THE SURREALISTIC ART OF PHYLLIS HUTCHINSON MONTROSE: MODERN ART, MINOR HISTORY, AND GENDER IN THE AMERICAN WEST

by

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The Surrealistic Art of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose: Modern Art, Minor History, and Gender in the American West

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Kira van Lil

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose (b. 1928) is a Colorado-based Surrealistic artist who relies upon her dreams and spiritual experiences to fuel her work. While there are varying opinions on when or if the Surrealist movement ended in the mid-twentieth century, Colorado is not typically considered to be a Surrealist or Post-Surrealist center; thus Montrose eludes placement in the traditional art historical canon. Her declaration that she is a true Surrealist raises many issues pertaining to women in Surrealism, modern art in the American West, and the relevance of non-major art in art history. I analyze scholarship across the fields of Surrealism and Post-Surrealism, Regionalism and Post-Regionalism, American Western history, spirituality in the West, women's studies, and the Deleuze-Guattarian theory of the minor. Using Montrose's art and life as a catalyst, I argue that it is time to consider a new discourse that no longer ignores art that falls outside of the historical canon. This acknowledgment creates a more complete picture of art history.

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Introduction

Modern art and the American West are two concepts that are not typically thought suited to be paired together: modern art is usually tied to major cities like Paris and New York City, while the contemporaneous American West was largely perceived to be a place of myth, frozen in time through masculinist stories of "cowboys versus Indians" and the heroic landscapes rendered by Albert Bierstadt or Ansel Adams. It is acknowledged that modern artists could be born in the West, as in the cases of Jackson Pollock and Clyfford Still; it is also acknowledged that the West could serve as a source of inspiration, which is evident in the work of Georgia O'Keeffe and Max Ernst. However, the fact that there were local modern artists creating work of merit in the West is often overlooked in the major art historical discourse, save for the rare case that captured the attention of mainstream scholarship.[1] Yet this local type of artwork does exist, and we must adjust the lens through which we examine this art and consider alternate modes of discourse, for when we look beyond the traditionally accepted centers of art will we create a more complete picture of art history. This is what I want to exemplify with this thesis.

The unifying link throughout my analyses is Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, a Denver-based Surrealistic artist whom I had the opportunity to interview over the course of a year and a half. Her art is not well known outside of Colorado: the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, a Denver museum that specializes in modern Colorado art, owns twenty-five pieces, the largest number of Montrose's works outside of her own collection.[2] The Kirkland

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[1] Vance Kirkland has posthumously received wider recognition with museums all over the world acquiring his art for their collections, including: the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Columbus Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest, and the Vienna Museum of Modern Art (see "Art Around the World." Kirkland Museum, accessed 14 May 2013. www.kirklandmuseum.org/pages/index/aroundTheWorld.html

[2] Alisha Stovall (Registrar at the Kirkland Museum), email message to the author, May 21, 2013.

Museum also held the first ever retrospective of her work in the Spring of 2013.[3] She has also exhibited in various juried and solo exhibitions in Colorado, in galleries in Colorado and New York, and her work are part of over one hundred private collections in the United States and Europe.[4] Her art, attitude, and prose are best described as whimsical, which is perfectly summarized in an artist's statement from 1980:

> Born with surprise in Denver after being plucked unceremoniously from the cosmic matrix. Put brush into paint at the age of seven, creating a confused looking robin sitting on a golfball… I had several left feet, tied knots in the May Pole ribbons, knocked my square dance partners unconscious… I married; found two babies under the cabbages; became ill; sailed my white skiff along the border of life and death; and saw the archetypal tunnel with great light at the end; went back to port and picked up my paint brush. I think life is a tantalizing riddle and painting is magic.[5]

As a self-proclaimed Surrealist working in the American West, Montrose and her work raise many issues pertaining to what defines Surrealism, the role of women artists in the Surrealist movement, and the impact of the American West in interpretations of gender, spirituality, history and modern art. That she is overlooked in mainstream scholarship is partly owed to the fact that she does not fit into traditional definitions of Surrealism or Western American art, and historical scholarship is reluctant to acknowledge artwork outside of the canon. Her Surrealistic art, which was created almost forty years after the commencement of the original Surrealist movement[6], ultimately reveals that the current state of art historical scholarship is flawed because it is still largely incapable of acknowledging artwork that is not mainstream or does not comfortably fit into certain categories.

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[3] See Hugh Grant, *In Thin Air: The Art of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose* (Denver: The Kirkland Museum, 2013).
[4] *Phyllis Montrose*. Pamphlet. ca. 1980. n.p.
[5] Ibid.
[6] The Surrealist movement began with the publication of André Breton's first "Manifesto of Surrealism" in 1924 and dispersed as an organized movement in 1939 when the Surrealists fled the destruction of World War II. Montrose did not begin creating Surrealist work until the 1960s.

The literature of Surrealist leader André Breton established Surrealism as a masculinist movement that was defined by the role of the unconscious in art and other creative endeavors such as literature and theatre. Prior to the 1970s, scholarship by William Rubin, Sarane Alexandrian and others predominantly highlighted the works of male Surrealists while the women associated with the movement, if they were acknowledged at all, occupied a secondary role that positioned them as muses rather than equal contributors. The scholarly focus on women in the original Surrealist movement first started coming to the fore in the mid-1970s with the publication of Gloria Feman Orenstein's revolutionary article, "Art History and the Case for the Women of Surrealism," which called for a revisionary art history on Surrealism and women.[7] Other works from this decade were surveys that identified women artists in the Surrealist movement, such as the publication of *La Femme Surréaliste* by the journal *Obliques* and Lea Vergine's 1980 book *L'Autre Moitié de l'avant garde*. This area of study has gained significant ground since the 1980s with works by Whitney Chadwick, Mary Ann Caws, Natalya Lusty, and Ilene Susan Fort, all of whom sought to build upon the surveys of women Surrealists and their related California cousins, the Post-Surrealists, conducted by previous scholars and focus more on the lives and motivations of the artists.

Scholarship on the postmodern American West is a growing area of study. Patricia Nelson Limerick is considered to be the founder of the New Western History school of thought. The New Western historians move beyond masculinist and heroic accounts of the West, which are exemplified by the foundational work of Frederick Jackson Turner and his "Frontier Thesis," and expand their studies to examine issues of gender, class, race, and ethnicity. Kerwin Lee Klein, Richard Etulain, and Robert L. Dorman are all considered to be New Western historians.

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[7] See Gloria Feman Orenstein, "Art History and the Case for the Women of Surrealism," *The Journal of General Education* 27 (1975): 31-54.

The study of women in the West is also on the rise with works by Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, Virginia Scharff, and Kristin M. McAndrews, though women still receive considerably less attention than their male counterparts. Literature on the landscape, especially prominent in Colorado because of the Rocky Mountains, is positively overflowing both in terms of its prominence as a genre and as an influence on artists. Thomas Brent Smith, curator of Western American Art at the Denver Art Museum, has sought to establish Denver as a center of Western American art.[8] However, there are significant gaps in the literature on abstract art in the Colorado. Hugh Grant, director of the Kirkland Museum, has spearheaded the effort to bring modern Colorado art to the fore, along with local historians Deborah Wadsworth and Stanley Cuba, as well as journalists Michael Paglia and Mary Voelz Chandler. My aim is to build a more complex understanding of modern art in Colorado, particularly Surrealism.

This thesis combines multiple discourses in order to create a more solid foundation for discussing the Surrealistic work of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose. Chapter 1 identifies the problems surrounding modern art created in Colorado with a focus on Surrealism and Post-Surrealism. I propose to incorporate the principles of Regionalism and Post-Regionalism to analyze American modern art created not only in Colorado, but anywhere between the major centers of New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Chapter 2 builds upon the framework created in Chapter 1 and specifically discusses Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, including a brief biography, her spirituality, and art. Chapter 3 delves into the concept of the minor and its applicability to my discussion of modern art in the American West. The theory of the minor was first proposed as a literary concept by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their 1975 text *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. The discourse of the minor questions that of the dominant major

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[8] Thomas Brent Smith et al. *Elevating Western American Art: Developing an Institute in the Cultural Capital of the Rockies* (Denver: Petrie Institute of Western American Art, 2012), 38.

through a political, collective effort and creates a useful framework through which to discuss art and history that is not recognized through mainstream scholarship. The minor is one of Deleuze and Guattari's less studied theories, with many scholars opting to reference their other works such as *A Thousand Plateaus*. Simon O'Sullivan created the first strictly artistic application in *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation*, published in 2006, while Branden Joseph applied the minor as a more historical framework in his 2008 book, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage.* I will focus predominantly on two notable examples of the minor confronting the major: the Fifteen Colorado Artists of the 1940s and the Counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the discourses I employ throughout my paper were or still are considered minor, thus this chapter serves as a bridge to my final argument. Chapter 4 combines two seemingly disparate topics: the tenuous relationship between women artists and the Surrealist movement and how the perceived freedom of the American West altered the roles and expectations for women. These analyses will culminate in a discussion of how the idea of the West affected the art and lives of American women Surrealists. I ultimately demonstrate that the "myth of the West," which characterizes the American West as a place of wilderness and freedom, can be expanded beyond consideration of the physical place to take into account the perception that the West permits people to blaze their own spiritual, creative, social, and emotional paths. Montrose employs this perception to create Surrealistic work that addresses the influences of her psychic and spiritual selves, which in turn affect the way she sees the world around her.

The case-study of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose's work is weaved throughout this thesis, reminding us that there are revealing overlaps in disparate topics of art and historical scholarship that cannot be overlooked. Art history is always evolving in search of new modes of discourse. I

therefore propose that it is time to consider a new vernacular to evaluate local art and thus create a richer and more complete picture of the art historical discipline.

Chapter 1

The Problem of Modern Art in Colorado

The idea of modern art in the American West is a difficult reconciliation, particularly when one is surrounded by realistic paintings of majestic landscapes or stereotypical genre scenes. However, modern art was being created in Colorado in the first half of the twentieth century that demonstrated knowledge of contemporaneous art being created in major centers like New York City and Paris. This thesis seeks to dispel the notion that modern art needed to be created in a major or urban center for it to have relevance in art history. I will first trace a brief history of modern art in Colorado with a specific focus on Denver to highlight its position in the American modern art scene. I will then analyze specifically how Surrealistic ideology is an ideal creative avenue to help regional artists identify their place in art and history decades after the original Surrealist movement. Finally, I will utilize the principles of Regionalism, Post-Regionalism, and New Western history to highlight that academic consideration of the places between major cities like New York City and Los Angeles is a growing concern. I ultimately hope to create a revisionist history that further expands our current knowledge of Surrealism, Post-Surrealism[9] and Western American art, and demonstrate that the modern art that was created outside of the traditionally accepted centers must be studied to create a richer understanding of American art history.

[9] Post-Surrealism was founded by California artists Helen Lundeberg and Lorser Feitelson. It was inspired by the original Surrealist movement and specifically applies to the art created by members of the Post-Surrealist group, not all Surrealist work created after the disbandment of the original Surrealist group. This movement will be explored further in this chapter.

A Brief History of Colorado and Modern Art

In the first half of the twentieth century, the American art scene was struggling to find its footing in the shadow of Europe, which had reigned supreme in art innovation for centuries within Western society. New York City has been regarded as the premiere American art center since the advent of Abstract Expressionism, which did not come to the fore until the years during and after World War II.[10] The biases towards New York City and more recently Los Angeles have been prevalent in analyses of American art. Denver and Colorado Springs were the two major hubs for modern art in Colorado in the first half of the twentieth century. Denver experienced explosive growth at the turn of the century, yet it seemed to spring into existence out of nothing. Historian Gunther Barth describes Denver as an "instant city," which is defined by the unusually rapid expansion of a non-indigenous settlement in an exotic and unfamiliar territory and is transformed into an urban environment.[11] In 1870, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Museum of Fine Art in Boston were founded, Denver was finally connected to the East Coast in 1870 when the transcontinental railroad reached the city.[12] Consequently, Denver—and Colorado at large—was lagging behind in the arts, for even though the scenic Rocky Mountains attracted the likes of Albert Bierstadt and Worthington Whittridge from the Hudson River School, there was little significant art being created in the area at that time, particularly by non-indigenous Colorado artists. Denver was comparatively young, thus it took longer for cultural institutions and general interest in the arts to take root.

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[10] See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[11] Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), xxi.
[12] Smith et al., *Elevating Western American Art*, 16.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Denver was a filthy, crowded, and corrupt city.[13] Known as the Queen City because of its size and mineral wealth, its economy was largely based on agriculture and mining. Robert W. Speer, the Mayor of Denver from 1904 to 1912 and again from 1916 until his death in 1918, was a firm adherent to the City Beautiful movement, which sought to clean and brighten urban environments. In addition to literally cleaning up the city[14], Speer's ultimate brainchild was the creation of the Civic Center, a series of buildings that comprise the cultural heart of the city. These buildings included the City and County Building and the Colorado State Capitol, which surround a park partially encircled by a neoclassical colonnade. *Bronco Buster*, a bronze sculpture by Alexander Phimister Proctor, was installed in Civic Center Park in 1920. It is one of many modern-era sculptures in downtown Denver that depict traditional Western American subjects, which reiterates the predominant local support in notions of Manifest Destiny and the winning of the West.[15] Speer proposed the City Beautiful project in 1904, but its original iteration was not completed until 1919. Distinctly absent from this list at the time was an art museum, for in spite of Speer's political clout, funding for beautifying the city was limited, and interest did not extend significantly to the visual arts.

The Artist's Club, formed in 1893, was the forerunner to the modern-day Denver Art Museum. Most of the artists in the Club, such as Emma Richardson Cherry, Charles Partridge Adams, and Elisabeth Spalding, painted still-lifes, landscapes, and genre scenes. These artworks were regionally specific, as the artists were interested in local subject matter, particularly the

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[13] At the turn of the century, there was an unethical alliance between the members of City Hall and leading business magnates, who ensured that they received disproportionate amounts of money in return for electoral support. See Phil Goodstein, *Denver from the Bottom Up: Robert Speer's Denver, 1904-1920* (Denver: New Social Publications, 2004), 7.

[14] Goodstein, *Denver*, 11.

[15] See also *The Closing Era* (1905) by Preston Powers, which sits in front of the state capitol and depicts a Native American standing over a buffalo, and *Pioneer Monument* (1911) by Frederick William MacMonnies, which is a fountain covered in figures of cowboys, horses, and other Western subjects.

mountainous landscape. Members of the Artist's Club displayed their work in juried exhibitions at the Public Library until they were given a permanent established venue in 1922. However, few of these artists were informed of the trends in art in other parts of the country and in Europe, as communication with other areas was slow and the display of modern art was neither a priority nor a realistic possibility. Colorado's first painter with modern training was John Thompson: trained at the Art Students League in New York with L.W. Hitchcock and the Académie Julian in Paris with J.P. Laurens in 1907, he first came to Denver from New York in 1914 before permanently settling in 1917. He formed a small art colony and taught local artists the tenets of modernism, and is also credited with helping lay the foundations for Santa Fe's *Los Cinco Pintores* group, as he taught two of its members, Jozef Bakos and Walter Mruk. This group was instrumental in establishing Santa Fe and Taos' future art colonies.[16]

In 1919, the Artists Club, known as the Denver Art Association at this time, held the *Twenty-fifth Annual Exhibition of the Denver Art Association*. It came to be notoriously referred to as the "Denver Armory Show" due to its highly controversial nature, similar to that of the Armory Show of 1913 in New York City. The "Denver Armory Show" featured similarly modern works executed in Impressionist, Fauvist, and restrained Cubist styles by local artists. Most Colorado viewers, including artists, were not used to such sensational, abstract work, and, much like the audience of generations past at the Paris Salon of the 1860s, many perceived these artworks to be painterly abominations. One artist-writer, who ironically had a piece in the show, stated in his article for the *Rocky Mountain News*: "Indeed, one might be pardoned for thinking that by accident the rejected instead of the accepted pictures had found their way to the walls of

[16] Mary Motian-Meadows and Georgia Garnsey, *The Murals of Colorado: Walls that Speak* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 2012), 107.

the gallery… modernism is responsible for the eccentricities of the collection."[17] In spite of the fact that many in Colorado rejected these modernist abstractions, there were a few artists who openly embraced them and began incorporating new styles into their work.

In 1928, the Denver Artists Guild was formed and attracted artists who were interested in traditional landscapes or in modern abstractions. Clarence Durham, Gladys Caldwell Fisher, Vance Kirkland, Arnold and Louise Rönnebeck, John Thompson, and Allen Tupper True were some of the better-known artists of the Guild's fifty-two charter members. These artists coexisted and created work along side each other for a time, but in 1948, a long-standing disagreement over what was considered to be good art fractured the group into two distinct halves of traditionalist versus modernist. According to a contemporaneous account, "Members of the new group have muttered such epithets as 'tourist painter, Sunday painter, representationalist, amateur' at their friends and neighbors of the guild. Conservative members of the guild have found the work of the new group to be 'freakish, childish, distorted, radical, silly.'"[18] The traditionalist group remained under the heading of the Denver Artists Guild while the modernist group became known as the Fifteen Colorado Artists[19], though in spite of their ideological differences, they continued to occasionally exhibit together. Vance Kirkland, regarded as one of the most preeminent and well known Colorado artists today, sided with the Fifteen, as he

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[17] Henry Read, "Library Exhibit Called 'Fraud' and 'Monstrosity' by Two Writers," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 20, 1919.
[18] Alex Murphee, "Modern vs. Traditional Painting Inspires Denver Artists' Schism," *The Denver Post*, November 23, 1948.
[19] Don F. Allen, John Billmyer, Marion Buchan, Jean Charlot, Mina Conant, Angelo di Benedetto, Eo (Eva Lucille) Kirchner, Vance Kirkland, Moritz Krieg, Duard Marshall, Louise Emerson Ronnebeck, William Sanderson, Paul K. Smith, J. Richard Sorby, and Frank Vavra.

experimented with Surrealism, Hard Edge Abstraction, and Abstract Expressionism between the late 1930s and the early 1960s before settling on his signature Dot Paintings[20] in 1963.

Roughly around the same time as Denver, an art colony was forming concurrently in Colorado Springs through the Broadmoor Art Academy, which opened its doors in 1919. The Academy, which later changed its name to the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center in 1935[21], attracted numerous faculty members and students alike who were or would become well known in the arts, including Boardman Robinson, George Biddle, and Jackson Pollock.[22] While the Center was highly popular for a time, especially amongst Regionalist[23] painters in the 1930s, it was more artistically conservative and did not emphasize modern styles. This did not hold much long-term appeal for more forward-thinking artists such as Pollock. The Center's influence further waned after the end of World War II, as it was not a degree-granting institution. Abstract Expressionist Robert Motherwell was hired in 1953 as an instructor, thus opening up modernist avenues. However, the so-called "golden age" of the institution—as well as its potential to become a major art colony like Taos, New Mexico—was past. By 1957, the Colorado Springs

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[20] These works are also referred to as Energy in Space Abstractions, as they are often titled after celestial events. See Michael Paglia, "From Landscape to Color Field in Colorado Abstract Expressionism" in *Colorado Abstract: Paintings and Sculpture.* eds. Michael Paglia and Mary Voelz Chandler (Albuquerque: Fresno Fine Art Publications, 2009), 37.

[21] Motian-Meadows and Garnsey, *Murals,* 45.

[22] Boardman Robinson arrived from the Art Students League of New York as an instructor in 1930 and stayed as the director from 1931 until his retirement in 1947. George Biddle was a professor from September 1936 to May 1937 and is well known for his suggestion to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933 that a federal program—the WPA, or Works Progress Administration (changed to Work Projects Administration in 1939)—be created for artists struggling through the Great Depression. Jackson Pollock was a student for a brief time in 1937 and specialized in lithography.

[23] The Regionalist art movement focused on realistic portrayals of rural life and was particularly popular in the 1930s American Midwest. Some of the more well known Regionalists were Grant Wood and Thomas Hart Benton. Regionalist art is related to Regionalist political ideologies, which focus on the shaping power of place on individual identities. My emphasis throughout my paper leans towards this latter definition of Regionalism. See Robert L. Dorman, *Hell of a Vision: Regionalism and the Modern American West* (Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 2012); Timonthy Mahoney and Wendy J. Katz, eds., *Regionalism and the Humanities* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

Fine Arts Center had become the art department of Colorado College. Artists' groups have continued to periodically crop up around Colorado in a collective effort to draw attention to local artists as well as to engage with more progressive styles.[24] In general, artists typically create work independently, which tends to make Colorado art more difficult to define.[25] Surrealistic art, which particularly captivated Denver painters Vance Kirkland, Mina Conant, and Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, is conducive for Colorado artists because the individual artist's vision is at the core of its principles.

Surrealism in Colorado

The artists of Surrealism are primarily concerned with the artist's unconscious and personal aesthetic. This emphasis on the individual artist's vision opens Surrealist discourse to the possibility that it, despite being a historical movement, can exist anywhere and at any time. This section seeks to explore the origins of Surrealism and how its principles not only allowed it to expand into the distinctly American movement of Post-Surrealism, but also enable artists to

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[24] In Boulder, The Prospectors group was founded in 1931 and comprised of five painters—Muriel Sibell (Wolle), Gwendolyn Meux, Virginia True, F.C. Trucksess, and Frances Hoar—who were all members of the Boulder Artists' Guild and faculty at the University of Colorado. The Boulder Artists' Guild was founded in 1926 and, like the Denver Artists Guild before the schism, embraced both traditional and modern styles. It dispersed in the late 1940s. The Boulder Art Association, a separate group, was founded in 1923 and continues today. Members created both modern and Regionalist work (Hugh Grant, email message to the author, May 16, 2013). The Nine was a Denver-based group that was active during the 1960s and included Ann Sink White, George Bethune, Mal Dabny Lewis, Alic Abrams, Rita Derjue, Jutta Golas, William Mead, Nini Geary, Greta Hilb, Blondell Butler, and Ethel Kaplan. These artists worked in a variety of media, including painting, ceramics, jewelry, and sculpture (Grant, email message to the author, May 16, 2013). Gene and JoAnn Bernofsky, Richard Kallweit, and Clark Richert, founded the artist's commune Drop City in the 1960s as well, and in the early 1970s, the group evolved into another collective, Criss-Cross (Jennifer Heath, "Think Big, *Rocky Mountain News*, August 5, 1989, 46-M). These groups will be discussed further in Chapter 3. The Front Range group was founded in Boulder in 1973 during second-wave feminism and sought to give local women artists a chance to exhibit and promote themselves. Their exhibition *Colorado Women in the Arts, 1979* was open to all women in the state (Cydney Payton et al., *Elbows & Tea Leaves: Front Range Women in the Visual Arts (1974-2000)* [Boulder: Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000], 2).

[25] Jane Fudge, "Perceptions of Denver," in *Denver Confluence of the Arts,* ed. Jeff Bradley et al. (Denver: Meridian International, Inc., 1995), 54.

continue to utilize its mechanisms to explore their emotional and creative selves. I propose that Surrealism was the ideal movement for artists in Colorado and the American West overall in the twentieth century because it could be aligned with the political objectives of Regionalism, which drew on how place shapes the identity of individuals.

Surrealism developed in Paris in 1924 out of the highly political and anti-war movement of Dadaism, as through the tenets of self-appointed leader André Breton, who was himself originally a Dadaist adherent.[26] Surrealism was developed around Sigmund Freud's writings on the unconscious and is defined by two key components that are addressed in the first Surrealist Manifesto, published in 1924: the first is the exploration of the unconscious through automatism[27], which lent to highly individual aesthetics for each artist. The second component is the uncanny, which could be accomplished through unexpected juxtaposing elements or the strategy of shock: it was meant to evoke such a strong response in viewers that they too would be connected with their own unconscious. Surrealism can also be described as highly sexualized and inherently misogynistic, as much of Freud's psychoanalytic interpretation of the unconscious

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[26] Surrealism, too, was political in that it was highly critical of the French bourgeoisie. It originated as a literary movement—indeed, the first "Manifesto of Surrealism" listed 19 writers and no artists—and *La Révolution surréaliste* was the first journal in which Surrealist writers and poets could publish their often-controversial work. In its third issue, which was published in April 1925, then-editor Pierre Naville declared that Surrealist art was not possible. André Breton, who did not like anyone assuming any sort of control over his movement, assumed control over *La Révolution surréaliste* in July 1925 and argued that Surrealism could indeed extend to the visual arts through his publication of the article "Surrealism and Painting," which was officially published in 1928.

[27] In the first "Manifesto of Surrealism," Breton defined Surrealism as "psychic automatism in its pure state, but which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern." (See André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972], 26). In art, there are numerous automatic methods such as decalcomania (the application of a medium like gouache to a smooth surface, which is applied to a canvas) and frottage (the creation of a "rubbing" using a drawing utensil). Most of these methods are executed at a rapid pace so as to fully connect with the unconscious.

revolved around sexuality; furthermore, the Surrealist doctrine based on contemporaneous societal expectations and gender roles.[28]

There is no set visual vocabulary for Surrealism, as it is based on the visualization of the individual artist's unconscious. André Breton, an enigmatic and controlling figure, was notorious for the fact that he reserved the right to declare who was and who was not a Surrealist[29], which further added to the confusion of what could be considered "Surrealist." The myriad of Surrealist aesthetics can be categorized into two general groups: abstract and "'dream image' illusionism," also referred to as veristic Surrealism.[30] The Surrealist works of Joan Miró, Jean Arp, Arshile Gorky and Yves Tanguy[31] are abstract in their rendering of the background, imagery, and composition. André Masson also created abstract paintings and was one of the original members of Surrealism, but in the 1930s, he became so disenchanted with Breton's overbearing nature that he aligned himself to Georges Bataille's dissident Surrealists.[32] His works are characterized by

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[28] Many of the women who joined the movement, such as Kay Sage and Leonora Carrington, did so in the mid- to late-1930s, the period in which many scholars believe was not only the height of Surrealism, but also the time that its influence and popularity was just beginning to wane. See Robert J. Belton, "Speaking with Forked Tongues: 'Male' Discourse in 'Female' Surrealism?" in *Surrealism and Women*, eds. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, Gwen Raaberg (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 50-62.

[29] In the "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," published in 1930, Breton asserted his almost-dictatorial role as leader of the Surrealists. He refers to specific artists he has excommunicated, such as Robert Desnos, Michel Leiris, Jacques Prévert, and André Masson (who was actually later accepted back into the group shortly after World War II commenced), indicating their weaknesses and justifying their respective excommunications. Breton also rants for six pages about the ineptitude and vileness of his arch-nemesis, Georges Bataille, who became the leader of the dissident Surrealists because he wanted to push the boundaries of Surrealism into the realms of violence and lewdness (unsurprisingly, excommunicated Surrealists inevitably gravitated towards Bataille). "The Second Manifesto" overall reads as a call to action, asserting the superiority of the orthodox Surrealists and demanding that adherents assess their "degree of moral competence" (Breton, "Second Manifesto of Surrealism," *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 138).

[30] William Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage* (New York: MOMA, 1968), 91.

[31] The work of Miró and Tanguy, along with fellow Surrealists Jean Art and Arshile Gorky, is also described as Biomorphic Abstraction. It is defined by the use of smooth abstract forms based on shapes found in nature. It does not refer to a specific movement, but rather a distinct feature in the work of many abstract artists, including Henry Moore, Constantin Brancusi, and Wassily Kandinsky.

[32] William Jeffett, "André Masson," in *Undercover Surrealism: Georges Bataille and DOCUMENTS,* eds. Dawn Ades and Simon Baker (London: Hayward Gallery, 2006), 118.

Figure 1.1. André Masson, *Battle of Fishes.* 1926. Oil and sand on canvas. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Figure 1.2. Salvador Dalí, *The Lugubrious Game.* 1929. Collage and oil on cardboard. Private collection.

violence and death, as exemplified in his oil paint and sand painting *Battle of Fishes* (see Figure 1.1). As World War II began to rapidly approach France in 1939, Breton overlooked the offense of Masson's rejection of his orthodoxy and embraced his works once more in his 1939 essay "The magical eloquence of André Masson."[33]

The paintings of Salvador Dalí, Kay Sage, Leonora Carrington and René Magritte can be considered as dream image illusionism because their works contain depictions of the real world, such as figures and landscape motifs. However, the representations are fantastical, even hallucinatory, either in their setting or in the juxtaposition of imagery. Dalí's 1929 painting *The Lugubrious Game* (see Figure 1.2) presents the viewer with a desolate landscape filled with hundreds of images, including hats, birds, and disembodied heads. The piece alludes to Dalí's sexual frustration at that time, and the hats and birds in particular reference erotic Freudian symbolism, as the hats are shaped like female genitalia and the birds are phallic.[34] Magritte rejected automatism, preferring to work in a slow and deliberate manner, and consequently Breton had long resisted regarding him as a Surrealist. Breton finally allowed him to participate in a Surrealist exhibition at Galerie Goerman in 1928.[35] The Surrealists were not required to strictly adhere to pure abstraction or pure dream image illusionism. In the case of Max Ernst, he often combined the two by using automatic methods to create the foundation of his painting, then discerned images from the resultant shapes and textures.

Surrealist ideas began spreading beyond Paris in the 1930s, largely through traveling exhibitions and partially through Breton's "discoveries" during his travels abroad. World War II

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[33] André Breton, "The magical eloquence of André Masson," in *Surrealism and Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (Boston: MFA Publications, 2002), 151-154.
[34] Fèlix Fanés, *Salvador Dalí: The Construction of the Image, 1925-1930* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 144.
[35] Michele Dantini, *Modern and Contemporary Art*, trans. Timothy Stroud (New York: Sterling, 2008), 100.

Figure 1.3. Max Ernst, *Gypsy Rose Lee.* 1943. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

was a major catalyst for the spread of Surrealism in America and Mexico, as many of the European artists, who were labeled "degenerates"[36] by the Nazi party and faced prohibition to create their work, if not internment in the concentration camps, were forced to flee the continent.[37] As the European Surrealists created work in their new environments, some of their styles shifted to reflect their new surroundings.[38] Max Ernst, who twice escaped internment by the Nazis, fled to Sedona, Arizona in 1941 with the help of American collector Peggy

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[36] The term "degenerate art" was first used in the 1920s to describe art that did not fit with the conservative politics of National Socialism. Over 5,000 works of art were seized prior to 1937 in an attempt to purge Germany of avant-garde art, which included Cubism, Symbolism, Dada, Fauvism, Expressionism, and Surrealism. In 1937, the traveling exhibition "Entartete Kunst" ("degenerate art"), arranged by the Reich Minister of Propoganda, Joseph Goebbels, made its first appearance in Munich. Seized works were displayed in a crowded, disorderly fashion, and the ultimate goal of the exhibition was to highlight the perversity of Judaism. See Peter Adam, *Art of the Third Reich* (New York: Abrams, 1992), 29, 123.

[37] Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), 73.

[38] See Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron and Andrew Eastman, "Surrealists in Exile: Another Kind of Resistance," *Poetics Today* 17 (1996): 437-451.

Guggenheim, who was also his wife between 1942 and 1946.[39] The work he created during this period demonstrates a clear incorporation of the arid desert scenery of the American Southwest, which also held appeal in a different way for other artists including Georgia O'Keeffe, who permanently relocated to Abiquiu, New Mexico in 1940.[40] Ernst's landscape *Gypsy Rose Lee* (see Figure 1.3), painted in 1943, was executed using decalcomania, a technique he frequently used that involves the application of wet paint on a piece of glass that is pressed to a canvas. Its orange pillar-like hills rising in the background recall the warm sandstone of Sedona's Mongollan Rim. Prior to his arrival in Arizona, his decalcomania landscapes tended to be cooler in tone, but his paintings created during his exile are markedly desert-like and warm.[41] The combination of the creation of new work in a new environment, in addition to the connections fostered with local artists, led Surrealism to take on a life of its own outside of André Breton's control.

Surrealism held a great amount of appeal for artists and collectors alike in America upon its transatlantic arrival. American art collectors and exhibitions were crucial in the spread of Surrealism: Walter and Louise Arensberg were markedly fond of Cubist, Dadaist, and Surrealist work and hosted many visitors and artists at their Hollywood residence, including Man Ray and Max Ernst.[42] One of the earliest major American exhibitions to showcase Surrealist art was at the

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[39] Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile,* 173.
[40] Barbara Buhler Lynes, Introduction, *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico: Architecture, Katsinam, and the Land* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2013), 15.
[41] Werner Spies, "Max Ernst in America: 'Vox Angelica,'" in *Max Ernst: A Retrospective*, eds. Thomas M. Messer and Diane Waldman (New York: The Guggenheim Museum, 1975), 70.
[42] The Arensbergs were a wealthy couple from the East Coast who moved to Hollywood in 1921, largely for health and financial reasons. Their collection of modern art was the largest ever seen on the West Coast at this point and they invited artists and locals alike to come enjoy their collection. Walter became very active in the art community, serving as a board member with the Los Angeles Art Association and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and also created two short-lived organizations, American Arts in Action and the Modern Institute of Art in Beverly Hills, which sought to promote modern art in California. Additionally, the Arensbergs were close with Marcel Duchamp, who stayed with them on

Museum of Modern Art in 1936. *Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism*, curated by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., displayed the work of the European-based Dadaists and Surrealists.[43] This exhibition traveled throughout America in 1937 and received mixed reviews.[44] In 1947, the *Abstract and Surrealist American Art* exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago[45] featured work from 252 American and expatriate artists alike, including Jackson Pollock, Vance Kirkland, and Max Ernst.[46] Peggy Guggenheim's *Art of This Century* gallery in New York City was open from 1942 to 1947 and sought to promote work of modern artists, including Giorgio de Chirico, Wassily Kandinsky, Alberto Giacometti, and Pablo Picasso.[47] These modern art exhibitions in the late 1930s and 1940s featuring Surrealist work as well as the number of American artists who were adapting the Surrealist style were exemplary of the powerful influence that these modern movements were exerting in America.

Surrealism particularly caught on in Southern California due to the popularity of the study of metaphysics, namely Theosophy and New Thought.[48] Consequently, there is a distinct

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numerous occasions, and they accumulated the largest single collection of his work. See Rebecca Peabody et al., *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute and J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 11.

[43] Barr's choice to mix these two groups of work in one venue was met with some trepidation and malaise from the artists themselves, as there was still lingering bitterness of André Breton's decision to use Dadaist ideas towards Surrealist ends. See Anne Umland and Adrian Sudhalter, eds., *Dada in the Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: MOMA, 2008), 16.

[44] Umland and Sudhalter, *Dada*, 17.

[45] Chicago later had its own Surrealist collective: the Chicago Surrealist Group, which was founded in 1966.

[46] Frederick A. Sweet and Katharine Kuh, *Abstract and Surrealist American Art: Fifty-Eighth Annual Exhibition of American Paintings and Sculpture* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1947).

[47] Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 67.

[48] Susan Ehrlich, ed., *Pacific Dreams: Currents of Surrealism and Fantasy in California Art, 1934-1957,* (Los Angeles: Armand Hammer Museum, 1995), 19; Ilene Susan Fort, "The Adventuresome, the Eccentrics, and the Dreamers: Women Modernists of Southern California," in *Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West. 1890-1945*, ed. Patricia Trenton (Los Angeles: Autry Museum, 1995), 89. Interestingly, Wade Clark Roof argues that Southern California is ideally suited to "new religious pluralism," or a higher tolerance of a wider array of religions, because there never was a single religious establishment that held an especially strong presence in the region. He also notes that the area's

spiritual element to Post-Surrealist work that exhibits a search for the inner self. In 1934, Los Angeles artists Helen Lundeberg and Lorser Feitelson developed Post-Surrealism with the creation of the first—and only—Post-Surrealist manifesto. The unpublished manifesto, entitled "Explanatory Text for Six Paintings by Helen Lundeberg," states:

> Post-surrealism is concerned with the creation of order through introspection rather than with the surface organization of introspective subject matter. It differs equally from the expressionist surrealism—which places with caprice, with the unorganized psychic meanderings—and from the cubistic surrealism, which, in organizing subjective material, still clings to the traditional principles of objective-order.[49]

Originally referred to as New Classicism or Subjective Classicism, this new iteration of Surrealism was intended to be a distinctly American interpretation of its European predecessor and focused more on the inner workings of the rational mind. Like Surrealism, the Post-Surrealists focused on relating the objects they painted according to form, position, and function so as to create an unusual composition that revealed a deeper meaning as the viewer explored the piece.[50] Unlike Surrealism, Post-Surrealist art placed women in a positive light rather than a submissive, sexual one, including work by women artists, and work was created in a more conscious, orderly manner. Furthermore, Lundeberg and Feitelson did not submit to Breton's approval; rather, they maintained the theory of the movement but were open to anyone who

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natural beauty and moderate climate are conducive to feelings of awe, harmony and personal enlightenment, which allowed the metaphysical teachings of New Thought, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and Christian Science to thrive. See Wade Clark Roof, "Pluralism as a Culture: Religion and Civility in Southern California," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 612 (2007): 82-99.

[49] Cited in *Pacific Standard Time: Los Angeles Art 1945-1980* (39). Also noteworthy is that "new classicism" is crossed out in the manifesto and replaced with "post-surrealism." Catherine Taft argues that the term "new classicism" is used to define Lundeberg's theoretical stance and is a bold move, as Lundeberg was a woman who sought to re-evaluate the original Surrealist movement from an American perspective.

[50] Ehrlich, *Pacific Dreams,* 20.

wanted to join. By the 1950s, the Post-Surrealists had moved on to geometric abstraction and Hard Edge painting, the latter of which was also a Southern California-based movement.[51]

There has been much debate concerning the end of Surrealism, if it did indeed end at all. More traditional scholars such as Clement Greenberg and William S. Rubin believed that the movement ended at the outbreak of World War II, when the original group broke apart and scattered throughout the Western Hemisphere.[52] Other scholars such as Annette Shandler Levitt believe that the World War II years were the high point of Surrealism, particularly because the artists were finally removed from André Breton's control, but that it ultimately morphed into Abstract Expressionism.[53] Still other scholars such as Sarane Alexandrian believe that it ended with the death of Breton in 1966.[54] While Surrealism has been cited as an influence in the work of some contemporary artists, including Cindy Sherman and John Currin[55], there are some, such as Katharine Conley and Claude Abastado, who believe that Surrealism never ended and that it continues today, either through the continuing use of its principles and aesthetic or through the rise of new movements directly linked to Surrealism such as Post-Surrealism.[56] It is my contention that Surrealism's focus on the individual artist's psyche allows for the movement to live on in different iterations through the artists who continue to use it.

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[51] Andrew Perchuk and Catherine Taft, "Floating Structures: Building the Modern Postwar Los Angeles," in *Pacific Standard Time*, 49.
[52] See Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage*, 1968; Clement Greenberg, "Surrealist Painting," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956,* ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986-1993).
[53] See Annette Shandler Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).
[54] See Sarane Alexandrian, *Surrealist Art* (New York: Praeger, 1969).
[55] See Kirsten Anderson, ed, *Pop Surrealism: The Rise of Underground Art* (San Francisco: Ignition, 2004); Ralph Rugoff, "Post-Surrealist Art in the Logan Collection," in *Supernova: Art of the 1990s from the Logan Collection* (San Francisco: SFMOMA, 2003); Levitt, *Genres and Genders*; Alexandrian, *Surrealist Art*.
[56] See Katharine Conley, *Robert Desnos, Surrealism, and the Marvelous in Everyday Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Claude Abastado, *Introduction au surréalisme* (Paris: Bordas, 1986).

Another later adaptation of Surrealism is known as Visionary art, which combines the aesthetic of Surrealism with esotericism and New Age spirituality. This popular but little-studied genre focuses entirely on the internal vision of the individual artist, who often has no formal education, and features veristic dreamlike imagery. Nevill Drury aligns René Magritte, Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, Paul Delvaux, and Yves Tanguy with Visionary art, arguing that their use of veristic dream imagery, which he believes often includes Qabalistic symbolism, distinguishes them as Visionaries in addition to Surrealists.[57] The fact that Surrealism—already rather malleable as a style because of its lack of set aesthetic and its emphasis on the artist's psyche—was so easily morphed into Post-Surrealism and Visionary art lends credence to the notion that Surrealism is present in different areas of Western art history and its iterations continue to be utilized.

Vance Kirkland can be credited as being one of the first artists to employ Surrealism in Colorado. Unlike most of the other artists in the area at the time, Kirkland was aware of the artistic trends occurring in centers like New York City and Europe; he developed a Surrealistic aesthetic that was inspired by the *scuola metafisica* aesthetic of Giorgio de Chirico. However, like other Colorado artists at this time, Kirkland included elements from nature and the landscape. His 1945 landscape painting *Five Million Years Ago* (see Figure 1.4), which was featured in the *Abstract and Surrealist American Art* exhibition, is visually reminiscent of Salvador Dalí and Yves Tanguy with its amorphous hills and sharp contrast; however, *Fantasy* (see Figure 1.5) from 1948 is quite unique in its depiction of fantastical creatures that seem to be a cross between a bird and a gnarled tree. His adaptation of the Surrealist aesthetic turned

[57] Nevill Drury, *Echoes from the Void: Writings on Magic, Visionary Art and the New Consciousness* (Bridport: Prism Press, 1994), 70-85.

Figure 1.4. Vance Kirkland, *Five Million Years Ago.* 1945. Watercolor and gouache. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 1.5. Vance Kirkland, *Fantasy*. 1948. Watercolor and gouache. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

ordinary still-lifes and landscapes into epic fantasies unlike anything Coloradans had ever seen. Also, similar to other Colorado artists of the time, such as Otto Bach and Charles Bunnell, he did not engage with the psychological ideologies of Surrealism. Kirkland's use of Surrealism was more about experimentation with modern art genres, which allowed him to eventually develop his genuine style of the Dot Paintings. Kirkland's Surrealistic artwork as well as his influence as a teacher helped set the foundation for other Colorado artists to engage with Surrealism.

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose is a Colorado artist who identifies herself as a true Surrealist.[58] Born in 1928, Montrose's work falls outside of the traditionally accepted timeline of Surrealism, as she began seriously painting Surrealistic work in the 1960s. However, she employs the dreamlike aesthetic of Surrealism and refers to her dreams, interpretations of her childhood, and spiritual experiences to create her work. The work of Surrealists such as Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, and Paul Delvaux all have had a profound influence on her own.[59] These influences are evident in *Burning Nest* (see Figure 1.6), which contains stylistic echoes of Dalí and Magritte as well as her implementation of dream image illusionism, making it less of an abstraction and more of a fantastical interpretation of reality. Unlike Dalí and Magritte, Montrose does not imbue her work with Freudian symbolism or overtly sexual imagery. Montrose's difficult relationship with her mother is most apparent in this work: a nest, the symbol of the home, is engulfed in flames; contains two eggs, representative of her and her brother. A cut-out of an eye gazes from above with a single tear streaking down its partial cheek, indicative of the pain of her childhood. In the foreground lies a house with a single window illuminated. The scene is encased in a wooden box that seems to create a frame, which may be an allusion to her

[58] Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.
[59] Montrose, interview with the author, September 3, 2012.

Figure 1.6. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Burning Nest.* 1986. Egg tempera on board. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 1.7. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *The Visitor.* 1965. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

mother's distaste for Montrose's choice to be an artist. A picture erupts out of the wood of the frame, demonstrating that her creativity and vision will always prevail.

The spiritual and conscious nature of Montrose's work would ordinarily identify her as a Post-Surrealist or a Visionary artist, but she adamantly identifies herself as a Surrealist despite the fact that she openly rejects André Breton's restrictions and Surrealist canons, arguing that Breton was a writer and not an artist.[60] Montrose also does not engage with the West in the same way that many of the artists of the Fifteen nor the Regionalists. Rather, she makes use of the perception of the West as a place of freedom and nonconformity to create work that allows her to explore herself. *The Visitor* (see Figure 1.7) is a physical manifestation of one of these forces: her own personal muse, which is depicted as a white, spherical face that is almost reminiscent of the moon. Spheres and eggs, which are symbolic of wholeness and the womb, are commonly featured in her work, reminding us that her muse is a constant presence in her mind and creating a signature image that is specific to Montrose. This persistent inclusion of a specific symbol recalls the similar practice executed by the Surrealists, much like Dalí's ants and Magritte's faceless women[61], but her symbolism is decidedly more demure: in this particular painting, the spheres represent "thought bubbles" that bring her ideas and inspiration.[62]

Montrose's self-identification as a Surrealist in an arguably non-Surrealist time and place presents a conundrum: if an artist's work falls outside of the traditionally accepted framework, how can we identify where it "belongs" in art history? The Post-Surrealist and Visionary art phenomena have demonstrated that an art movement can transfer into a new cultural context and

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Dalí's ants represent a highly sexualized childhood experience that involved biting the head off of an ant-covered bat when he saw a girl he was enamored with. Magritte, on the other hand, often features female embodiments whose faces are covered with a cloth, which is symbolic of his mother's suicide: she drowned herself and her nightgown floated upward, covering her face.
[62] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.

morph into a different manifestation that is still connected to the original movement, and the same can be posited for Montrose. Creating work far away from the leading cultural centers enabled her to rely on her own creativity while being informed by the locality of her environment.

Colorado and the Politics of Regionalism

Scholarship has recently ventured out to consider the periphery and the regions between the major centers. Colorado art becomes significant through the intellectual lenses of Regionalism, Post-Regionalism, and New Western history. It should be noted that Regionalism can also be understood as a conservative, realist art movement that was popular in the 1930s and which focused on rural life, assisting modern American art identify and differentiate itself from its European counterpart.[63] Regionalism as an art movement is generally committed to a figurative and narrative style, thus any Surrealist or abstract features would not be considered part of the Regionalist style. But beyond the established artistic style, the geopolitical ideology, which revolves around ideas of place, regional identity, and self-identification[64], create an impact on art practices. Regionalism, precisely in its lack of connection to other parts of the country and the world, serves to create a voice for the inhabitants of the spaces between the major urban centers. The notion of identifying oneself with one's region is a key factor to consider with Regionalism. Art, therefore, could serve as a vehicle that lends to the creation of a regional identity and fosters a form of self-realization for the inhabitants in that region.

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[63] Richard Etulain, *Re-Imagining the Modern American West: A Century of Fiction, History and Art* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1996), 120; Erika Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism: From Regionalism to Abstract Expressionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 14; Nancy Heller and Julia Williams, *The Regionalists – Masters of the American Scene* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1976), 26.
[64] See Dorman, *Hell of a Vision;* Mahoney and Katz, *Regionalism and the Humanities*, x.

Richard Etulain marks the post-World War II era as the shifting point for Regionalism into Post-Regionalism.[65] Post-Regionalism, which is inherently linked to postmodernism, moves beyond the focus of the shaping power of place on the individual and looks at larger cultural and social concerns. As "easterners" were moving West and as "westerners" were moving into the West's urban environments, the roles of multiple racial and ethnic groups as well as the roles of women were added to scholarly analyses of the New West. For modern American artists, the post-World War II period similarly ushered in an era of inter- and cross-cultural mixing and innovation. The West is believed to have played a central role in the early work of Abstract Expressionists Clyfford Still and Jackson Pollock, both of whom were born in Western states and went on to become successful in major modern art centers.[66] However, while the West likely played a role in the work of these significant artists, very little of what is considered to be their best work was created outside of the Abstract Expressionist centers on the East and West Coasts. Indeed, this is the case with most American art, where the centers are usually identified as New York City and Los Angeles. This raises the following question: what of art *in* the West, created in the spaces between New York and California?

The scholarship of American art history is filled with holes, in part because of the persistent focus on the art created in urban metropolises[67], particularly the two coastal poles of

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[65] Etulain, *Re-Imagining the Modern American West*, 140.

[66] Abstract Expressionism was the first modern American art movement that asserted New York City's place as a major art center. Clyfford Still was born in North Dakota and spent his childhood in Washington and Alberta, Canada before going on to be a successful artist in San Francisco and New York City; Jackson Pollock was born in Wyoming and became the central figure with the Abstract Expressionists in New York City.

[67] There are a few exceptions to the rule that relevant modern art had to be created in a metropolis, the most notable being the art colony in the remote town of Taos, New Mexico. However, it should be noted that Mabel Dodge Luhan, a New York heiress who had previously established herself as an influential patron of the arts in New York and Europe, is credited with turning Taos into a modern art center. Dodge hosted a number of artists and poets, including Ansel Adams, Gertrude Stein, and D.H. Lawrence. Most famously, Dodge's hospitality, as well as the beauty of the arid environment, inspired Georgia O'Keeffe

New York City and Los Angeles. Robert O. Self identifies the two urban centers of the American West as Chicago and Los Angeles, with Chicago having been the most influential Western city in the nineteenth century and Los Angeles representing that of the twentieth century. He demonstrates that the fundamental issue with the very notion of the "metropolis" is that it is typically seen as irreconcilable with the West because the West is still perceived to be distinctly non-urban, an uninhibited and open wilderness.[68] Consequently, any art or history that is created *between* Chicago and Los Angeles and that does not fit into the Western stereotype tends to be overlooked. Colorado—and more specifically Denver—falls into the category of an in-between space, thus scholars often have difficulty acknowledging its place in history. The ideologies of Post-Regionalism and New Western history seek to bring together the disciplines of urbanism, nationalism, and regionalism to help scholars study and analyze Western cities beyond just Chicago and Los Angeles as metropolitan places. I propose that Colorado art can be recognized as unique and relevant in American art history by approaching and analyzing it through the avenues of Regionalism, Post-Regionalism, and New Western history.

Our knowledge of art history will always be fragmentary because of the focus on major centers and available data on a given artist, such biographies, market records, and exhibition information. Art history must expand its scholarly horizons beyond the major art centers, for the declaration of any given artist as "significant" can be both subjective and indicative of the popular trends of the time. The fact that at least one artist—Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose—who is still creating work and has declared herself a Surrealist demonstrates that we must rethink not

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to move to Ghost Ranch, north of Abiquiu, New Mexico, permanently in 1940. See Flannery Burke, *From Greenwich Village to Taos: Primitivism and Place at Mabel Dodge Luhan's* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Lynes and Kastner, *Georgia O'Keeffe in New Mexico*, 15.

[68] Robert O. Self, "City Lights: Urban History in the West," in *A Companion to the American West,* ed. William Deverell (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 412-435.

only how we interpret Surrealism, but also the criteria we employ to deem art to be relevant in light of the ideologies of Regionalism, Post-Regionalism, and New Western history.

Chapter 2

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose is an anomaly in Colorado and Surrealist art because she does not fit into any defined categories: she neither engages in any of the typical areas of painting in Colorado—she does not paint landscapes or purposely incorporate them into her paintings, as is the typical practice of many Colorado artists—nor does her creation of Surrealistic art fall within Surrealism's historical timeline. A "new paradigm artist"[69], she creates work that refers to her personal concerns and vision, not troubling herself to market it or make it appealing for different audiences. This chapter will analyze the motivations behind her art, including her biography, her spirituality, and her interpretation of Surrealism, and it will create a revisionist history of Colorado art that interprets Regionalism and Post-Regionalism from the stance of the artist who connects more with the idea of a place rather than the realities of the place.

Life

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose was born into privilege Denver in 1928. She is the daughter of Robert Hutchinson, a successful real estate agent, and Christine Hoeckel, who emigrated from Germany in 1910. Christine's second cousin, Charles F. Hoeckel, had adopted her at the request of her father, George. Charles was the founder of C.F. Hoeckel Blank Book & Lithography Co., a very lucrative company that made ledgers, checks, and stationary for most banks in the nearby

[69] Artist and art historian Deborah Haynes, who also identifies herself as a new paradigm artist, states that new paradigm artists have little concern for market imperatives, nor for larger social or cultural expectations for production. Deborah Haynes, *Book of this Place: Land, Art, and Spirituality* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2009), xxvi.

states.[70] A great deal of money was left to Christine after his death, which she managed and invested well. Phyllis' brother, Joe, was four years younger, and they shared a close relationship.

Phyllis had an arduous childhood. Her mother was demanding and cold, believing that the best way to raise children was with toughness in order to make them strong. She regularly made Phyllis feel like she was stupid, even though she has an IQ of over 130 and is a member of Mensa.[71] At seven years old, she came down with rheumatic fever and was bedridden for six months. The family moved to Honolulu for a year in the hopes that the sea level climate would cure her ailment. Her mother brought her some paints to keep her occupied, and Phyllis immediately fell in love with painting. When she was well again, she took painting classes for a year at the Honolulu Art Museum. Her parents divorced when she was twelve and her father joined the Navy, serving on the USS Enterprise Aircraft Carrier during World War II. When she was fifteen her mother remarried a man whom Phyllis describes as "a crude drunk"[72]; their relationship was antagonistic and brief, as her mother divorced him four years later, but during that time, a friend of her mother's convinced her to send Phyllis to Westlake School for Girls in Los Angeles. She graduated from Westlake, now known as the Harvard-Westlake School, in 1947.[73]

In her youth, Phyllis was an integral part of Denver's social scene, as her family was prominent in the city and she was quite beautiful. She was a regular fixture at parties of other members of Denver society as well as the theatre, as she was a great admirer of opera and other performing arts. Her mother owned a second home in Central City and they regularly attended

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[70] Grant, *In Thin Air,* 60.
[71] Mensa is an organization for people with a high IQ (the average comes to a score of 130 on an IQ test) and is open to anyone who scores in the 98th percentile or higher on an approved intelligence test.
[72] Grant, *In Thin Air,* 8.
[73] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.

operas at the Central City Opera House. The Opera House had been completely refurbished in 1932 and turned the then-languishing Central City from a borderline ghost town into a bustling mountain destination that attracted tourists and celebrities alike.[74] Her mother pushed her to date wealthy young men so that she could marry well, but she was far more interested in creating art. She attended the University of Denver from the fall of 1947 to Summer 1948, studying English and art. She studied art with John Billmyer, Marion Buchan, Richard Sorby, Charles Ramus, and Margaret Kerfoot, all of whom were prominent Colorado painters. Phyllis remembers Kerfoot as being one of the most unpleasant and demanding professors she ever had, as she insisted that her students produce a painting a day, which did not jibe with Phyllis' meticulous and time-consuming technique.[75] Artist Julio de Diego saved Phyllis during the summer of 1948, after which point she temporarily abandoned formal education. She met her first husband, Robert Montrose, a fellow student at DU, and they married in 1948 when she was twenty. She had her first child, a daughter named Valerie, in 1949, followed by Lisa in 1952. The marriage dissolved in 1955, as did her second marriage to Bob Johnson, which lasted from about 1972 to 1974.[76]

Phyllis maintained an active presence in the Colorado art community, particularly in the 1950s until the early 2000s. The Denver Art Museum accepted her painting *Mardi Gras* for an exhibition in the Denver City and County Building Gallery in 1952. In June 1961, she opened the Central City Art Gallery and featured the work of fellow Colorado artists as well as her own, though she decided to close the gallery in 1963 so that she could focus on her own painting,

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[74] Central City held much appeal for local artists and tourists alike. Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac visited Central City with Denver local Neal Cassady in 1947, and Kerouac later described his impressions of the town in his 1959 classic, *On the Road*: "Central City is two miles high; at first you get drunk on the altitude, then you get tired, and then there's a fever in your soul." (Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* [New York: Penguin], 1976, 53).
[75] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.
[76] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.

being a mother, and other obligations.[77] While she did not graduate with an art degree, she did continue to study with some of her former professors periodically, such as John Billmyer, with whom she took a printmaking class, and Julio de Diego, both in the late 1960s. She frequently traveled abroad in the 1960s to study the art of Renaissance masters and stayed for months at a time in Austria and especially Italy, where she feels a deep historical and spiritual connection. Vance Kirkland, whom she knew very briefly during her time at DU after he complimented one of her drawings, met with her again in the late 1970s at his studio to discuss and praise her work. She served for a time on the art committee for the Jewish Community Center, and she has exhibited in numerous Colorado galleries throughout the years in both juried and solo shows, including the Denver Art Museum's Metropolitan Annual in 1952, 1955, and 1958, as well as Simon Olshwang Gallery and Ahda Ahrtz Gallery in New York.[78] She estimates that she has work in over one hundred private collections in America and Europe.[79] The Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art in Denver, which specializes in modern Colorado art, owns a number of her works and put on the first retrospective exhibition of her work in Spring 2013 that displayed fifty-four years of her work. Much of her art was created in solitude; Montrose considers herself to be a loner, but the most significant relationship she had with another Colorado artist was the one she shared with modern painter and sculptor Angelo di Benedetto.

Phyllis first met di Benedetto when she was about seventeen years old in Central City, where he had a second studio. Di Benedetto was one of the most significant modern artists in Colorado, as he was an original member of the rebellious Fifteen Colorado Artists group and created several major public works throughout the state, including his sculpture in Burns Park in

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[77] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.
[78] *Phyllis Montrose.* Pamphlet. ca. 1980. n.p.
[79] Ibid.

Denver and the 3,000 square foot mural, *Justice Through the Ages* (Figure 2.1), which once graced the underside of Colorado Justice Building until its demolition in 2010.[80] Montrose's visit to di Benedetto's Central City studio was the beginning of a lifelong mentorship and friendship: she took night classes in the early 1950s at the art school he and fellow artist Frank Vavra founded in Denver, and from 1976 to 1978, she served as his chief painting assistant on his Justice Building mural. He greatly respected her as an artist and was immensely impressed by her great technical skill. In *Damaged in Transit (As We All Have in Our Journey Through Life)* (Figure 2.2), a female figure painted in the style of an underpainting, is exposed through a torn canvas of a desert scene. Montrose claims that the woman is a semi-self portrait, an interpretation of herself had she lived in the Renaissance.[81] The torn desert landscape, barren and austere, is not a literal reference to the landscape genre. Rather, it represents a hopeless present.[82] The painting becomes a reflection on the trials she has encountered throughout her life. Her use of *trompe l'oeil* fooled even di Benedetto into attempting to peel the envelope off the canvas, to which he exclaimed, "You bastard!"[83] During their work together on the Justice Building mural, he bestowed his best compliment on her by declaring her "indispensible."[84] Towards the beginning of the 1990s, they had become so close that they discussed the possibility of marriage, but he died in 1992 after battling cancer.

Death has crossed her path several times throughout her life. In addition to having rheumatic fever as a child, at twenty-eight she nearly died again when she suffered from massive hemorrhaging that landed her in the hospital for six weeks and forced her to have sixteen blood

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[80] Tom McGhee, "Asbestos-tainted mural from judicial building will be destroyed," *The Denver Post*, June 11, 2010.
[81] Montrose, interview with the author, June 22, 2013.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.
[84] Grant, *In Thin Air*, 12.

transfusions. One night, when she believed she was inches from death, a voice, which she has heard only three times in her life, asked her if she was ready to die. She thought of her daughters, who were only three and six years old, and she did not want to leave them.[85] Surviving this experience had a profound impact on her spirituality and her art. Eleven years later, when she was thirty-nine, her brother died from malignant melanoma at just thirty-five years old. This was a particularly hard blow, as she and Joe were close and supported one another in the face of the oppression of their mother. Christine, who did not attempt to understand or appreciate her daughter's art until late in life, lived to the extraordinary age of 101 and died in 1995.

Phyllis has become more reclusive in her advancing age and she does not create as much art as she used to, though her rebellious attitude and wit are still perfectly intact. At nearly eighty-five years old, she moves more slowly than she used to and her doctor informed her that she has glaucoma, to which she retorts, "To hell with what he thinks. Jackass."[86] Though physical limitations may be interfering with her everyday life, she relies upon her internal vision and her spiritual self to guide her creativity.

Spirituality

For much of her young life, Phyllis sought spiritual fulfillment. Christianity was impressed upon her at Westlake, which was then an Episcopalian school, but she was not satisfied by it. Her near-death experience when she was twenty-eight had a significant impact on her spirituality and was a catalyst for her renewed search for answers. Around the same time of her hospitalization, she attended a lecture in Denver by a disciple of the guru Paramahansa

[85] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.
[86] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.

Yogananda, the founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF).[87] She was immediately entranced with Yogananda's teachings presented in the lecture, and she soon after read his famous 1946 book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which answered many of her questions about God and spirituality. She signed up for the SRF correspondence program and began practicing raja yoga and meditation, though she chose to not fully join the Denver group, preferring to practice alone at a more reasonable hour. She nevertheless advanced to the point where she could arouse the kundalini with the assistance of the writings of guru Vivekananda. Kundalini is the ultimate goal of hatha or raja yoga, which is characterized by the awakening of the divine consciousness and wisdom through the ascent to the crown chakra.[88] She regularly practiced meditation and yoga for twenty to thirty years,[89] though her advancing age has made it more tiring and difficult. She has recently become more interested in Tibetan Buddhism because its teachings on death reflect her own experience "almost perfectly."[90]

Phyllis' interest in Eastern religious practices in the 1960s was a part of a larger national trend that especially took hold in the American West. Hinduism and Buddhism were first introduced to the American audience during the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago,

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[87] Lola Williamson describes the Self-Realization Fellowship as a Hindu-inspired meditation movement, which is a semi-Christianized version of Hinduism that focuses on self-improvement through meditation and yoga. Yogananda recognized that the most effective way to make Hinduism more palatable for a Western audience was to combine it with aspects of Western religions. In order to assert his role as the sole guru (or leader) over all followers of SRF, he established a mail-order correspondence program that distributes only his words and teachings to interested followers for 12-18 months before initiation into the physical group. There are over 150 formal locations in the US, including Denver, which meet at 10:30 am every Sunday for group meditation. SRF, along with other Hindu-inspired meditation movements such as Siddha Yoga and Transcendental Yoga, became particularly popular in the 1960s. See Lola Williamson, *Transcendent in America: Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as New Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 55-79.

[88] Philip Goldberg, *American Veda: From Emerson and the Beatles to Yoga and Meditation – How Indian Spirituality Changed the West* (New York: Harmony, 2010), 182.

[89] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.

[90] Ibid.

which was associated with the World Columbian Exposition.[91] The first surge in mainstream popularity came during the 1920s, an age of decadence and egocentricity, but the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929 put a damper on the enthusiasm surrounding the notion of self-discovery. The 1950s and 1960s saw a resurge in the popularity of Eastern religions with the advents of the Beatnik and Counterculture movements.[92] Contemporary American religious scholar Wade Clark Roof identified the baby boomer generation behind this resurgence, as they were raised in an environment of economic prosperity and more permissive parenting, which led them to shift their focus more towards self-fulfillment and other internal needs.[93]

In terms of Euroamerican culture, the American West is perceived to be less rooted in Western religious tradition and is instead a mix of ancient indigenous customs and the beliefs of immigrants, many of whom came in search of wealth during the Gold Rushes. There is no singular spiritual identity, but rather more of a conglomeration of beliefs that encourages a deeper search for personal enlightenment. Ferenc Morton Szasz argues that the various religious groups and denominations moved along different paths at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly the missionaries of Christianity, who needed to adapt their teachings to appeal to more groups of people. This made the American West, including Colorado, more fluid in its religious identities.[94] According to a 2008 religious survey conducted by the Pew Forum, Colorado is predominantly Christian at 66% of the population identifying with one of the denominations, while 25% identify as unaffiliated, 2% as Jewish, 1% as Buddhist, less than 0.5%

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[91] Williamson, *Transcendent in America,* 27.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 43-44.
[94] Ferenc Morton Szasz, *Religion in the Modern American West* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2000), 5, 32.

as Hindu, and less than 0.5% as Muslim.[95] There are six SRF centers in state, most of which are located along the Front Range, as well as numerous Buddhist temples and retreats, such as the Shambhala Mountain Center near Red Feather Lakes, the Dharma Sangha Crestone Mountain Zen Center in southwest Colorado, and Tara Mandala Retreat Center in Pagosa Springs.[96] Boulder is home to Naropa University, formerly known as the Naropa Institute, a four-year Buddhist-inspired college founded by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche in 1974. Beatnik poet Allen Ginsberg was one of the first faculty members and initiated the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics.[97] Though a place cannot have a spiritual identity simply assigned to it, as people are the ones who assign meaning, the scenic locales of these retreats may lend credence to Wade Clark Roof's assertion that a region's scenery has an impact on one's feeling of harmony and spirituality.[98]

The establishment of Colorado as a place that may be more conducive to differing paths of spiritual growth set the foundation for Phyllis' own exploration. She claims that she was already sensitive to psychic vibrations, which also includes telepathy, and after she began practicing meditation and yoga, this sensitivity was amplified.[99] Her paintings are inspired by her visions and dreams; therefore, they may have been correspondingly impacted by her spirituality. She does not purposely include any spiritual symbolism, though she frequently incorporates spherical shapes, which are representative of wholeness, celestial bodies, and the womb. She characterizes the spheres in *The Visitor* (Figure 1.7) as "thought bubbles" brought to her by her

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[95] "Religion & Politics '08: Colorado," The Pew Research Center, 2010, accessed 17 May 2013. religions.pewforum.org/maps
[96] Denver, Boulder/Lyons, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Pueblo, and Grand Junction. See "Colorado Groups," SRF Denver, accessed 16 June 2013. www.srf-denver.org/rollback/colorado_groups.html
[97] "History of Naropa," Naropa University, 2013, accessed 16 June 2013. www.naropa.edu/about-naropa/history/index.php
[98] Roof, "Pluralism as a Culture," 89.
[99] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.

muse. In *Tightrope Walker* (Figure 2.3), a particularly colorful piece that seems to send the viewer cascading towards heaven, the sphere by held by the acrobat exemplifies fortune or faith. The figure steps forward towards a faint, thin wire that could break at any moment, yet her expression is so gleeful and confident that there seems to be little doubt that she could possibly miss her step. Though Phyllis no longer practices yoga and is broadening her engagement with Eastern religions, the bulk of her Surrealist work was created at the height of her spiritual practices, specifically yoga, from the 1960s through the early 1990s.

The Surrealism of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose

Phyllis did not immediately start creating Surrealist work when she began painting. Many of the pieces she produced when she was taking classes and especially before 1960 were created from life and included landscapes and portraits. Her watercolor painting *Nevadaville* (Figure 2.4) was painted during a summer in which she took a class in Central City with her least favorite professor, Margaret Kerfoot. It demonstrates her great technical skill, but it also contains a sense of urgency, which can be seen in the roughness of her lines that are smoothed out in many of her later works. Her woodcut print *Woman Praying* (Figure 2.5) was completed in 1968 when she was taking a class with John Billmyer and was featured on the cover of the DU literary magazine, *Foothills.*[100] Though she created occasional non-Surrealist pieces into the 1970s, her transition to Surrealism appears to have occurred around the same time she began practicing meditation and yoga, which was also in close proximity to her near-death experience.

Her shift towards Surrealism at this time demonstrates a deep desire to connect with her spiritual and psychic self. Montrose primarily evokes the Surrealist notion that inspiration for artwork comes from dreams or the unconscious: she claims that she will go to bed at night with

[100] Grant, *In Thin Air,* 25.

an idea in her head for a painting and uncertainty for its execution, which indicates a degree of premeditation, then pulls resultant images from her dreams to solve her conundrum.[101] She uses mainly tempera paint and oil glazes on panel to execute her work, as she likes the luminosity of the colors, and a single painting can take weeks or months to complete.[102] While Phyllis is a self-professed Surrealist, she does not follow much of the traditionally accepted Surrealist doctrine. While she is familiar with the Manifestoes, she outright rejects André Breton's position of authority in the movement, arguing that he was an intellectual and not an artist. Rather, Montrose chooses to focus on the idea that Surrealist art is based on the artist's intent and interpretation of his or her own unconscious. She rarely, if ever, includes sexual symbolism, a staple of traditional Surrealist works, as its doctrine was founded in part on the psychoanalytic writings of Sigmund Freud. Her deliberate and slow method also go against Breton's requirement that art should be created via automatism, such as the works by Max Ernst and Joan Miró, which is unplanned and rapidly executed.[103] Her semi-premeditation and unhurried painting style recalls the practice of the Post-Surrealists, who stressed the importance of the cognizance and methodical execution.

In both method and style, Phyllis's painting most echoes that of René Magritte, as Magritte's works were created in an equally methodical and time-consuming manner.[104] Her vivid skyscapes such as those in *The Traveler* (Figure 2.6) and *Cave of the Heart* (Figure 2.7) are reminiscent of Magritte's skies, such as that depicted in *The False Mirror* and *The Castle of the Pyrenees* (Figure 2.8). Unlike Magritte, whose subjects have hard edges in their painstakingly precise execution, *The Traveler* and *Cave of the Heart* are softer: the clouds have an amorphous

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[101] Montrose, interview with the author, September 13, 2012.
[102] Montrose, interview with the author, May 11, 2013.
[103] However, as demonstrated by Breton's eventual acceptance of Magritte, who was also slow and methodical in his Surrealist paintings, Breton was not strict on this: he was more interested in the artist's inner vision and interpretation of the individual psyche.
[104] Rubin, *Dada, Surrealism, and their Heritage*, 91.

quality to them, as though they were pulled from her imagination rather than reality, and the stones and sand are equally velvety in their renderings. Both paintings also exhibit a distinct feeling of loneliness between the isolated desert settings and the separation between the inanimate subjects from the rest of the setting.

Phyllis is also fond of employing *trompe l'oeil* in many of her works, similar to that in Magritte's 1929 painting *The Treachery of Images* (Figure 2.9), which depicts a realistic pipe while reminding the viewer that it is, in fact, not a pipe. Phyllis seems to be aware of this stylistic similarity, as evidenced by her 1980 work, *Still Life with Magritte* (Figure 2.10), which includes a faithful re-creation of his famous 1964 painting, *The Son of Man* (Figure 2.11) and realistic inclusions of two of Magritte's favorite motifs: clouds and apples. She also included a postcard of an unidentified abstract painting, which injects more color into the piece and prevents the work from becoming too figurative or literal.[105] The wooden background and organized composition in *Still Life with Magritte* additionally recalls the works of John F. Peto and William Harnett, two American *trompe l'oeil* painters whose late nineteenth century works received renewed interest and study in the 1940s.[106]

Phyllis's biography parallels that of fellow female Surrealist Leonora Carrington. Both women were born into wealthy families, which had similar expectations when it came to their privileged daughters: young women of the mid-twentieth century were expected to marry well, maintain the home and uphold the dignity of their family name. Carrington and Montrose rejected these expectations through Surrealism, with Carrington abandoning her family in 1937

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[105] Montrose, interview with the author, June 22, 2013. Phyllis thought that the piece might be attributed to Mark Rothko, but it shares more compositional and stylistic similarities to the works of Maurice Estève and Patrick Heron, as well as the works of Jean Hélion in the 1930s.

[106] Olive Bragazzi, "The Story of the Rediscovery of William Harnett and John Peto by Edith Halpert and Alfred Frankenstein," *American Art Journal* 16 (1984): 51-65.

to join the Surrealists in France[107] and Montrose's persistence to paint against her mother's wishes. Both women also question the patriarchy of the art world: Natalya Lusty argues that Carrington imbued *Inn of the Dawn Horse* (Figure 4.1) with a subversive message about sexuality with the inclusion of the hyena, a sexually ambiguous creature[108]; Phyllis, on the other hand, does not identify herself as a feminist[109], yet she does question the roles of men in both art and life.

Like Carrington, Claude Cahun, and other women Surrealist forebears, Phyllis struggled in a world that was geared towards the success of men and shares stylistic similarities with many female Surrealists and Post-Surrealists[110], largely through her frequent use of direct or indirect self-references.[111] She seeks to empower herself through her painting and chooses to focus on imaginative figures over which she has complete control rather than literal references to reality. In her painting *Waiting for St. George* (1977), which depicts a sexually ambiguous figure that she identifies as a woman holding a dragon over her head, she exclaimed, "Women are in

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[107] Carrington also became romantically involved with fellow artist Max Ernst, and they lived and worked together for a time in Saint Martin d'Ardèche in Southern France.
[108] Natalya Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 41. This particular piece, as well as other evidence of Carrington's transgression, will be discussed further in Chapter 4.
[109] Phyllis believes that issues surrounding feminism have more to do with biology, which is something she argues cannot be denied (interview, September 13, 2012). Conversely, Carrington became one of the founders of the Women's Liberation Movement in Mexico during the early 1970s. Whitney Chadwick argues that the works she created during and after the 1940s—while she was living in Mexico and after the dissolution of her relationship with Max Ernst—demonstrate a definite interest in women's concerns by focusing on issues of femininity, motherhood, and identity (see Whitney Chadwick, "Leonora Carrington: Evolution of a Feminist Consciousness," *Woman's Art Journal* 7 [1986]: 37-42).
[110] These artists include (but are not limited to): Leonora Carrington, Claude Cahun, Dorothea Tanning, Helen Lundeberg, Frida Kahlo, Francesca Woodman, and Alice Rahon.
[111] Whitney Chadwick argues that Surrealism allowed women to explore their identities, psyches, and sexuality like no previous movement ever had, which led to the use of self-references (see Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement,* 66). However, Robert J. Belton counters this claim by arguing that, while male Surrealists used women as muses for their art, women joined the Surrealist movement towards the end of its height in the late 1930s and often after their male partners had died or left them, thus the only source of inspiration many of them had was herself (see Belton, "Speaking with a Forked Tongue," 58).

control."[112] She is equally critical of women who flaunt themselves shamelessly, such as the woman in *The Hunting Party* (Figure 2.12). This piece is based off of a real experience in which Phyllis watched other women at a cocktail party who were using their bodies to attract the attention of young men. Because these women so eagerly paraded themselves, seeking a man to fulfill their worldly desires and falling prey to society's expectations of women, she argues that they denied their own sense of womanhood.[113] The obsession with the material may be more than a denial of femininity, but rather a denial of one's identity because of the focus on things outside of the emotional and spiritual self.

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose's goal with her work is to educate the uneducated about the myriad of unseen things that constantly surround us.[114] Surrealism provides the ideal avenue to reach this goal, as it seeks to illuminate the unseen world of the unconscious. Her use of color, realistic technique, and lack of overtly jarring imagery makes her iteration of Surrealism both palatable and relatable for the Colorado audience. Though she is contradictory and rejects the notion that she is a part of Colorado, she is connected to the region through the new myth of the West, which builds upon the belief that the region is relatively freer of Euroamerican traditions and thus more open to the development of the emotional and spiritual selves.

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[112] Montrose, interview with the author, September 13, 2012.
[113] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.
[114] Montrose, interview with the author, September 13, 2012.

Figure 2.1. Angelo di Benedetto, *Justice Through the Ages.* 1976-78. Mural. Destroyed 2010.

Figure 2.2. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Damaged in Transit (As We All Have in Our Journey Through Life).* 1981-84.Tempera and oil glazes on board. Collection of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose.

Figure 2.3. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Tightrope Walker.* 1978. Tempera and oil glazes on board. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

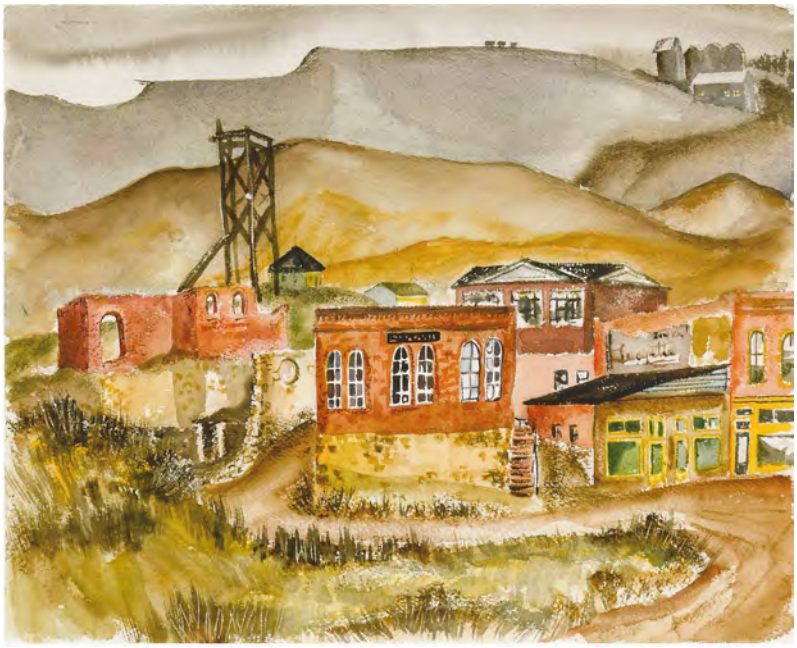

Figure 2.4. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Nevadaville.* 1948. Watercolor. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 2.5. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Woman Praying.* 1968. Woodcut. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 2.6. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *The Traveler.* 1989-90. Tempera and oil glazes on board. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 2.7. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Cave of the Heart.* 1989-90. Oil on linen. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

Figure 2.8. René Magritte, *The Castle of the Pyrenees.* 1959. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Figure 2.9. René Magritte, *The Treachery of Images.* 1928-29. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

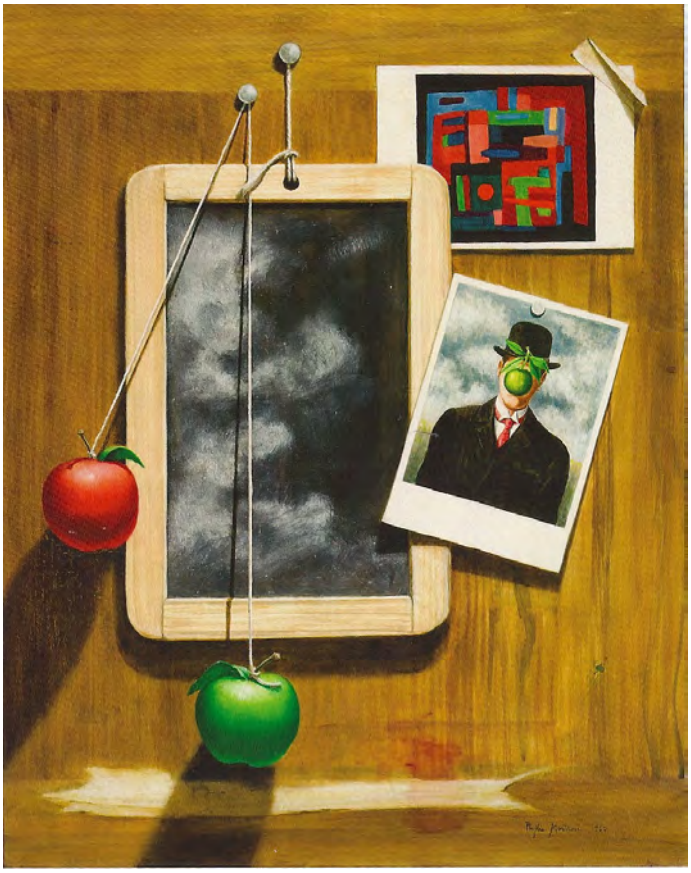

Figure 2.10. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Still Life with Magritte.* Tempera and oil glazes on board. Collection of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose.

Figure 2.11. René Magritte, *The Son of Man.* 1964. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

Figure 2.12. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *The Hunting Party.* 1969. Tempera and oil glazes on board. Collection of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose.

Chapter 3

The American West and the Minor History

Perhaps the biggest hurdle facing our attempts to seriously analyze modern American art created outside of the major centers of New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles is that it is difficult to move beyond a "major" vernacular to discuss these works. This vernacular cannot be applied to the non-major because it does not take into account other factors, such as the specificity of a place, that lie beyond the major centers. Consequently, a major discourse tends to reduce anything that falls outside of the major to the realm of unoriginal banality. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Regionalism looks beyond the major centers and focuses on the individuals' rights to assert their relevance in in-between spaces. In this regard, it is considered a minor discourse. In this chapter I will draw on the theory of the minor and apply it to issues in discussing the American West. I will first define the origins of the notion of the minor in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who demonstrate that the major and minor are inherently linked and cannot exist without the other. I will then apply my analysis to Frederick Jackson Turner's 1893 thesis "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," a seminal text in the study of the American West that unintentionally marginalized the region because of its emphasis on the exceptionalism of the West. I will next examine two instances in Western history—the Fifteen Colorado Artists in the 1940s and the Counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s—from the perspective of the minor before finally turning my attention to the role that can be attributed to Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose as a part of a minor art history. Ultimately, the concept of the minor, which is often overlooked in light of Deleuze and Guattari's other theoretical achievements such as the non-hierarchical model of the rhizome, provides a new lens through which to examine the American West and non-major art.

The Significance of the "Minor"

The theory of the minor does not use the word "minor" in its literal sense, which implies lesser significance; rather, it indicates that a minority of people can construct an alternate and critical mode of discourse from within the major. The minor was a literary concept first proposed in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in 1975. They argued that Franz Kafka, who died in 1924 and saw few of his works published during his lifetime, deliberately wrote in Prague German[115], a dialect spoken primarily by the Jews of Prague, not only because he lived in Prague and was Jewish, but because he wanted purposely to engage other marginalized Jews and rebel against fascism.[116] This could define his work as "minor literature."

Deleuze and Guattari identify three key characteristics of minor literature: the first is the deliberate use of a sub-language or dialect of a major language to deterritorialize the major, which Kafka achieved by writing in Prague German in spite of the fact that he was well versed in "high" German.[117] Second is the inherently political nature of engaging the minor. They argue that every action is political, though when part of a major discourse an individual can be easily

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[115] While Deleuze and Guattari emphasize his use of Prague German, as it is exemplary of the idea of the minor because it is a dialect within a major language, Kafka also wrote in Yiddish, Czech, and Hebrew. Utilizing the linguistic theories of John J. Gumperz, Charles A. Ferguson, and Henri Gobard, Deleuze and Guattari argue that Kafka employed a tetralinguistic model in which his four languages can be identified as vernacular (Czech), vehicular (Prague German), referential (Yiddish), and mythic (Hebrew). See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature,* trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 23-24.

[116] This particular era of fascism is linked to the rise of National Socialism in Germany, starting in 1914 with the start of World War I. The emphases on German values and ethnic solidarity furthered the antagonism towards the Jewish population and became the cornerstones of Nazism. See Martin Kitchen, *A History of Modern Germany, 1800-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 205.

[117] According to Richard T. Gray, Kafka's parents encouraged their children to speak "high German" in spite of the fact that they likely spoke a Yiddish dialect at home. German was the language of social mobility and would not inhibit their children from seeking later opportunities they would otherwise be marginalized from due to their Jewish heritage. See Richard T. Gray, *A Franz Kafka Encyclopedia* (Westport: Greenwood, 2005), 147-48.

overlooked because one's actions or concerns cannot be distinguished from the larger milieu. In the minor, the focus is able to turn more towards the individual because of the minor's smaller scale. Finally, the minor is defined through its collective nature, for it is only through strength in numbers that the major can be deterritorialized. The concerns of multiple individuals can be linked together[118] to create a set of values that define the minority. Additionally, "talent" is neither abundant nor necessary in minor literature because its lack allows the creation of something more relatable to a wider population than a masterwork. The focus on the major perpetuates exceptionalism and suppresses the disenfranchised minority; however, if a piece of literature is more relatable, it is all the more able to spark a revolution.

The theory of the minor is not without its flaws, for although it addresses sociopolitical issues, it does not specifically address postmodernist issues of race, ethnicity, or gender. It also does not address socioeconomic factors that complicate the creation and reception of work created across classed divides. The minor may have started as a literary phenomenon, but its ideologies are applicable anywhere there is a perceived binary of superior versus inferior, assisting in eliminating the boundaries of the binary. The major and the minor are inextricably linked and cannot exist without the other: while the minor employs the "language" of the major to a lesser degree than the major itself, the major is often informed by the minor, thus propelling it towards the next paradigmatic shift. This shift has been especially evident in the cases of postcolonialism and feminism[119] in which scholars recognized that too many people—namely

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[118] In 1980, Deleuze and Guattari further built upon the notion of interconnectivity with *A Thousand Plateaus*. They propose we examine history as a rhizome, which is modeled like a continuous system of roots with no beginning or end on a series of non-hierarchical plateaus. The arborial metaphor, which literally references a tree, is based on a hierarchical model, much like that of the "major" in *Kafka*.

[119] Pelagia Goulimari examines Alice Jardine's 1984 article, "Woman in Limbo: Deleuze and his Br(others)," which argues that the discourse of the minor can be problematic when applied to feminism because Deleuze and Guattari not only had no female followers in the US at that time (and only one

indigenous or local populations and women, respectively—were stripped of power and overshadowed by white, masculinist beliefs. While there is no definite way to determine whether a minor discourse will eventually become major, feminism and postcolonialism in particular address the issues of previously marginalized[120] peoples who came together with a strong enough voice that could no longer be ignored. The scholarly study of the American West is gaining strength in academia, though it is still overlooked in the greater study of American history, which still tends to focus on major historic events in commonly acknowledged centers. In this regard, the history of the American West is a minor history that is in the process of becoming part of the major history.

The West as Minor

The mythology of the West has not yet been completely abandoned, especially in pop culture, which paints the West as endless mountains, John Wayne on a horse, and Indians belting out battle cries as they storm a fort. This perception has affected the analysis of the West from a serious scholarly standpoint, marginalizing it in academia. Consequently, a different vernacular must be employed when discussing the West in order to reduce the sense of mythological exceptionalism. This can be provided by the minor. Deleuze and Guattari's model of the rhizome has been more commonly employed in analyses of the West[121], as it is not a reductive

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French feminist), they also wrote from a masculinist perspective. See Pelagia Goulimari, "A Minoritarian Feminism? Things to Do with Deleuze and Guattari," *Hypatia* 14 (1999): 99.

[120] I use the term "marginal" as synonymous with "minor" because the minor can be seen as peripheral in postcolonialist discourse: it is outside the major and typically regarded as inferior. Prior to postcolonialism, colonialist ideology regarded centers to be strongholds of power and the periphery—and consequently its marginalized peoples—to be inferior or unworthy of study.

[121] See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Marco Abel, "Speeding Across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 48 (2002): 227-256; Neil Campbell, *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational, Global, Media Age* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008);

hierarchical model and enforces a sense of connectivity between peoples, but the discourse of the minor has generally been passed over as an applicable mode of analysis. However, the minor proves to be a useful framework when discussing the American West: the "language" of the West, while built upon that of the older, more established East Coast centers, is different because social and cultural concerns specific to the circumstances generated a different vocabulary and diction; second, as demonstrated by Regionalism and Post-Regionalism, the focus on a group of individuals identifying themselves through the notion of place is a political act; and third, inhabitants of the West produce a collective solidarity to assert their relevance to the East Coast centers.

For much of American history, the West has been considered exceptional[122], an area that defies the Eurocentric understanding of place. The West was long identified as the frontier[123], which in contemporary geographical terms is defined by a population of less two people per square mile. This singled it out as a place of wilderness and freedom. After the 1890 US Census, which determined that Euroamericans had reached their maximum expansion beyond the original thirteen colonies and were occupying all of the area between the East and West Coasts, the frontier was declared closed.[124] In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner published his seminal work, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," a very triumphalist interpretation of how

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Catrin Gersdorf, *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert: Landscape and the Construction of America* (New York: Rodopi, 2009).

[122] Gary J. Hausladen identifies three dichotomies when discussing the American West: the West as a separate or exceptional region as opposed to an inherent part of national culture; the real West versus the mythic West; and the West as region as opposed to the West as a cultural process. See Gary J. Hausladen, *Western Places, American Myths* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 2.

[123] "Frontier" is now considered to be a highly politically charged word, particularly in the New Western history school of thought, as it embodies archaic notions of Manifest Destiny. See Kerwin Lee Klein, "Reclaiming the 'F' Word, or Being and Becoming Postwestern," *Pacific Historical Review* 65 (1996): 179-215.

[124] Interestingly, according to the 1990 US Census, 132 counties (mostly in Western states) had populations of two or less, thus the "frontier" never really closed. See Mahoney and Katz, *Regionalism and the Humanities*, xiii.

conquering the so-called frontier defined the collective American spirit: Turner argues that the frontier released Americans from archaic European-based beliefs.[125] His thesis was a reflection of how people perceived the West to be a place of uninhibited, open wilderness and significantly impacted the way the West was analyzed for decades. He of course completely ignored women's roles in the frontier, as well as issues of race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and "The Significance of the Frontier" is now criticized by American Western historians for its narrow modernist scope. However, this false mythologization of the West[126], written in a vain attempt to assert America's relevance to the perceived technological and cultural dominance of Europe, consequently narrowed the spectrum of analyses through which the West could be examined.[127] Indeed, it is my contention that the focus on the myth of the West affected the art of the West: people overall tend to be more willing to admire a heroic landscape that realistically portrays the Maroon Bells in Aspen rather than an abstracted equivalent because styles such as Cubism, Surrealism, and Abstract Expressionism came from acknowledged artistic centers and were thus foreign or inapplicable to the art of Colorado.[128]

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[125] Turner's assertion that the conquering of the frontier defined the "American" people countered that of Theodore Roosevelt, who alleged in his six-volume series, *The Winning of the West*, that the battles between trans-Appalachian pioneers and Native Americans led to the forging of a new people: Americans.

[126] This mythologization focuses only on the accomplishments of white Euroamericans, which includes the conquering of Native Americans. However, Euroamericans did manipulate the beliefs and actions of the Native Americans to further enhance the perception of the West as untamed and free.

[127] Elizabeth Cunningham argues that the American dream of westward expansion evoked the desire for artists to portray celebrate the wilderness. See Elizabeth Cunningham, "Unmasking the Myth: The Deeper Meaning in Literature and Art of the American West," in *West, West, West: Major Paintings from the Anschutz Collection* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991), 21.

[128] The outrage against the so-called "Denver Armory Show" as well as the schism of the Denver Artists Guild and the Fifteen Colorado Artists makes this bias especially evident because the abstract styles were so radical and jarring. These styles did not glorify the landscape in ways that the Hudson River School did, but rather flattened it. Critic Thomas Craven, who is remembered as the Clement Greenberg of Regionalism, particularly disliked European-bred abstraction because he believed it to be elitist, whereas Regionalism was clearly American and less visually disrupting. Similarly, Regionalist artist Thomas Hart Benton vehemently rejected modern styles even after studying in Europe.

The Fifteen Colorado Artists embraced the modern styles created outside of Colorado and rejected the traditionalist insistence by other local artists and the public that Colorado art should be executed in a realistic manner. Active only in Denver, they went against what was dominant in Colorado art—the landscape[129], genre painting, or still-life executed in an academic realist style—and engaged with modern styles innovated elsewhere not only in an effort to learn something new, but as an act of critique. The Fifteen are exemplary of the minor: they were a minority who applied major modern styles—Fauvism, Cubism, Surrealism, et cetera—in a separate and distinct manner; they were political[130] because they were critical of both the expectation for traditionalism in Colorado and the abstract styles of modern centers, choosing to combine the two so as to create something that reflected their own artistic concerns; and they functioned as a collectivity because they maintained their solidarity as a group, representing the disenfranchised artists of Denver while not standing out as supremely exceptional in the greater American art scene. The landscape still played a key role in many of their works, as did the artistic and political ideologies of Regionalism. These trends can be attributed to two factors: the politics of Regionalism, in which a person seeks to identify his- or herself through an active engagement through the surrounding place; and Regionalist art's visual qualities, which critic

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[129] Publications on Colorado art—and American Western art at large—often tend to focus on the landscape as not only being the defining genre of the state, but also the main draw for artists. While I do not disagree with this observation, I find it interesting that the landscape tends to be the sole focus. See Peter Hassrick, ed., *Colorado: The Artist's Muse* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Smith et al., *Elevating Western American Art*; Paglia and Chandler, *Colorado Abstract*; Peter E. Pool, ed., *The Altered Landscape* (Reno: The Nevada Museum of Art, 1999); William H. Truettner, ed., *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920* (Washington, DC: The National Museum of American Art, 1991).

[130] If we apply Erika Doss's argument regarding the liberal political nature of Abstract Expressionism versus the conservative nature of Regionalism (see Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism,* 2-3), it could be argued that the Fifteen's use of different modern art aesthetics is a rebuttal to the politically conservative nature of 1940s Colorado. However, it should be noted that many of their works still contained a Regionalist aesthetic and ideas, this could be due to the fact that the artists wanted to create work that was still relatable to a Colorado audience.

Thomas Craven argued were distinctly American and less elitist than abstraction.[131] Regionalism as an art movement was more relatable, particularly in Colorado, where resistance to modern art was still strong: it served as a bridge between realism and abstraction and created a place for many American artists who were struggling to create an identity in the shadow of the dominance of Europe.[132]

The work of Louise Emerson Rönnebeck, an original member of the Fifteen, demonstrates a great interest in the West. She was fascinated in the many physical changes the West underwent in the 1930s, particularly the collapse of the coal industry and its accompanying ghost towns. Her medium of choice was fresco painting, which was still predominantly executed by men at that time, though she was technically proficient at oil, tempera, and watercolor as well. Her work exhibits a distinct Regionalist tone[133], and her use of contour is stylistically reminiscent of fellow Regionalists Thomas Hart Benton and Lamar Dodd. Rönnebeck found both inspiration and success in the West, and her choice of subject matter was often controversial, as was the case with *The People vs. Mary Elizabeth Smith* (see Figure 3.1). Smith,

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[131] Heller and Williams, *The Regionalists,* 29; Thomas Craven, "American Men of Art," *Scribner's* 92 (1932): 23-28.

[132] Erika Doss identifies Regionalism as a politically conservative antithesis to the liberal Abstract Expressionism, which further asserted America's identity as separate from that of Europe (Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism,* 56).

[133] Rönnebeck personally identified herself as a modern artist, as evidenced by her membership with the Fifteen, yet Linda Anne Sivertson argues that her work was more conservatively Regionalist in that she perpetuated popular stereotypes about the West, including Indian wars and the pony express (See Linda Anne Sivertson, *Colorado Women Artists of the New Deal* [Thesis, University of Colorado Denver, 2008], 60).

Figure 3.1. Louise Emerson Rönnebeck, *The People vs. Mary Elizabeth Smith.* 1936. Oil on canvas. Private collection.

a young Denver mother, was accused of intentionally murdering her husband in 1936 after he threatened to leave her, thus bastardizing their young son by stripping him of his legal name. Rönnebeck attended the trial and felt intense sympathy for Smith, as she too was a mother and gladly put her art second to her children. Smith is depicted sitting on the stand, frail and distraught. Her baby, Rodney, is just visible in the lower left, cradled in his grandmother's arms. According to accounts of the trial, everyone in the courtroom at one point was in tears because of her vehement desire to love and protect her son by any means necessary, including murdering her wayward husband.[134] Smith was ultimately acquitted by reason of temporary insanity, a victory that can be felt in Rönnebeck's emotional work. The passionate emotions are evident in the intense gazes of all figures in the courtroom, who stare in rapt attention at Smith,

[134] Betsy Fahlman, "Louise Emerson Rönnebeck: A New Deal Artist of the American West," *Woman's Art Journal* 22 (Autumn, 2001-Winter, 2002): 12-18.

empathizing with her motherly pain. The piece is not executed in cold tones, which create a sense of foreboding, but warm, reddish tones, assuring the viewer that all will end well.

If Rönnebeck and the Fifteen Colorado Artists represented the discourse of the minor at the micro level, then the Counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s, which was a critique of the major discourse of the avant-garde, represents the minor at the macro level. By the 1950s, New York City had overcome the dominance of Paris and had asserted itself as the center of the avant-garde; artistically, this was accomplished with Abstract Expressionism.[135] The Beat Generation is considered to be a forerunner of the Counterculture movement and was defined by liberal use of drugs, a rejection of materialism, interest in Eastern religions and philosophies, and black turtlenecks.[136] Literary figures such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg were among the first to illuminate the disenchantment that many people felt with American mainstream culture and capitalist society in the mid-twentieth century. Ginsberg and Kerouac, like the people of the Counterculture, sought refuge in the American West, in part because its geographic distance from the pretention of New York City and New England in general. Furthermore, the myth of the West as a place of freedom lent to the notion that it was a place where one could escape from the standards of mainstream society and find oneself.[137]

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[135] Clement Greenberg championed Abstract Expressionism, along with Harold Rosenberg. He argued that art should not reference anything figural or otherwise part of the real world, as anything referential eliminates the experience of the painting as a painting, and he was particularly fond of Jackson Pollock's drip paintings. In his 1955 essay "American-Type Painting," he argued that "it was the unrealized Picasso… who became the important incentive for Americans like Gorky, de Kooning and Pollock, all three of whom set out to catch, and to some extent did catch (or at least Pollock did) some of the uncaught hares that Picasso had started" (212), thus implying New York's new dominance as an art center. He goes on to conclude that Abstract Expressionism is the greatest art movement since Cubism. See Clement Greenberg, "'American-Type' Painting," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 208-229.

[136] Goldberg, *American Veda,* 138.

[137] Kerouac and especially Ginsberg were drawn specifically to Denver because of Neal Cassady, a Denver native in whom Ginsberg had a romantic interest. To Kerouac and Ginsberg, the free-spirited Cassady embodied the notion of the vanishing West (see Allen and Louis Ginsberg, *Family Business:*

Participants in the Counterculture movement—colloquially known as "hippies"—sought to rebel against the majority, not only of the New York City avant-garde but against the political and social environment of mid-1960s America. The "center" of the Counterculture was based primarily in San Francisco[138], which further added to its über-liberal reputation, though it also spread elsewhere in the American West. Libre, Colorado was just outside of Trinidad and was home to Drop City, an art-based commune that once featured geometric houses known as "dome homes" from 1965 to the early 1970s that have since been destroyed. The Drop City community, made up largely of people who sought to escape the urban confines of the city, created sculptures, paintings, films, and performances. Part of the allure of the West for the Counterculture was not just the geographic removal from New York City, but also the primitivism of the Native Americans: they were seen to represent a spiritual antithesis to the majority's focus on capitalism and were a very real reminder of the marginalization by the Euroamerican majority.[139]

Theodore Roszak describes the Counterculture as being focused on a "personalist style,"[140] as personal transformation through cultural radicalism would lead to revolution. However, the discourse of the Counterculture was not completely removed from that of the

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Selected Letters Between a Father and Son, ed. Michael Schumaker [New York: Bloomsbury, 2001], 10-11). Cassady was fictitiously portrayed as Dean Moriarty in Kerouac's 1957 novel, *On the Road*. Ginsberg became one of the founding faculty members of Naropa University in Boulder and started The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics.

[138] Counterculture really became more of a worldwide movement, particularly through rock 'n' roll music and with the start of the Vietnam War. Counterculture adherents could be found in London, West Berlin, and Amsterdam, and even Monterrey and Tijuana, Mexico. However, Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner describe it as a "regional" movement, explaining that this is why it is not part of mainstream art history. See *West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965-1977,* eds. Elissa Auther and Adam Lerner (Denver: MCA Denver, 2011), xxix.

[139] Lucy Lippard, Foreword, *West of Center*, xiii. It can also be argued that the general lack of a single established religion in the American West, as discussed in Chapter 2, was quite appealing to those who sought spiritual fulfillment through non-Western, non-Euroamerican religions.

[140] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 57.

avant-garde, as it manipulated certain elements of the avant-garde to create a new vernacular: an artistic example of this is evidenced in the spontaneity of the Drop Art of Clark Richert, which can be likened to the Happenings of Allan Kaprow.[141] *The Ultimate Painting* (see Figure 3.2), a collaborative work between Clark Richert, Richard Kallweit, JoAnn Bernofsky, Gene Bernofsky, and Charles deJulio, was created in 1966 in the commune Drop City in Libre. It was made to spin along a central axis, which had a particularly psychedelic effect during light shows. Its design mimicked a five-pointed geodesic framework, allowing different patterns to become apparent under the various frequencies of a strobe light.[142] This painting was sent to the Brooklyn Museum for exhibition in the winter of 1968 and 1969, but it was lost after exhibition and has never been recovered. Richert, the Bernofskys, Kallweit, and deJulio went on to found Criss-Cross, an artist's cooperative, in Boulder in the early 1970s after Drop City had "gone the hardcore hippie route."[143] The members of Criss-Cross, which became associated with another 1970s movement, "P&D" (Pattern & Decoration), created structured, patterned pieces that recall the geometric artworks and dome homes of Drop City. Their periodical *Criss-Cross Art*

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[141] Richert, along with fellow Drop Artists Gene and JoAnn Bernofsky, were all students together at the University of Kansas and discovered the avant-garde practices of Kaprow, John Cage, and others through visits to New York. They were inspired by the spontaneous and novel nature of Happenings and decided to create their own version of it through Drop Art (also known as Droppings). Drop Art started as small disruptions to daily life, such as dropping pebbles out of windows onto unknowing passersby, but it eventually grew to include the spontaneous construction of rural communities, such as Drop City in Libre, Colorado. See Erin Elder, "How to Build a Commune: Drop City's Influence on the Southwestern Commune Movement," *West of Center,* 14.

[142] The recent exhibition *West of Center*, held at MCA Denver in 2011 and 2012, chronicled some of the art created during the Counterculture movement. However, much of it was site-specific and could not be put on display except through photographs, including *The Ultimate Painting*, which was lost after it was exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum in 1969. This exhibition was likened to California's recent exhibition series *Pacific Standard Time*, which was an assertion of the equivalent superiority of West Coast art during the avant-garde era. Ironically, art critic David Hickey criticized *PST* by insulting Denver, stating: "It's corny. It's the sort of thing Denver would do. They would do a Mountain Standard Time. It is '50s boosterish and largely unnecessary." See Adam Nagourney, "Los Angeles Stakes Its Claim as a World Art Center," *New York Times*, October 12, 2011, C1.

[143] Clark Richert, quoted in "Think Big" by Jennifer Heath, *Rocky Mountain News,* August 5, 1989, 46-M.

Figure 3.2. Clark Richert, Richard Kallweit, JoAnn Berofsky, Gene Bernofsky, and Charles deJulio. *The Ultimate Painting*. 1966. Current location unknown.

Communications was nationally distributed from 1974 to 1980[144], and members exhibited work in Colorado and New York. In many ways, the Counterculture movement evolved from a minor position to a major one, particularly as the Vietnam War progressed and more people spoke out against the war through music, art and literature. However, much of the art remains overshadowed because it simply defies the conventional vernacular of American art in the mid-twentieth century.

Both the Fifteen Colorado Artists and the Counterculturists went against convention in their respective decades. Interestingly, Surrealism was one of the modes that allowed them to

[144] Heath, "Think Big," 46-M.

defy mainstream practices: several members of the Fifteen[145] incorporated Surrealist visual elements into their work, such as amorphous forms and barren fantastical landscapes, something which had never been done in Colorado art before; the Counterculturists, on the other hand, were fascinated with the psychedelic experience's ability to expose an alternate (or even unconscious) reality, much like the Surrealists.[146] Though the original Surrealist movement is now considered to be a major, it opened doors for a minor discourse in the West because of its emphasis on the individual's aesthetic and psyche, thus making it an ideal movement for Western artists looking to create something new and personal.

Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose and Minor Art History

Art historian Simon O'Sullivan further developed our understanding of the minor by creating an applicable framework for art history.[147] While pointing out that Deleuze and Guattari were rather conservative in their views of art[148], O'Sullivan took their key concepts of the political, critical, and collective functions of the minor and not only reoriented them to fit an art historical vernacular, but also added other considerations that are more specific to art. He first argues that by looking at practices that were originally considered minor during modernism, such as feminism and post-colonialism, we can see how these practices ultimately deterritorialized the language of modernism by initiating a paradigm shift. Second, minor art can be achieved through

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[145] Mina Conant, Vance Kirkland, Moritz Krieg, and William Sanderson all used the Surrealist aesthetic in their work, either temporarily, in the instance of Kirkland, or throughout their artistic careers, as was the case of Conant.

[146] The Surrealists were known to have used drugs and hypnotism on occasion to access the images of the unconscious. Joan Miró in particular used a combination of drugs and starvation-induced hallucinations to inspire his work.

[147] See Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought Beyond Representation* (Basingstroke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Branden Joseph also built upon the concept of minor history with his book *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2008). However, the overlap of art and minor theory is still generally lacking.

[148] Gilles Deleuze also wrote *The Logic of Sensation*, a seminal text in the philosophy of aesthetics that examines the work of Francis Bacon.

the use of unconventional media, as other media such as painting can be considered major because of its commonality. Similarly, minor art can be found outside of the confines of the traditional gallery or museum. Third, minor art also focuses on the local in the face of an increasingly international art world. It should question art's relationship to capitalism, producing a "stutter" or "stammer" in commodity and moving beyond its narrow logic. Fourth, minor art should push the limits of representation, often to the point of absurdity. Humor is an effective tool in this regard, as it is an act of violence against signifying norms. Finally, he addresses the fact that some minor movements can become major while others are passed over. However, he does not provide an answer as to why this happens, as it can vary depending on the accompanying circumstances such as time and place.[149]

O'Sullivan provides a more suitable framework for minor art, though his focus tends to be more on the deterritorializing "language" of the minor, which can create a more effective impact and thus make minor art less difficult to overlook. It focuses so much on the radical aspects of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the minor that the work of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose could not be considered applicable in O'Sullivan's terms: her paintings are created in traditional media; they are intended to be displayed in a museum or on a wall; and her modes of representation, while mildly humorous on occasion, do not push against the boundaries of absurdity. This does not mean that her work cannot still be considered minor according to Deleuze and Guattari's framework. She deterritorializes the vernacular of Surrealism not only by rejecting André Breton's assertions of what defines Surrealism, but also by declaring herself a Surrealist in an arguably non-Surrealist region. The West, with its lack of a set major modern vernacular, is open to Surrealism as a model movement to disrupt the dominant ideologies

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[149] O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari*, 70-75.

inherent to the region because it is centered on the individual, and its placement outside of its Parisian center creates a minor discourse. Montrose does not need Breton's blessing to know that she creates Surrealist work, and chooses to paint imagery derived from her dreams in a slow and deliberate manner that creates a whimsical alternate world rather than a sexual, disorienting one. Second, her choice to be a Surrealist who does not directly make use of the surrounding Colorado landscape, something that many Colorado artists did, including those of the Fifteen, is unconventional because she is part of a group of local artists who choose to focus their attentions beyond the overused motif of the landscape, opting for an aesthetic and ideology that is not typical in Colorado culture. She aligns her work with the politically liberal leanings of other avant-garde artists such as Jackson Pollock[150] by adopting the avant-garde and non-American artistic aesthetic of Surrealism. Like Pollock, she rejects notions of conservatism and the comparatively reserved aesthetic of Regionalism that is comfortable for many in the Western American audience. She imbues her work with personal concerns, which are often linked to wider issues facing women, and with a clear sense that she chooses to create whatever she desires with little consideration of what others want to see.

However, she does not fall into Deleuze and Guattari's requirement that, to be considered part of the minor, one must be part of a collective. This is a shortcoming of the minor theory because it allows for those who operate individually, such as Montrose, to slip through the cracks of historical discourses because they do not draw enough attention to themselves on their own.

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[150] Erika Doss argues that Jackson Pollock's adamant rejection of Regionalism, despite having studied under Thomas Hart Benton, is rooted in his embracing of European modernism and his aspirations for personal and social reform, both of which Doss considers to be politically liberal. Regionalism, on the other hand, sought to maintain "American tradition" and accompanying conservative values, neither of which were especially open to reform or change. See Doss, *Benton, Pollock, and the Politics of Modernism,* 4.

Figure 3.3. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Eternal Woman.* 1984. Giclée reproduction print. Collection of Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose.

Conversely, she could be considered part of a combined effort amongst American artists who are between the traditionally accepted centers and who seek to address personal or localized concerns in an effort to assert their relevance in the face of the shadow of the major discourse. Also, because the theory of the minor does not take into account the socioeconomic, her position as a socialite complicates her reception as an artist because she is less concerned with needing to sell art that is applicable to a wider audience and instead uses her art as a mode of self-exploration. This latter motivation is similar to the original members of the Surrealist movement, but their power as a group helped draw attention to their creations and ideologies.

Montrose regards her 1984 painting, *Eternal Woman* (Figure 3.3), to be the only feminist painting she ever created,[151] even though many of her other works address the roles of women in American culture. A bust of a woman is tightly bound in gauzy fabric, restraining her and silencing her as a tear streaks from her left eye. The rocky, burning surroundings trap her, forcing her to stay in a position that is at the mercy of whomever decides to unbind her. Using the vernacular of the minor, Montrose is deterritorializing the language of Surrealism to address a new concern: her implementation of a dreamlike aesthetic in this particular case speaks not only to her preference and desire to explore her personal concerns, but also indicates how many other women felt before the politics of feminism liberated them from centuries of constraint and maltreatment. The gauzy bandages restrain the woman from both movement and speech, and the surrounding rocks prevent her from escaping the encroaching fire. The tear in her eye conveys her helplessness. Montrose takes Surrealism, which is typically understood to be misogynistic, and morphs it into a vehicle to encourage female empowerment by evoking an emotional response. This usage of Surrealism as feminist discourse has gained prominence in scholarship on the movement since the 1980s and will be explored further in Chapter Four.

Regionalism and Post-Regionalism provide one avenue through which to analyze local art, the wider discourse of the minor provides yet another method to employ when examining art, history, or literature that falls to the margins of the mainstream. The American West is overlooked because its reality does not fit the expectations of major American culture. The discourse of the minor, which can be identified in the origins of almost every Euroamerican movement and paradigm shift, demonstrates that expectations can be changed.

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[151] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2012.

Chapter 4

Women, Surrealism, and the West

The advent of second-wave feminism in the 1970s brought about an increased awareness and interest in women artists whose work was previously overlooked or reduced to a secondary role to that of their male counterparts. The roles of women in the American West, however, have only recently begun to receive serious scholarly consideration. In this chapter, I will aim to synthesize feminist interpretations of Surrealism with those of the American West to create a new understanding of how the mythologization of the West informed the creativity of women who aligned themselves with Surrealism and Post-Surrealism. I will first analyze the conflicted roles of women Surrealists in Europe, focusing on painter Leonora Carrington and photographer Claude Cahun. I will then examine postmodernist interpretations of frontier women in the nineteenth-century American West, more specifically how professional scout Martha Jane Canary—more commonly remembered as Calamity Jane—and explorer Isabella Bird utilized the perceived freedom of the West to go against the gendered expectations of the day or to reinvent their identities completely. Finally, I will explore the modern art of Western women artists, with an emphasis on Helen Lundeberg and Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose's usage of Surrealism and Post-Surrealism. I will ultimately show that the presumed freedom of the Wild West allowed female Surrealists to use their art to not only explore themselves, but also to carve out a distinctive niche that asserts their importance and relevance as women and as artists.

Women Artists and Surrealism

Surrealism is generally acknowledged to have been a patriarchal, misogynistic movement, which is in part reflective of the gendered attitudes prevalent in France at this time.[152] André Breton was womanizer typical for his time, having had three wives and numerous mistresses, and he did not care for Surrealism to encompass the concerns of women artists.[153] Indeed, a woman like Frida Kahlo rejected Breton's assertion that she was, in fact, a Surrealist[154], which was common amongst women artists because the movement was regarded as sexist[155]; similarly, in 1978, author Angela Carter, who is known for her Magical Realist and feminist writings, stated that, as much as she wanted to align herself with the Surrealists, they simply did not consider women as equals. They would rather put her on a pedestal of mystery, beauty, and otherness, consequently marginalizing her and preventing her from being seriously regarded.[156] In addition to the Surrealists' inability to regard women as equal to men, male Surrealist artists were focused on the depiction of unconscious desires—desires that were

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[152] Patriarchal traditions were very strong in France in the first half of the twentieth century, and there was very little emphasis on progressiveness for women; indeed, women were not allowed to vote until 1947, which was later than most Western societies.

[153] The Surrealists saw themselves as progressive because they allowed women to exhibit with them, an opportunity rarely afforded to female artists in France at that time. However, Robert J. Belton argues that women artists were only allowed to exhibit with the Surrealists because their inclusion reified the notion of the irrational and hypersexual *femme-enfant*; he further argues that most of the women were the close friends of lovers of the male artists and that their increased inclusion came in the mid- to late-1930s, when the movement's popularity was starting to wane as artists fled an increasingly hostile social environment. See Belton, "Speaking with a Forked Tongue," 51.

[154] In addition to finding Surrealism to be misogynistic and André Breton an overall disagreeable person, Kahlo insisted that she was a Magical Realist. Kahlo's work focused on elements of her real life, as was typical of Magical Realist art, and served as an additional assertion of her cultural heritage, as Magical Realism was primarily a Latin American movement.

[155] Dissident Surrealist Leonor Fini claimed that fellow artist Leonora Carrington was "a true revolutionary," but not really a Surrealist; similarly, Post-Surrealist Dorr Bothwell adamantly rejected that she was a Surrealist. Whitney Chadwick, who wrote the first major publication on women artists in Surrealism, claims that this rejection is quite common because the artists did not want to be minimized by the repression of Surrealist doctrine. See Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 9.

[156] Angela Carter, "The Alchemy of the Word," in *Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings* (London: Vintage, 2006), 73.

frequently sexual in nature—and they frequently utilized their female companions as muses and objects. They were particularly fond of the idea of the *femme-enfant*, an irrational and illogical "woman-child" whose highly sexual nature was inspiring to their respective artist-companion's work.

However, in spite of all of the misogynistic evidence against Surrealism, the rise of the Feminist Movement in the 1970s generated an increased interest in the artistic roles of women Surrealists. The first attempt to catalogue women Surrealists came in 1977 with a special issue of the journal *Obliques*, entitled *La Femme Surréaliste*, which accounted for thirty-six women in the orbit of Surrealism; a second attempt came in 1980 with Lea Vergine's *L'Autre Moitié de l'avant garde*, which looked more generally at women artists in all avant-garde movements between 1910 and 1940 and identified eighteen Surrealist women. Then, in 1984, Mary Ann Caws analyzed Breton's novella *Arcanum 17* in search of a feminist vernacular for Surrealism.[157] One of Breton's lesser known works, *Arcanum 17* was written during Breton's self-exile in Percé Rock, Canada and is a contemplative combination of a love letter, political pamphlet, and mythology. Breton agonized over the devastation of World War II and the abandonment of his second wife, Jacqueline Lamba, along their only daughter. However, he also finds hope through his third wife, Elisa Claro, as well as a newfound appreciation for women. Indeed, he boldly declares that men misused their power and caused the war, something women would not have done, and that it is time for women to be considered equals both in art and in life.[158] Caws proposes that we juxtapose *Arcanum 17*'s mythological character, Melusine, with Nadja, another

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[157] Mary Ann Caws, "Singing in Another Key: Surrealism through a Feminist Eye," *Diacritics* 14 (1984): 60-70.
[158] André Breton, *Arcanum 17* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon, 1994), 26.

one of Breton's characters in a book of the same name written in 1928[159]: if Nadja represented the ideal *femme-enfant* who relied upon a man to define her, Melusine represented a woman who had been wronged by man and who sought to protect those who had suffered.[160]

In 1985, Whitney Chadwick published *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, the first scholarly work to argue that Surrealism served as a vehicle for women to explore and express themselves through an artistic medium. Though Surrealism was about analyzing one's unconscious, male Surrealists relied upon women to be their muses; female artists, therefore, had to rely upon themselves for inspiration, thus much of their work tends to include direct or indirect self-references. Natalya Lusty more recently suggests that, while Breton and the male Surrealists may not have been good with women, Surrealism itself may have been beneficial for women[161], for self-exploration is conducive to self-empowerment. Furthermore, though male Surrealists may have simply allowed women to exhibit their work in order to reinforce their own beliefs towards them, the fact is that many women were glad to at last have the opportunity to exhibit work in a public forum, something which they had been long denied.

However, just because women finally had an avenue through which to create and exhibit work does not mean that they turned a blind eye to the sexist and patriarchal structure of Surrealism. Leonora Carrington was ironically seen by the Surrealists as the ideal *femme-enfant*:

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[159] *Nadja* is the semi-fictitious story of a whirlwind romance between Breton and a free-spirited but troubled *femme-enfant*. The book is exemplary of Surrealist literature, as it is written in a disjointed, fantastical manner, and it is also a platform for Breton to critique the psychiatric system and has been argued to be a denial his own emotive (i.e. feminine) self. See Levitt, *Genres and Genders,* 52.

[160] There are several iterations of the story of Melusine, a woman who was cursed to transform into a half-woman/half-serpent once a week unless she could find a man who would marry her while resisting the temptation to gaze upon her in her serpentine form. Breton seems to be referring to the version in which she becomes the protector of the chateau of her betrothed. (See Walter Scott, *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* [London: Oliver and Boyd, 1932], 310-11). In the introduction to the 1994 edition of *Arcanum 17*, Anna Balakin states that the legend of Melusine "supports Breton's haunting thought that man has unwittingly dislodged woman from a position where she could do so much good for humanity" (12).

[161] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* 9.

she was a beautiful and highly emotional young woman who chose to rebel against her wealthy British family and become an artist after attending the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in 1936. As was the case with many of the women in the Surrealist group, she became romantically involved with a fellow male Surrealist, Max Ernst, in 1938. She was featured in several of his paintings, such as *The Robing of the Bride* (1940) and *The Spanish Physician* (1940), though she famously said in 1983, "I didn't have time to be anyone's muse… I was too busy rebelling against my family and learning to be an artist."[162]

Carrington may have been the proverbial poster child for the *femme-enfant*, a notion that was further reinforced by her mental collapse in 1939[163] following Ernst's brief internment in two Nazi prison camps. However, Natalya Lusty asserts that Carrington's rebellion went beyond that towards her family: she included transgressive critiques of the Surrealist patriarchy in her short story "The Debutante" and the painting *The Inn of the Dawn Horse (Self-Portrait)* (see Figure 4.1), both of which were completed in 1937 and are a sort of fantastical autobiography. In "The Debutante," a young girl convinces a hyena, whom she befriended at the local zoo, to take her place at her coming-of-age ball by killing the maid and wearing her face.[164] In *The Inn of the Dawn Horse*, a wild-haired woman sits awkwardly in a child's bedroom with a hyena immediately to her left. The hyena is a symbol of mockery, with its characteristic "laughter" and of sexual transgression, as its sex is difficult to biologically determine without close expertly

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[162] Cited in Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, 66.
[163] Carrington's mental breakdown, which is referenced in Max Ernst's 1940 painting *The Spanish Physician*, recalls that of André Breton's Nadja, whom he had abandoned after a ten-day whirlwind romance because she had too many emotional issues, only to later discover she had been institutionalized. He then used her institutionalization as a catalyst to rant about the flawed state of psychiatry. Annette Shandler Levitt argues that Breton used Nadja's breakdown as a scapegoat to reassert his masculinity, something that the male Surrealists grappled with in general because of the inherently emotional nature of exploring the unconscious in their work; she also argues that he used Nadja's breakdown as justification for his rejection of her. See Levitt *Genres and Genders,* 63.
[164] Leonora Carrington, "The Debutante," in *Anthology of Black Humor*, ed. André Breton, trans. Mark Polizzotti (San Francisco: City Light, 1997), 335-340.

Figure 4.1. Leonora Carrington, *The Inn of the Dawn Horse (Self-Portrait)*. 1937. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

examination.[165] Her untamed mane of hair resembles a horse's mane, drawing attention to the two horses in the background. The first one, a rocking horse, alludes to the innocence of childhood, and its positioning directs the viewer's gaze to the horse galloping away outside the window. Carrington's childhood as the daughter of a wealthy family was filled with gendered expectation that she become the model trophy wife, yet she chose to flee from that life with the Surrealists, just like the horse outside the window. Carrington read "The Debutante" aloud to the Surrealists in 1938 in broken French, which Lusty claims was a deliberate effort to mask her intelligence[166] so as not to risk her continued acceptance amongst the misogynistic Surrealists in

[165] Lusty, *Surrealism, Feminism, Psychoanalysis,* 41.
[166] The mask is also a reference to psychoanalyst Joan Riviere's 1929 study, "Womanliness as Masquerade." Riviere argued that women purposely masked their intelligence so as to not compromise

order to exhibit her work. However, much of her artistic oeuvre demonstrates a deep interest in women and mythology; Surrealism, therefore, not only gave her an opportunity to create and exhibit but also to explore her psyche.

Photographer Claude Cahun was similarly critical of the Surrealist rhetoric, particularly towards its remarkably conservative attitudes about gender and heterosexuality.[167] Cahun, who was born Lucille Renée Mathilde Schwob, changed her name to the more sexually ambiguous "Claude" in 1919 and was lifelong partners with her stepsister, Suzanne Malherbe. Cahun joined the Surrealists in 1932, though her status with the group was arguably marginal, as she usually only exhibited with them but did not participate in their other group activities. Her self-portraits, which are exemplary of Surrealist photography in that they question the reality of the photographic medium, address the crisis of identity and self-definition for women and homosexuals. This is accomplished through the use of disguise and distortion: she often applies heavy make-up, changes her hairstyles, and dresses in a variety of men's and women's clothing that force the viewer to question her sexuality; mirrors are used to create a sense of illusion and disrupt the reflected reality of the photograph; dolls and mannequins highlight the uncanny, a key aspect of Surrealist work; and she occasionally employed various photographic techniques

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the masculinity of their male cohorts, as such an act was tantamount to castrating the father. It is likely that Riviere was at least partially referring to herself as well, as she worked in a very male-dominated field for the time. See Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as Masquerade," in *Formations of Fantasy,* eds. Burgin, Victor, James Donald, and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen and Co., 1986), 35-44.

[167] The emphasis on heterosexuality is most easily found in André Breton's literary works, such as *Nadja* (1928) and *L'Amour fou* (1937), which revolve around stories of heterosexual, romantic love. There is also a distinct lack of reference to homosexuality or sexual deviancy in much of the "orthodox" Surrealists' works. Artists who were interested in pushing Surrealism beyond Breton's restrictive boundaries oriented themselves around Georges Bataille, the controversial arch-nemesis of Breton, and are referred to as the dissident Surrealists. Ironically, there is no evidence that Claude Cahun was ever part of the dissident Surrealists.

Figure 4.2. Claude Cahun, *Self-Portrait*. 1928. Photograph. Jersey Heritage Collection.

such as double exposure[168] to further distort and manipulate the image. Mostly, however, it is her sexual ambiguity that confronts the Surrealist emphasis on heterosexuality. Her 1928 *Self-Portrait* (see Figure 4.2) depicts her as very androgynous: her blonde hair cropped short and wearing a large checked jacket that obscures her figure, she stands next to a mirror that reflects the left side of her face, emphasizing the photograph's imitation of reality. She gazes unabashedly at her viewers, as though daring them to ask who she is. Though Surrealist doctrine

[168] Double exposure is a technique in which one negative frame of film is twice exposed to a lit subject, resulting in two images in a single photograph.

may not have been oriented to allow her to express her homosexuality and concerns towards gender, she nevertheless was able to use Surrealism's emphasis on the unconscious and its questioning reality to create extraordinarily personal and provocative work. [169]

Scholars like Whitney Chadwick are keen to declare that Surrealism was a modernist precursor to second-wave feminism because it was an avenue for women artists to explore and express themselves, something which they had long been denied. This may be overreaching, as there was very little that was actually "feminist" in the original Surrealist movement. Indeed, Robert J. Belton asserts that a new methodology and rhetoric are needed when discussing the art of women in Surrealism because of its inherently patriarchal and sexist ideology.[170] Nevertheless, Leonora Carrington and Claude Cahun both rebelled against Surrealist doctrine whilst still adhering to its emphasis on the psyche in order to create work that allowed them to explore deeply personal topics. The rebellion of women in such a chauvinistic environment was extraordinary; however, there were other parts of the world where such rebellion flourished.

Women in the American West

Western Europe was rife with deep-seated notions about gender and societal expectations that were rooted in hundreds of years of tradition. Many of these traditions carried over to America when Europeans began settling the East Coast, though they were not as ubiquitous because, to European settlers, America was seen as a new environment where new cultural traditions could begin. Many of these gendered expectations were even less apparent in the

[169] Mary Ann Caws, "These Photographing Women: the Scandal of Genius," in *Angels of Anarchy* (Manchester: Manchester Art Gallery, 2009), 29.
[170] Belton, "Speaking with a Forked Tongue," 60.

American West: Wyoming was the first territory to adopt women's suffrage in 1869[171], followed by Colorado in 1893, and Utah and Idaho in 1896.[172] By comparison, the US government did not ratify women's suffrage nationwide until 1920. As Frederick Jackson Turner demonstrated in his seminal 1893 paper "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," the West was seen as a wild and free space prior to its declared closing following the results of the 1890 US Census; furthermore, Turner argued that it was this freedom that supposedly defined the collective American spirit. However, the concept of the West's freedom continued to have a strong hold on the collective Euroamerican imagination well into the twentieth century: the West was a place where people—both men and women alike—could reinvent themselves through lived experience. This is not to say that preconceived notions about gender and sex were entirely absent in the West; indeed, Kristin M. McAndrews demonstrates that the very idea of the "cowgirl" can be interpreted to be diminutive to that of the "cowboy," as their roles on ranches have been previously reduced to a secondary or weaker status.[173] Rather, the West was seen as a place where new myths and extraordinary identities could be born.

Dee Brown's 1958 book, *The Gentle Tamers: Women of the Old Wild West*, was one of the first scholarly works to look past the male legends of the Old West, such as Jesse James and William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody, and instead examined the roles of women in the West. This work, however, while not anti-feminist, is a product of the patriarchal 1950s. Brown's

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[171] Wyoming became a state in 1890. It was also the first state to allow women to serve on juries and had the first female court bailiff (Mary Atkinson), the first female justice of the peace (Esther Hobart Morris), and elected the first female state governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross, in 1924. It has been indicated that one of the reasons women in the American West were granted suffrage earlier was because there were so few Euroamericans in the West in the 19th century that it logistically made sense to have as many white adults as possible able to vote (see Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930* [Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003], 32). However, there is no denying that this allowance demonstrates that gender biases were at the very least less inhibitive in the West.

[172] Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman,* 32.

[173] Kristin M. McAndrews, *Wrangling Women: Humor and Gender in the American West* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 2.

interpretation is rooted in modernist ideologies and does not take into account issues of race and class. In 1980, Joan Jensen and Darlis Miller wrote their groundbreaking essay, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited," in which they identified Brown's four female stereotypes: the gentle tamers, the sunbonneted helpmates, the hell-raisers, and the bad women.[174] The gentle tamers were the refined ladies, the suffragists and the civilizers. It was believed that they brought social and cultural values from the East Coast and Europe by promoting literature and the arts, as well as habits of cleanliness, morality, language, and dress. They were perceived to be weak and unable to adjust to new and rough surroundings because of their refined upbringings. Sunbonneted helpmates, on the other hand, were both physically and emotionally strong. They were supposed to be virtuous and helpful, as their sole purpose in life was to help their male counterparts succeed. The bad women were prostitutes, the ladies who sold their services in the saloons and on the dirt roads. Finally, the hell-raisers were women who acted more like men. They were typically thought to be well educated and good-looking, yet they could "outride, outshoot, and out-cuss the best cowboys in the west."[175] The hell-raisers were not especially common outside of the world of dime novels and Wild West shows. However, the so-called "hell-raiser" Martha Jane Canary, also known as Calamity Jane, was a real frontierswoman and professional scout who died in 1903. She actively perpetuated the stories about her: she appears to have not only allowed people to mythologize her, such as Edward Wheeler, the author of the *Deadwood Dick* dime novels that featured Calamity Jane as a heroine[176], but it is it also likely that she fabricated

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[174] Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," in *Women and Gender in the American West: Jensen-Miller Prize Essays from the Coalition for Western Women's History*, eds. Mary Ann Irwin and James F. Brooks (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press: 2004), 9-36.
[175] Jensen and Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited," 12.
[176] Calamity Jane was introduced in the first issue of the Beadle Library's *Deadwood Dick* dime novels in 1877, though her character was further developed in *Deadwood Dick on Deck; or, Calamity Jane, The*

information about her own life.[177] For Canary, the West was a place where she could reinvent herself. For other women, the West was seen as a place where they could defy the typical gendered expectations of the time and assert their independence.

Isabella Bird was a British woman who flourished in the American West and became the first woman to be inducted into Britain's Royal Geographic Society in 1892. Bird stayed in Estes Park, Colorado for six months in 1873 and chronicled her experiences of mountain climbing and homesteading in letters to her sister. These letters were then published as a series in the British magazine, *Leisure Hour*, before eventually being assembled into a book, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, in 1886. Colorado was a popular destination for the British upper class: in addition to being perceived to be a wild place that needed to be tamed, it was abundant in open land and a climate that promoted good health for the infirm. Karen M. Morin studied Bird's letters and noted that she seemed to be caught between two personas: the first persona was a strong, courageous, and independent woman who took great pleasure in homesteading and mountaineering; the other persona was a woman who was fearful and fatigued. Morin attributes these latter characteristics to Bird's deeply ingrained values of British Victorianism, which dictated that women were supposed to be weak and subservient, thus her demonstration of fear served to reiterate her identity as an upper-class lady.[178] However, she did not give up. In Letter

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Heroine of Whoop-Up. A Story of Dakota, which was published in 1878. She is described as having been once beautiful, indicating that she was a lady of class, though life on the frontier had worn down her features. She also reportedly drank, cussed, played cards, and generally outdid her male counterparts in every regard, yet she had a heart of gold, as evidenced by her kindness and generosity towards the sick and needy.

[177] According to James D. McLaird, Canary's 1896 autobiography *Life and Adventures of Calamity Jane, By Herself* includes both verifiable biographical information and "fancied adventures akin to dime novel fare or tales of show people like Buffalo Bill" (30). See James D. McLaird "Calamity Jane's Diary and Letters: Story of a Fraud," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 45 (1995): 20-45.

[178] Karen M. Morin, "Narrating Imperial Adventure: Isabella Bird's Travels in the Nineteenth-Century American West," in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West,* ed. Gary J. Hausladen (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2003), 204-224.

VII, in which she recounted a particularly arduous mountaineering expedition up Longs Peak, she wrote:

> From the summit were seen in unrivalled combination all the views which had rejoiced our eyes during the ascent. It was something at last to stand upon the storm-rent crown of this lonely sentinel on the Rocky Range, on one of the mightiest of the vertebrae of the backbone of the North American continent, and to see the waters start for both oceans. Uplifted above love and hate and storms of passion, calm amidst the eternal silences, fanned by zephyrs and bathed in living blue, peace rested for that one bright day on the Peak, as if it were some region 'Where falls not rain, or hail, or any snow,/Or ever wind blows loudly.'[179]

As evidenced by her extraordinarily eloquent writing, Bird was absolutely enamored with her rugged lifestyle. Morin argues that Bird's account demonstrates that the West was not only seen as a place to be tamed, but a place that encouraged emotive attachment and therefore personal empowerment through the overcoming of fear and rigorous exercise.[180]

A unifying theme in my analyses of Leonora Carrington, Claude Cahun, Martha Jane Canary, and Isabella Bird is that of rebellion: these four women chose to defy societal norms to assert themselves as strong individuals who did not need a man to define them. Carrington and Cahun were able to accomplish this feat in the highly gender-biased environment of interwar France, but Canary and Bird were perhaps more fortunate in that they were in an environment—the American West—that was perceived to have relatively fewer restrictions when it came to the gendered expectations of women in the late nineteenth century. Although the social conditions of women in the American West in the mid-twentieth century were considerably different from those in the nineteenth century, the combination of these two facets of women's studies opens my discussion to the following questions: what of women artists in the West? How different were their experiences and opportunities in comparison to the East Coast and European

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[179] Isabella Lucy Bird, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains,* 2nd ed (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1886), 114.
[180] Morin, "Narrating Imperial Adventure," 216.

counterparts? And above all, how does the art of women Surrealists in the West alter our understanding of women's roles in art?

Women Artists in the West

At the turn of the century, Euroamerican women artists on the East Coast had more opportunity than ever before to study and create art, especially if they were white and came from a middle-to-upper class upbringing. European women had generally not been allowed to formally study art until the mid-to-late nineteenth century due to the fact that drawing and painting from models was part of the core curriculum in the study of art, particularly the male nude.[181] In the United States, the Pennsylvania Academy, founded in 1805, was one of the first schools to admit women and offered a life drawing class with a female model by 1868.[182] Prevalent gendered expectations rooted in capitalist traditions continued to dictate that a woman's role was in the home in support of her husband. This often made it very difficult for many to exhibit work and be taken seriously, and even more difficult for a woman to have a full-fledged career as an artist. The restrictions for women artists of the American West were comparatively less prevalent to those on the East Coast and Europe, though they still faced some discrimination that favored their male counterparts.

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[181] It was believed that women should not be exposed to the indecency of the male nude, as it would corrupt their perceived fragile morals and sensibilities. Furthermore, art was not conducive to creating an idyllic domestic environment and was seen as frivolous when undertaken by women. More craft-like creative endeavors such as textile arts were seen as ideal outlets for women in part because they provided more domestically useful products such as clothing. Private art education was available to young women who came from affluent families, but the subject matter did not focus on the figure, but rather the still-life or the landscape. Women artists who have achieved some critical acclaim continue to struggle against masculine biases still prevalent in art history. See Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 145-178.

[182] Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 52.

When discussing women artists in the West, it is important to remember that women have been creating art in the region for over 10,000 years, based on archaeological evidence of indigenous inhabitance in America, albeit of an arguably more functional nature: Pueblo women made pottery, Navajo women created beautiful weavings, and Pomo women were basketmakers.[183] However, after the land was wrested away from the indigenous populations, it became a "new" territory with different opportunities for Euroamerican inhabitants. Compared to the East Coast, the West was relatively more liberal when it came to women artists between the years of 1890 to 1945, though they have received considerably less attention in scholarship than their Eastern counterparts. Women artists had more opportunity for formal education in art and other subjects out West: the California School of Design, the oldest formal art school on the West Coast, opened in San Francisco in 1874 and one of the first classes offered had sixty students, forty-six of whom were women.[184] Floral still-lifes were long some of the most popular subjects amongst women artists at the turn of the century, largely due to expectations about what women should paint, thus making it easier to sell work.[185] Alice Chittenden, one of the first women artists to exhibit work in San Francisco's annual art exhibitions in 1898, was highly successful in that she able to sell her paintings of botanically-accurate California flowers on the East Coast and even in Paris.[186] However, as the twentieth century progressed, many women still experienced some gender discrimination when it came to exhibiting work, particularly if the

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[183] Virginia Scharff, Introduction, *Independent Spirits: Women Painters of the American West. 1890-1945*, ed. Patricia Trenton (Los Angeles: Autry Museum, 1995), 2.
[184] Susan Landauer, "Searching for Selfhood: Women Artists of Northern California," in *Independent Spirits,* 10.
[185] The floral still-life as a predominantly female genre is not limited to just the turn of the century: Rachel Ruysch, who was a Dutch painter in the late 17th and 18th centuries, achieved great success with her floral still-lifes, as did Maria Sibylla Merian, a German-born scientific illustrator who created botanical engravings around the same time as Ruysch.
[186] Landauer, "Searching for Selfhood," 12.

work was modern or deviated from more feminine subject matter, thus many of them signed their work with only their initials.

Certain areas in the West were more liberal when it came to the arts and the roles of women, most notably Southern California. By the 1920s, Southern California had become a veritable paradise for mystics, faith healers, and eccentrics, all of whom comprised many different religions and cults. Surrealism captured the imaginations of the artists in this area, particularly women. While Theosophists believed that women experienced something akin to Delphic powers, Surrealism and its resultant American offspring Post-Surrealism allowed women painters an alternative method to rebel against societal expectations and to gain self-awareness.[187] Unsurprisingly, many of their works were self-portraits. Helen Lundeberg, the co-creator of Post-Surrealism, frequently injected at least a partial self-reference in her work. Her 1935 painting *Double Portrait of the Artist in Time* (see Figure 4.3) is a clever interpretation of the self-portrait in which the child Lundeberg sits in the foreground and is connected by a woman's shadow to a hanging portrait of her adult self in the background. The shadow is almost perfectly aligned with the portrait, making it seem as though the adult is emerging from the confines of her frame to protectively stand behind the child. The shadow creates a visual riddle for the viewer and recalls a similar illusionary technique created by Salvador Dalí. Dalí's double-

[187] Ilene Susan Fort and Tere Arcq, Introduction, *In Wonderland: The Surrealist Adventures of Women Artists in Mexico and the United States*, eds. Ilene Susan Fort et al. (Los Angeles: LACMA), 18-29.

Figure 4.3. Helen Lundeberg, *Double Portrait of the Artist in Time.* 1935. Oil on masonite. Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Figure 4.4. Salvador Dalí, *Mae West's Face which May be Used as a Surrealist Apartment.* 1934-35. Gouache with graphite on commercially printed magazine page. Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

images, such as that employed in *Mae West's Face which May be Used as a Surrealist Apartment* (see Figure 4.4), involves the meticulous placement of certain images to create a larger, more ambiguous picture. This technique was born out of his development of paranoiac-critical method, which relies on the brain's ability to create visual associations between things that are not logically linked, and the resultant vagueness of the overall image becomes part of an interpretive process by transforming reality through a hallucinatory or delirious visual experience.[188] Dalí, like many of the original Surrealists, sought to tap into the irrational part of the mind through the theories of psychology. Helen Lundeberg's use of the shadow connecting the child and the portrait, on the other hand, forms a more literal, almost motherly link to her younger self. It is not intended to evoke a sense of confusion, but rather a bond between her past and then-present selves.

Lundeberg and Lorser Feitelson, who was first her art teacher at the Stickney School of Art and later her husband, purposely set out to create a distinctly American rebuttal to European Surrealism. In addition to its emphasis on premeditation prior to creating work, Post-Surrealism allowed men and women alike to delve into their psyches without one gender being intentionally considered superior to the other. It also lacked dictatorial control like that of André Breton's because no one needed Lundeberg or Feitelson's blessing to join. Lundeberg, who died in 1999, represents an American antithesis to André Breton, for she was a brilliant woman who was an equal contributor to the Post-Surrealist manifesto and movement. Lundeberg went on to experiment with geometric abstraction and Hard Edge painting in the 1950s[189], thus moving

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[188] Tom McDonough, "Delirious Paris: Mapping as a Paranoiac-Critical Activity," *Grey Room* 19 (2005): 6-21.
[189] Ehrlich, *Pacific Dreams* 32.

away from the more representational nature of her Post-Surrealist work, though in all of her art is a profound sense of mystery.

Los Angeles has recently asserted itself as a major center equal to that of New York City in American art history[190], thus the works of the California Post-Surrealists have gained increased recognition. Other iterations of Surrealism have been known to take root in other parts of the US, such as the Dynaton group in San Francisco during the 1950s and the Chicago Surrealist Group of the 1960s, though neither fall under the heading of Post-Surrealism because the latter is considered to be a distinct movement of its own and does not simply encompass all later manifestations of Surrealism. Denver is not typically considered to be a place that can be identified as Surrealist, Post-Surrealist or even pseudo-Surrealist; however, that does not mean that Surrealism did not happen at all in Colorado. Though Vance Kirkland may have been the first artist to introduce the Surrealist aesthetic to Colorado in 1939, Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose holds a distinctive place because she is a female Surrealist who knowingly engages with Surrealist doctrine while giving it her own twist that transcends both traditional Surrealism and Post-Surrealism. It is my contention that she holds this place not only because of the wider array of opportunities afforded to women artists in the modern American West, but also because the West is still imbued with a sense of myth. Surrealism and its later derivatives by their very nature have a sense of myth and magic in them. *Angels Round Me While I Sleep* (see Figure 4.5) features a sleeping jester in a cushioned boat, two books resting under his hip, his hair alight in his thirst for knowledge.[191] Three cocoon-like angels hover above, protecting him as he floats

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[190] The recent 2011-2012 exhibition series *Pacific Standard Time*, which was ten years in the making and spanned across sixty institutions in the Los Angeles area, made this assertion officially undeniable: it demonstrated that the work being created in LA was distinct, relevant and highly valued in comparison to New York City.

[191] Montrose, interview with the author, February 11, 2013.

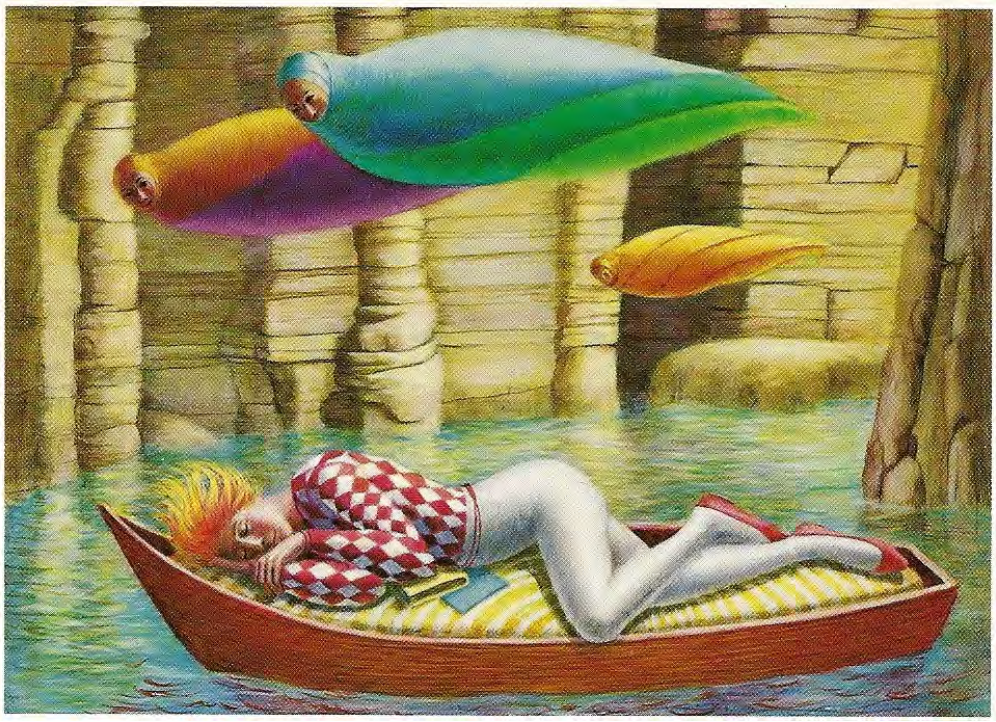

Figure 4.5. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Angels Round Me While I Sleep.* 1979. Tempera and oil. Private collection.

Figure 4.6. Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose, *Illusion.* 1985. Oil on canvas. Collection of the Kirkland Museum of Fine and Decorative Art, Denver.

peacefully down the canyon. Though Montrose refers to the figure as a male, the length of the hair and the curvature of the hip suggest that it is more androgynous. Indeed, the possible androgyny in this 1979 piece could be a reference to herself and her own near-death experience, as the angels are linked with the spiritual, and is one of the more overtly mythical paintings in her oeuvre.

As an artist, Montrose defies typical regionalist expectations of direct reference to the Colorado landscape; rather, Surrealism and the collective power of the myth of the West allow her to create a new and unique otherworldly sense of magic to Colorado. Her 1985 painting *Illusion* (see Figure 4.6) contains a hint of an arid desert setting, but it becomes ambiguous and plaster-like as the layers are stripped away to expose a brick wall, which is further torn away to reveal the open blue sky that is reminiscent of the soft, sweeping skies of René Magritte. The painting indicates Montrose's adamancy to create her own unique style: she exposes the various layers of reality and its associated restrictions, and she tears through the layers to uncover the limitlessness of the sky. This particular piece encapsulates her approach to art in that she breaks down the barriers and strips away the superfluous to expose what is hidden behind the façade of reality.

The myth of the wild and free American West is not as dominant as it was at the turn of the century, though it continues to maintain its grasp on popular imagination. Our understandings of the American West, Surrealism, and gender are always evolving, though it is rare that these three topics ever collide at once. As the lives and works of Helen Lundeberg and Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose have demonstrated, this unexpected overlap does exist and is not isolated to a single city. Furthermore, this overlap demonstrates that it is time for scholars to rethink their assumptions about how we define art history, for if we only focus on what is "major" or what fits

our expectations, we are missing just how expansive art history truly is. Recent scholarship on women in Surrealism argues that the movement gave women artists a voice to express themselves both in Europe and America, and the relative lack of previously established gendered constraints in the American West allowed them to explore themselves in a different manner that reflects distinct concerns separate from that of their European counterparts. Furthermore, American women Surrealists were more easily able to establish themselves as legitimate artists with fewer repercussions: they demonstrate that women do not have to relegate themselves to a secondary role to that of men, but rather that they can dominate and create a new understanding of Surrealism and art history at large.

Conclusion

Fellow Colorado artist Angelo di Benedetto once claimed the work of Montrose "[makes] visible the emotional realities we all share and often call unreal… [She] is a storyteller of the inner world; not sardonic ever, but empathetic with the human condition, offering messages concerning reconciliation with the complexities of existence."[192] Surrealism is believed to have happened only in Paris, New York City, or by the artists upon whom André Breton bestowed his accolades. However, the movement took on a life of its own and not only spread throughout the world during World War II, but continues to live on in the artists who are inspired by it. It is too simple and reductive to deride this art as prosaic or unoriginal because there are more factors to take into consideration besides the dreamlike aesthetic: there is also the power of the unconscious and the relevance of the artist's personal vision, neither of which can be separated from Surrealist intention.

Montrose defies all traditional logic when it comes to being a Surrealist and an artist of the American West; however, in doing so, she demonstrates that much of the modern and contemporary art of the West has been overlooked because it does not fit preconceived expectations of what Western art is supposed to look like. She was able to combine her formal training in art with her living circumstances to create her own brand of Surrealism, which is informed by the movement's original principles but is ultimately less restrained because she is both chronologically and geographically removed from its restrictive expectations. Colorado is an ideal setting because of the lack of confining major discourses that dictate what certain types of art are expected to look like. Her work fills in some of the glaring gaps in the literature on American Surrealism, women Surrealists, and modern art in the American West. Echoing the

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[192] *Phyllis Montrose*. Pamphlet. ca. 1980. n.p.

sentiment of di Benedetto, I argue that Phyllis Hutchinson Montrose makes the unseen seen in not just Colorado art, but in the discourse of art history.

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