Spiritual Journey*, ch. 3.
- 25 Carrington, *The Stone Door*, pp. 25–8.
- 26 Orenstein, 'The Chrysopeia'.
- 27 See e.g. Orenstein, 'Methodology of the Marvelous'.
- 28 Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, p. 82.
- 29 Aberth, *Leonora Carrington*, p. 93. The grammatically correct version would be 'Ascensus Niger', and no text with such a title is known. However, in 1994 the Mexican metal band Argentum released an audiocassette titled *Exothaernium* that includes a track titled 'Ascensus Nigrum'. Mysteriously, it adds the words *aeternam liber nostra animae*, which do not appear with either Ficino or Jung (see next note).
- 30 Jung, *Psychologie und Alchemie*, p. 208 note 119. Jung refers to the section 'Symbola Pythagore philosophi' in Ficino's untitled translation of a series of *Auctores platonici* (Venice: Manutius, 1497). Jung owned an original copy, which is now available online. For the page with the 'Ab Eo Quod' quotation, see <http://www.e-rara.ch/cgi/content/pageview/1868661> (persistent link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-7132>). Aberth's translation '... indeed, this is the beauty of the earth' (*Leonora Carrington*, p. 93) is based on a misreading of *deorum* as *decorum*.