From Bluebeard's Castle to the White World of Dreams: Constrictions and Constructions in Angela Carter's Prose Fiction

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Abstract

Angela Carter's death in 1992 heralded a surge of popularity and tributes. These latter tended to cast her as a "fairy godmother" or "white witch", labels which this thesis takes as starting points in its examination of the roles of author, narrator, hero, environment and reader; their interchangeability; and mutual affect. It focuses on the construction of the subject and her or his environment in Carter's fiction, measuring their interaction by way of generic filters, criticism, interviews and journalism.

The introduction examines Carter's strategies and agenda within this context by way of a historical exploration of the Western subject's perception of her/his surroundings, with particular regard to the postmodern and feminist viewpoints. This is followed by an account of Carter's own publishing history envisaged as a landscaped, picaresque journey which typifies her characteristic blend of idealism and pragmatics. Her juxtaposition of the fantastical with the familiar continues to resurface as part of the debate in subsequent chapters, which use a succession of literary and cultural tools to illumine her texts in the light of the main project. Thus: her short fictions, radio plays and the film The Company of Wolves are examined as fairy tales; The Magic Toyshop and Heroes and Villains explored using theories of the Gothic and the dystopia; Love and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman assessed in light of pornography and the picaresque; The Passion of New Eve viewed in terms of constructions of gender; and Nights at the Circus and Wise Children seen alongside theories carnival and of time. Elements of film theory, urban studies and architecture are threaded throughout, and some conclusions are offered through a reading of the important tropes of dream and labyrinth in American Ghosts and Old World Wonders.

Always, subversive and unpredictable, Carter's writing can nevertheless be viewed as a succession of rewritings depicting an evolution of a subject initially vulnerable to but ultimately able to manipulate history. This is signalled most clearly by the early figure of the witch-hysteric. She is gradually transformed into the sibyl-prophetess of the later texts, while in a parallel dynamic, the environment's external threatening constructions have been dismantled in favour of a self-fashioning world full of possibility.

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Introduction

Constructing the Subject Inside and Out

The Whys and the Wherefores

This thesis charts the interaction of the subject with its surrounding environment in the work of Angela Carter, showing at the same time how the texts themselves encompass a two-fold extended project: a continual reworking of certain key themes and a simultaneous experiment with varying genres and levels of fantasy and reality.

The title of the thesis emphasises the combination of physical and metaphysical aspects of journeys in Carter's fiction. The inner and the outer become confused to the extent that each at times works as an analogue of the other. So, in Nights at the Circus for instance, the hero Fevvers' wings give her the identity of the New Woman who will soar above the restrictions hitherto imposed on women. However, she is also used by others as a concrete archetypal symbol, projected upon and claimed as a sign of their own invention. Elsewhere in the novel, people and houses become symbiotically linked, and dreams impinge upon reality.

Tricks with time and space interfere with the reader's constructions and cause slippages of role throughout Carter's work. This thesis is also concerned with the reading strategies used by readers of Carter's work, her characters as readers of books and of their surroundings, and reading as a survival strategy. The role of the reader is both enlarged and encroached upon by Carter, whose own role as writer is itself up for debate.

I originally applied to research this topic before Angela Carter's premature death, envisaging that not only would I have the opportunity to interview the author herself, but that I would be contending with a body of work that was still growing and which had attracted some critical acclaim but was not generally well-known.

However, sadly she died on the 16 February 1992 at the age of fifty-one. According to Sir Keith Thomas, who has been quoted widely on the subject, the British Academy then

received a surge of applications for awards to study her in the academic year 1992-3. The result of this, according to Lorna Sage, is that she has become "by far the most fashionable twentieth-century topic".[1]

Increased readership and academic interest have led to there being more enthusiasts and more material, which must be welcomed by those who feel her writing is worthwhile. However, they bring a new onus on the scholar, who has to put together and defend her own version of Carter whilst many others are also doing the same, and this new dynamic has necessarily affected the way in which I have approached this research.

The introductory chapter has been particularly difficult to "pitch". Ultimately, I want both to introduce the thesis as it stands and to give the reader some idea of what might have been included if size had permitted - of the sheer range of Carter's work - without falling prey to self-indulgence. The choice is complicated by the fact that even now, some five years after her death, "new" work is still in the process of being made generally available for the first time. For example, The Curious Room, a collection of her dramatic work, containing radio plays, film scripts and the libretto of an opera, has appeared only recently but alters the shape of her *oeuvre*.[2] While I am aware that some of the material I have included in my explication - using studies of prehistoric times, for instance, to gain insights into the nature of urban existence - might well appear extreme, my claims are couched in these terms in an attempt to do justice to the work of a writer with formidable knowledge of literature and life.

Therein lies Carter's fascination as a rigorous but captivating read. As Kate Webb writes of Carter's last novel, Wise Children (but it could be applied to almost any of her fiction):

> her gist is always more than surface level, and a huge part of the fun of reading Wise Children lies in seeing how far you can unpack the layers of meaning. How far, too, you can unpick the words of others that have been woven into Carter's/Dora's own. There is Shakespeare everywhere, but other

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[1] "Introduction," Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994) 3. Although that remark applied to research degrees, a similar movement is apparent in undergraduate courses. "Angela Carter, the contemporary British feminist writer, has overtaken Graham Greene to become the most popular modern author studied on university English courses." Charles Hymas, "Women oust the classics in academe's war of words," Sunday Times 8 Aug. 1993, sec. 1: 6.

[2] The Curious Room: Plays, Film Scripts and an Opera, introd. Susannah Clapp, ed. and with production notes by Mark Bell (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996).

> writers also: Milton, Sterne, Wordsworth ("If the child is the father of the man...then who is the mother of the woman?"), Dickens, Lewis Carroll making an appearance as a purveyor of "kiddiporn", Samuel Butler, Shaw, Dostoevsky ("My crime is my punishment"), Henry James and Tennessee Williams ("They lived on room service and the kindness of strangers") are just a random selection.[3]

Carter's breadth and depth of reading, together with the ingenuity of her ideas, make her a perilous subject for study. As a literary detective, one has to stay very light on one's feet not only in the work of discerning and interpreting but also in the subsequent arrangement of the result. As Carter's work contains a delicate balance between the hard-hitting and the fantastical, a clumsy presentation of its ideas and themes risks being facile: the dissection of a butterfly.

To complicate the matter of handling Carter's work further, throughout the author's literary career, Carter's work was the subject of disagreement and misunderstanding. Her controversial ideas on the subject of pornography, for instance, ensured her isolation at New York State University when she was teaching there in the late eighties, and brought her to the unsympathetic attention of Andrea Dworkin.[4] Critics have squabbled over the meanings of her work, while reviewers have found their reading strategies inadequate to the task. However, she has provoked thoughtful admiration from a wide range of people, even if there is disagreement among them as to her "best work".[5]

Ordering material that is both diverse and self-referential has been a complex matter. Even putting the introductory chapter into some kind of sequence has been difficult due to Carter's own fusion of the inner and the outer, so I have had to separate artificially the two focal ranges in order to maintain a coherent form. Going from the wide to the narrow, but emphasising the links between the two, I first examine our present environment in the context of the ways in which we live in and react to it. Then I take some preliminary steps towards

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[3] "Seriously Funny: Wise Children," Sage, Flesh and the Mirror 295.

[4] See Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: The Women's Press, 1981) 85.

[5] Typical amongst Carter's readers for having diverse opinions are Paul Barker, for instance, who likes The Magic Toyshop and The Bloody Chamber the best, and Paulina Palmer, who, writing before Carter's death, sees her as getting better and better. Barker, "The Return of the Magic Story-Teller," Independent on Sunday 8 Jan. 1995, suppt.: 16, and Palmer, "From Coded Mannequin to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight," Women Reading Women's Writing, ed. Sue Roe (Brighton: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1987) 179-205.

describing the embodied, gendered subject who may be reader, writer or character, and begin to look at some of the problems this contemporary Western subject, who both creates and is created by her environment, encounters.

The thesis' emphasis, then, is on the partial, the alienating and the fluctuating. In setting all of this out at the beginning, I intend this preliminary material to be read as a backdrop to subsequent chapters. I have envisaged Carter being primarily interested in female or feminised subjects, although her perspective is wide-ranging rather than exclusive. The chapters are then presented in a mainly chronological order, with an examination of Carter's fairy tales (text, radio play and film) preceding four chapters on her longer works followed by a conclusion related to the later, short pieces contained in American Ghosts and Old World Wonders. My approach gave rise to some natural pairings among the novels, The Magic Toyshop with Heroes and Villains, Love with The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, and Nights at the Circus with Wise Children, while The Passion of New Eve is treated separately. This chronological order facilitates, in my opinion and Carter's own words, "an inbuilt narrative drive".[6]

Urban Turmoil

Apart from her strong avocation for the role of the writer in both reflecting the state of society and in imagining possible futures, this extract also shows Carter explicitly linking the process in with the confusions of the environment, particularly the urban environment. Because it is of such central importance in this study, I trace back to the beginning of our experience of urban existence in the context of both societal behaviour generally and gendered experience in particular. This most intense human environment is constructed largely through interaction with other human subjects and, crucially as can be seen below, there is evidence that as people proliferated so gendered roles began to emerge.

Many palaeontologists and evolutionary biologists believe that evolution, both physical and cultural, occurs in short periods of flux that follow and are followed by relatively stable times. Stephen Jay Gould describes this "stop-go" pattern in the following terms: "The

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[6] Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Angela Carter," meanjin 44.1 (1985): 12.

history of life is not a continuum of development , but a record punctuated by brief, sometimes geologically instantaneous, episodes of mass extinction and subsequent diversification."[7] The uneven pace of what we might otherwise envisage as a smooth curve is exacerbated by Gould's conclusions on the inevitability or otherwise of the existence of the human race. For him, we exist "as a contingency of 'just history' " (323). By implication, then, not only are we accidental products of events, but so is our history (and therefore our future). We began as hunter-gatherers, and there was no inevitability in our adapting to permanent settlements, which we began comparatively recently in our species' history (around 10,000 years ago).[8] On the positive side, settled populations can grow far larger than nomadic tribes, thus allowing the emerging farmers to overrun any disputed territory. However, because of the dependence upon a few crops and the consequent restriction of access to the food supply, an elite class tended to develop in the settled societies. Everyone else became subservient, and their standards of nutrition (and their heights) fell (Diamond 167-8). At the same time, because of this sedentary existence, women began to have children at two- rather than four-yearly intervals. Both their health and their status therefore suffered.

Sherry B. Ortner has speculated on the universal devaluation of women from an anthropological perspective in her seminal article "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?".[9] According to her, their associations with children, who are themselves not seen as quite human, has contributed to women's removal from the mainstream of society. Meanwhile, male creativity has focused on *production* rather than *reproduction*, with the result that the worlds of religion, art, science and history have been constructed almost exclusively by men; women have been excluded by a combination of custom and opportunity.[10] The very act of settling in one place seems to have caused a large proportion of the population to be denied access to a full share of the societal wealth and culture.[11]

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[7] Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History (1989; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 54.

[8] See Jared Diamond, The Rise and Fall of the Third Chimpanzee (1991; London: Vintage, 1992) especially Chapter 10.

[9] In Women, Culture and Society, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974; Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1983) 67-87.

[10] Luce Irigaray has suggested that if "women's work" received wages it would be thought of more highly. "The Necessity for Sexuate Rights," The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray, ed and introd. Margaret Whitford (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 198.

[11] Bruce Chatwin reaches this conclusion in his novel, The Songlines (1987; London: Picador, 1988). See also later in this section.

This weighting of the imperishable over the perishable has influenced successive generations. The movement towards permanent architecture has consequently been viewed as a necessary as well as inevitable step in the direction of civilisation. Yet, Diamond points out that we have lived less that half a percent of our time as anatomically modern human beings in cities, and are still adjusting to this swift and massive alteration in our societies' structures, whether or not we acknowledge this (172). Widespread complacency denies the upheavals involved in these changes which include the development of concepts of ownership. This, together with the ability to change the landscape, has caused changes in our attitudes to ourselves. Contemporary research suggests that with the loss of many communal ties, such as religious faith and the extended family, the post-industrial cities have been background to, and to some extent may have caused, the faltering of individuals' attachments to each other and to the community. In the West, communal living of a sort persisted amongst the poor in Europe until the Renaissance, when corridors between more and smaller rooms as havens of privacy became the norm in order to accommodate the solitude that had come, through a philosophical shift, to be viewed as a positive experience.[12] In its spiritual, political and linguistic turmoil, the Renaissance period, like our own, sought new ways of thinking and perceiving the world, and new concepts of self-hood arose. Yet now the rational individual who was formed during the upheavals of the Renaissance is again breaking down.

Whether because of philosophy or high-density living, our ties with each other have loosened, while our desire for privacy has increased. These facts and that of unequally apportioned resources are mirrored in urban architecture. For J. Nicholas Entrikin, the city illustrates "the 'death' of community" in contemporary society (70), and the effect of an urban environment is pathological. It is necessary in the city to avoid the always-threatening information overload, but the inertia that results has a tendency to leave the individual isolated and paradoxically, because it is a defensive strategy, vulnerable. Part of this tension is caused by uncertainty about the future, over which the individual would have more control in a lower-density environment. This manifests as a mixture of nostalgia and trepidation, the past

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[12] Philippe Ariès, "Introduction," Passions of the Renaissance, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 3, A History of Private Life, gen. eds. Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard UP, 1989) 6-7.

being incorporated into the present: tricks or mistakes with time, which in turn prompts the necessary development of new coping strategies.

Technology, which has been used increasingly to provide surveillance and security, has been revealed as being unequal to the task. In the James Bulgar murder case, two young boys were able to lead an even smaller child out of a shopping mall, through crowded streets finally to kill him. Security camera footage served only to make the crime seem the more fantastical when it appeared on television screens around the world. This "performance" of an abduction scenario, has sinister echoes of the experience of Jean Baudrillard's post-modern individual who is no longer able to distinguish between the real and the simulacra. Instead, an overload or "excess of communication" produces a "living satellite".[13] The integrity of the subject is attacked within a disfunctioning environment where the divisions between public and private space have broken down while doubt is placed on the ability of the body to negotiate adequately the challenges it is faced with. This is an ironical development in view of the cult of the body which has characterised this century. The sheer mass of information and experience to which we are subject is too demanding, and in Frederic Jameson's words, we are called upon by our surroundings to do the impossible, to "grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, as yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions".[14]

Susan Saegert looked into the effect of a crowd on people, finding it to be a combination of what she called "stimulus overload (e.g. meaningless noise), information overload (e.g. crowding or a surfeit of signs on a highway), and decisional overload (e.g. attempting to construct social relationships on a very high density environment or to respond creatively and effectively to frequent, unpredictable, complex, and changing task demands" (264). People's reactions to the stress of crowding fall into two main camps: an increased effort at controlling one's own life; or the withdrawal from society. With the latter response particularly, information is no longer derived directly from contact with others. Instead, it is gleaned unsystematically from religious, political and media sources. The more rarefied our contact with the sources of our information, the more irrational and superstitious we become,

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[13] "The Ecstasy of Communication," Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto, 1985) 128.
[14] "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Modernism/Postmodernism, ed. and introd. Peter Brooker (Harlow: Longman, 1992) 172.

and the more volatile the situation generally. Furthermore, to question the desirability of a dense population system is itself disturbing. As a society we have placed a great deal of reliance upon a system that weakens the ties of mutual responsibility while relying heavily upon them. Rising crime rates, riots and deprivation highlight its fragility, throwing into question the concept of a reasonable standard of living in the city environment and puts the onus on planners to change the situation.

Since the Renaissance, the city has shifted from being a religious to a secular space, and the geographer David Harvey has drawn a parallel between this shift in perception and the current breakdown of the subject which has left the structures of local community and native country threatened by diminished importance (305). While the world feels smaller, because of travel and telecommunications innovations, national pride and territoriality are manifested with increasing ferocity. Saegert, noting this tendency to break up into "cliques and factions" suggests this indicates a desire for more manageable alternatives (274). Yet, as the pace of change accelerates, the possibility of formulating these seems less and less likely unless we manage to modify the ways in which we adapt to the stressful circumstances of high-density life.

That the city space has failed its inhabitants is strongly argued by the architect Joseph Rykwert,[15] who looks in vain for city planners to respect and provide for the division between private and public space. According to Baudrillard, on the other hand, this mental division has already been lost to the extent that we are no longer capable of defining its exact nature and, as the divisions between public and private break down, so do those between reality and fiction. He reasons that as we are already prone to "simulating" many of our actions, the reality and the simulation will tend to blend both in these actions and in our understanding of them.

We should also consider that the metropolis exists not only as an entity in itself, but also as a site through which we travel. Consequently, any investigation into our environment has necessarily to allow for both static and fluid perceptions. As well as architectural structure, Rykwert shows us that the street is "human movement institutionalised", and the treatment of human traffic, both pedestrian and other, needs to be examined in conjunction

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[15] The Necessity of Artifice: Ideas in Architecture (London: Academy, 1982).

with the buildings themselves (105). In response to this, Rykwert has explored the alarming consequences for the population of choices made by urban planners who prioritise carriageways and cars over footpaths and people (112-13). Taking inspiration from his observations of nomadic peoples, whose lifestyles offer the closest available comparisons to our own cultural origins, he stresses the possibility that the pathway may have come into existence before the permanent human dwelling, and that as a result it may contain something of a prior truth about our existence. A track may seem invisible to the uninitiated, whilst appearing obvious to those who know what signs to look for. A seemingly ordinary bushland walkway can, if approached with the correct knowledge and attitude, become imbued with immense significance, facilitating the gaining of knowledge and cementing of bonds between members of a clan or tribe.[16] In The Songlines, his book on the Australian aborigines, Bruce Chatwin repeatedly stresses that human beings are naturally walking creatures. The "songlines" of the title are memorised chants that walkers use as guides on long trips. By describing the surrounding terrain in terms of the Dreamtime or other ancient lore, the songlines serve to re-create the world. Re-treading his Ancestor's footsteps (the book does not mention female walkers), a man is able to convert the unfamiliar and indistinct into an environment rich with references and meaning. This example also sheds light on the importance of the pathway in the symbolism of our lives.

The interval between birth and death is often thought of as a path or road; it is also a way of visualising our interaction with each other, a route of communication. Since the Middle Ages, when ordinary street life was a source of spectacle and locus of interaction, we have become progressively less able or inclined to make sense of our environment or find coherence within it. Rykwert advances the idea that as we have become more literate so we have become *il*literate to our surroundings (131). The meanings that could be evoked by buildings and were available to the ordinary people in the Middle Ages, are no longer apparent. The rate of change in society has produced confusion and the destruction of our sense of the meaning of places. Our failure to evolve fast enough, perhaps to grow Jameson's "new organs" gives rise to woolly reactions with people using the template of past certainties

[16] Another example might be the "invisible" ley-lines which permeate the landscape and have to be detected by divining or other inspirational methods.

to try to make sense of the present. Thus, says Donald Meinig, regions are "abstractions, they exist in our minds. As a form of territoriality they can become imbued with emotion and can influence our actions" (1202). Increasingly society becomes more idiosyncratic and less consensual.

After all this negativity, what positive points can be made about the urb? As places of intense contrasts, where ghettoising produces districts with strong occupational or cultural flavours, cities have the potential to stimulate their inhabitants through their diversity and by the construction of tension across boundaries to produce "live space".[17] Less positive is the fact that inhabitants have often been disturbed at how easy it is to move between different areas. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have pointed out that the city plans for Manchester positioned housing for the poor behind tasteful bourgeois shopping areas (130). They note that the development of certain behaviours and disassociations between the "mainstream" bourgeoisie and other more despised groups has a sexual, forbidden element, of taboo.[18]

Elizabeth Wilson goes further in her connection of the city with sexuality than Stallybrass and White. Whilst their analysis concentrates on the interaction between different groups within the city, Wilson focuses upon the processes of, and intentions behind, the construction of cities and so builds a case for gendered ghettoising. The emergence of the suburb allowed bourgeois men to remove women from the street and out of sight. This, along with screening the poor out of sight and the development of hidden sewers enabled them to create a city space much more in keeping with their own self-image and maximise their own freedom.

Other writers have approached the issue of the suburbanised woman from other directions. Angela Leighton, in the process of analysing Victorian women's poetry on the subject of sexuality, examines nineteenth-century views on immorality through a spatial schema. She reasons that in the last century, because women had no civil rights, they existed purely in a moral sphere, that is, the moral health of everyone depended upon their behaviour

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[17] This is in opposition to Richard Sennett's term "dead space", which refers to arbitrary, blurred or neutral boundaries which fail to stimulate or interact with people. "The body and the city: Looking for 'live space' in the modern townscape," Times Literary Supplement 18 Sept. 1992: 3.

[18] "The 'poetics' of transgression reveals the disgust, fear and desire which inform the dramatic self-representation of that culture through the 'scene of its low Other' " (202).

(344). This supposes that moral contamination could pass only from woman to woman. By contrast, men are:

> the arbiters of virtue and vice, they are also the go-betweens. For them the passage from one to the other is a secret passage between separate spheres. But for women the difference is not so certain. The passage which divides the "type of virtue" from the type of "vice" can turn into a mirror, to reflect the self (355-6).

Thus women were kept as far apart as possible, isolated in their fathers' or husbands' homes or in brothels, to such an extent that when the first Anglican Sisterhoods were set up in the 1840s there was considerable public disapproval. The idea of women coming together without male separation and supervision was both worrying and highly subversive. It appears that wherever prevailing powers seek to circumscribe the behaviour of other groups in a society, the means are found by some members of the pressurised group to resignify the restriction. More recently other groups, such as gays, have begun to emerge who respond to stereotyping with self-definition (Wilson 119-20). It may only be an attitude of mind, where the required servility masks resentment or opposition, or it may be something more radical. Gérard Vincent said of the post-revolution Soviet Union that: "every individual leads a double life: as a citizen, he obeys the rules, but as a cautious deviant he flouts them in order to feed himself, satisfy his sexual needs, and maximise his gain".[19] A more autonomous approach is echoed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who suggests that the city provides endless opportunities for finding and exploring different realities at will in the manner of Alice passing through the looking-glass (261). Yet the city is perilous, partly because of the sheer scale, but also as it contains disaffected people whose connections with society are too tenuous for normal interaction.

In many ways, then, conditions seem right for re-examination and -articulation of the nature of the human subject, the environment s/he finds herself in and the ways in which the two negotiate and develop each other. The narratives we construct when describing our environment are crucial to our relationship with it, and Carter's own relevance to this

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[19] "The Secrets of History and the Riddle of Identity," Riddles of Identity in Modern Times, eds. Antoine Prost and Gérard Vincent, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, vol. 5 A History of Private Life (1991) 148.

supposition is exemplified by her thoughts on the nature of her work: "it *is* all applied linguistics. But language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation" (77). Her diffidence in enunciating the project, and the acknowledgement that she has changed her mind in the past and may do so again in the future, indicate a necessary sensitivity towards it.

In the course of this thesis, I shall be examining the journeys made by Carter's protagonists through buildings, cities and jungles, environments external to them and of their own making inside their heads. Their confusion between the inner and the outer, however, necessitates an introduction to the interface, to the body in discourse.

(Re)Constructing the Body in the Text

> [Frida Kahlo] depicts her body...her torso stuck with tacks; she paints the fresh incision of the surgeon's knife; her own blood, and other people's, too; her miscarriage; her restless dual nature, part European, part Mexican; her broken heart.[20]

In 1989, Carter wrote a critical introduction to a postcard set of paintings by Frida Kahlo, the Mexican artist. As the above extract indicates, Carter's interest and concern with the connections between the identity of the woman artist and her work as mediated by her body are paramount. Her description picks its way through the material evidence to show how Kahlo's art and the facts of her life reflect and partake of each other. Her body is explicitly foregrounded as the site in which this exchange takes place, a site which proved vulnerable as, according to Carter, Kahlo finally gave up living when her foot was amputated, many years after the initial accident which triggered her painting career (103). If her body's open wounds made her view it as a source of artistic inspiration, then removal of a part of it impoverished this source, desecrating her relationship with it. Neither work nor life were able to continue. Making the same connection with the written word, Alicia Suskin Ostriker has pointed out that female poets make references to the body, especially the poet's own body, far more often and more richly and intimately than do their male counterparts.[21] This may be due to both sexes' tendency to identify the female with the natural world, as discussed in Ortner's article, yet Ostriker focuses more minutely on the woman's reaction to her body's uneasy relation with culture, reasoning that because it is associated with her, the woman's body suffers or is victimised so that she experiences "not 'beauty' but an overwhelming vividness, energy, and terror in the sense of self as a living organism" (257). Again selfhood is under attack. However, there is also a sense that new organs are being grown or the self is being constructed differently. This concept of the body as being of pivotal importance as a sensory organ through which we experience society has informed many theorists' writing, in particular, that of Michel Foucault and Mikhail Bakhtin.

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[20] "Frida Kahlo," Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, 1992) 103.
[21] "Body Language: Imagery of the Body in Women's Poetry," The State of the Language, eds. Leonard Michaels and Christopher Ricks (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1980) 248.

Power and Control

Foucault's concern with power, knowledge, the formation and function of the subject and how all of these interact, give him an obvious relevance within the parameters of this discussion. For him, the body - which philosophy has largely ignored as an entity that exists historically - was of great interest as a site of struggle and demarcation. Where Carter saw "Everybody's appearance" as "their symbolic autobiography",[22] in Foucault's opinion, the body is "the inscribed surface of events".[23] More generally, Foucault does not intend to provide a universally applicable key to understanding. Instead, as an author, he sites himself, in his own phrase as one of the "founders of discursivity",[24] who provides a paradigm that shapes the modes, images and concepts which other operators within their fields will, in turn, utilise: a methodology which finds parallels in both Carter's work and this thesis. Although the founder freely admits fallibility, other people's work is coloured by contact with what he produces. Thus Foucault's complex legacy allows his readers great freedom of interpretation and comparison. However, he also warns that "all knowledge rests upon injustice" (95). By making explicit the power struggle inherent in the pursuit of knowledge, (c.f. Carter's heroes in subsequent chapters) Foucault highlights the importance of the perspective from which the enquiry is conducted. The traditional historian writes from a humble, self-effacing, distant point of view which generically seeks to homogenise its material. S/he looks for links with which to construct a logical chain of events and to this end ignores deviant details. In contrast, Foucault's "effective" history, or genealogy, is biased and conceives of events as haphazard.[25] Incidentally, the argumentative, biased and heterogeneous novel is an ideal form for exploring a world in which events are contingent rather than inevitable.

Foucault concentrates on and unwraps our cultural conceptions of deviance, focusing on the disciplines and social practices which work upon all of us. This unconventional, intellectually active attention to types and aspects of lives normally ignored or turned away from in disgust echoes Carter's attitude to her own characters who often behave in ways that appear "perverse" or "deviant". Buzz, from Love, for instance, is capable of a species of

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[22] Lorna Sage "The Savage Sideshow," New Review 4.39-40 (1977): 56.

[23] "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow (1984; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 83.

[24] "What Is an Author?" The Foucault Reader 114.

[25] Foucault's viewpoint finds scientific support in Stephen Jay Gould's theories. See 5 above.

violence which normally casts a character in the role of villain, but he is portrayed as being as damaged as he is damaging. Not only the destiny of his actions, but their origins, are presented to a reader whose condemnation is at times invited, but at other times is skilfully fended off.

Foucault's method of historical enquiry allows the reader to slot in her/his own personal, self-confessedly biased reactions, allied with a variable perspective, and the space to resist the urge to incorporate or expel incongruous events. Of course the nature of fiction is very different from the real world, otherwise there would be no reason to create the former. Yet a clarification of the ways in which we attempt to experience the real world should have some bearing on an analysis of the make-believe versions. In this way, significantly, the realm of the novel provides an environment within which the reader may react to the events depicted without needing to venerate or condemn the text. At the same time there is an awareness rather than a dismissal of the body within the frame of reference. It has been integrated into the discourse. According to Foucault (in "Space, Knowledge, and Power") the body's affects and disorders will actually have a bearing upon the academic's viewpoint (249).

Having touched on Foucault's relevance in this study at a fundamental level, we can start working in closer focus with the issues he raises concerning the ideological and actual treatment of the body in society. Working, as I have stated, from a historical point of view, his studies chart our construction of, and attitudes towards, concepts of normality and deviance, and he links these in with our views of criminal behaviour. Within this frame of reference, the ownership and treatment of the body, its functioning with respect (chronologically) first to the monarch and then to the state is of paramount importance. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault show how the practices of torture and public execution conveyed not only the obvious warning to future lawbreakers, it would often also replicate the damage of the original crime upon its victim. A literal demarcation of the body replays the crime for the onlooker.[26]

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[26] Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (1973; Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1991). See especially 44-5 which depict both the commonplace details of thieves having their hands removed and the more startling and painstaking events which reproduce the harm of the crime even to the point of staging the execution at the site of the murder.

This often intricate process was made more significant because of the involvement of the monarch who was represented by the law and whose sovereignty was restored by way of spectacular punishment. However, this violence caused problems through the very assertion of authority. The man who carried out the sentence, the executioner, was the representative of the sovereign on the scene, but the violence of his task came to be interpreted as tyranny by proxy. To inflame matters further, the public confession that the condemned individual was supposed to make as part of the spectacle began to be viewed as ludicrous or shameful. Because of this, in the West at least, there was a shift in emphasis. This move was, in Foucault's terms, a prerequisite for the rise of capitalism and industrialisation, as bodies were needed in order to furnish the capitalist with labour. "The body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Discipline and Punish 26). In effect, a new politics of the body developed. From the spectacular inscription on the criminal's body of the evidence of his crime, there was a move towards a different type of subjectifying, inflicted away from the crowd: surveillance. As a result, the body became part of the machine of production.

Here the notion of the panopticon, which combines maximised surveillance powers with minimal interaction between the surveyed comes in to play. First sketched out by Jeremy Bentham as a design for a prison, this phenomenon, a hollow ring with open-fronted segments facing a central watch-tower, must be understood as a possibility rather than a functioning reality. Its purpose and possible usage are more important than its concrete existence. The panopticon provides an opportunity for the separation of deviants (or possible deviants, such as school children) and, by dint of its design, which uses rooms with windows at both ends, it creates the perfect viewing conditions. There is nowhere to hide, and there can be no method of communication between the incarcerants. Anyone may watch them, although the prisoner will not be specifically aware of this as the surveillance tower is constructed specifically to conceal the surveyor's gaze. They are unable to discern who regards them or even when or if, a process of self-surveillance begins. The mechanism is internalised and becomes the most powerful element in the strategy, for those surveying are themselves subject to inspection. In Foucault's words, "this machine is one in which everyone is caught, those who exercise this

power as well as those who are subjected to it".[27] The panopticon stands as the quintessential device which characterises our control techniques of outlaws.[28] Nowadays we are often recorded or regarded by hidden cameras in shopping malls, or on motorways without being aware of the event. Perhaps even now we have not come to full awareness of the implications of this evolving tendency as crime rates continue to rise exponentially. Part of the reason for this may be that delinquency has been separated out as a type of illegality that enfranchises the rest of us (Discipline and Punish 277). In any case, the body is watched to such an extent that a "whole type of society emerges" (216). The surveillance has separated us from each other, our sense of the crowd has diminished. Mechanisms operating outside of us prevent the dissolution of difference and so we remain alone even among thousands of our kind. Ironically, technology seems to have had the opposite effect to that intended.

Another of Foucault's studies, The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, discusses the roles that sex and sexuality have played in the functioning of our (Western) culture. As in Discipline and Punish, Foucault concentrates his efforts on the issues of power and control mechanisms which have evolved from pre-industrial times and now surround us so effectively. According to his account, our current state of simultaneous fastidiousness and fascination has developed as a result of our increasingly cushioned existence. Famine and plague no longer have the same power over us; our physical state is "no longer an inaccessible substrate" and is instead able to hold more symbolic meaning (142). As a result there has been a proliferation of studies on sexuality, and a single path or passage of sexuality has emerged as legitimised and enshrined - the fertile "Malthusian" couple (3). Meanwhile, other loci of sexuality, between parents and their children, teachers and pupils, have been shaded by a process of linguistic screening whereby the vocabulary with which such matters were discussed - in which confessions were made - was rendered taboo. At the same time there was an explosion of discourses which good Christians were supposed to use to articulate their unclean actions and thoughts. Irregularities were probed and diagnosed, the tendency always towards more surveillance and classification, with bodies as the site of the struggle for power. The new

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[27] "The Eye of Power," Power/Knowledge, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980) 156. Quoted by Paul Rabinow, "Introduction," The Foucault Reader 19.

[28] Outlaws are well-represented in Carter's writing. See, for instance, Heroes and Villains, The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, and The Passion of New Eve.

"plagues" are schizophrenics, psychopaths, out-of-control children, the underclass; the focus has moved away from the social, to the intra-individual realm.

At the beginning of this century, the new psychology performed the rather unhelpful task of unearthing the incestuous element in family relations and seeking to medicalise and restrain it.[29] Where the practice of sodomy had been a temporary aberration, now the territory of the homosexual was fenced off. In compensation for all this debarring however, the pursuit of sexuality did become all the more pleasurable because, beyond the rigidly inscribed areas, it was forbidden and inexpressible. But this last course is taken only by a few individuals. As with our original sudden permanent settlement, this revolution of existence benefits the few at everyone else's expense, a modern example being the so-called "sexual revolution" of the nineteen sixties, which in retrospect suited heterosexuals and males rather more than it did everyone else.

Death is also perceived differently from the days in which execution was a singular and public event. In a society which does not put its own members to death (apart from the United States where in any case executions are no longer spectacular) massacres of other groups are still an essential element of social behaviour. For Foucault, this phenomenon may be explained by the fact that the social body, of which we are constituents, no longer has the power of death over its members, exerting instead the power of life. The body is driven out of the discourse as it has only a negative existence within this frame of reference so that, for example, the terminally ill may be kept alive regardless of quality of life because modern medicine is able to achieve such results.

So, broadly speaking, Foucault charts a distinct change in the way in which the body was, and is now, viewed and treated in society. He highlights the blind spots, taboos and silences, "an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within overall strategies", that signal centres of real power and activity (History of Sexuality 27). Carter's own narratives are sympathetic to his viewpoint. From Melanie's discovery of herself "O, my America, my new found land" (Toyshop 1), through to the Chance

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[29] There is convincing evidence that a considerable amount of denial also took place. See J. Moussaieff Masson, The Assault on Truth: Freud and Child Sex Abuse (1985; London: Fontana, new ed. 1992).

twins' invention of their place in the world through the mirroring effect of their identical bodies, Carter has striven to release the bodies of her heroes from negation.

The Carnival of Hysteria

In the prologue of Mikhail Bakhtin's Rabelais and his World, Krystyna Pomorska points out that both Bakhtin and Rabelais were working within a culture and time of official prohibition, where authority sought to control dissent at a fundamental level. As I have already mentioned, there are strong connections to be made between the Renaissance, when Rabelais was writing, and this century. Both are times of flux and have been characterised by the need for a new type of sensibility in order to comprehend the world more accurately. Rabelais' and Bakhtin's defiant strategies, separated chronologically by over three hundred years, are intimately related in terms both of content and of underlying intent: "both Rabelais and Bakhtin cultivated laughter, aware that laughter, like language, is uniquely characteristic of the human species" (p. xi).

The importance of this carnival laughter is emphasised time and again. It is a sign of courage, a signal of dissent. Its ambivalence and criticism express a spirit of freedom and opposition. As a physical sign, laughter which is directed towards authority brings that authority nearer to the grotesque physical (social) body of the people. For Bakhtin, the laughter that "degrades and materializes" lowers the spiritual (20), and, with its emphasis on bodily functions brings it into contact with the proletariat.

An immediate problem with this concept is that the capacity for laughter has been lost because of the disappearance of a norm for the subject to be based upon (as we have seen earlier in this piece). One answer to this complaint is that whilst the immediacy of carnival has been lost, it continues to exist in fragments in our discourses as a type of residual laughter. However, the question remains of how it emerges and manifests itself.

Many commentators are uncertain about Bakhtin's carnival theory. Is it as subversive as it first appears? Is there then any actual evidence that carnival was effective historically? In the 1960s, Mary Douglas (among others) reasoned that any temporary loss of definition of

boundaries would ultimately result only in an inevitable return to the status quo.[30] The historian Natalie Zemon Davis came to a different conclusion when she focused on the early modern period of France's history - a time-span which includes Rabelais' own era. Although she acknowledges the view which casts festive life as a safety valve that may moderate but cannot change the hierarchical organisation of society, she does not envisage her material as leading her inexorably towards this outcome. Instead, she examines it for signs that something more radical occurs.[31] The extent to which she succeeds gives some indication as to the feasibility of Foucault's and Carter's projects of embodying narrative.

Davis points out that Bakhtin's account allows that carnival not only reinforces official institutions but also interrogates them. Parades and riots occur as comments upon particular events; sometimes in a premeditated context, sometimes spontaneously. As well as signifying domestic and local events, festivities were often timed to have meaning within the religious calendar. Indeed, "Abbeys" as they were named, were prone to having their own shrines and ceremonies, often including members masquerading as women. Yet with the increasing influence of Protestantism and capitalism, (which demanded more spiritually refined ritual and a regular workforce) Davis hypothesises that carnival gradually ceased to offer institutionalised resistance to official tyranny, causing it to be relegated geographically and sociologically to the home, and leisure-time (103). So, is it still relevant?

As recounted by Davis, the enactment of public disorderly conduct by feminine figures (even though they were often men dressed as women) gave rise to female role models who were, occasionally, actually emulated by real women. Although there is no evidence that they belonged to Abbeys, when events took a serious political turn women were known to take part in riots, as did men in female disguise. Through charivari and festival, then, a wider and more powerful role for women was at least envisaged. Yet during the same time-period women's rights within the family and state were being whittled away in the run-up towards industrialisation.

The question of the contemporary effectiveness of Rabelais' carnival centres on its intimate, if problematic, connections with the official functions of public life. In order for it

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[30] Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) 3-4.

[31] Society and Culture in Early Modern France: eight essays (1965; London: Duckworth, 1975) 97.

to be properly subversive, carnival needs to be transposed from the purely domestic to encompass the public sphere again. At the same time, it needs to retain its connections with the vernacular so as to operate a dialogic relationship with official functions. This merger has implications for the ways in which time is perceived as, by blending the official linear schedule with carnival "timeliness", a new historical awareness is born which would in turn cause "an increased awareness of time and the *difference* between historical epochs".[32]

Bakhtin identified carnival as "the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal....hostile to all that was immortalised and completed" (10). Through the medium of carnival he, like Foucault, is able to view history as the study of crisis, although, despite the unsettling disorderly connotations of Bakhtin's description, there is still room for the criticism that he views history nostalgically.

Mary Russo has pointed out that historically (indeed to the present day) carnivals have been violent, dangerous places for women or other marginal figures to attend.[33] For Russo, the sheer misogyny of carnival behaviour, with its burlesqued women and symbolism of the feminine body as grotesque, taints the whole field with conservatism. Yet, if Bakhtin's depiction of the female body is ambivalent it also contains images which are positive: "she debases, brings down to earth, lends a bodily substance to things, and destroys; but, *first of all, she is the principle that gives birth*" (Bakhtin 240, my italics). The grotesque body is a central feature of the carnival which in turn looks for change or reform. It is transgressive and subversive, open to the world. At the same time, Russo makes the connection between the carnivalised woman's body and the hysteric (222).

Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have pointed out that "It is striking how the broken fragments of carnival, terrifying and disconnected, glide through the discourse of the hysteric",[34] while for Sandra M. Gilbert the hysteric is "ambiguous, anti-establishment and conservative at the same time".[35] As a figure she maintains her rebellion inside herself while

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[32] Clair Wills, "Upsetting the public: carnival, hysteria and women's texts," Bakhtin and Cultural Theory, eds. Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 132, her italics.
[33] "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986) 217.
[34] The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London: Methuen, 1986) 171.
[35] "Introduction," The Newly Born Woman, by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, trans. Betsy Wing (1975; Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987) p. xii.

remaining within the domestic sphere. Although she appears reactionary, the hysteric is not solely a pawn of the establishment.

Russo draws parallels between the workings of carnival, and hysteria as a kind of performance while noting that the actual position of an author conflicts with the participatory aspects of carnival because the author's function is to *represent* rather than *participate* in the activity s/he describes. The resulting detachment, then, has the capacity to render the whole frame of reference more limited and remote. Meanwhile, the hysteric's point of view is congruent with the conditions of true carnival as she is placed wholly within her own set of (admittedly circumscribed) gestures. She actually relives certain parts of her own history in a cyclical pattern within a domestic setting with no spectacular view.

The hysterical woman has historically proved to be a useful camouflage for female rebellion. Women in riots in early modern times rampaged in the knowledge that legally they would not be held wholly accountable for their actions. Perhaps the contemporary plea of "Pre-Menstrual Syndrome" by some women convicted of violent crimes parallels this. Looking back in time, Elaine Showalter points out, in The Female Malady, that the suffragettes used the tactics of the hysteric (162), while Luce Irigaray, addressing our present society, suggests that as a technique of defiance, the hysteric may contrive to over-comply with the role of the feminine (by which she is constricted) in protest its imposition.[36] Although not all of these techniques are necessarily likely measures for the theorist, or feminist, to contemplate practising, they do show that strategies for defiance may be found in what at first seem unlikely circumstances when analysed from a standard masculinised viewpoint.

Processes of performance and masquerade are vital to the woman's depiction of herself *in* society as her body is more circumscribed *by* society than a man's. Indeed, the male gaze is itself one of the elements that freeze women into place. For John Berger, the social presence of the male (who occupies the position of spectator-owner) is connected with power and with his potential for affecting others' circumstances. Meanwhile, the woman is her own onlooker. Berger speculates on the internalising aspect of the gaze upon the woman who has been born

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[36] "Questions," The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray, ed. and introd. Margaret Whitford (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 138.

into a defined and confined space within a male world. She has a relationship with herself that exemplifies the aim of Bentham's and Foucault's panopticon but achieves a high level of self-surveillance without the aid of any external device. There are complications, however. The self-surveying woman "comes to consider the *surveyor* and the *surveyed* within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman".[37] If Berger is correct in his assumptions about her dual roles, then the woman is effectively masquerading as herself in her own life story. She reverberates between her roles as both character and onlooker, never wholly one or the other. Her actions and appearance do comment upon her own opinion of herself and attributes, but at the same time, this species of self-consciousness reveals the artificiality of the whole procedure. The resulting environment narrates the cramped position which women occupy and perhaps explains the Women's Movement's political slogan "the personal is political" the effect of which is noted by Adrienne Rich: "I began at this point to feel that politics was not something 'out there' but something 'in here' " (44). The mismatch between the inner and the outer, once acknowledged, can begin to be theorised.

Yet, in view of the fact that to be embodied is to be gendered is to be feminised is to be devalued, is acquiescence with this identification a progressive or a retrogressive step? If we adapt Foucault's argument, which asserts genealogy over traditional history, then for the narrator/artist/historian to acknowledge their position and bias within a discourse results in the provision of a fuller, more honest account. By this paradigm, the alternative, so-called "bodiless" discourse, which affects to be dispassionate and unbiased, deceives itself. If women produce this latter type of discourse, then they leave unexamined the disparate positions which men and women occupy in discourse and abandon possible multivalency for a single mode of expression, and yet "all knowledge is based upon injustice".

In the course of this introduction I have outlined some of the currently circulating crises and debates dealing with the state of both the subject and the environment. The alienation and frustration expressed by so many commentators point to a more general feeling of mismatch. Meanwhile, the strategies and methodologies for negotiating the complex, fragmentary reality we are faced with are unsatisfactory, although embodying the subject

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[37] John Berger Ways of Seeing: based on the BBC television series with John Berger, [A book made by John Berger et al.] (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972) 46, his italics.

within the discourse appears to offer some possibilities. The rest of this thesis, then, will apply this insight to Angela Carter's work, investigating at the same time how her experiments with genre facilitate active reading strategies, including a powerful sense of *re*-reading.

Chapter One looks at Carter's treatment of the fairy tale, in particular "Little Red Riding Hood", noting the author's apparent identification with Red Riding Hood, and questioning the legitimacy of drawing parallels between her and her work.

Chapter Two, which takes The Magic Toyshop (1967) and Heroes and Villains (1969) as its main texts, examines two heroines who are dislocated from the environments they find themselves in. Both are voracious readers who try to use their knowledge of texts to extricate themselves from their narratives. Taking Gothic motifs to construct a filter through which to view the texts, I chart Carter's use of surreal travel, of external features that illustrate internal mental processes, of blocked-off knowledge, and the uses and abuses of language.

Chapter Three centres round Love (1971, rev. ed. 1987) and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (1972). I examine Carter's portrayal of circumscribed femininity, partly through the experiences of a feminised male protagonist, partly through an analysis of Carter's unorthodox opinions on the subject of pornography.

Chapter Four takes The Passion of New Eve (1977), a text that seems to consolidate what has gone before and provide a bridge from the early texts to the later ones, and which narrates the protagonist's progress from a nightmare reality through several extreme communities to a place of possibility.

Chapter Five looks at the widening possibilities open to increasingly powerful heroes in the late novels Nights at the Circus (1984) and Wise Children (1991). While the concepts of carnival and the panopticon are developed, new elements are added, such as Hollywood and shamanism.

Finally, in Chapter Six, I draw together the insights achieved through the course of the thesis, by performing a reading of Carter's final, posthumously published collection of short fictions, American Ghosts and Old World Wonders (1993). Using the motifs of the dream and the labyrinth as exemplifying Carter's tricks with time and space, her unconventional realities, and investigations of the links between reader, author and character, I examine her relationship with mysticism and her attempts to locate and describe a "new kind of being".

Before I begin this, however, I want to present the narrative of Carter's publishing history which, I would argue, is in the process of becoming a contemporary fairytale. The sense of Carter's performance of her own literary career not only exemplifies the concept of the storied journey, it also highlights some of the connections that this thesis makes between the author, reader and text.

The Path of a Writer

We have already touched on the author's relationship to the generic landscape and in the course of that investigation discerned the importance of gender in both the quality of the experience and the manner in which it is interpreted. With these points in mind, I want to examine Carter's authorial persona with regard to her fiction, especially the fairy tales, and reveal how she dealt with the hostile environment of the publishing world and then make the claim that the publishing path she trod closely mirrored the actual content of her work. This is by no means an easy task as she is a writer of such sophistication and theoretical expertise. I have therefore deliberately placed this passage directly in front of (in the path of) the chapter on the fairy tale so as to encourage a process of cross-pollination, the culmination of which is found at the fairytale chapter's conclusion.

In the introduction to the posthumous collection, American Ghosts and Old World Wonders, her literary executor Susannah Clapp states that Carter had no false pride about what she did, indeed, she was perfectly happy for anything she wrote to be "set to music or skated on ice" (p. ix). She was neither intimidated by genre divisions - amongst her posthumously published work is a libretto for an operatic Orlando[1] - nor did she feel she owed herself, her work or her audience any adherence to notions of purity. Instead, with the above phrase she set up the image of a preposterous, limitless carnival combining music and ice (where will it end? at a deep-sea diving Doctor Hoffman perhaps?) which also expresses a "vulgar" interest in cold hard cash. At the same time, this image possesses a sort of lyrical beauty. Similarly Fevvers, the winged, peroxided hero of Nights at the Circus owns a "skipping-rope of egg-shaped pearls" which, Elaine Jordan suggests, is typical of Carter's own style of image in that it "yoke[s] together within the same syntax...incompatible elements" ("Enthralment", 24). However, although I agree with her idea that this provokes a "retroactive response" in the reader, I contest the accompanying argument that in the process Carter deletes herself from the text, thereby producing a stronger version.

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[1] The Curious Room: Play, Film Scripts an Opera, introd. Susannah Clapp, ed. and productions notes by Mark Bell (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996).

At the end of her (creative) life Carter was bursting out of a corset of artistic restrictions in terms of subject matter, as well as genre; the diverse material, forms and origins of the tales in American Ghosts reveal this.[2] Yet Carter's publishing career was itself diverse. When closely examined it is revealed as a journey of development, an experiment in role-playing (she had at one time wanted to be an actress[3]), an adding on of skins and hues.

It was Lorna Sage, in her first published interview with Carter in 1977, who made the initial connection between the writer and the history of her publications.[4] For Sage, Carter's journey from Heinemann (the first four novels) to Hart-Davis and then to Gollancz, is picaresque and nomadic and agrees strongly with her descriptions of Carter herself, with her "personal talent for shape shifting" (53) to the extent that far from being the "fragile" figure with "elf-locks" she was on their previous meeting (53), Carter now appears as Lieutenant Ripley from the Alien films (courtesy of a small time-warp). She is "tall, spare and cropped", with an "un-English" accent and a "general air of displacement" (52).

This metamorphic picture contrasts strongly with Carmen Callil's interpretation of events. Her own elegy for Carter emphasised that despite the latter's failure to produce The Sadeian Woman for the Virago Press until seven years after the original commission, that loyalty "was an absolute cornerstone of her extraordinary personality".[5] Certainly, Carter followed Callil from Virago to Chatto and Windus, yet she never put all her *oeuvres* into one basket.[6] At her death, , her work was simultaneously available, in paperback, in Virago,[7] Picador, Penguin and Bloodaxe imprints. In view of this, Callil's strenuous emphasis on specific aspects of Carter's character which may not be representative of the whole, begins to look strained. She is merging the roles of author and narrator, constructing *her* Carter. This observation, although perhaps initially trite, highlights a defining characteristic amongst the commentators who have written or spoken about Carter since her death and, while it contrasts wildly with Carter's own orthodoxy, (which was based around Barthes' "death of the author")

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[2] Although Carter herself would be the first to admit the potential power and eroticism of the corset. See the discussion on the corset at 34-5 below.

[3] See "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 74.

[4] "The Savage Sideshow," New Review 4.39-40 (1977): 52.

[5] "Flying Jewellery," Sunday Times 23 Feb. 1992, sec. 6: 7.

[6] Callil's high regard for Carter was reciprocated. See Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Angela Carter," meanjin 44.1 (1985): 11 for Carter's paean of praise for Callil.

[7] After her death, Virago re-issued the two novels that were still out of print: Shadow Dance in 1994 and Several Perceptions in 1995.

is yet strong enough to warrant fuller investigation at a later point at the end of the next chapter.

Pursuing my line of enquiry, examining Carter's attitudes and behaviour within the publishing zone, I corresponded with the managing director of by far the smallest of the firms mentioned above on the subject of "Angela's curious publishing career".[8] Neil Astley of Bloodaxe sent me copies of their protracted correspondence of the late seventies and early eighties which discussed a possible book of her poems, author-illustrated, and a re-issuing of Love and Fireworks, which were then out of print. He related that he had felt that what Bloodaxe could not manage - large-scale marketing, etc. - would be to some extent compensated for by a superior quality of production and the house policy of a strong personal relationship with the author. In the end, however, Carter went to Penguin and Virago, the poems were never published and Bloodaxe published only her radio plays - Come Unto These Yellow Sands - as "her larger publishers hadn't wanted to do [them] because they were rather specialised". The process of being published was, for Carter, very much bound up with the idea of being a writer, more specifically, of being a certain sort of writer. "Show me someone who writes for art's sake and I'll show you a bad writer" she told Kerryn Goldsworthy (9). Engaging with the market was as vital as good writing or portentous messages. However, does this stance have any bearing on the way in which her writing is defined *in* the market-place?

The journalist and writer Nicci Gerrard has produced a full-length study on the experiences and effects on women writers of today's competitive market.[9] She concludes that as feminism becomes more fragmented and publishing more commercial and populist, their relative demands upon each other constantly re-shape the profile of women's writing and affect the ways in which the writers define themselves and in which they are defined by publishers and readers. Whilst this sounds on the surface encouraging, Gerrard is most concerned that feminism, which was initially led by writers, is now largely stagnant. The few exceptions to this decline (among whom she names Carter) are not enough to stem the collapse of invention and imagination as genres are more and more obsessively categorised

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[8] Neil Astley, letter to the author, 24 Feb. 1993.

[9] Into the Mainstream: How Feminism has Changed Women's Writing (London: Pandora, 1989).

and labelled, and shortcuts and certainties are increasingly sought. One writer, Emma Tennant, comments ruefully to Gerrard: "I have always crossed genres and that makes me difficult to categorise" (116). Versatility - shapeshifting - is not rewarded. Indeed, Carter remarks of The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman, which was in many ways a departure from her previous work, that it "marked the beginning of my obscurity. I went from being a very promising young writer to being completely ignored in two novels."[10] Her next novel, The Passion of New Eve, which was marketed initially as science fiction/fantasy, saw her in danger of becoming still more marginalised.

The allocation of prestigious literary awards highlights what *is* admired, although Gerrard points out in this context that whatever "the merit and originality of the individual winners and runners-up, the tone set by Booker is one of conservatism and caution, and often seems to demonstrate the stranglehold of the literary establishment" (56). While Sara Maitland is vitriolic about Carter's omission from the 1984 Booker prize shortlist, Gerrard is more circumspect: "major prizes simply do not heed the literary adventures and experiments which are by their nature risk-takers" (59). Books which make detours from the path of convention and explore the unknown forest beyond are simply too dangerous; symbolic textual Red Riding Hoods becoming wolves by a process of metonymy. Carter herself lays the blame for this firmly on the publishers. In a piece written after her own experiences as a Booker prize judge she decided that "the prize could, and should, do rather more than it does now to help, not readers but publishers, discriminate among their own wares".[11] Instead, she feels, navel-gazing rather than innovation is lauded.

Carter's own reputation was, according to Merja Makinen, made "from mainstream publishing houses" (8). She came to feminist publishing relatively late, with the long-gestating The Sadeian Woman in 1979. Although Carter obviously supported Callil's enterprise in setting up this women's imprint, her failure to present them with her whole list prompts Makinen to explore the idea that feminist publishers are in danger of being ghettoised, leading to stereotyped authors being read by a self-selected, and select, audience. By Makinen's definition, Carter's "more textually savage books are published by Virago"; the

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[10] Susannah Clapp, "On madness, men and fairy-tales," Independent on Sunday 9 Jun. 1991, suppt: 26.
[11] "Trials of a Booker Judge," New Society 20 Oct. 1983: 106.

smaller print runs better fitting the specialised radical audience. On the other hand, "the two celebratory ones" are published by "the big-money bidders, Picador and Vantage [sic]" (9). While Carter, in The Sadeian Woman, argued that the female sex should extricate itself from the luxuriant myth of self-flattering passivity, the publisher's motto is that "exuberance sells better than discomfort" (Makinen 9). Broadly speaking, when Carter gave her hero wings, she herself soared into the major league tables.

In the midst of all these conflicting forces and commentators' opinions, conclusions must be contingent. It is obvious that Carter wished to reach as wide an audience as possible, regardless of the quality of the paper used, but at the same time she was intent on maintaining a tight hold on the textual content of her books. She was well aware of the commercial side of publishing, commenting in "The Savage Sideshow" that "I love about academics the way they say, 'I'm working on a book' - without any idea of the marketing, I find that very sweet" (54). Elsewhere, her demands on editors have something in common with the rather terrifying attitude as separately reported *by* Carter, which Japanese men display towards their wives. About the former, Carter said: "I think absolute self-effacement is the role of an editor" (Goldsworthy 11). This strongly echoes a reported conversation in which, when asked what he looked for in a wife, a Japanese man pronounced: "Slavery. I can get everything else I need from bar-hostesses."[12] To attempt to block off, rather than confront, the issues which this sort of commentary uncovers, as Callil tries to, is to do a disservice to the writer who set them up in the first place. Carter's narration of the publishing industry was the charting of a peculiar landscape that was often hostile, always exacting and highly relevant when her work is reviewed. Always intent upon innovation, she ignored generic and territorial lines. An increasingly wily, adept reader of the market, her career advanced as she learned to combine her narrative arguments with commercially attractive elements. Like her most tenacious characters, her commitment to ideals was tempered by the need to earn a living.

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[12] "Poor Butterfly," Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, rev. ed. 1992) 44.

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Fairytale, Fantasy and Role-playing in the Non-novelistic Fiction

Throughout her career Carter borrowed, adapted and stole, transformed morsels from the amorphous mass of material we know as fairy tale. All of her novels contain elements of the folklore and traditional stories which in one form or other occupy a space in the Western narrative awareness. In general terms, the widespread knowledge of and reference to fairy tales cannot be overstated. Jack Zipes, for example, has shown that apart from the immense popularity of the oral tales amongst the illiterate majority of the pre-industrial German population, nineteenth-century sales of the Grimm Brothers' written versions were considerable,[1] while currently the huge catchment area of the Walt Disney packages has disseminated certain, albeit bowdlerised, forms of the best-known tales, such as "Snow White", "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella" to a massive and constantly expanding audience. Even advertisements attempt to beguile us with more or less thinly disguised versions of the genre, testament to the vast vocabulary of signs the fairy tale offers us.[2]

As I shall be examining Carter's contribution to this particular field, in the form of her own retellings, the history of the fairytale, together with much of the commentary that has been produced alongside it will need to be considered. The complexity of Carter's own relationship to this particular branch of the fantastic is exemplified in the title caption to her interview with Mary Harron, which reads "I'm a socialist, damn it! How can you expect me to be interested in fairies?"[3] Conducted at about the time that Nights at the Circus was published and film of The Company of Wolves released, this interview is keyed towards a very practical concern with social justice. Magic is put to the service of the political, and the possible connections between mysticism and feminism are mentioned by the interviewer only to be

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[1] See Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization (London: Heinemann, 1983) especially Chapter 3.

[2] Examples include a recent campaign for a well-known Australian lager. First the girl kisses the frog, who turns into a handsome sheep-shearer, he then kisses her in the hope of receiving his own heart's desire and to his delight she turns into a pint of beer.

[3] Guardian 25 Sept. 1984: 10.

"smartly slapped down". Her relationship with the unruly qualities of the fairy tale thus openly complicated, Carter's negotiation with them remains to be seen.

Fairy Tales: The Territory

To begin at the beginning: fairy tales, the descendants of oral narratives, are peopled by archetypes, figures of wish-fulfilment and inhabitants of a feudal society, and, as a result, have no original authors. They are often told by a persona placed within the text, a crone or Mother Goose. Of intermittently fashionable popularity, they are nevertheless deeply soaked into our cultural psyche. Their meanings and uses have been defined and redefined many times over the few centuries and at no time has the debate been hotter that in the last few decades. Carter entered into this debate self-consciously, and some of her most enthusiastic as well as vitriolic critics have responded to her in this vein.

Marxist folklorist Jack Zipes reports that before Charles Perrault's important collection, *Histoires et Contes de Temps Passé avec des Moralités*, was published in 1697, well-known tales contained a raw edge. "Little children were attacked or killed by animals and grown-ups in the woods and fields. Hunger often drove people to commit atrocious acts. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, violence was difficult to explain on rational grounds."[4] The tales had a practical edge, preaching self-reliance. In Perrault's seventeenth- century hands, however, things changed. The raping kings and cannibal queens of the folk narratives were elided for a courtly narrative by a bourgeois writer keen for advancement. The original subversion was tempered, and in the 1970s the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim accused Perrault of "winking" over younger heads,[5] that is, of adopting a patronising, ironical attitude that diverted the true message of the tales (of Bettelheim's own interpretations more later). The early modern fairy tale, then was still pedagogic, but now perhaps held a less radical account of the world.

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[4] The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Sociocultural Context (London: Heinemann, 1983) 6.

[5] The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales (1975, 1976; Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1988) 168.

It can surely be no coincidence that, as several critics have pointed out, this disparity of semiology and chronology, and the writing down of the tales occurred at about the same time, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, that children were beginning to be seen as separate to and different from adults.[6] Morals were instilled in a more obvious, patronising manner and a metalanguage or literary discourse arose between the writers themselves. As Zipes puts it: while writers *acted* on children, they *interacted* with each other (Art of Subversion 3), although not necessarily in a positive fashion. From being *Märchen* (folk tales), the stories altered in character and purpose according to who was telling them.[7] This view is somewhat contradicted by Eugen Weber, for whom "folk thinking was always colored, and often fashioned or refashioned, by what their betters thought or wanted them to think".[8] However, although to some extent Weber's arguments are persuasive, the patronage, prejudice and proselytising evident in the genre can be understood and the cultural elements traced more usefully, in the later written versions of the tales than on the lost oral tellings. With that in mind, I shall be concentrating on the former.

Fairy tales and their critics are problematic in the ideals they espouse and are consequently not immune from making unnerving comparisons. Ruth Bottigheimer asserts that the Grimms revised their own writing to produce more passive and silent female characters as Western society in the nineteenth century pushed women into a steadily more constricted social space.[9] Marina Warner finds that tracing this movement has continued relevance, commenting that it is "a rule of thumb in fairy tales today that the less a female character speaks the nicer she tends to be".[10] With regard to a slightly different social stereotyping, Zipes has observed that "[e]rotic play and seduction appear to capture the imagination of the French, whereas the Germans are more concerned with law and order" (Trials 24)!

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[6] See, for example, Patricia Duncker, "Re-imagining the fairy tales: Angela Carter's Bloody Chamber," Literature and History 10.1 (1984): 4.

[7] "The rise of the fairy tale in the Western world as the mass-mediated cultural form of the folk tale coincided with the decline of feudalism and the formation of the bourgeois public sphere." Jack Zipes, Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales (London: Heinemann, 1979) 12.

[8] "Fairies and Hard Facts: The Reality of Folktales," Journal of the History of Ideas 42.1 (1981): 110.

[9] "Silenced Women in the Grimms' Tales: The 'Fit' Between Fairy Tales and Society in Their Historical Context," Fairy Tales and Society: Illusion, Allusion and Paradigm, ed. Ruth Bottigheimer (Philadelphia: U of Philadelphia P, 1986) 115-16.

[10] "Women Against Women in the Old Wives' Tale," Cinema and the Realm of Enchantment: Lectures, Seminars and Essays by Marina Warner and Others, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: British Film Institute, 1993) 70.

More positively, fairy tales also have powerful transformative and re-adaptive elements. Warner puts it most succinctly when she says that on the whole "fairy tales are not passive or active: their mood is optative - announcing what might be".[11] This is not to gainsay the existence of strong arguments suggesting that the form can be expressive *of* frustration. Nina Auerbach and U. C. Knoepflmacher, presenting a collection of stories by Victorian women, clearly trace lineaments of strain in such work.[12] Although Auerbach and Knoepflmacher write of a new "license" apparent in the women's writing, the stories still "remain elliptical, subversive, open-ended. They convey not so much triumph as rage against the constraints that distort them" (3, 8). However, there may be a way of constructing an escape route.

We begin the construction of this route by looking again at Peter Stallybrass and Allon White who, in their full-length study of filth and the body in society, depend a great deal on nineteenth-century historical data for building up their arguments. Using records and contemporary accounts of city plans, legislation and reform groups, they conclude that the body "is neither a purely natural given nor is it merely a textual metaphor".[13] Applying this concept to the body of the female author in the nineteenth century, the distortion evident in the Victorian women's writing finds its obvious parallel in the corsets they wore, which forced their physical silhouettes into a rigid, idealised form. Auerbach and Knoepflmacher have obvious sympathy for the frustration resulting from such restriction. However, Carter wrote at the end of Fireworks that as she lived in too small a room to allow the writing of a novel, she turned to other forms and found "the limited trajectory of the short narrative concentrates its meaning".[14] Rather than a diminution of power, this suggests adaptability and resourcefulness when confronted by apparent restriction which is compounded by her subsequent review of a book on the social history of tight-lacing. Revelling in the overturning of the accepted symbolism of the corset as a repressor of women, Carter cites letters of the nineteenth century that assert "the correspondence between self-control, self-discipline and the magical ability to

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[11] From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994) p. xvi.
[12] Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women Writers (Chicago: U of Cambridge P, 1992).
[13] The Politics and Poetics of Transgression (London: Methuen, 1986) 192.
[14] "Afterword," Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces (London: Quartet, 1974) 121.

control the world" (a fairy tale reality indeed!).[15] Eschewing the obvious in favour of a more dangerous and interesting alternative is typical Carter-esque treatment of cultural material, it should lead us to emphasise the fairy tale's ability to express the history and opinions not only of the teller but also of the interpreter as well as finding links between fairy tale-like events and real social behaviours from the comparatively recent past. The association of the body and the text is examined further in the third and final section of this chapter.

According to Zipes' account, the disputes and disparities between writers of fairy tales became still more heated as the twentieth century progressed. Between the world wars "the realm of the fairy tales was a virtual battleground, where educators and writers with varying pedagogical ideas and with social democratic, liberal, communist, and fascist leanings fought over the welfare of children" (Trials 32). After the Second World War, Bruno Bettelheim produced The Uses of Enchantment, his highly influential set of readings of fairy tales which depend upon psychoanalysis and the child's unconscious. For Bettelheim, fairy tales *are* for children and are vital to their social development as they give shape and narrative coherence to otherwise unnameable desires and fears. He asserts that the child should be offered an account that discriminates between the choices of the reality and the pleasure principles, and which also pays particular attention to the sex roles and the mediating of ambivalence. Thus the fairy tale has a psychoanalytic function, providing a therapeutic outlet for desires and drives which a child cannot, indeed should not, attempt to deal with directly. The fairy tale expresses something that should not be spelt out, gives children a safe metalanguage with which to express themselves, needs to be taken seriously, has pedagogy as its main purpose, is utopian and must be treated in neither too specific nor too vague terms.

Although Marina Warner finds some aspects of Bettelheim's approach appealing, she and other commentators have voiced major problems with his lack of historical perspective with regard to the purpose of fairy tales (Warner, From the Beast to the Blonde 212-13). He insists on a several-stranded approach, condemning Perrault's single moral (Bettelheim 168). However, although he himself often offers variations upon stories his overarching agenda fights a multivalent approach. He gives each of the stories a particular lesson -the overcoming of the fear of sexuality, for instance - and one particular overriding function - of developing

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[15] "The painful pleasure of a 15 inch waist," New Society 22 Apr. 1982: 145. See also The Path of a Writer.

the child as an individual - while writing as though all children are similar. While many of his insights appear interesting and provocative, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the tales have been told for other reasons. Eugen Weber, whose chilling article recounts the real-life experiences of children cast into the wilderness or persecuted by their step-parent in pre-industrial times, rails against Bettelheim's detachment from the form and its implications. He accuses Bettelheim of setting up a "regressive fantasy" by playing the "cunning analyst [who] wants to go beyond the obvious" by concentrating on a narrow literary interpretation of the tales and by responding to them through Perrault's own *literary* interpretation (93, 94).

So what place does the fairy tale have and what function could it perform in today's often heterogeneous society where, despite the Disney corporation's efforts to the contrary, clearly shared values and experiences can no longer be surmised? In this regard it should be remembered that fairy tales are not inherently benign. One of Warner's lectures on film points out how fond Hitler was of fairy tales, and sets out some of the uses to which he put them. In particular, "The Boy who Set Out to Discover Fear" was used to instil correct ideas in the Hitler Youth in classroom propaganda during the war.[16] The evil and malformed monsters in this tale assume a new significance in the light of the persecutions embarked on to realise Hitler's personal fantasies.

Bea Campbell, writing even before the horrifying James Bulgar case, when two ten-year-old boys murdered a three-year-old and were vilified by the press and public alike, comes to the conclusion that children "have become the enemy within. Childhood has become a metaphor for a country that is out of control. Children are victimised and demonised."[17] As the child is progressively entrapped within the mass of restrictions which are the result of adults' failure to provide him or her with a safe world there emerges a counterbalancing inscribed, labelled, policed, safe, imaginary ghetto.[18] Zipes gives warning of what could and does happen to fairy tales in these times when the child is at the centre of a sentimental cult.

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[16] "The Uses of Enchantment," Petrie 20.

[17] "When in doubt, blame the children," Independent 23 Mar. 1993: 22. Campbell's depiction of the demonised child has many similarities to Bettelheim's view of the inner life of the child who desperately needs the therapy of fairy tales.

[18] See Marina Warner on the stultifying need adults have to surround and embody the child with associations of atavism, imagination, desire and innocence. "Little Angels Little Devils: Keeping Childhood Innocent," Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time: The 1994 Reith Lectures (London: Vintage, 1994).

The politically challenging fairy tale "that seeks to maintain its utopian purpose and social critique is always in danger of being defaced and transformed into mere entertainment".[19] Formerly an outward-looking genre, it is often currently perceived as a form of "refuge and escape [making] up for what people could not realize in society" (Zipes, Magic Spell 174). Problems, rifts, discrepancies and prejudices are glossed over, while a fragile veneer of unity overlays the whole. Disney has "saccharinised" the dangerous as part of a movement towards safety and closure through the cushioning effects of mass appeal and the big budget (Zipes, Magic Spell 114).

In this section we have looked at the uses to which the fairy tale has been put, and the arguments it has generated. Fairy tales reflect and *reflect upon* our attitudes towards ourselves, our societies and children, revealing ideologies which can alter greatly according to the identity of the audience or the teller. Although they may be used to elucidate, to open up possibilities, they are universal tools and as such are available to any political, emotional or cultural point of view. Furthermore, there is some sense that their usefulness is decreasing as they are unable to adapt to contemporary narrative demands. In the next section, we go on to see how feminism, as a contemporary political, social and cultural movement, fares with this dialectical medium, before considering the specificity of Carter's own treatment of the fairy tale.

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[19] Fairy Tale as Myth: Myth as Fairy Tale (Kentucky: UP of Kentucky, 1994) 142.

> "God, children know something they can't tell, they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in bed."[20]

Fairy tales have a potential for the sinister often only glimpsed or hinted at, and certainly not readily discussed with the children who make up their prime audience. Furthermore, different ages, cultures and ideologies continually attempt to establish ownership of the tales through a process of naturalisation, that is, of mythologising. This involves the factions fashioning their own idiosyncratic versions of history. Diane Purkiss, while documenting the changing fortunes of the witch over the modern period, notices a corresponding instability in the semiology of "Hansel and Gretel". Originally told by people who faced hunger as an everyday possibility, the tale of the witch, in Purkiss' interpretation, represents a surrogate, if perverse, mother who seems to offer survival to the starving children. To contemporary readers the witch and her readers are "greedy consumer[s]", the focus has switched from hardship to profligacy (281). This current attitude to resources worries Purkiss but, on the one hand, this very flexibility points to the tale's ability to adapt and survive by maintaining a fundamental, if altered, relevance. On the other, Purkiss the historian is concerned by the accompanying loss of the story's historical tracing, an "elevation to classic timelessness": the heterogeneous form lost to purity (281). By interpreting events according to our own concerns and ideologies we run the risk of obliterating the delicate palimpsest of earlier experiences and styles of interpretation: of cauterising the roots of folk-knowledge and draining it of materiality.

The fine line between accepting fairy tales' misty origins and according them mythological status was traced by Carter in her interview with Harron.

> I don't use myth, because myth is part of religion. I don't mind folklore because it's part of the furniture of people's minds. A lot of my conscious energy is devoted to demythologising things.[21]

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[20] Djuna Barnes, Nightwood, preface T. S. Eliot (1936; London: Faber and Faber, 1979) 117.

[21] Harron 10. See also Carter's essay "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 71.

The power and possibilities of fairy tales provoked some of Carter's most thoughtful work; her early novel The Magic Toyshop (1967) is a haunting fantastic tale which consciously evokes Blubeard and the Sleeping Beauty. Later books are peppered with embodiments of fairy tale figures (notably several more Sleeping Beauties). Her collections of tales, Fireworks (1974), The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979), Black Venus (1985) and American Ghosts and Old World Wonders (1993) each have their own flavours whilst sharing some of the phantasmagoric characteristics of fairy tales.

The pieces in The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories were written alongside Carter's own translation of Perrault's tales and provide recognisable versions of well-known tales, distinguished from their more familiar forms by the re-sculpting or laying bare of disturbing desires and the revivifying of cliché. "The Erl-King" provides a lush, verdant setting to a story of sadomasochism, while in "Wolf-Alice" a frail-looking girl in the white night-dress saves the demonic Duke. Black Venus carries on some of the themes which were explored in previous collections - the fascination with mirrors and wolves for instance - and takes them in new directions. Location and historical detail have moved into focus in a new way. From the archetypal and vague, Carter has shifted to creating stories from the lives of Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe. She turns to national and political history in her comments upon the relative merits of the early slave culture in the New World and the indigenous culture it over-ran. In American Ghosts and Old World Wonders, Carter's style has evolved to the point where she is producing "pieces" rather than tales. Including essays, meditations, a short film-script, this collection both harks back to earlier themes and concerns and heralds Carter's increasing confidence and conscious manipulation of form.

In her introduction to the first Virago Book of Fairy Tales Carter makes the pragmatic point that tales are told to provide a sense of cultural continuity for shifting populations, and also served to pass the time during monotonous tasks as "part of the invisible luggage people take with them when they leave home" (p. xiv). Consequently, when they are converted to print, the tales are dramatically affected. She writes that with their publication the tales were "taken out of the mouths of grannies, nannies and old wives", yet it is there that they eventually reappear. "My own grandmother...told me *Red Riding Hood* in almost Perrault's

own words, forty years ago".[22] While acknowledging the process of colonisation that has taken place as a result of the tales being pinned down in writing, Carter does not allow that the issue of ownership has been decided once and for all. On the contrary, she highlights the instability of authority, the contingency of the speech act and the way in which this alters the implications of the text. Their "optative" quality is highlighted.

Carter also proves herself to be largely of Zipes' and Weber's way of thinking when she admits that her Bloody Chamber tales were largely "the result of quarrelling furiously with Bettelheim".[23] For her, as for Zipes, it is important to remember the stories' savage legacy. Of the Little Red Riding Hood motif she says: "three or four hundred years ago it would have been a rough nursery game with a real moral: you shouldn't lurk around in the forest, and not because of seducers" (Haffenden 84). Zipes' own objections to Bettelheim's claims are based partly on the historical fact that those stories were originally intended for all ages (Magic Spell 176). In her turn, Carter rebelled against the appellation "adult version" for her collection, disliking its implied rift and prurience (Haffenden 84).

In my opinion, Bettelheim's mistake was to try to render timeless and unchanging a set of narratives which are constantly changing and fragmenting and which need to do so in order to continue to find an audience, finding myself more in agreement with Anne Cranny-Francis, who points out that as "society changes, formerly acceptable conventions become unacceptable or are revised".[24] Although I would argue that fairy tales do reflect the times they exist in (see the previous section), yet, revelling in its plasticity and imaginary freedom, feminism has turned to the fairy tale form as a practical outlet of expression. Wanting change, feminism "goes beyond making ideology explicit and deconstructing it" by arguing "a need to change that ideology, to effect a real transformation" necessarily through "a transformation of patriarchal social practices".[25] So, before performing a close reading of some of Carter's fairy tale texts, let us briefly examine what other contemporary writers have made of the fairy tale.

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[22] "About the Stories," Sleeping Beauty and Other Favourite Fairy Tales, by Charles Perrault, ed. and trans. by Angela Carter, illus. by Michael Foreman (London: Gollancz, 1982) 126.
[23] "Magical Mannerist," Novelists in Interview, ed. John Haffenden (London: Methuen, 1985) 83.
[24] Feminist Fiction: Uses of Generic Fiction (Cambridge: Polity, 1990) 17.
[25] Linda Hutcheon, The Politics of Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 1989) 168.

The revisionist fairy tale is now well-explored territory, so much so, that James Finn Garner has had considerable success with his Politically Correct Bedtime Stories.[26] These, as the introduction states, take into account the trend away from the "sexist, racist, culturalist, nationalist, regionalist, ageist, lookist" (p. x) and take the residual narrative devices to their (il)logical extremes. "The Three Codependent Goats Gruff" is a case in point. All three goats, together with the troll, work themselves up into an ecstasy of self-sacrifice and fall into the chasm in a whirl of limbs and horns. The pleasing irony of their fates is emphasised as "they each felt that they would finally get what they deserved, plus, as a bonus, a little extra guilt for the fate of the others" (22). While the result is often very funny, there is also a disquieting implication that simple inversion or "updating" tactics will from now on produce only pale shadows of Garner's ultimately conservative storylines. While feminists may find them amusing because of their exaggeration and ironising of otherwise worthy themes, reactionary readers might tend to place them so far beyond and outside their normal experience of fairy tales that their opinions may not be challenged in any substantial fashion. Maggie Humm has identified the place of struggle to be on the borders, at the edges of the known.[27] To move too far, too fast and ignore the landscape around is to risk losing oneself and one's readers.

Other writers have found paths through the fairy tale forest which have brought them aesthetic satisfaction and a sense of political reclamation. Sara Maitland writes that at the start of her literary career, when looking to embark upon a writer's work, she realised that fairy tales "had been told over and over again for different purposes and could be told one more time at least; they could be told through brand new shining feminist eyes".[28] So the witch in her version of "Hansel and Gretel" is a wisewoman: herbalist, feminist and abortionist, perhaps an immortal.[29] Many other women writers have used fairy tales to express ahistorical truths and to bring a sense of an oral narrative, distracting attention away from the author herself. Michèle Roberts (e.g. Flesh and Blood), Margaret Atwood (e.g. The Robber Bride) and Isabel Allende (e.g. Eva Luna) are among the best-known of these, producing work that

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[26] (1994; London: Souvenir: 1995).

[27] Border Traffic: Strategies of Contemporary Women Writers (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991) p. vii.

[28] "A Feminist Writer's Progress," Wandor 18.

[29] Sara Maitland, A Book of Spells (1987; London: Minerva, 1990).

varies widely in terms of style and motivation.[30] Taking a more extended example, A. S. Byatt has employed several techniques: the integration of the fairy tales into longer, bricolage-like texts; and the use of the fairy tale form in both fantastic and "realistic" stories. In Possession, tales are woven into the fabric of the novel and evoke the past by providing a link between the contemporary parts of the novel and the sections set in the nineteenth century which call to mind the worlds of Hans Christian Anderson or, more pertinently, Christina Rossetti. The Matisse Stories (all inspired by the artist's paintings) site their magic within the medium of art. It is people's interpretation of events rather than the events themselves that provide the fairy tale flavour of the pieces. The stories in The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye stories, some of which were originally published in Possession, are mostly beautifully expressed and quite original, but are very much overshadowed by the title tale.[31] On finding a djinn in a glass bottle, and discovering she has three wishes as a result, Gillian Perholt, a narratologist, is alerted to the possibilities of her situation because of her craft. She makes very sensible wishes and her horizons widen. This case study on the synthesis of fairy tale paradigm with a contemporary existence goes a long way towards gainsaying Zipes' disquieting predictions about the genres' decreasing relevance.

Writing with foreboding, Zipes quotes Andrea Dworkin's pronouncement that we "have not formed the ancient world - it has formed us....We have taken the fairy tales of childhood with us into maturity, chewed but still lying in the stomach, as real identity."[32] Consequently, Zipes admits that "in her two most popular literary forms [Perrault's and the Grimms'] which have fully captured the mass-mediated common imagination in our day, Little Red Riding Hood is a *male* creation and projection" (Trials 56). The fairy tale, however much it is associated with women, still retains a masculine bias. This may explain the difficulties which feminism can have in disrupting the narratives in a way that is meaningful rather than parodic. Cixous writes that the hysteric, a figure painfully aware of, and doomed to express, her position at odds with society "is given images that don't belong to her, and she forces

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[30] Flesh and Blood (1994; London: Virago, 1995); The Robber Bride (London: Bloomsbury, 1993); Eva Luna, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (1987; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989).

[31] Possession: A Romance (1990; London: Vintage, 1991); The Matisse Stories (1993; London: Vintage, 1994); The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994).

[32] Andrea Dworkin, Woman Hating (New York: Dutton, 1974) 33. Quoted by Jack Zipes, Trials 57.

herself, as we've all done, to resemble them".[33] Perhaps in some ways feminism is better at *expressing* the disjunctions than at overcoming the injustices which result from them.

Zipes' pessimism about the fairy tale's ability to radicalise reflects this point of view. He writes that "despite the strong feminist component in many of the new and revised fairy tales...the emphasis on closure, harmony, happy end, and well-ordered world remains the governing principle so that the tales rarely hold a critical mirror to the ossified reality of our times" (Fairy Tale as Myth 147). Meanwhile, Alison Lurie is unconvinced of the need for a feminist rewriting in any case. Deprived of fairy tales in her own youth, her study of children's cultural material, Don't Tell the Grown-ups, follows the usual line of extolling the richness of the fairy tales, but also asserts that there are plenty of strong female models in old fairy tale, it is just that the best-known tales have been the most manipulated to express social stereotypes, particularly of the nineteenth century. This, however, does not address the issue of how we are to treat the figures and icons we do have. Essentialist traps are rife, and the pressures of cultural conformism consistently threaten to undermine an author's intent.

Currently, then, different ideas and theories co-exist alongside each other. Feminism has close but troubled links with the fairy tale, but the question to be asked now is: how do these theories relate to and intersect with Carter's own work? I shall focus for the purposes of this discussion on her 1979 collection, The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories, which appeared at around the same time as her translation of Perrault's tales and which contains her own versions of Bluebeard, "Beauty and the Beast", "Puss-in-Boots" and "Little Red Riding Hood" as well as two lesser-known or amalgamated tales, "The Erl-King" and "Wolf-Alice".

Patricia Duncker, writing in 1984, responded to this collection with a mixture of guarded enthusiasm and frustration.[34] While she approves wholeheartedly of the title story, with its strong, avenging mother who guns down her murderous son-in-law, taking the place of the usual male rescuer, elsewhere she finds the heroines to be stuck in the fantasy of object-hood that Dworkin notes. Duncker complains that Carter cannot "imagine Cinderella in bed with the Fairy Godmother", and calls for the tales to be rewritten yet again but ~~with a~~ "with a bolder hand" (8). Yet I think Duncker forgets her own arguments in this conclusion. Early on

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[33] "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn Signs 7.1 (1981): 47.
[34] See n. 6 above.

in her article she states that the "original folk tales were a collective enterprise, produced by both audience and narrator" (5), indicating her approval of an ongoing joint construction with the flexibility to respond to the demands of either party. The history of literary criticism offers up a very strong example of this process. At the end of the nineteen twenties, in A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf envisages women's writing as being engaged in the attempt to clear a series of obstacles or hurdles of perception and expression with the distinct sense that each succeeding generation would find the course easier. By this schema, the emergent writer of the 1920s "will be a poet...in another hundred years' time".[35] The evolutionary process will run its course as every version of the text may be regarded as a transitional one. One might then cite Jeanette Winterson, twenty years Carter's junior, who allows her Rapunzel to have a loving, sexual relationship with her witch.[36] This is a little simplistic, although it does provide a way out of the Perrault-Grimm stranglehold on representation. Duncker has her own agenda for the fairy tale - a more developed interest in gay politics than Carter's - and multiplicity is a part of this, yet she does it a disservice by attempting to subdue Carter's agenda to her own. She paradoxically seeks to stifle what she pleads for, the chance to "carve out our own erotic identities, as free women" (12). Instead, she echoes Bettelheim's lack of perspective, as she actually proposes a mode of expression whilst simultaneously stifling the signs of it.

Ellen Cronan Rose is somewhat milder in her reaction to possible conflicts. She too is worried about the "doomed inward quest" that the conventional fairy tale conducts.[37] Instead of tales and heroes that are "seduced" (that is, led aside) she looks for them to be "educed" (led *out*) (216, n. 15). In harmony with Jacqueline Rose's idea that seduction, which will be accompanied by deception and closure, produces false unities,[38] Cronan Rose wants instead to find ideas unpacked and identities unfolded. For her, Carter's Bloody Chamber stories are about " 'undoing the repression of sex' " together with "undoing the oppression of gender" (Cronan Rose 225) in order to find oneself loveable and be able to turn to the other. So,

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[35] (1929; London: Grafton, 1977) 90.

[36] Sexing the Cherry (London: Bloomsbury, 1989).

[37] "Through the Looking-Glass: When Women Tell Fairy Tales," The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development, ed. E. Abel at al (London: UP of New England, 1983) 210.

[38] Jacqueline Rose, The Case of Peter Pan or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction (1984; Basingstoke: Macmillan, rev. ed. 1994) 2.

despite the dangers of incompatibility thrown up by conflicting ideologies, feminists and fairy tales may prove to be allies to this end.

The Company of Wolves: A Case Study

Let us look in greater detail at The Company of Wolves - text, radio play and film - paying particular attention to the issues of role and identity, feminist interpretation and subversion, the differences between genres and version, and the position of the storyteller. Although, as already mentioned, Carter remarked that her stories were the result of "quarrelling furiously" with Bettelheim, it is his twice-used phrase "the company of wolves" that Carter borrows to signify her text/radio play/film on the subject.[39] Her choice may have been made for one or more of several reasons: the term simultaneously expresses a promise that, rather than the usual singleton, several members of that species will figure in the story and that the characters will find themselves in very close proximity to these creatures. Moreover, it provides a whiff of artifice or masquerade as the word "company" implies a troupe of actors or dancers. So, Carter self-consciously avails herself of the multivalencies of the tale which were opened up by Bettelheim's examination of the variations, but denied by his critical position. She also evolves her own family tree for the narrative. The credits for the film state that it was based upon her short story. This in turn promotes the idea of a type of Ur-book from which she can produce her own variants.[40]

Carter's fairy tale narratives emphasise the latent contents of the stories so that the elements of sexuality and violence they already contain emerge differently from previous versions - and from each other. Through this treatment the balance between the conscious and unconscious contents undergoes constant shifting. Space is opened up for the reader to explore new, more radical emphases and interpretations, such as a sexual alliance between Red Riding Hood and the wolf, which highlight what has hitherto been found unacceptable and hence avoided.

In my examination of Carter's treatment of the wolf theme, I move from text to radio play to film, for both chronological and generic reasons. With regard to the former rationale,

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[39] The Uses of Enchantment 168.

[40] Carter outlined this idea herself in her interview with Goldsworthy 5.

Carter admits that the radio play was developed from the short story, while the film was released a few years later;[41] with regard to the latter, the written story is undoubtedly the oldest form amongst the three, although it could be argued that, on the contrary, the radio play more nearly imitates an oral narrative as it deals with the spoken word. Film, while its origins date from around the same time as radio, is in many ways the most volatile of the media, as new technology constantly extends its powers to convey what has been hitherto unrepresentable.[42]

As mentioned, the short story, "The Company of Wolves" (henceforth, "Company") appears in the Bloody Chamber collection embedded in a trio of stories about girls and wolves. The first two, "The Werewolf" and "Company", consist of retellings of the Little Red Riding Hood story. The third, "Wolf-Alice", to which I shall return, approaches the wolf theme from within, as it depicts a girl emerging from her *own* wolfishness, rather than concentrating on the wolf as an other that is encountered.

"The Werewolf" begins conventionally enough, with a child visiting her grandmother (on her mother's orders). On the way she is attacked by a wolf and, having fended it off and gained its paw as a trophy, she arrives at her grandmother's cottage to find that the old woman has had her hand hacked off. The child mobilises the neighbours, who drive the old woman away to her death, whereupon, rather surprisingly, the girl moves into her grandmother's house.

Anne Cranny-Francis sees the key points in "The Werewolf" to be the girls' acquisition of property, and her active driving away of the woman who would forcibly insert her into patriarchy (92). This interpretation, while rather rough on the grandmother, would seem to be a direct repudiation of Bettelheim's conformist schema, where socialisation into the prevailing system is paramount (but incidentally rather unsatisfactory to a large proportion of people in real life). Ellen Cronan Rose's interpretation centres round the child being repulsed by the discovery that maturity involves the incorporation of a sexual animal into oneself. Ultimately, however, she is able to accept it. The problem with this line of reasoning is that while the child is able to deal effectively with the wolf, she seems to be immobilised by the spectacle of

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[41] The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories was first published by Gollancz in 1979. The radio play was written between 1979 and 1982, while the film was released in 1984.

[42] Film theory is examined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

her wounded grandmother. It is not the animal-like sexuality that troubles her, but some kind of hatred of herself as a member of the female sex. A classical Freudian reading of this tale might suggest that the old woman originally appeared as phallic to her granddaughter. When the child discovers the old woman is lacking a vital body part (that is, she is castrated) she then acts accordingly, although it is difficult to decipher her actions, which are very ambiguous. Perhaps the least unsatisfactory conclusion that may be drawn is that this tale proves how mutable the fairy tale can be, and that its significance is a function determined by the reader as well as the author.

Marina Warner has shown how the fairy tale centres round the marginalised figures of the very old and the very young.[43] In this light, "The Werewolf" depicts empowerment for the occupants of both these poles. The child comes to economic independence (autonomy) and in turn her grandmother is revealed to have had another side to her apart from the traditional nice, frail old lady who is always consumed by the wolf in these tales. She, too, is shown to have "strayed off the path" *and* to have adapted to it. Constructed as nurturing as well as savage and cunning (as the myths of Mowgli and Romulus and Remus remind us) within Carter's frame of reference the wolf serves a useful symbolic purpose. Ultimately, however, all of these interpretation have validity, mirroring as they do Carter's own methods of offering several different variations on the same theme to interact with each other and force the person following the narrative continually to shift their critical position.[44] This phenomenon is seen clearly in the next tale, "The Company of Wolves".

Although it does not fit snugly into that genre because of its heterogeneous and literary origins (derived from Perrault's fairy tale, styled in the manner of Poe, set in an exotic yet precise world like that in Isak Dinesen's gothic tales), the "Company" story is set up with a horror film atmosphere. Wolves howl in the depths of cold, dark forests, and the comparatively safe, ordered paths that negotiate these woods serve, by way of their (metaphorical) contrast to the shadows, to heighten the ghastly effect. In addition, rather than depict a straightforward rendering of the Little Red Riding Hood tale, Carter introduces a

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[43] "Through a Child's Eyes," Cinema and the Realm of Enchantment: Lectures, Seminars and Essays by Marina Warner and Others 55.

[44] Carter stated her demands of her reader in these terms: "Reading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts". "Notes from the Front Line" 69.

variety of other characters - a jilted girl who turns her lover's wedding party into wolves, a married couple one of whom is a werewolf, and so on - in order to establish a world peopled by wolves that are hairy on the inside but which, despite their supernatural existence, are not always subject to magical remedies. The wolves cannot necessarily be driven away by charms, but must also be dealt with in a fashion unmediated by magic. Because of this, the connections between wolf and human are emphasised more strongly than in the previous story.

These anecdotes show people undergoing transformations because of spite, fate, chance, or violence. They deny the reader the opportunity to evolve a formula to protect her/himself from the impact of each successive blow just as the wolves cannot be defeated by magic charms. In the order in which they appear: a wolf is trapped in a pit and turns into a man when dismembered; a wedding party is metamorphosed by a village girl herself abandoned by the groom; and a bridegroom turns into a wolf when he goes outside on his wedding night, returning years later to change again from man to wolf only to be killed by his wife's second husband. The reader's sympathies are already unsettled by the image of the wolf as lover and victim as well as aggressor. Only then does the familiar Red Riding Hood storyline appear, in order to undergo its own revision.

The girl goes to visit her grandmother, meets a *man* (apparently a man, at least) on the way and is persuaded to race him to the cottage. The chief point of interest in this section is the girl's victory over the wolf which replaces her usual rescue by a huntsman. Indeed, it is the huntsman who represents danger in this tale. In the end, the girl shrugs off her fear along with her clothes and becomes a wolf herself instead of becoming his meal. Yet this variation occurs only at the end of the tale. Granny has (as usual) already been eaten; her own consumation by the wolf containing an overt (rather than subliminal) sexual element: "The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed" (116). Elsewhere, Carter talks of how women's fiction stops abruptly at marriage; with the end of the self as maiden comes the death of one kind of life and the beginning of another which is deemed unsuitable material for traditional mainstream fiction.[45] This passage may then be read as a warning parody of that sort of fictional etiquette

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[45] "Alison's Giggle," The Left and the Erotic, ed. Eileen Phillips (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983).

manual. Its effectiveness lies partly in the text's ornate, unhurried style and partly because of the underlying familiar (childhood) narrative from which this text derives: the sensuality is muddling in this context. It is only in the last half-page that the radical nature of the new ending emerges and the full extent of the tale's transformation becomes apparent. We have already noted Jack Zipes' comment that fairy tales were originally meant for all age-groups (Magic Spell 178), and that Carter herself fought against the appellation "adult".[46] This type of treatment is as an act of reclamation. In his analysis, Bettelheim has the wolf take on an aspect of the father which the girl must confront and change her attitude towards. In her rewriting, Carter gives the wolf several incarnations, both male and female, which culminate in an ungendered concept of self as wolf.

The third of the Bloody Chamber stories, "Wolf-Alice", does not proceed directly from any well-known fairy tale, but it does have connections to mythology, in particular to the story of Romulus and Remus as both they and the girl in the tale were brought up by wolves. This tale also smells strongly of the Gothic, with a mad, fey Duke inhabiting a decaying mansion which he leaves only to forage for dead bodies. "Alice" is his maid. Obviously named for Lewis Carroll's character, she is not referred to by name in the story, but her experiences with the looking-glass point clearly to her literary heritage. Like her namesake, she is unable to make sense of the world she finds herself in because her own interpretations of it emanate from a type of consciousness other than that which prevails, in this case a physicality without inhibitions.

Through the juxtaposition of Alice and the Duke, the "humanity" of the former, who is in a pre-lapsarian state of nature, is contrasted with the beastliness of the neurasthenic, over-refined latter in an original restatement of the Beauty/Beast opposition. This comparison is also upheld by a contrast between the behaviour of representatives of the two worlds. The mercy shown by the foster-mother wolf illumines the lack of feeling among the nuns who try to "civilise" Alice when she is captured. The desirability of civilisation itself is called into question. By its standards, both Alice and the Duke are marginalised, and their singularity is exemplified, or reflected, by the mirror which neither of them can make use of in the usual

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[46] "My intention was not to do 'versions' or, as the American edition of the book said, horribly, 'adult' fairy tales but to extract the latent content from the traditional stories and to use it as the beginnings of new stories." Haffenden 84.

way. The Duke does not cast a reflection, while, almost autistically, Alice initially does not have the capacity to perceive her *self* in the mirror. The function of the mirror is to measure the diminution of their alienation.

Alice begins to discover a concept of time through her menstrual cycle's coincidence with the phases of the moon. Her sense of being something other from what she smells and sees and hears is further developed by a series of encounters with the looking-glass. In her examination of the intricacies of the Lacanian mirror stage, Laura Mulvey points out that upon seeing its reflection, a child will tend to attribute its image with greater capabilities than the child itself possesses.[47] The possible result is idealisation to the point of misrecognition.[48] At first, Alice falls into this trap of under-identification, and for some time believes that her reflection is a playmate whose own bodily changes give Alice's emerging femininity some validity. Her own fantasy initiates her perceptual transformation. Consequently, it is when she realises that the mirror shows her *herself* that the main action of the tale is precipitated. She leaves the house for the first time and thereby saves the Duke's life when she is mistaken for a ghost by vengeful villagers.

Once her own translation has taken place, she is able to pull the Duke through the mirror as well. As a cultural space, the surface of the mirror can not be impinged upon or correctly interpreted by those outside the symbolic order. The importance of this surface, or screen as an instrument of translation is evident in the final words of the story where "[l]ittle by little, there appeared within [the glass], like the image on photographic paper that emerges, first, a formless web of tracery...then in firmer yet still shadowed outline until at last *as vivid as real life*, as if brought into being by her soft, moist, gentle tongue, finally the face of the Duke" (126, my italics). The fantastic element which the reflection possesses has not been abandoned. Still conceived of as different from "*real life*", instability is available to prevent total closure.

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[47] "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Visual and Other Pleasures (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989) 17. This essay was first published in Screen (1975).

[48] Mulvey 20. In the course of their development, aged around two years, children normally pass through a phase of "magical omnipotent thinking". This is characterised by the child having made the connection between names and objects, but believing that language is not about communication but about power. In other words, when s/he names something, it means that someone has to bring it to her/him. To be autistic is to remain in this state of self-*mis*recognition permanently. See J. H. Flavell, Cognitive Development (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977).

There are two other wolf stories which I feel are worth mentioning in the context of this chapter as they provide further connections and comparisons with the human-animal debate it contains and because they, too, are different versions of the same tale and consequently provide a parallel with the Company of Wolves "trilogy". In the case of "Cousins" and "Peter and the Wolf", however, the change the tale undergoes is of a political rather than generic nature.[49]

Both stories tell of a girl who is brought up by wolves, but who is discovered and brought back to her grandmother's house when she is about eight years old. Her complete otherness and nakedness fascinate her boy cousin and start to work a change in his consciousness. She is taken away again by her pack and the boy, shaken by his experiences, learns to read and prepares for the priesthood. On his journey to the seminary, when he is about fourteen, he sees her again. This time she is followed by two wolf cubs and runs away at his approach. He turns his back on his mountain where all of this took place and goes out into the world.

This narrative is similar to "Wolf-Alice", yet it contains some crucial differences. The wolf-person in both storylines is a girl whose story is extraordinary but not overtly supernatural. Until they are recaptured by civilisation the stories are almost identical, but then the plots fork. One girl returns to the wild (like Marianne in Heroes and Villains, see Chapter Two), while the other, finding herself in a mirror, takes the first steps towards a more advanced state of being. This dichotomy demonstrates how either path can be followed within a schema of fantastic reality.

The texts of "Cousins" and "Peter and the Wolf" also contain crucial differences which affect not the actual structure of the story, but rather the way in which the reader is drawn into the plot. Most significant of these is Peter's attitude to the priesthood. In the chronologically first story ("Cousins", 1980), he sees learning as his only escape from the mountain but does not intend to go to the lengths of becoming a priest until he sees his cousin with her cubs. After his initial entranced stumbling towards her, he tries to block the memory of her (and her signification) by reciting Greek verbs, thereby revealing that he has returned to his early rigid

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[49] "Cousins," Granta: The End of the English Novel 3 (1980): 47-55; "Peter and the Wolf," Black Venus (1985; London, Picador, 1986) 77-87.

outlook. In the later version ("Peter and the Wolf", 1985), the opposite occurs. It is piety that drives his endeavours, but after the second meeting with his cousin his views change dramatically. Now he "determinedly set his face towards the town and tramped onwards, into a different story" (87). Carter emphasises the freedom of interpretation through her characters, on whom she bestows the ability to react differently according to the same stimuli.

The script of the "Company" radio play introduces a more lurid brand of horror than that afforded by the short stories. In her preface to the volume which contains the play, Come Unto These Yellow Sands, Carter explains the *frisson* this particular facet of her work produces by making the connection between a radio presentation and oral narrative. Thus, "radio retains the atavistic lure, the atavistic power, of voices in the dark", a site where fantasies tend to take on added strength.[50] Apart from the main plot, the radio play includes some, but not all, of the anecdotes from the short story together with certain new features. There is yet another (albeit sketchy) version of the "Peter and the Wolf" story (in all probability this is the original version). Yet, having mentioned the similarities with the written version, the differences are the more interesting.

For a start, the actual construction of the narrative becomes a more self-conscious feature. Characters take up the narration of their own stories, their voices crossing and merging with the narrator's. Memorably, at one point, Granny's playful growling segues into the sounds of a real (were)wolf. This seems like an echo of "The Werewolf" tale with the additional twist that now Granny and the wolf can co-exist.

The radio version also sees the introduction of humour, which subtly permeates the story. For instance, in the same words as the short story Granny warns Red Riding Hood: "If you spy a naked man among the pines, my dearie, you must run as if the devil were after you" (69). Where this was originally left as a menacing image, signalling a pause, now Red Riding Hood cheekily retorts: "A naked man? In *this* weather? He'd have his thingumajigs frozen off, Granny!" (69, her italics). The laughter is not allowed to continue, however, but is undermined by incorporation into the sound of a storm. The same end is reached, but by way of a detour that would not have been possible before. The actual timbre of the voice is used as

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[50] Come Unto These Yellow Sands (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1985) 13.

a sound effect. Such illusory perceptions, like Alice's mistake with the mirror, blur the distinction between animate and inanimate.

In addition, the radio play works as a written text in the collection Come Unto These Yellow Sands. Three of the four plays contained in the volume appeared as short stories in The Bloody Chamber.[51] The remaining play is a fantastical treatment of the sensational history of Richard Dadd, a nineteenth-century painter who killed his father. The title play, it falls first in this volume, so it necessarily affects the readings of the subsequent texts. It tells how Dadd believed his father to be the devil, killed him and then spent the rest of his life in Bethlem Hospital.

The narrative of the play is counterpointed by extracts from a lecture supposedly given by Oberon, King of the Fairies, on the subject of the fantastic as it was perceived and depicted by the Victorians. Dadd's fate works as an allegory for the prevailing attitude towards the imagination. His early paintings show exquisite fairy figures, whose unreality is emphasised by distortions of perspective and their nakedness. Yet their very perfection is a cause of unease. As Carter's Puck points out: "so much, so very much prettiness suggests the presence of far too may ugly beings gibbering away behind the painted screen where he pushed them" (22). The painting presents a polished exterior, but its shortcomings are illustrated within the play by way of a series of failures to progress. At one point the action becomes stuck, as if on a record, and Oberon and Titania are locked in a repetitious hostile greeting. One of the paintings Dadd completed in hospital, The Fairy Feller's Master-Stroke, depicts a pending axe-blow that never falls. Within the schema of the play, this eternal split-second reflects how "self-knowledge, self-realisation remains immanent, never accomplished, the fairies remain fairies, they symbolise nothing" (52). The creative cul-de-sac that this type of mind-set generates acts as a warning shadow upon the other plays, especially The Company of Wolves which immediately follows it. For a reader coming from the Dadd narrative, the accumulation of alternatives is a very welcome contrast. The flexibility which Carter advocates has been preceded by some very effective propaganda.

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[51] These were "The Company of Wolves," "Vampirella," (the short story is "The Lady of the House of Love") and "Puss in Boots".

In turn, the film presents a still more multi-layered narrative, incorporating as it does all three of the subplots which appeared in the original short story. Now not only do the characters of these subplots tell their own tales, but the whole structure has become increasingly complex. New elements have been added as the rationale for the unified Red Riding Hood narrative is extended to cover her life before the famous visit to her grandmother. Still more complicated, the whole tale is being dreamed by a present-day counterpart with the same name, Rosaleen, and played by the same girl. The dream village is viewed first of all through the window of this girl's room. Her dressing-table mirror also reflects some of the scenes. The usual divisions between interior and exterior have been folded in upon one another so that the issue of where the action is taking place is continually placed before the spectator. A vision of eternal regression is constructed through the screens which is reminiscent of the vertigo felt by Peter at the sight of his cousin's genitals: "his first devastating intimation of infinity" ("Cousins" 51). This in turn triggers a sense of uncertainty in the spectator because the characters in the film occupy an ambiguous space; certain views, entrances and exits have somehow not been properly taken into account.

For John Collick, these windows into Rosaleen's room act like cinema screens. When, at the end of the film, a wolf breaks through the window, the shot "parallels the destruction of the audience's position of authority as the incomprehensible meaning of the film 'bursts' through the screen".[52] By pursuing an interpretation which depends upon such a violent motive for events, Collick misses the possibility of the window perhaps existing or being broken within the premise of a fantastic reality. In his full-length work on the subject, Tzvetan Todorov envisaged the fantastic as being signified by uncertainty. When an initially unexplained event takes place, the decision has to be made to situate it either as naturally explicable, or as marvellous.[53] Todorov's version of fantasy resides at the point where the mind teeters on the verge of moving to one extreme or the other. Instability is the most

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[52] "Wolves through the window: writing dreams/dreaming films/filming dreams," Critical Survey 3.3 (1991): 286. Collick's point about the significance of the film's ending is, however, belied by Carter's own comment on the writing process: "The reason why the girl is pounced on by the wolves at the end is pure contingency, since the original ending that Neil [Jordan] wanted turned out to be impossible" (Haffenden 84).

[53] The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre, trans. Richard Howard, foreword Robert Scholes, Cornell Paperbacks (1970; Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1980) 41.

intriguing of its attributes, and it begins to look as though it is more difficult to portray these qualities on film than on the page or through the radio.

In further illustration of this, Collick has pointed out that the film's audiences have remained puzzled by the inclusion of deliberately over-emphatic symbols (the worm in the apple, the spiders on the Bible) designed to foreground the usually latent sexuality and hostility. Instead, perhaps because in general films are conservative (huge expenditure requires mainstream appeal), the expectations of an audience reflect this complacency, or vice versa. Mulvey makes much the same point in her essay "Film, Feminism and the Avant-Garde" which searches for a feminist film aesthetic, a necessarily radical avant-garde, while speculating on women's exclusion from film-making. She suggests that the incorporation of traditional female practices into the film-making or narrative processes might be a move in the right direction as the combination of experimental areas with conservative narrative structure would cause a dialogical relationship to develop between them (Mulvey 124). Thus, Carter's rewritten story, which uncovers the latent material of the fairy tale and which goes over the same basic plotline ("girl meets werewolf") again and again with subtle variations, offers the film-goer what is perhaps an uneasy alliance between the familiar and the strange. Perhaps that is the best reaction to attempt to provoke given Mulvey's opinion that to produce untroubled pleasure is simply to uphold the status quo. Whether The Company of Wolves has achieved anything radical, however, is debatable as Collick's article disappointingly concludes. Even after praising the attempts of The Company of Wolves film-makers, he asserts that: "Films of dream-stories seem to confirm, rather than challenge, the orthodox belief in film as an impartial and scientific mode of representation" (288).

So, the "Company of Wolves" texts inhabit a realm where attempts to exact concrete definitions and interpretations are constantly frustrated and undercut. On the contrary, the fantastic provides a space where a different type of reality can be formed, and the person following the narrative performs an active, interpretative role. So what does this signify in terms of generic and social codes? Perhaps the most vivid way of expressing the situation is to regard it in terms of the actual tales and to use the movements of Red Riding Hood to show exactly how Carter's tales transgress the modes they were wont to follow.

As Cixous pointed out, the Little Red Riding Hoods are all reminded not to stray off the path, with vague threats of what will happen if they do. In her reconstruction of these furtive movements, Carter's course has constantly been to stray deliberately from the path in matters of genre and of subject matter to the point where her heroes are able to incorporate the wolf into themselves. As a result, she has opened up the substance of the tale by stepping into the restricted zone.

The written stories have omniscient narrators. The controlled precision of the words keep the reader in a delicate balance between the old and new versions of the fairy tale. Moreover, Carter also produces two versions of Beauty and the Beast, and two (or three) Red Riding Hoods. On the page, the stories follow directly one from another without starting a new page. Neither entirely separate nor joined, they prompt the reader to ponder as s/he proceeds, precisely what *is* their connection?

Because of the speed with which they are absorbed (we can hear several sounds at once and perceive sight and sound as being separate), radio and film are able to comment upon themselves with greater ease than can written forms. The possibilities of "straying off the path", of pulling away from convention are therefore far more varied. Radio exists as the most ephemeral of the genres and is thus in many ways the easiest to manipulate in terms of cost and risk. But while it and the short story provide a far more sympathetic environment for work which challenges societal mores, which Carter fully exploits, it is film, which is potentially the most dramatic and exciting medium (in terms of its immediacy), but which is also the most strictured in the demands made of it by mainstream film-makers, where a political fantastic is required.

What, then, is going on that is worth getting excited about? Carter is providing new ways of looking at the tales, breathing new life into the well-used archetypes to attract a more varied audience, taking away the "children only" signs, stripping off the soft-focus Disney lenses. She accords the tales the respect that Zipes pleads for when he writes: "fairy tales...are not the best therapy in the world for children. They are historical prescriptions, internalised, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them" (Zipes, Art of Subversion 11).

In conclusion, I want to explore the idea of a female fantastic space. Mary Daly's dictionary, Webster's' First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language,[54] which is witty and reader-friendly (if the reader is a woman), postulates a sense of a different kind of order. It balks at "tidy" linearity, instead bringing to the fore a different language, which expresses imagination and creativity, converting the mundane into the marvellous. Its definition of "Fairy Space", for instance, runs thus: "Space Dis-covered by Fey Women who Spiral beyond Stagnation; Space where Weird Women gather and Gossip with Fairies". A fanciful *other* blueprint of reality, Daly's book overtly uses myth to construct an engaging string of half-realistic, playful definitions. It deals in possibilities and paradoxes and weaves the two together; it gives us a guide to the understanding of the intangible. That place of struggle which Maggie Humm located "at the borders" is now in "New Space", which Daly has defined as "Space on the Boundary of patriarchal institutions". She has found both a language and a mode of conceptualising that recognise the liminality of the subject matter and yet galvanise it with a vocabulary that highlights its importance as part of the task of re-siting women's experience.

In light of this, while I do not for a moment presume to suggest that Carter really did believe in fairies (her comments to Harron, among others, strongly bely this), I do want to stress that in her fictional worlds magical events *are* meant to be taken seriously. Yet, unlike Daly, for whom the Witch, the Web and the Labyrinth are wholly positive concepts, Carter has something more problematic to say about circuitousness and its implications. In her essay "The Language of Sisterhood" she writes that women "live in a shared privacy of oblique reference, perhaps originally designed to keep whatever is going on from the masters" (231). Too much codifying and a refusal to engage directly with the dominant discourses results in a slave mentality. The wryness of this piece is similar in tone to her exhortation to Western women not to opt out from their responsibility for an imperialist past ("Notes from the Front Line" 73). Carter's subversive links are made with the projected aim of shifting all self-defined groups into positions of shared communications rather than simply providing a counterweighted paradigm which still looks - however, negatively - to the classical divisions and hierarchies in order to define itself. While Daly seeks to celebrate "otherness" in and of

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[54] This title was "conjured" by Daly "in cahoots with" Jane Caputi (1987; London: The Women's Press, 1988).

itself, Diane Purkiss, in a more Carter-esque stance, counters that to "see yourself as eternally oppressed is not really liberating unless you are also presented with some inkling of a solution" (18).

But what happens if you do try to provide answers to your questions? In a controversial article published two months after Carter's death, John Bayley damned her writing with faint praise, describing a laboured, so-called "political correctness", and hinting that she inspired a movement towards self-cloning.[55] "One of Carter's chief talents has been to help create a new kind of persona for real women to copy", he writes, complaining that "the magic talisman" of "female subversion" made imagination "the obedient servant of ideology" (11). While perhaps this warning does contain some substance insofar as Carter explicitly linked politics and folklore in her work, which to some critics might seem a fey practice, to declare this reading to be fully representative of her work is to read her inaccurately. For the ironical Carter, ideology is important, but then so is historical materiality. In the course of her work, the reader is offered many paths and a wide choice of roles are available for her as well as for the characters, which is reflected by and linked to Carter herself in the last part of this chapter.

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[55] "Fighting for the Crown," New York Review 23 Apr. 1992: 9-11.

The Reconstructed Carter: Who is She Playing?

In Sage's elegiac piece "Death of the Author", she reports Carter's confession that "my childhood, boyhood and youth is a kind of cabaret turn performed, nowadays, with such a practised style it comes out engine-turned on demand" (241). In 1977 the facts were that "she has been married and divorced; she has no children; her mother is dead and her father has retired to Scotland" (Sage, "The Savage Sideshow" 57). In the light of this, John Mortimer's 1982 interview can only be described as bizarre. The reader is left with the distinct impression that it is Carter's father who is dead - as he is always referred to in the past tense - whilst her mother is apparently "hooked on TV like heroin".[56] This last image is hauntingly like the domestic scene at the start of Carter's book about theatrical old ladies, Wise Children, which is itself a rewriting of the life of Carter's Aunt Kit, whose leanings towards the music hall were thwarted.[57] For some reason, Carter used her interview with Mortimer as an opportunity to rewrite her own story and succeeded in blatantly contradicting herself. This sense of a *directed* narrative with a variable truth-value is also apparent in Carter's remarks about her hero, Fevvers, whose story-telling may or may not be dependable. "I have no idea whether that's true or not. That's just what she says, a story that's being constructed. That's just the story of her life...you are kept uncertain. The reader is kept uncertain until quite a long way through."[58] The biography is always up for refashioning.

After Carter's death, Merja Makinen speculated about the hagiography that subsequently sprang up around her and reflected on the possible consequences for the reception of her work. Noting the proliferation of the "white witch" and "fairy godmother" motifs, Makinen warned that "this...mythologizing needs watching; it is always the dangerously problematic that are mythologized in order to make them less dangerous" (2). For her, the importance of Carter's fairy tales within the body of her work is both marked by "the memorials blurring stories with the story-teller" (3), and threatened by it. Consequently, I want to delve a little deeper in this direction, to determine whether this fusion of roles on either side of the page is really the problem that Makinen fears.

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[56] "The stylish prime of Miss Carter," Sunday Times 24 Jan. 1982: 36.

[57] See, for example, "On madness, men and fairy-tales".

[58] Anna Katsavos, "An Interview with Angela Carter," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 13.

In 1995, Paul Barker wrote a retrospective piece on Carter. He records, with a combination of admiration and bafflement how, when he first met her in the late sixties

> I couldn't entirely concentrate on what she was saying. There were black gaps where two of her front teeth were missing. Only Angela, then in her late twenties, would have made no attempt to hide the blanks. I never found out why they were missing.[59]

Here instigating a mystery, the cause of speculation, Carter elsewhere consciously constructed herself as part of her own study of signs in the journalistic pieces collected in Nothing Sacred (originally written for Barker as editor of New Society). As well as textual references which weave her own life and feelings in and out of her subjects (both real and fictional people) she interspersed these essays with photographs: of D. H. Lawrence, Louise Brooks and herself. One might then speculate that she has taken on an authorial persona, an assumed position from which she sets out her literary wares, yet other signs point to something less easily defined. Lorna Sage argues, for instance, that far from having a persona, which implies the adding on of something, the donning of a mask, Carter had, if anything, a skin too few: "literally thin-skinned...you could see the veins easily" ("Death of the Author" 236). Rather than an interface, there is a semi-permeable membrane. The boundary exists but is constantly being re-negotiated. Michael Benton wrote that "the virtual world of the text ... is central, created in the space between the writer's inner self and outer reality, re-created in the space between the reader's inner self and the words on the page" (24). By that schema the text itself is the boundary or membrane, and Carter's opinion that reading is as creative as writing (expressed in "Notes from the Front Line" 69) must be taken very seriously. The story-telling is open to either the reader or the writer.

What we are left with is the image of a writer who uses her own biographical details and body to give form and focus to the body of her work but who refuses to do this simplistically. Instead, the highly polished performance (which, like the argument in John Berger's Ways of Seeing is apparently being viewed from the inside as well externally) produces perplexity. Like the short story "Flesh and the Mirror" (in Fireworks) where there is a reversal of light and dark, she defies and defeats attempts at description and categorisation.

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[59] "The Return of the Magic Story-Teller," Independent on Sunday 8 Jan. 1995, suppt.: 14.

By this enticing performance, she in turn provokes the reader, who is also a kind of writer, into endlessly trying to catch up with the elusive figure she would have us construct, just as Evelyn in The Passion of New Eve pursues the siren Leilah through the labyrinthine city streets. A dangerous instability ensues, which is accompanied by a refusal to take the material and forms used quite seriously.

Naomi Schor believes irony - or a new definition of it - to be the key to new, hitherto unimaginable realms of female/feminist thought. She posits an irony that "allows the ironist to both reject and re-appropriate the discourse of reference",[60] where the norm is submerged. Zipes' commentary on Perrault's versions of tales includes a consideration of this: "The irony of his narration suggests that he sought to appeal to the erotic and playful side of adult readers....This irony was lost on younger readers "(Trials 9). Ideas and concepts direct themselves at the readers according to the type of reader they are, but are perhaps obscured and not available to them otherwise.

According to Makinen, Carter enjoins the reader to perform active feminist deconstructions on the tales in The Bloody Chamber (3). While Avis Lewallen and Patricia Duncker are unsatisfied by their political content,[61] Makinen argues that rather than a straight, literal reading, the tales call for an understanding and practice of irony. She points out that the "Company of Wolves" tale "is not read as a story read for the first time, with a positively imaged heroine. It is read, with the original story encoded within it, so that one reads of *both* texts, aware of how the new one refers back to and implicitly critiques the old" (5). Donna Haraway illuminates the concept further, writing that irony "is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humor and serious play."[62] Irony allows the fairy tales to be persuasive, pervasive and perverse.

Irony also predicates movement, flux, oscillation, all of which unsettle the narrative. Examining Freud, Hélène Cixous considers how the effect of the uncanny "reverberates"

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[60] "Fetishism and its Ironies," Nineteenth Century French Studies 17.1 (1988): 94.

[61] Lewallen, "Wayward Girls but Wicked Women? Female Sexuality in Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber," Perspectives on Pornography: Sexuality in Film and Literature, eds. Gary Day and Clive Bloom (New York: St Martin's, 1988) 144-58; Duncker, "Re-imagining the fairy tales".

[62] "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics, ed. Elizabeth Weed (London: Routledge, 1989) 173. This essay was first published in Socialist Review 80 (1985).

(536). This "labyrinthine space" is heterogeneous (or "composite") and as such is vulnerable to tortuous stretching of meaning and to the constant need for reinterpretation required by the complex topology. At the same time the reader must be willingly engaged or else none of the other processes will be embarked upon in the first place (525, 536).

Carter, then, has sited herself as the story teller. It is a position of power in this context for the traditional marginalised old woman in the corner has undergone several transformations. In the Red Riding Hood story, the protagonist is named after and identified by what she wears. Similarly, in her real life Carter deliberately donned the cloak of the fairy godmother or fairy tale witch - Sage called it an "outrageous granny disguise" ("Death of the Author" 251) - but then proceeded to perform variations and departures from that role. Like her heroes, who perform and dress up, she used the markers of the role to her own advantage, moving from one to another in "a dizzying accumulation that undermines the narrative logic by its very excessiveness".[63] As a result, one journalist asks, perhaps more than rhetorically, "Is she the wolf in Granny's nightcap...or Granny pretending to be the wolf?"[64]

Maggie Humm feels that the traversing of boundaries has a utopian effect, positively affecting those who cross them, in particular "witches and hysterics" (17). By this paradigm, naming Carter as a witch in turn signifies empowerment. Yet Diane Purkiss is concerned that the witch exists in a mythological limbo and outside of time. Associated with death - either because she is thought to cause it or because she herself suffers it - the witch is in part a male fantasy figure. The mythologisation of witches that exists instead of a documented history involves a slotting back into a patriarchal system. Zipes, for example, noted that where in early versions of tales there was a goddess, she later transmuted into a witch, with all the accompanying peroration (Art of Subversion 7). The incorporation of the witch can in part be associated with the silencing of women in the fairy tale which we have already noted. It remains a fact therefore, that re-visioning the Hag as powerful and positive cannot be accomplished merely by stating that it is so, as Mary Daly attempted. The witch is still in the process of reclamation, and the operation may not be successful.

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[63] Susan Rubin Suleiman, Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde (London: Harvard UP, 1990) 137.

[64] Jane Dunn, "That Wolf in Gran's Nightcap" Observer 2 Oct. 1994, rev.: 17. This perceptive comment also harks back to Carter's own grandmother pretending to be the wolf in the Red Riding Hood story. See earlier in this chapter.

Yet, through our viewing her as an equivocal, complex figure, the witch may emerge as subversive. We already know that fairy tales are not necessarily benign, and similarly Purkiss is convinced that women's knowledge of their own bodies (a key concept in the "witch as wisewoman" myth) is not automatically subversive (21). However, fairy tales can be awarded significations which oppose earlier representations: liminality can be approached from many different directions. Consequently, while not a given feminist icon, the witch, through wilful misreading, might be imbued with new significances (Purkiss 38).

While Carter, at best, partially accomplished that re-visioning, she branched out in other ways, and her peculiar fascination with the Red Riding Hood story, which she returned to continually, leads to the obvious conclusion that she can also be identified strongly with the protagonist. I have made a link between Carter and her heroes, where the latter physically work through ideas the author is experimenting with within the confines of her texts. As well as moving around, Red Riding Hood speaks and actually pushes the plot along; she takes detours and is wanton, displaying a dangerous sexuality. She is an analogue of the text itself, of the ways in which Carter has sought to re-signify the old story. Her final transformation into a wolf is a reminder of the reflection in the mirror, and that boundaries exist to be crossed.

Our collective cultural perceptions of the natural world have themselves undergone a sea-change. Whereas in early modern times the wolf and werewolf were associated with the devil and our own connections with all three were signs of humanity's ambivalence to its connections with the world of animals (Zipes, Trials 45), now "the body is no longer equated in contemporary literature with unruly nature, but more and more comparisons are drawn with machines" (Trials 42). The fairy tale, with its animism and anthropomorphism, is a treasure trove for the writer who seeks to recover a sense of materiality by escaping from an imprisoning definition of the machine. This freedom of expression is ideally exemplified in Carter's Red Riding Hood as an embodied narrator/hero who simultaneously explores the text, her own metaphorical body and the outside world.

In her book Space, Time, and Perversion, Elizabeth Grosz evolves a method of reading which I want to use to conclude this chapter. As she asks questions about corporeality and the text, she investigates a position which finds a direct identification of author and text to be

over-simplistic but which is inherently assured that the two *are* implicated in each other. She begins with the idea that a feminist text is contingent - it cannot be created merely by the intention to produce a feminist text - and as such depends upon the contexts of the writing and the reading. This accords well with Carter's treatment of the fairy tale insofar as she apparently refuses to admit that "ownership" has passed irrevocably from the oral storyteller to the literary author. Grosz further envisages "discursive positioning", a "complex relation between the corporeality of the author, that is, the author's textual residues or traces, the text's materiality, and its effects in marking the bodies of the author and readers, and the corporeality and productivity of readers" (18). Author and reader are thus connected as both inhabit this discursive textual space. The author's identity may not be mapped directly from the text s/he produces, views and glimpses are always finite and partial, but the link remains. It avoids the essentialism that would result in the shutting down of multiplicity. Instead, Grosz's theories foster cross-fertilisation; the oscillating irony which moves both ways through the semi-permeable membrane that provides the environment for on-going transformations. Cixous wrote that: "Fiction is connected to life's economy by a link as undeniable and ambiguous as that which passes from the *Unheimliche* to the *Heimliche*: it is not unreal; it is the 'fictional reality' and the vibration of reality" ("Fiction and its Phantoms" 546). The effects of vibrations may be subtle, but they can also be far-reaching.

Although his observations and theories are in many ways at odds with the arguments set out in this chapter, Bettelheim points out, accurately I think, that the fairytale body is "temporarily extraordinary" (57-8). It grows and shrinks, metamorphoses, and disappears. It can end up in many places at once. Carter/Little Red Riding Hood/the witch all tell stories, thereby establishing a multi-voiced female genealogy with female characters who ask questions, act, surprise, succeed. Familiar territory is no longer quite what it was, as Salman Rushdie put it: "She opens an old story for us, like an egg, and finds the new story, the now-story we want to hear, within".[65]

Mary Kaiser points out that the Bloody Chamber tales are set in recognisably different eras.[66] The title story was set at the turn of this century, when there was some scope for

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[65] "Introduction," Burning Your Boats: stories (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995) p. xiv.
[66] "Fairy Tale as Sexual Allegory: Intertextuality in Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 31.

women to band together and achieve independence (see Chapter Five) and so the protagonist survived, while the Snow Child, whose tale takes place in a medieval setting, falls fatally victim to the feudal system. Kaiser concludes, and I agree with her, that this highlights Carter's views on the materiality of history (35). Taking into account Carter's reclamation of the oral tales (with her grandmother telling her stories in Perrault's own words), however, I also believe that Carter is implying that history itself may be perverse and may flow backwards as well as forwards. Transformations are not necessarily benign either.

Lorna Sage wrote after Carter's death that a "Life doesn't have to reinvent its subject as a 'real' person" ("Death of the Author" 236) and I hope that I have not given the impression that I have been writing to that end in the course of this chapter. Instead, I wanted to look at the ways in which an authorial personality, whoever constructed it, interacted with Carter's work and affected both its nature and impact. "Angela Carter the writer" is part real, part marketing ploy, part a signal of the reader's engagement, part a protective shell around her real self. Irony enfolds the obvious in her work and her comments about it. This makes reading her a more dangerous and exhilarating exercise. At her death, the fantasy figures of the fairy godmother and the witch rose to everyone's lips partly I think as an expression of hope that reading will help us transform ourselves and our surroundings, and partly as acknowledgement that Carter was in the process of becoming one of the writers who could show us the way.

2

Haunted House and Poisoned Paradise: enclosed heroines in The Magic Toyshop and Heroes and Villains

In this chapter, I shall take two of Angela Carter's early novels, The Magic Toyshop (1967; henceforth Toyshop) and Heroes and Villains (1969; henceforth Heroes) examining how the interaction between subject and environment is organised. I shall be arguing that a particular kind of space is formed which has links with inner perception, its own laws of reality and a singular effect upon those trapped within it. I shall also make a comparison of the two novels, showing how Toyshop and Heroes are so closely linked that the latter constitutes a rewriting of the former, revealing a more powerful version of the enchanted space described in the earlier book.

My case for stating and then building upon this causal link between the two novels originates from a remark made by Carter in an interview with Leonore Stephens in 1987 for Antithesis, about her reason for writing Heroes in the first place. From the language she used, she appears to have been irritated, at the very least, by her earlier reviewers as she replies to Stephens' request to comment on the term "gothic" as applied to her writing with:

> By the time I'd written three novels, some containing fantastic elements, it was applied to me very freely. And of course I'm a very booksy woman and I got increasingly pissed off with this sloppy use of the term, because I knew perfectly well what a gothic novel was, and I knew perfectly well that I wasn't writing one. So I though, well, I would write one, a novel full of owls, ivy, a daemon lover, all kinds of fatal encounters in the midst of breathtaking elaborate ruins. So I did. That was Heroes and Villains (94).

From this, we can note that Carter did not intend to deny the presence of these so-called "gothic" elements in her writing; her short polemical pieces, "Notes on the Gothic Mode" and the "Afterword" to the Fireworks collection testify to her enjoyment and conscious

utilisation of the form.[1] Her quarrel is with the assumption that she had produced, and intended to produce, primarily Gothic novels.

For the moment I shall leave aside the question of Carter's own relationship to the "Gothic Mode". Her use and understanding of it are far more problematic than she at first suggests (incorporating, for example elements, of pastiche), and will consequently need to be dealt with more fully elsewhere in the chapter. First, however, I want to set out in some detail the rationale for using these particular texts in this chapter, why these, and not others of Carter's early fictions were selected, and how Toyshop works as a precursor of Heroes.

The Magic Toyshop is Carter's second novel and the best-known of her first three, having made its way on to university and A-level syllabuses in recent years. A film starring Tom Bell and Caroline Milmoe was made of the book in 1987, and there is even a student's edition, published by Virago, offering "introductory and follow-on material" for the uninitiated in order to smooth the newcomer's entry into Carter's challenging work.[2]

In the scholarly world, obscurity (as well as death) customarily acts as "a red rag to a bull", an invitation to open up and rediscover what has been lost. However, neither Shadow Dance nor Several Perceptions have been taken up by critics to any great extent, indeed, they are often omitted from lists of Carter's work at the beginning of her other books, even though she did not repudiate them.[3] So why forgo what might in many ways prove to be an exciting maiden voyage to concentrate upon what is comparatively familiar, safe territory? In fact reasons do immediately begin to present themselves. To start with, Carter's work , indeed women's writing generally, is already subject to an ongoing reclamation process. Heroes was itself out of print for twelve years, and Toyshop was re-issued, fourteen years after it had first appeared, by Virago, a firm which specialise in making texts available again which have been

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[1] In 1975, writing in the Iowa Review, Carter referred to Heroes as "a kind of pastiche Gothic novel" (132). She added that using "an absolutely non-naturalistic formula gave me a wonderful sense of freedom. I liked the pictorial, expository nature of Gothic imagery, its ambivalence, and the rhetorical, non-naturalistic use of language" (the Iowa Review 6.3-4 (1975): 133). In the "Afterword" to Fireworks Carter eulogises Gothic tales as "cruel tales, tales of wonder, tales of terror, fabulous narratives that deal directly with the imagery of the unconscious - mirrors; the externalized self; forsaken castles; haunted forests; forbidden sexual objects" (121).

[2] The Magic Toyshop, introductory and follow-on material Elaine Millard and Angel Scott, Students' Virago Series (1967; London: Hutchinson/Virago, 1988).

[3] Since Carter's death, Virago have re-issued both. As yet, however, they are still comparatively obscure, and have received little scholarly attention. There is also some evidence that she was not exactly enthusiastic about Shadow Dance. Ian McEwan reported that she felt "mild embarrassment" about it. "Sweet Smell of Excess," Sunday Times 9 Sept. 1984, mag.: 43.

forgotten or "lost". Ultimately, the fact that the chosen novels have links at the levels of plot, theme and character, entices the reader to examine the ties between them. The very names of the heroines, Melanie and Marianne, are also very similar. Neither of them is referred to by a surname throughout the texts, further cutting them off from the normal networks of patriarchal family relationships and, at the same time, breaking down the barriers of differentiation between the two girls.

In Toyshop, fifteen-year-old Melanie secretly dons her mother's wedding dress while her mother and father are away. It is accidentally torn and stained with blood, and when she hears of her parents' deaths the next day, she links the two events. It is with that trauma in the background that the rest of the events of the novel take place. Melanie and her young brother and sister, Jonathon and Victoria, are sent away from their beautiful country house to live with their Uncle Philip in London. They arrive to find an uncle who seeks to mould them to his own satisfaction (with the apparent connivance of his toyshop/house), an Irish aunt, Margaret, who is dumb, and her two brothers. Francie, the elder, remains a shadowy figure throughout. He acquires significance only at the end of the novel when Melanie realises that he and Margaret have an incestuous relationship. The younger brother, Finn, on the other hand, provides most of the colour and excitement of the novel, as he is both an artist and the locus of opposition to Uncle Philip. It is with Finn that Melanie stands as she watches the annihilation of the world of the magic toyshop, (Uncle Philip sets it alight when he realises he is being cuckolded by Francie) while he tells her that nothing is left "but us" (200).

Marianne, in Heroes, is also forced to confront death at an early age. Living in a post-apocalyptic England, she is six years old when she sees her teenage brother die as he and a young Barbarian tussle on the ground in an "embrace to the kill" (5). One of the Professor caste, who live in stockaded settlements, Marianne runs away from the boredom of her existence with Jewel, the same Barbarian (they do not recognise each other until their wedding night), thereby saving his life. In the course of her new nomadic life she saves him twice more: first, from an encounter with one of the Out-People (mutant outlaw beggars) in a scene which strongly recalls the occasion when he killed her brother; secondly, she foils Jewel's attempt to drown himself. But in the end his death wish triumphs, and he is killed by Soldiers

(a subgroup of the Professors) whilst trying to rescue the renegade Professor, Donally, who has himself made several attempts upon their lives. Marianne hears that Jewel was shot in the stomach and died in great pain in an ironic parody of the pregnancy which he has foisted upon her, and which prompts her own decision to become the Barbarians' leader.

Even these brief glimpses into two complex and eclectic novels reveal certain immediately identifiable points in common. Both girls are cut off from contemporary experience through the arrangements of time and space which characterise their existence. Despite living in London, Melanie is unable to break away, as she fantasises, from the sinister house, which is several times compared to Bluebeard's castle (83, 118, 146). Something in the nature of the enchanted space, where reality is split or contaminated, prevents her. Similarly, Marianne is unable to imagine a city, thinking it to be synonymous with ruins (7). She is effectively marooned in the future in a traumatised society which is condemned to a form of live burial at "the end of the world" (124). Her first home, in the settlement, is ringed by a series of barriers; she lives in a tower surrounded by wire fencing, then watch towers, and beyond them a no-man's land of marsh, forest and tumble-down buildings. This external arrangement mirrors the inner combination of fear and strict hierarchy that signify the Professors' society. At the same time, its penetrability and futility are continually emphasised as the Barbarians have so little trouble gaining entry that the fortifications function more as allegory than as effective protection. If Toyshop alludes to Bluebeard, Heroes can be read as a grotesque rendering of another fairy tale, that of the Sleeping Beauty.

Both girls, then, are threatened or deposited in enchanted or unreal space which is constructed partly by geographical elements and partly the external projection of damaged and warring psyches. They both steadily lose their family or initial security and are subjected to bizarre, fantastic marriage and consummation rites. Years later, Carter told Moira Paterson that girls "are always wearing wedding dresses in my fiction....It's usually a prelude to something ghastly."[4] By taking the triumphal happy ending from the traditional fairy tale, and re-appropriating and re-energising it, she has wrested the trope of the wedding (dress) from the domain of the fairy tale and converted it into something altogether more radical. In the

[4] "Flights of Fancy in Balham" Observer 9 Nov. 1986, mag.: 45

traditional fairy tale, there is no gap between a bride's expectations and her fate. In many ways her life ends, as the story ends, with a wedding.

In establishing the links between these two books, certain themes have begun to emerge in common. Fairy tale elements appear, only to be twisted and made grotesque and Gothic sensibility converts reality into a dangerous sensorium. Because of this, I intend to use the next section of this chapter to explore the nature of Gothic, as it is theorised by Carter and others, taking in as well the other main generic elements of the novels, the dystopia and the already-mentioned fairy tale among them, and discovering how they contribute to it. This will be followed by more detailed examinations of both novels suggesting that the space which in Toyshop exists in one house covers a whole world in Heroes. Misconceptions, imprisonment, mistakes or slippages of identity and fact all contribute to the construction of a sense of "Carterian" subjecthood.

The Relevance of Gothic: Why Gothic anyway?

Having decided to use the tools of the Gothic mode to uncover the gaps and barriers within Toyshop and Heroes, I necessarily have to contend with the potential loss of other generic inputs. These "lost interpretations" centre around Carter's comment that Toyshop is a "baleful fairytale",[5] and the obvious connections Heroes has with the dystopia. Yet instead of consigning these to their own limbo, to lurk, unacknowledged and vaguely menacing, I shall allow them temporary liberty to combine with and inform my analysis of Gothic elements. By examining more closely what a fairy tale and a dystopia consist of, we necessarily take a step towards isolating what the Gothic is or is not. Having spent the last chapter on an exploration of Carter's relationship with the fairy tale, my concern is very much to prevent that form from playing a major role in this chapter. So to define it negatively, out of existence even, at this point serves to prevent the tedium of repetition.

On initial inspection, the tradition of fairy tales and that of the Gothic have many points in common. Works are often set in an indeterminate past, contain supernatural elements and are rich in the kind of symbolism which makes explicit what is normally hidden to the conscious mind. There is also a sense in which both genres have been united by way of their debasement within the canon. The Gothic has suffered through the overuse of a few stock images (among them the ruined castle, the graveyard, the blood-sucking vampire) to the extent that it is difficult to achieve the response from an audience which it originally aimed at - that of provoking fear. Instead, there is always a certain amount of contaminating irony.[6] The fairy tale, as we have seen, has similarly been subject to modifying forces: partitioned off, pronounced as suitable only for children, its sexual and scatological elements cauterised. This movement has, in Carter's words, "helped to denaturize" the genre.[7] Ironically, it is the realisation of the effect wrought by this "prettifying" treatment which points us towards the fundamental differences between fairy tale and Gothic; for however fantastic its setting and unlikely the events it depicts, one of the primary functions of the folk or fairy tale has been to

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[5] Carter, "Notes on the Gothic Mode" 132.

[6] See David Punter, The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day (London: Longman, 1980), especially Ch. 1.

[7] Carter, "Introduction," The Virago Book of Fairy Tales, illus. Corinna Sargood (London: Virago, 1990) p.xvii.

articulate, debate and advise on the vagaries of ordinary life. It has a "normalising" influence, offering up as accessible the experience it describes. It has its own topsy-turvy logic, and works towards ultimate closure or resolution. By contrast, the Gothic expresses the abnormal and the extreme. It resists closure and, in its examination of themes and symbols normally confined to the unconscious, it looks rather towards dissolution, and the inclusion of non sequiturs and dead ends within the narrative.

In short then, the fairy tale and Gothic occupy similar positions within literature (in terms of theme, plot, generic value). Yet at the same time they are in a sense opposites. The former works towards a "satisfying" conclusion. I use the word advisedly for the fairy tale seeks to reward good behaviour and punish evil within a moral framework that is often stultifying in the demands it makes for rigidly defined normal behaviour.[8] The latter genre is more wayward and arbitrary. To be good is not necessarily to be safe, as the various innocent members of the Frankenstein family discover. Moral values are more likely to be questioned, as is the nature of reality. It is to this more equivocal world that Toyshop and Heroes belong.

Whilst many of the elements of Toyshop suggest the fairy tale, with its setting in a toyshop, an enclosed recreational space, hinting at a narrative aimed at children rather than adults, its ending is incongruent with this analysis. There can be no closure because, by the end of the book, the world in which closure should take place no longer exists. Heroes, on the other hand, provides closure, but not until the "Prince Charming" of the tale, Jewel, has been killed, leaving the pregnant Marianne to rule his kingdom alone. Moreover, although he rescues her from the arid life of the mind and marries her, they are very unhappy together and the future is always foreboding.

With regard to the dystopian elements of Carter's early writing, I prefer to use the term adopted by Krishnan Kumar in his full-length study, Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times, because of its clear incorporation of a reaction against the utopia, from which it ultimately derives its energy. The anti-utopia, then, is defined by way of negativity and malfunctions. Kumar points out that, in the past at least, the anti-utopia was produced by the

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[8] I have examined, above in Chapter 1, this "house-training the id" (Marina Warner, "Beauty and the Beasts," Sight and Sound 2.6 Oct. 1992: 10) with which Bruno Bettelheim's work is involved and which a considerable volume of feminist writing is concerned to overturn. Consequently, the analysis I am offering up here is necessarily simplistic.

frustrated utopian thinker and founded upon ruined hopes.[9] An embittered mode, it fights against the stability and contentment projected by the utopian narrative. He sees the anti-utopia as promoting Dostoyevsky's idea that the power to do harm to oneself is part of the experience of being human, marking out the individual from society. When in Aldous Huxley's famous work, the Savage finally grasps the nature of the Brave New World he has strayed into he recoils from its safe artificiality: "I don't want comfort....I'm claiming the right to be unhappy" (211).

As with our examination of the links between the Gothic and the fairy tale, certain characteristics begin to emerge which reveal common points of interest between the Gothic and the anti-utopia. Both are defined negatively. As the anti-utopia is a twisted form of the optimistic stable utopia (Kumar points out that the anti-utopia cannot exist without the prototype utopia, whether real or imagined, to parody and subvert), so the Gothic is a dark destructive shadow of the fairy tale.[10] Carter is fascinated by the lack that is inherent in the Gothic form. She commented to Stephens on the Marquis de Sade's treatments of the genre: "They are stories composed entirely in the negative and in terms of negatives. They are written in terms of what is *not* rather than what is" (94).

The anti-utopia faces the possibility that there cannot be a realisation of the utopian ideal; it acknowledges the shortcomings of an over-arching political solution that treats humanity as economic units, social groups or as a series of problems to be solved. Instead, the vagaries of the individual are portrayed as an antidote to this dehumanising dynamic. Failure and imperfection, according to the standards of the society, may initiate transgression, which in turns spawns alternatives in the form of innovations. In short, the anti-utopia can be seen as multivalent where the utopia is univalent.

How, therefore, do these distinctions apply to Toyshop and Heroes, and to the enquiry being conducted here? Heroes bears a strong resemblance to Brave New World. Both books feature a beautiful, anachronistic doomed Savage counterpointed by a breed of Professor/rationalisers. These latter are allied with the impersonal and unfeeling (and

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[9] According to Kumar, the anti-utopia represents "one side of a dialogue of the self within individuals who have been indelibly stamped with the utopian temperament". Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times (1987; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991) 124. He reasons that the conflict inherent in the genre is central to its development.

[10] See Chapter 1 for an exploration of the fairy tale, particularly with regard to Carter.

therefore with a kind of death of humanity). Yet perhaps a more compelling image of the anti-utopian tainted innocence is Donally's idea that in the world of Heroes the "spring" of history has been released, and "time is going backwards" (93). This in turn lends weight to the idea that Marianne is "Eve at the end of the world" (124). The ultimate utopian vision is a recreation of the mythical first environment - Eden. The repeated images of snakes and, more especially, the tattoo of the original Fall on Jewel's back portray the superimposition of the original utopia upon the new anti-utopia, a desolation of dreams. Alternatively, this organisation of role almost amounts to a separation of species like that described by H. G. Wells in The Time Machine, where the Eloi and Morlocks have evolved a sinister, mutually exploitative relationship which in turn draws parallels with humanity's situation not only at the turn of the last century but also with the present.

The pre-lapsarian theme also pervades Toyshop. In her interview with John Haffenden in 1984, Carter allowed that "the intention was that the toyshop itself should be a secularized Eden" (80). Apparently, she was engaged with the myth of the Fall not only at a purely biblical level, but also with Milton's comparatively recent re-rendering in Paradise Lost. Like Charlotte Brontë in Shirley, Carter is wrestling with interpretation of the myth as a pillar of Western culture.[11] She is looking to reappropriate the critical space rather than the myth itself through the Toyshop world, an anachronistic space within which characters are condemned to re-enact the archetypal stories of ancient legend. Ultimately, it is so unwieldy and unfeasible that it collapses under its own weight or, more accurately, spontaneously combusts.

By looking at the anti-utopian and fairy tale aspects of Toyshop and Heroes we become aware that the Gothic is being combined and juxtaposed with other genres to produce complex and multivalent narratives. Often two genres appear to occupy the same space with, however, one looking towards closure, the other towards opening up the narrative to debate. Congruent with Gothic writing insofar as they both operate in the latter mode, the anti-utopia is materially different insofar as it operates primarily as a political device. Meanwhile, the Gothic serves the purpose of projecting a mood of melancholy and fear, whether or not it is used for radical or conservative purposes. By allowing the fairy tale and the anti-utopia into

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[11] "Milton tried to see the first woman; but Cary, he saw her not....It was his work he saw." Shirley (1849; London: Zodiac, 1985) 284. See Chapter 4, A Fortunate Fall? for an extended examination of Carter's views on myth.

the debate, we have succeeded in sharpening the focus with which the Gothic may be viewed. The combination of the surreal or supernatural possibility accompanied by an amoral outlook produces a disturbance within the narrative itself. This sense of unease is heightened by the protagonists' own futile attempts to change the sort of narrative they inhabit. Melanie, throughout Toyshop, desperately tries to impose a set of fairy tale mores on her situation to dispel its menace and to make some kind of sense out of it. Her sense of being resident in Bluebeard's castle excuses her entrapment and terror to herself; her voracious reading of children's books signifies the desire to escape into the simpler, more predictable world of the utopia; her susceptibility to the externals of romance and courtship (the white wedding dress, the stock figure of the tall, dark and handsome lover), despite the violence, brutality and even incest that she witnesses, shows her to be writing a kind of "other" narrative.

Similarly, Marianne defuses, or attempts to defuse, the horror of the world she lives in by detaching herself from it in the manner of a would-be anthropologist. As she is raped by Jewel, she maintains a sense of her self partly through an intellectualised analysis of the event. She tries to think of her experience as "researches", repressing the futility of such a venture. Her rationalised "political" model of her world runs counter to its realities of monsters, guerrilla warfare and ubiquitous ruins. Gerardine Meaney points out that even the Professors' community can be included within this decaying, failing schema, describing how they attempt to appear as a "society of philosophers" but their society is ultimately "literally a besieged bunker".[12]

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[12] Gerardine Meaney, (Un)Like Subjects: Women, theory, fiction (London: Routledge, 1993) 109.

History and Strands: Is there more than one Gothic?

So, what elements go to make up a "Gothic consciousness" and how does Carter's fiction/polemical opinion fit in with this schema? This section sorts through various versions of the Gothic that are available to the contemporary reader and writer. It examines the difficulties of establishing its origins, and highlights the ways in which it problematises the conventions of realism in narrative. As they provide an invaluable "concretion" of gothic mores, architectural aspects are woven into the fabric of the argument. Then follows a decoding of the conundrum of Carter's own attitude towards the Gothic. As I have already mentioned, she recounted to Antithesis that it was her anger at her supposed misrepresentation by reviewers that prompted her to write Heroes. Yet elsewhere, she claims the nomenclature of a Gothic writer for herself, embracing the Gothic characteristics as she sees them in their stark, unmediated blackness and negativity.[13] The potential confusion which this complex position could lend thus needs to be made to work *for* rather than *against* the grain of the chapter, an end that will be achieved by going under the surface of Carter's own "Gothic consciousness". The way will then open up for a comprehensive examination of the functions, absurdities and paradoxes of the enchanted space in these two early novels.

The origins of Gothic are uncertain to say the least. It seems to have been coined to refer to the Goths, who were instrumental in the downfall of the declining Roman Empire, and as a result, for a time "Gothic" signified roughly the same as our contemporary "barbaric" (Punter 5). In the eighteenth century it underwent a shift in meaning, coming to represent the "medieval". Yet, the medieval in this case did not tally with the term as it stands today (which still differs anyway according to whether it is being used by linguists, literary historians, historians and political theorists), where the medieval era is generally reckoned to lie between the Norman Conquest and the Tudors. Instead, for the late eighteenth century, the cut-off point was the mid-seventeenth century. Hardly more than a century away, the brand of medieval was a cauterising gesture, a rejection of the recent past. More than anything else it proclaimed a determination to promote a contrasting general outlook in its opposition to the

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[13] See "Afterword," Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces (London: Quartet, 1974) 121-2.

classical. In the 1780s and 1790s, the Age of Enlightenment was coming to a close. As an era it had been characterised by a pronounced bias towards rationality, a desire to view the world as an ultimately knowable phenomenon.

Acknowledging his debt to Freud, David Punter points out that the particular mind-set that was prevalent in the eighteenth century was all the more perversely susceptible to excessive taboos because of its techniques of evasion, with the emotions being compelled to go underground. This imbalance then infected late Enlightenment literature. The constraints of the present were thus connected with the medieval, that simultaneously despised and fascinating past era which operated as a type of semi-allowable taboo; the Gothic deals with simultaneous attraction and repulsion, like that displayed archetypally by Dracula's victims. Thus Punter writes that by perceiving "the passions as enemies, the Gothic victim admits a Trojan horse" (82-3). The complexities (and often apparent irrationalities) of the human experience were allowed an airing only in distorted form within fictional re-working to undermine the stability of the character. By implication, of course, the reader's stability was also attacked.

The problems with reality were compounded immeasurably for English writers by the hitherto inconceivable violence and upheaval that the French Revolution heralded. For Ronald Paulson, the English Gothic movement was the "sublimation of French turmoil".[14] It constituted, in other words, a simultaneous attempt to assimilate and reject what had been displaced or submerged. To achieve this, Gothic went to the lengths of investigating the supernatural, and trying to "fathom" the unfathomable (Paulson 224).

One of Freud's aims in Totem and Taboo is the portrayal and analysis of a grotesque reality, where repression is made explicit and the desires that we feel as infants but which we come to learn are unsocial are acknowledged.[15] Written in the first two decades of this century, the book is disturbing for the modern reader to negotiate. The fact that it was produced during this era of colonial paternalism allows it to talk of "primitives" who are "the most backward and miserable of savages" (1) and to make connections between them and the children and neurotics of the West in a manner that would be impossible to justify today. It is,

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[14] Representations of Revolution (1789-1820) (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983) 221.

[15] Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics, trans. James Strachey (1950; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961).

furthermore, written from an untroubled patriarchal point of view. However, having made that proviso, I have to concede that Freud's anthropological-psychoanalytic enquiry does, to my mind, open up an alternative route towards an origin of Gothic and it is on this facet of the book that I will concentrate.

In Totem and Taboo, Freud focuses on two fundamental (and suppressed) human desires: the drive towards committing incest, and the violent feelings we have towards our parents. Expressed in mythical terms, the narrative echoes the story of Oedipus. Freud posits a tyrannical father who drives his sons away from his group of women. The sons in turn, driven by jealousy, band together to kill the father and then attempt to absorb some of his power by eating his body. However, because of their guilt, they fail to take advantage of their position and refrain from associating with the women. Thus their father's power is greater after his death than before.

Freud goes on to hypothesise how tribal societies have evolved various restrictive practices to accommodate the residual feelings which emanate from our pre-conscious history and which lead to a considerable amount of ambivalence in relationships with family members. An externalised representation, these typically involve very limited contact between certain relatives (in particular mothers- and sons-in-law), the proscribing of certain animals as food and the avoidance of direct contact between a king and his subjects. Then, in contrast, in certain highly specific instances these laws are reversed, creating a sort of pocket in time and space in which what has been forbidden becomes compulsory. Thus the desires are externalised, purged and rendered harmless.[16]

How, then, does this information fit in with the picture of the Gothic that I have begun to build up? The key lies in Freud's descriptions of feelings and processes that are hidden away. In his study, Freud emphasises that all children have to pass through a state of mind similar to the external tribal society (17). From Jacques Lacan's writings on the mirror stage of development, Bice Benvenuto and Roger Kennedy conclude that the child's anticipation of bodily control leads to a state of "jubilation" due to an idealised perception of the body's functioning,[17] while more recently, psychologists have posited "magical thinking", which

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[16] See the second part of the Introduction for the discussion of carnival in terms of taboo and hysteria.
[17] The Works of Jacques Lacan: An Introduction (London: Free Association, 1986) 54.

similarly allows the child to believe in its own omnipotence, for a little while.[18] This powerful retrospective combination of delight and the intimation that what we perceive is somehow different from reality is an unstable mixture as it signifies a stage that has to be continually re-negotiated.

Luce Irigaray has provided another, more far-reaching explanation for the development of our society from the twin taboos of incest and the desire to kill outlined by Freud. For her, although Freud's explanation contains some truth, it is based on the result of a yet earlier stage. According to Irigaray, Freud's model of ambivalence is actually focused on the initial relationship with the mother and her womb, and rather than "Oedipus", the myth that provides the necessary archetypal details is "Clytemnestra". She killed her husband Agamemnon in revenge for his sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia and was in turn killed by her son, Orestes.[19] Irigaray further points out that the processes of sublimation surrounding this interpretation have been the more successful as this archetypal origin has been more hidden. Claire Kahane builds on this insight: although the Gothic is often ostensibly centred around the interactions between a mother and her sons (the threat of incest), her attention is directed towards the mother-daughter dyad. It is logistically complicated, an "ongoing battle with a mirror image who is both self and other" (337).

Approaching this instability from a literary critic's point of view, Rosemary Jackson has built upon Tzvetan Todorov's definition of fantasy, which centres round the characters' and reader's uncertainty between interpreting an event as having taken place or deciding that they have been the victim of a trick or delusion.[20] Jackson has shown that while fantastic writing works on our "fear of formlessness",[21] it also panders to our desire to return to "an original unity, a 'paradise' lost by the 'fall' into division with the construction of a subject" (89). The "between" state she describes is also dangerous, but it is one to which the individual is compelled to keep returning, and it is strongly associated with the workings of the Gothic, reaching its epitome in the fate of Dracula and his victims who are condemned to "an eternal interstitial existence" (118). All this instability in the realm of identity leads by a process of

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[18] See the discussion in Chapter 1, n. 48.

[19] See "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray, ed. and introd. Margaret Whitford (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 34-46.

[20] See above at 54.

[21] Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (1981; London: Routledge, 1988) 122.

inference to slippage, and the ultimate Gothic confrontation of meeting one's own double. This most intense combination of the familiar and the strange is a common device in Gothic writing, and the uncertainty and confusion that it engenders are prime components of its hallmark emotion: fear. More precisely, the Gothic is characterised by a dread expressed by Julia Kristeva in terms of the foreigner who "is within us and when we flee from our struggle against the foreigner, we are fighting the unconscious, that 'improper' facet of our impossible 'own and proper' ".[22] The Gothic obscures the actual site of the fear it excites as it dissolves the divisions between the self and Others, and between internal and external. For Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the genre is characterised by a self who is "massively blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access" (12). This image of a subject uneasy within, or maladjusted towards the society he or she should be participating in, and threatened by a non-specific or shifting focus of menace, has particular resonance for women.

Ronald Paulson, while denying that the Gothic was particularly friendly towards women (indeed he points out its culpability concerning the "pornographic subjugation of the female body" (222)), still admits that in many ways it functioned originally as a female-centred genre, coinciding with the rise of the female author (236). With a genre that is so concerned with what lies underneath, behind, and between the apparently straightforward, it is not surprising that the Gothic has interested many female/feminist readers, writers and theorists who are concerned with debunking hierarchical authority. Gothic admits doubleness, a diffuse, even confused viewpoint, where reality cannot be taken for granted. Instead, as Sedgwick argues, in Gothic literature dreams do not parody reality, rather they duplicate it. She is, furthermore, concerned with sexuality, how it pervades the atmosphere of Gothic, and the ways in which it began to be portrayed in the novel. For her, there is a process of metonymy in operation. When nakedness (or some other secret or taboo) is hidden by a veil, it is eventually this veil which comes to represent what is thought to be behind it. I emphasise the last proviso for, as Sedgwick points out, "the suffused veil very often hides Nothing, or death, or, in particular, some cheat that means absence and substitution" (146).

This involvement with Gothic has continued through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as women have re-evaluated its emphases. An important early example of this trend

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[22] Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, trans. L. S. Roudiez, (1988; London: Wheatsheaf, 1991) 19.

would be Mary Shelley's Frankenstein,[23] but a more recent particularly intriguing example of this process is found in Lady Oracle by the Canadian writer Margaret Atwood.[24] Incorporating several separate time-spans, the autobiography of the narrator is also interspersed with examples of the Costume Gothic by which she makes her living. The narrator herself, Joan/Louisa Delacourt/Foster, has several different identities as a fat/thin, redhead/brunette, poet/Costume Gothic writer, mistress/wife, each of which she tries to keep separate from the others. She experiences such extreme disquiet when her respective identities threaten to spill untidily into each other that she retreats into a form of her own narrative genre, and fakes her own death by drowning. The instabilities within her life are then further complicated by the ways in with her preoccupations begin to stray into her Costume Gothics, producing a skewed text where her separate selves are reunited and begin to communicate with each other, and the hero's name becomes that of the narrator's husband. The sense of the Gothic as an external rendition of inner mental turmoil is given a new lease of life as Atwood reappropriates it.

In the 1970s, Ellen Moers investigated the phenomenon of what she called the "female gothic".[25] Her findings accord with Irigaray's and Kahane's, as well as providing an additional link between them. Moers pointed out that the Gothic heroine's travels, if she is alone, are conducted almost entirely indoors, albeit within the confines of huge, rambling, ruined castles full of subterranean passages and crumbling towers (the twentieth century produced a typically exaggerated example of this trope in Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast). Moers is also convinced that there is an internal element to this topography, that a type of surreal travel is taking place (129). For Kahane, these frightening, unknown corridors and labyrinths (which are also obscurely safe), double as a site of exploration of the mother's body. The ambivalence the explorer feels is analogous to the psychological connotations the womb carries in our present patriarchal society. Irigaray has emphasised that it is this displaced burden of feeling which has led to women being associated with madness, subjected to intrusive medical investigations (such as the use of the speculum), and labelled as inherently

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[23] Elaine Jordan mentions in an aside that Heroes and Villains can be "read as a re-writing of Frankenstein". "Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions," Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction, ed. Linda Anderson (London: Arnold, 1990) 19.

[24] (1976; London: Virago, 1982,).

[25] Literary Women (London: The Women's Press, 1978) 90.

more pathologically inclined than men.[26] Moers' analysis ties in with this as she records the shift in emphasis Gothic has undergone since the early nineteenth century, noting that for more recent Gothic heroines the prime site of incarceration is the insane asylum.[27] Putting these assertions into a coherent image it emerges that within the scope of Irigaray's, Kahane's and Moers' enquiries, the padded cell works as a point of intersection. It contains a trapped woman inside a space she neither knows how to escape from nor how she entered, as there is no door. The image also encompasses society's dislocation from her predicament and paradoxically a simultaneous release from the constraints of sanity, that is, to be reasonable and rational, and minimise emotion. There is a necessity to tread carefully here as one of the problems with feminist literary theory has been its assertion that for a woman to be mad is for her somehow to escape and improve upon patriarchal discourse.[28] As we saw in the previous chapter, Carter's position in this debate veers away from this proximity to essentialism. Thus, as I start to contextualise Carter's position, the image of the incarcerated woman in the padded cell becomes problematic. Her entrapment cannot be theorised successfully into a kind of marginalised empowerment until its conditions change. In Toyshop, then, Aunt Margaret's dumbness could be taken to be a refusal to submit to her husband's rule, the laws of the Father and of language. What it actually results in is a form of verbal impotence. Without a functional tongue she cannot communicate at anything more than a very basic level with her beloved niece Victoria (who has not learned to read), a ludicrously impractical situation. In her elegy to Carter, Lorna Sage wrote that Carter "feared and loathed and found hilarious the spectacle of the suffering woman" ("Death of the Author" 247), and with such a potential for arousing disquiet it is hardly surprising that this trapped woman figures so largely across Carter's writing, as well as in other writers' interpretations of the Gothic mode.

This description of the trapped woman in the padded cell resonates with Sedgwick's articulation of the "impossible" space (26), which cannot be entered or exited from, which is neither inside nor outside and which does not exist within the normal scale of human

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[26] Irigaray quotes a male friend who suddenly realised "It's true, I have always thought that all women were mad." "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother" 35.

[27] Moers 133. William Wilkie Collins' The Woman in White (1860) is an early example of this movement.

[28] Lorna Sage points out that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic allows a woman to be "virtuous" when constrained by being labelled insane. Women in the House of Fiction Post-War Women Novelists (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992) 168.

experience. It is the prime trope of the Gothic, encapsulating vertiginous possibilities of power by way of unlimited space coupled with the claustrophobia of live burial. These extremes are then forced into a single, logically perverse, concept where they continue to feed off each other. In Sedgwick's book then, a more explicit version of what a Gothic situation or state of mind *is* becomes apparent.[29] It involves coming to an awareness of an "other" space, dimension or mode of being, through telepathy or intuition, and in some way being changed by it even if it cannot be reached directly. Transference, translation, contagion and metonymy are all methods by which the characters and situations in the Gothic can be altered. Sedgwick herself points out that the Gothic self is apparently "shaped or formed by social contagion, facing outward, impressed from the surface" (155).

It is within the precepts of this description that we find a central characteristic of Gothic to be its dependence upon artifice, as well as discovering another aperture through which to connect these varying strands of enquiry with Carter's own theory and work on the subject. In 1974, her first collection of short stories was published, accompanied by an "Afterword" (which was dropped from later editions). This short piece took the form of a speculation on the difference between a tale and a short story. This difference, she decided, is sited within the Gothic mode itself, and in a single paragraph she crystallises her own views on the subject.

> The Gothic mode in which Poe writes grandly ignores the value systems of our institutions; it deals entirely with the profane. Its great themes are incest and cannibalism. Character and events are exaggerated beyond reality, to become symbols, ideas, passions. Its style will tend to be ornate, unnatural - and thus operate against the perennial human desire to believe the word as fact. Its only humour is black humour. It retains a singular moral function - that of provoking unease (122).

What emerges clearly from Carter's and Sedgwick's descriptions are the concepts of contagion between idea, plot and character and, more immediately useful, the dependence upon artifice, device, and the self-conscious manipulation of forms.

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[29] "I want to make it easier for the reader of 'respectable' nineteenth century novels to write 'Gothic' in the margin next to certain especially interesting passages, and to make that notation with a sense of linking specific elements in the passage with specific elements in the constellation of Gothic elements" (4).

An insight into this aspect of the Gothic can best be reached through theories of Gothic architecture. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the artist and art-critic John Ruskin formulated his theories on the aesthetics of architecture by looking at medieval buildings.[30] Not only did he adopt the conventional viewpoint on Gothic and place it in opposition to, and as a comment upon, the idea of classicism, but he also tried to understand the compelling quality he felt it exuded. This latter he discovered in the combination of an ambitious enthusiastic workman and an idea that is inexpressible, which cannot be truly replicated in stone from his original plan. Ruskin bitterly criticised the cinque-cento era, with its "unwholesome demand for *perfection*, at any cost" (356), finding instead that the obvious creativity and effort shown by the craftsman of the Gothic building indicated flexibility and a willingness to adapt to change. The craftsman's tendency to "transgress" the "laws of his design" and leave behind on the stone a tracery of his efforts points to the necessary self-consciousness of the technique, and an emphasis on the actual process of production at the same time as the sensibilities are outraged by his flouting of the rules.

Ruskin's ideas about the nature of Gothic tie in closely with Carter's, even though one is talking of an architectural style and the other of a literary one. Ruskin is even able to go some way towards dispelling the problem we might have with Carter's insistence that it is a "profane" genre. He weakens its link with the ecclesiastical, claiming that our associations of Gothic with churches and cathedrals is merely a matter of scale, and it was in reality ubiquitous.

The link between church and Gothic is important insofar as the inclusion of the former gives the latter scope for delving into the supernatural (of prime importance as the ascendancy of the Gothic coincides with a significant loss of faith with many people being left without a reliable "spiritual compass"), but it is rendered still more complicated by another innovation of the late eighteenth century. In his exploration of The Literature of Terror, David Punter recounts how enthusiasts for the genre went to the lengths of installing pseudo-ruins in their grounds, so retaining a tenuous link with the church (8). These attempts to collapse time and space to produce a quintessential, if parochial, product of the Gothic period actually move some way down the line towards the current confusion that has been generated by postmodern

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[30] Selections from the Writings of John Ruskin, 1st Series 1843-1860 (London: Allen, 1893) 341-56.

architecture, in which time and space are threatened with distortion, and where the nature or even possibility of a "reality" is called into question.[31] The inner confusions of the subject are again being played out through the manipulations of their surroundings.

To sum up, while its origins remain obscure, the Gothic can be shown to have a probing, disquieting connection with some of our most deep-seated psychical mechanisms. The power that enables it to disturb has been seized as a useful tool to be used by women writers to explore and revise narrative, although it may also work other ways, Indeed, Punter warns us against assuming it to occupy an automatically transgressive position: "Gothic fiction demonstrates the *potential* of revolution by daring to speak the socially unspeakable; but the very act of speaking it is an ambiguous gesture" (417). This ambiguity, the difficulty we have in reading the intentions and motivations of the Gothic, provides clues towards Carter's own relationship with it. Her remarks to Antithesis, that she knew what a Gothic novel was, and that what she wrote could not be included within that canon, and the shadow cast by her fourth novel, which she placed in the centre of the tradition, all point towards a need to escape the definition that has been laid on her. Here, the image of the incarcerated woman in the padded cell and Carter's attitude towards her begin to interact. One line of interpretation of the Gothic, as we have been following it, leads to live burial or limbo and Carter's response to the label of the Gothic writer indicates that perhaps she identified with this conclusion, as indeed she identified herself with her work. To extricate herself from this entrapment, Carter constructed Heroes, which depicts a world where everyone is so cut off from our own comparatively integrated world that they are condemned to a type of live burial, and which occupies a central position with the Gothic canon. By its differentiation from the other novels then, it serves to push them further away from the Gothic focus. Carter's drive towards assuming her own definitions and labels cannot be overstated; the trapped woman is thinking on her feet, and whilst the Gothic is strongly associated with incarceration and entrapment, its links with the fantastic allow for the possibility of solutions and ways of escape not available in a strictly realist narrative.

Extrication is not by any means a simple matter within the Gothic. Sedgwick, for one, highlights the fact that the Gothic is peppered with notions of the unspeakable, indescribable

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[31] See the discussions of the postmodern subject in the Introduction and Chapter 4.

and unreadable. These delaying tactics, underpinned by a landscape architecture characterised by the tunnel and the labyrinth, block the reader off from knowing what has happened as well as throwing the character into a kind of pre-interpretative limbo. They put the progress of the narrative on hold and, as I have already shown in this chapter, the actual characteristics of Gothic, in many ways "understood", are elusive when the attempt is made to isolate them. This suggests that the boundaries are potentially flexible, both to admit and, conversely, to restrain or imprison. The Gothic introduces the notion of the inner constraint in the form of inheritance, induction, initiation, which becomes external and is more powerful than physical barriers. This brings a space into being, a place that cannot be left, except by violent acts of destruction, including self-destruction.

In addition, while Carter's already quoted "Afterword" uses the Gothic to determine the difference between the tale and the short story, another formal distinction she makes between the two is based on freedom of interpretation. Accordingly, "the tale differs from the short story in that it makes few pretences at the imitation of life....[it] does not log everyday experience, as the short story does" (121). The "reality" of Carter's tale shakes off the bonds of compulsory veracity and enters a place where the writer still exerts interpretative control, but where the "allowable" is infinitely expanded. Todorov's moment of uncertainty experienced by the reader or character when they have to make a decision between the uncanny and the marvellous produces a resonating doubled text (41).

The Gothic, then, is an elusive genre whose physical motifs of the trap door and the secret hidden space best symbolise its tendency to facilitate or frustrate progress in the narrative and freedom of expression. Carter rightly seeks to evade its imprisoning effects upon her authorial voice, but rather than keeping the unconscious "in a suitcase" ("Afterword" 122), she chooses to explore the hazardous passages of the Gothic pile, entirely on her own terms of course. The next sections of this chapter will take Toyshop and Heroes in turn, and, with reference to the theories and dynamics in this section, will examine the methods she uses to delineate, explore and manage the spaces within them.

The Magic Toyshop: Shifting Selves

The action of The Magic Toyshop takes place within extremely circumscribed boundaries in terms of spatial limits, the number of characters and time-scales. Yet within these restrictions, which recall remarkably accurately the conditions of the sub-genre "female gothic" as described by Moers (with its fairy tale motifs of restricted geography and a father substitute), Carter manages to construct an intriguing set of significations by way of an inner geography that corresponds to the outer spatial experiences and through which they are re-interpreted. Settings reflect and often seem to coerce events.

The initial setting, Melanie's first house and garden, are opulent and roomy, but they do not impinge upon her consciousness until they begin to develop sentience. This process is initiated in the middle of the night, when wearing her mother's wedding dress, Melanie steals out into the garden. The house seems to lock her out deliberately, and nature, represented by the garden, conspires against her so that the dress is torn and bloodied. ("The garden turned against Melanie when she became afraid of it" (18).) This then triggers a regressive train of thought in her. From that point on, the dress does not signify the purity of its wearer (which is its traditional symbolism). Instead, as a signal of her personal Diaspora, she begins to act as though she herself represents the dress. In line with Sedgwick's discourse on the "bloody veil", Melanie launches into a series of substitutions that results in the first of many confusions with identity.[32] She and her mother are (con)fused by their association with the dress. If we then continue to follow Sedgwick, we learn that this is a mechanism associated with death. With her world threatening to fall apart, Melanie's fragmentation advances.

The book begins with Melanie looking at herself in the mirror, trying to emulate famous artists' models. However, by seeing herself as a Pre-Raphaelite, a Toulouse Lautrec, Titian, Renoir or Cranach, she avoids facing herself *as* herself. A more extreme symptom of her plight is her brush with infinity in the garden where the world, which consists of "only this garden," is "as empty as the sky, endless as eternity" (17). The elusiveness of identity, and the utter futility of attempting to pin it down, are clearly revealed as central tenets of this novel in

[32] Sedgwick hypothesises that the veil metonymically comes to represent sexual desire by its association with the flesh it is supposedly covering (143).

its opening chapter. Running in parallel with this motif, Carter swiftly establishes in the reader a sense of the illegibility or lack of intelligibility of certain encoded systems within the novel. As I have already mentioned, Aunt Margaret cannot speak. Because of this, she can have no kind of intellectual relationship with her illiterate five-year-old niece Victoria. Carter draws attention to this isolation by associating Victoria with the mad Mrs Rochester of Jane Eyre (7-8), and awarding her a physical solidity not accompanied by a mental presence. She is only a "great, heavy lump" who throughout the narrative grows "fatter than ever" (32, 88). Their brother Jonathon is cut off from the visual. His thick glasses and obsession with the sailing ships of the past lead to his being "blind" to the present reality (4). This lack of discernment also works the other way as "nobody ever noticed that he did not see them" (4). Instead, his thick-lensed glasses work to conceal his eyes from the world.

All three children are, as Sedgwick has pronounced of Gothic protagonists in general, "massively blocked off from something". Melanie's self has become alienated, Jonathon denies reality and Victoria, it seems, cannot grow mentally, only physically. By recognising these characteristics we are able to examine the functioning of the confined spaces that they find themselves in. The Gothic "disfunctionality" displayed by the children points the way towards an interpretation that can reconcile the social realism of the book with its surreal aspects. It is at times difficult for the reader to accept the resigned passivity with which Melanie (like Margaret and Finn) greets her treatment by Uncle Philip. He terrorises her, and the rest of the family, both physically and mentally. He poses a sexual threat, using Finn and a wooden swan as his hapless tools to perform two proxy rapes upon her; and, on a day-to-day basis, he compels her to work in his shop without wages. The only strategy Melanie employs to combat this is to fantasise about running away to be independent. Clearly identifying with her father's bachelor past, she uses the same words to express both it and her own future independence. In his *past* bedsitter she visualises "coffee brewing on a gas-ring" (13), while in her own *future* she pictures herself brewing "Nescafe on her own gas-ring" (78). This association with her father is important as Uncle Philip is endeavouring to obscure him, to wipe him from the text altogether. Her surname is never mentioned throughout the book, although her mother's maiden-name, "Flower", is as Uncle Philip is determined to turn her into "a little Flower" herself (144). Moreover, Melanie is also told she must be "a little

mother" to her brother and sister (28). Thus, ironically, she becomes trapped in the role which she originally stole for herself.

The answers to the difficulty of reconciling Melanie's (lack of) actions with her experiences lie in the complex real-unreal dyad that Carter constructs in Toyshop. At several points in the text, Melanie is revealed as neurotic, as an unreliable narrator, or as teetering on the edges of madness. As I expand on these allegations, I shall bear in mind how they relate to an interactively spatial interpretation of the novel through the Gothic mode.

Melanie's "well-developed sense of guilt" (5) leads to her blaming herself when her parents die in the plane crash. Her confusion, between the residual unconscious desire and the thought-act that caused their deaths, highlights the collapse of the boundaries between the inner and the outer that her perceptions have undergone. Her grief and shock have to be externalised. She wrecks her parents' bedroom, paints her face bizarrely with her mother's cosmetics and plaits her hair painfully tightly instead of giving way to inner turmoil and pain. Her behaviour connects her with Freud's neurotic and the "primitive" totemic tribes he describes in Totem and Taboo, as well as chiming with the "magical omnipotent thinking" children. The confusion of equating thoughts with actions, inner with outer space, also goes some way towards establishing Melanie as a character in the Gothic mode, explaining her passivity. If she is able to experience what she fantasises then her necessity for real action is considerably diminished. On top of that, a multiple reality is set up. Alternative Melanies begin to inhabit the text. One of them stays behind when she leaves her parents' house, a "daisy-crowned young girl" to "appear in mirrors where the new owner expected the reflection of his own face" (31). Another is Melanie's own adult self whom she feels herself to be gestating. The Gothic slippages of identity can occur both horizontally as well as vertically.

So, a number of potential Melanies exist, complicating the nature of the novel's reality, and conspiring to deny its closure. The resulting disorientation experienced by the reader, however, is further compounded by problems with her reliability as a narrator. Just over halfway through the book she sees a freshly severed hand in the cutlery drawer, and hears the blood dripping from its wrist. No one else can see it. It does not reappear, nor does it seem to connect with anything else in the book. It is disembodied both in a literal and a literary sense. Without having narrative significance it must interact with the text in some other way. Its

discovery in a prosaic setting (Melanie is washing up when she finds it) places the foreign and the menacing firmly in the centre of the familiar domestic scene. This calls into question any attempts by the reader to interpret Toyshop in terms of social realism. There is either a hand there, in which case we are truly inside Bluebeard's castle as Melanie believes, or there is not, and hence everything we receive filtered through her consciousness is suspect. In fact we are led, alternately, to both poles. Melanie's melodramatic reaction to her Uncle Philip's overpowering personality does turn out to be justified. His power over the world is total, as shown by his ultimate destruction of it.

However, these reassurances are counterbalanced by a disturbing little episode where Melanie's fragmentation is emphasised. Towards the end of the book, she finds herself all of a sudden completely absorbed by her own hand, which appears as "an object which did not belong to her and of which she did not know the use" (161). She imagines her fingers to be a family with separate personalities and a social standing similar to that which she used to occupy. Clearly, within the restrictive framework of her current existence she is beginning to act as the pathological, trapped woman who appears as the focus of Carter's attention. Yet, rather than open herself up to a new mode of consciousness, Melanie instinctively attempts to repress the desire to return to the state of original unity Jackson invokes as a "paradise lost" before "the 'fall' into division which coincides with the construction of the subject (89). Her move away from this dead, mythical space is signalled by her rejection of Uncle Philip's swan (phallus) which plays Zeus to her Leda on the toyshop stage. When she is struggling with it, she simultaneously confronts herself as other, for a disembodied Melanie gazes down on the stage below. It has already been made clear in the novel that what takes place on to the puppet-stage should not be taken lightly. The first time that Melanie witnesses a performance, Uncle Philip throws Finn from the flies, killing Finn's identity as a dancer and displaying in prototype his destructiveness, power, and empathy with puppets above humans, for it is because Finn tangled some puppets' strings that Philip almost murders him. Like Jane Austen in Mansfield Park, Carter has built up a world where the events that take place on stage are at least as pertinent to the characters' lives as what happens elsewhere.[33] The sign for this is

[33] Fanny refuses to take part in the household dramatic production because she fears the effects of the imaginary situations on the real. Lovers' Vows exacerbates the immoral inclinations of the amateur actors by giving them socially acceptable outlets.

almost too obvious to be taken seriously: Uncle Philip's puppet theatre is called "FLOWER'S PUPPET MICROCOSM" (126)

Because of this, it seems quite natural for Finn to talk of "killing" and then burying Uncle Philip's swan without irony. It has acquired animation through its connection with both Philip's and Finn's half-articulated desire for Melanie. Its defeat on, and then off, the stage signifies, because of the peculiar logic of the novel where symbolism and metonymy have gone mad, an ultimate defeat of Uncle Philip. He is symbolically castrated when it is destroyed, as soon afterwards he discovers that he has been cuckolded by his brother-in-law, and cannot confront Francie directly but only destroy his centre of power by setting the house alight.[34]

The other experience which puts a strain on, because it rivals, reality in the book is Melanie's dream of being Jonathon. On the night before the end of the toyshop world, she dreams that the two of them inhabit one body, and that they creep down to the puppet-stage. When they stand on the artificial beach it is transformed into a real one, then Jonathon rows away and they separate. When she wakes, she finds he has in fact disappeared, although he has apparently gone out with Uncle Philip, but we do not discover what happens to him during the toyshop's final chaotic moments. Oddly enough, his fate does not concern the reader unnecessarily. This is partly because his lack of mourning for his parents and his position as Uncle Philip's protégé render him an unsympathetic character. However, there is also the feeling that he has already exited the text and cannot therefore be touched by any subsequent events. Moreover, as the vision which Melanie shares with him is one that we are explicitly told no one else can see (as it is connected with his blindness and invisibility), by entering into it with him, she exhibits some authorial power and there is a corresponding jubilation. Through the mechanism of the dream, she is privy to information that should not be available to her, and, as with her guilt over her parents' deaths, she equates her dream or wish with action and again events fit in with her viewpoint. The confusion between thoughts and

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[34] This spiritual link with puppets occurs elsewhere in Carter's work. In the title story of The Bloody Chamber, the young bride is manoeuvred into the torture chamber where her dead predecessors lie. Somehow brainwashed into taking part in an execution ritual, she is rescued from her husband by her mother's sudden arrival on the scene. In Carter's words, when the husband realises he has lost control of events, it is because the dolls "break free of their strings" (39). In Fireworks' story, "The Loves of Lady Purple" the puppet literally bites back!

actions, representation and reality is so complete that Toyshop appears ultimately to be teetering on the brink between the real and the unreal.

Thus Carter uses Gothic's awareness of symbols, and the manner in which it shifts the symbol and what it stands for into the centre of the narrative and plays with reversals of their relationship. It is easy to speculate on why she was attracted to the self-consciousness inherent in a form that facilitates the development of the intricately-layered narratives. Its style allows Melanie, within the highly restricted prison of the toyshop, to turn the narrative space to her own use. Carter allows her her own set of interpretations and so she spins her own tales about the events occurring around her. With an eye for the fantastic, Melanie sees Francie as a stone, Aunt Margaret as a bird, Finn as "Simple Ivan in a folk tale" (33), and Uncle Philip as having a wooden head (143). By seeing her life *as* a narrative, sometimes in terms of film or within poetry, she is able to build up a complex surreal edifice that rivals in scope Carter's own third-person narrative about a young girl who loses her parents and moves to London. Consequently, the novel becomes crowded with supposedly internally-initiated trains of thought, false starts and dead ends.

The difficulty that a Gothic narrative has in getting itself told is evident from the ways in which the story overruns itself. For instance, Melanie has already been living in London for several weeks before we are given a description of a Sunday (the day around which the rest of the week pivots). Our sense of time becomes skewed as events are recounted in the wrong order. The train of thought is constantly having to be halted, retraced and the gaps filled in.

Like Henry James' novella, The Turn of the Screw, Carter's Toyshop manipulates the reader into close identification with Melanie, the central consciousness, even as the events which are depicted are unclear. The very absence of any kind of specificity draws the two points of view closer together to the extent that Melanie becomes a type of reader, albeit an untrustworthy one, within the text. Toyshop depicts the threats to Melanie's sense of subjecthood and methods of interpreting her surroundings both by her own attempts to remain within a clichéd world of magazine articles and romantic poetry, and by the malevolent Uncle Philip whose own edges are never quite finite. At times he incorporates the stage, the workshop, the puppets and house itself. The ultimate defeat of this composite monster, however, is due to its limited scope. He only controls the world of the toyshop. His

limitations become apparent when at the end of the novel, the toyshop burned down, Finn and Melanie face each other, declaiming that everything "is gone", nothing is left "but us" (200). In the end, the decision about its reality rating can be side-stepped because the book and the world end simultaneously. The same can not be said of Heroes which, as I am about to show, reveals a similar brand of the fantastic, but with infinitely extended boundaries.

Marianne, like Melanie, is a middle-class virgin who is precipitated from a rational existence into a realm of magic and superstition. Unlike Melanie, who believes herself accidentally responsible for events, she has purposely thrown herself into this new environment by running away from home with Jewel. Where Melanie desperately tries to manoeuvre herself into a realist narrative by her fantasies of bedsit-life and the continual re-reading of her childhood books, Marianne steadfastly confronts the varied, mostly unpleasant, situations she finds herself in.[35]

Our perceptions of space in this novel are distorted by a proliferation of borders and boundaries that destabilise our perceptions of the inner and outer dimensions, between what is interpreted and what is objectively "real". This problematised relationship results in an excess of vertigo and boredom, of over-familiarity and alienation, while the conflicts produce a perilous environment which Marianne herself has to negotiate. The effect of this journey is to focus attention on the mechanics of her mediation, and her ability to function in this dysfunctional world is achieved by a particular sort of identification with the author.[36]

Heroes is a distorted narrative. It is multi-layered, as a Gothic text should be, but these layers do not occur at intervals that allow either character or reader to take up a stable position in relation to them. Instead, both are put in the uncomfortable position of continuously having to adjust the focus through which they view events. At one end of this scale there is the tattoo of the Fall of Man inscribed on Jewel's back. The picture itself is disturbed by the contours and movements of his body. Its very existence is a distortion, and it also distorts

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[35] When Shadow Dance was first published, Anthony Burgess wrote that Carter possessed "what I admire and envy more than anything - a capacity for looking at the mess of contemporary experience without flinching" (quoted by Lorna Sage, "The Savage Sideshow," New Review 4.3-4 (1977): 51). This capacity is also one of Marianne's chief characteristics and functions within the novel. The presence of a "Carter character" within her own works has been suggested by, among others, Marc O'Day and Marina Warner. O'Day, in his essay " 'Mutability is Having a Field Day': The Sixties Aura of Angela Carter's Bristol Trilogy," (Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter, London: Virago, 1994) finds the first of these in Shadow Dance, in the "cool, detached, south London Emily" (36). In this instance, it is the character's poise which marks her out rather than her effect on the text. When she first saw the film version of The Magic Toyshop shortly after Carter's death, Marina Warner was struck by the actress playing Melanie, Caroline Milmoe, "who looks very like what the young Carter must have looked like" ("Women Against Women in the Old Wives' Tale," Cinema and the Realm of Enchantment: Lectures, Seminars and Essays by Marina Warner and Others, ed. Duncan Petrie (London: British Film Institute, 1993: 65). The use of such a literary device, or character, is explored further in this section

[36] See also Chapter 1, The Reconstructed Carter.

Jewel's individuality as it distracts those around him from *him*. Observing this, Marianne points out to Jewel that "you can never be properly by yourself" (85), and the tattoo's creator, Donally, is fascinated by it to the extent that he cares more about being separated from his "masterpiece" than about losing his son when he is expelled from the tribe (131). As Jewel can never see it himself, he is mentally detached from the tattoo although, obviously, it is part of his body. His blindness to it is like that of someone trying to read a book but holding it too close to their eyes and reveals the strain (as well as linking him spiritually to Jonathon). This stifling proximity of linked ideas within the text, of the decorated man and of his own decorations, which are and are not identical, attacks the concept of an autonomous self. The unease with which we view this mutated alliance is heightened because Jewel's merger is not with a person but with an ideology, the representation of a mythical instant.

While this constriction is taking place, the text experiences another pull in the opposite direction, from proximity to distance. As I have already stated, the entire world of Heroes can be seen as an infinitely stretched version of the small, enclosed, magical space in Toyshop that also makes a different set of demands upon the author, character and reader. These links can be traced partly through the inclusion in the later book of many of the key images and devices of the earlier. Then, when these are examined more closely, distinctions begin to emerge which reveal Heroes to be a more purposeful investigation into the nature of the enchanted space.

A demonic puppet-master/shaman attempts to shape the environment according to his own vision; he is locked in absorbed antagonism with an objectified, feminised young man who, for various reasons, acts as an inadequate protector to the book's heroine. Between Toyshop and Heroes, however, the magus is much diminished. Donally is more openly murderous than Uncle Philip, making several attempts to kill Jewel and Marianne in the course of the text. Yet Uncle Philip is far more effectively violent in his treatment of Finn. His symbiotic relationship with the house and toyshop increase the power of both puppet-master and environment. In contrast, Donally is not convincing. He postures and menaces but, within the scope of the text, he is impotent. He has killed Jewel's father, yet that event occurred outside the boundaries of the text and besides, the man he poisoned was old and sick. Now he gesticulates and throws spectacular fits (which are, however, not as impressive as

those of his son, who may or may not be an idiot). When the world is enlarged, the magus is diminished.

Much of the action in both novels takes place within a cavernous house which is eventually destroyed by fire. In Toyshop, this inferno signals the end of the existence of a dimension "which works according to the laws of dreams, fairy tales, folk tales, myth, and magic".[37] In Heroes, the crumbling mansion where Marianne first joins the Savages, is imprisoned by them and is finally forcibly married to Jewel (in an orgy of Gothic symbolism), is open to the elements rather than sealed off against the world. Her marriage bed lies in a room, carpeted by fallen leaves, which is gradually falling apart, so that every morning, "a little more of the roof had fallen in, until they would soon be as cruelly exposed as babies on a mountain-side and, each night, the spiral staircase grew a little more treacherous" (89). The more this world disintegrates, the more it is isolated from our own. Inside this impossible space, time truly seems to be going backwards, as Donally speculates (93), and when finally this second incarnation of the isolated world is destroyed by fire, it recalls the inferno in Toyshop (which itself echoes the burning of Manderley in Rebecca and of Thornfield Hall in Jane Eyre),

So, from an intertextual viewpoint, what is enclosed in terrifying concentration in Toyshop has become all-encompassing in Heroes. The microcosm has come into its own. Heroes' environment is so divided against itself that Marianne's father speculates on the emergence of separate human genuses (9), and roads have become "arteries that no longer [spring] from a heart" (107). This conjures up the image of a body which is undergoing torture such as might be found in a Gothic work, a geographical body which has been stretched on the rack, compressed in the boot, and is now so internally divided that it is a danger to itself. This description recalls the horrors discovered by the young bride in "The Bloody Chamber" who is closely related to Melanie and Marianne, having had a sheltered, cultured upbringing which is suddenly exchanged for a realm which does not pay full attention to realistic parameters. When confronted in the bloody chamber with the evidence of her husband's predilection for uxoricide, she is catapulted into knowledge and self-

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[37] Lorna Sage, Angela Carter Writers and their Work (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council: 1994) 15.

awareness and forced to act in order to save herself from being enclosed within it. Melanie, conversely, has to be pushed out of the skewed environment where bodies are replicated in wood and wax. Marianne, who cannot extricate herself from it, has instead to find a way of existing which does not depend upon a rigid rationality. She needs to develop a form of flexible rationality with links between the self and the external world, which can adapt to the tortured, impossible spaces into which the text crams her.

I have already indicated that Toyshop contains references to Jane Eyre, and thus has access to the connotations of the older text, such as the fire at Thornfield. Heroes has also been identified with the Brontës' work. The original Times Literary Supplement review of Heroes dubbed Mrs Green a "Nellie Dean", and called the Barbarians "a generation of Heathcliffs".[38] They are a host of dark, ornamental men, infinitely dangerous to the unlucky women who succumb to them. The Bradleys, seven half-brothers of whom Jewel is the oldest, resemble each other so closely that Marianne is often uncertain which is which. They appear as different aspects or ages of the same man, uncannily able to co-exist. This possibility is held out as sexual and threatening simultaneously, most strongly when Marianne is threatened by a gang-rape, but it does not directly affect her sense of herself. Instead, unlike Melanie, she remains resolutely integrated. Her few lapses in detachment occur at moments of great stress, when her father dies, when she is raped, when she puts on her wedding dress. They serve not only to illuminate the conflicts she is involved in, in terms of genre and viewpoint, but also to emphasise how stubbornly she patrols her own borders. When she recognises Jewel as the boy who killed her brother ten years previously she denies him his autonomy, in order to protect her own memory of the event, by telling him that he "looked more like Precious" than himself (79).

Episodes like this, slippages of selfhood, a lagging behind of events, mistakes in interpretation, fuel the alienation which pervades the book. When the armed wing of the Professor people, the Soldiers, and the Savages dress up to fight each other, both sides lose their humanity by sliding in opposite directions. The Soldiers seem like mechanoids in their armour, while the paint and decorations of the Savages transform them into libidinous

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[38] "Facing the Past," rev. of Heroes and Villains, by Angela Carter Times Literary Supplement 20 Nov. 1969: 1329.

"hobgoblins of nightmare" (5). They manage to inspire equal amounts of fear and hate in each other. Yet despite their apparent disparity, the Professors and the Savages are also confusingly alike, as if each is viewing the other through the wrong end of a telescope. Accustomed to thinking of the Savages as whirling dervishes, Marianne feels pity for them when she watches the whole weary tribe trudging peacefully and methodically through the forest. At the same time, the sudden fits of madness and violence to which the Professor class (supposedly the more peaceful community) is prone indicate that the two apparent opposites occupy much of the same space. In David Punter's words: "In the end, both...worlds look like different aspects of the same nursery" (398). Differences have been constructed which only exist because of their arbitrariness: you have to know they are there in order to feel the proper antagonism.[39] The Barbarians know that the crumbling cities are dangerous and should not be entered because of the Out-People who inhabit them. Before she joined them, Marianne was unaware of this, and wandered safely amongst the ruins and the Out-People left her alone because they did not believe she was real. Although literally in the same place, neither she nor they recognised each other as enemies as their versions of reality were too disparate. Elsewhere, her ability to travel safely through the novel (when she runs away from the camp, she manages to journey in a straight line) is tied in with her lack of superstition about or belief in the kind of text she finds herself in. Throughout the novel, she constantly attempts to transgress boundaries, both physical and mental, attempting endless rewrites as the struggle to move through and experience space in this novel is completely bound up with linguistics. This, too, is typical of Gothic writing, as illustrated by Sedgwick's characterisation of the heroine who struggles to express through her body what is linguistically impossible (6). Bart Moore-Gilbert, looking specifically at the Gothic as it displayed itself in the nineteen sixties, emphasises the self-conscious linguistic existence exhibited by the characters within the narratives,[40] and although I have no wish to insert Carter into a "movement" of this or any other kind, it is interesting to note the emergence of these tendencies in a wider arena. Meanwhile, central to this novel's treatment of the linguistic theme are Donally's capitalised

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[39] For Sedgwick, "the barrier of unspeakableness separates, not spaces that are qualitatively different, but spaces that are indistinguishable by any appeal to their content or intrinsic character" (19).

[40] "The Return of the Repressed: Gothic and the 1960s Novel," Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s, eds. Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed (London: Routledge, 1992) 181-99.

aphorisms. Although large and in a public space, because no one else can read, they have meaning only for Marianne. Yet, the meanings themselves are so esoteric that the utility of the act of reading itself collapses. In addition, because the aphorisms are directed at Marianne alone and exploit the difference between her and the rest of the tribe, even the appearance of words themselves forms a threat.

Earlier in the chapter I looked at the post-lapsarian elements present in both novels. More specifically now, Heroes' Edenic garden is dangerous both in its very nature (the poisonous plants, dangerous animals and confusing terrain) and because it allows ambushing and spying. Carter has constructed an arena that focuses on the act of naming and classification, and the power or illusion of power that accompanies it, reveals that ultimately the Word itself corrupts.

Thus, through Marianne, who shifts between the roles of reader, author and character as she probes the linguistic boundaries of her linguistic existence, we begin to perceive both the futility of a hierarchical structure, and to ascertain how it might be undermined. The roles themselves are pulled out of shape. Marianne constantly reads her surroundings, *and* attempts to control them linguistically. She deliberately defines "anachronism" for Jewel as a "pun in time" in order to confuse him. At the beginning of the novel, she is described as marking "all her possessions with her name, even her toothbrush" (3). As a reader of the topography around her, she goes through periods of not believing the texts around her, viewing Jewel as "a colour illustration" (90). Where Melanie worked as a prototypical author and reader of the same type, using fragments of literary and artistic knowledge to paper over the gaps and inconsistencies of her existence, Marianne experiences an epiphany on the beach. When she sees the unfamiliar life-forms around her, she speculates that in losing their names:

> these things underwent a process of uncreation and reverted to chaos, existing only to themselves in an unstructured world where they were not formally acknowledged, becoming an ever-widening margin of undifferentiated and nameless matter surrounding the outposts of man, who no longer made himself familiar with these things or rendered them authentic in his experience by the gift of naming (136-7).

The artificial boundaries which language creates are gradually dissolving, just as the room which Marianne shared with Jewel is evolving into a space which is neither inside nor outside. She has reached the point where she no longer knows who are the villains and who the heroes within the text (125). She does know, however, that to name or label something, or someone, is to restrict both the subject and the object of the exercise and she recognises the need to formulate a way of perceiving which frees her from this incarcerating dynamic.

A "corrupted Alice in wonderland",[41] Marianne is both curious about the world she finds herself in, and curiously unaffected by it. This is despite the fact that both she and Alice have to alter themselves in order to survive. While Alice gradually learns to adjust her size according to what is going on around her, Marianne also adapts. Her final decision, to be Queen of the Savages and "rule them all with a rod of iron" (150), recalls the ending of Through the Looking-Glass (where Alice, too, becomes a queen) and proves how determined she is to survive. As one of the Professor people and a pregnant woman, she is an unlikely candidate, but it allows her to take up a new position in relation to everyone else in the text, and, most importantly, with the text itself. The attention which Marianne, the character/reader/author, pays to linguistic processes means that she will be able to negotiate the enchanted space of the novel at will. It has become her own territory.

I end this chapter by picking up on some of the themes not addressed in it which I shall be looking at in my next chapter. Ronald Paulson pointed out that the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic offered hitherto unimagined opportunities to depict the subjugation of the female body, while Gothic's connections with titillation, tantalisation, and with the dark unexplored places of the psyche give it a natural link to pornography. Carter's earlier works, too, are littered with such objects and situations: for instance, the photographs of Ghislaine and Honeybuzzard in Shadow Dance, and the spy-hole in Toyshop which allows secret access between Melanie's room and the room shared by Finn and Francie. Moreover, while I have shown that Jewel's rape of Marianne provides one of the few instances where she loses her detachment and is submerged into the text, Carter herself had problems with the episode. In a letter to Elaine Jordan, she refers to the event as "that distinctly ideologically dodgy rape

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[41] Sage, "The Savage Sideshow" 52.

scene, which I put into the novel in the first place for reasons of pure sensationalism".[42] She does go on, however, to distinguish between real rape and rape fantasies, relating the scene in Heroes to the latter. In Nothing Sacred, she commented that she learned to look at things "very, very carefully" in order to try to deconstruct them.[43] Pornography replaces action and participation with watching; there is an acknowledged gap instead of intimacy (although this last may be more willed or constructed than innate).

The next chapter will therefore examine in more detail the gender-economy of sex relations, concentrating on the ironically entitled Love: A Novel, and on The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman which depicts the chaos that ensues when our desires step out from behind the mirror. A central non-fiction text will therefore be Carter's study of the Marquis de Sade, The Sadeian Woman. This last also ties in with the other main generic source for Carter's fiction. Heroes is Carter's first essay into the picaresque, while The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman is the second. Sade's work also involves a series of wanderings, incarcerations and escapes, and will assist me as I define the role and effects of the picaresque on Carter's work. I shall explore the development of the enchanted space and the adaptations and failures to adapt to a terrain that is as much contrived by the characters' imaginations as it is objectively real.

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[42] "The Dangerous Edge," Flesh and the Mirror 197.

[43] Angela Carter, Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, 1992) 28.

3

Traversing the Frontiers of Consciousness: Danger and Illusion in Love and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman

In the last chapter, the Gothic motifs of the enchanted space such as a ruin, a malignant house, were introduced and discussed, while the hero's state of mind affected her experience of, and response to, her environment. Here, I want to consider two novels, Love: A Novel (1971 revised and republished in 1987) and The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman (1972),[1] in which Carter further investigates the connections between inner and outer realities, and describes the explosive consequences of trespass between the two.

As a writer in the Gothic mode, Carter had already dealt with grotesque symbiosis, between Uncle Philip and his house in Toyshop, and with inner psychological links to architecture in the form of the barricades and towers of the Professor towns in Heroes. With her middle novels Love and Desire Machines, however, a more deliberate, more inclusive, conjunction is apparent. In Love, Annabel's flickering sensibilities lead to her repeated suicide attempts. The gap between representation and material object is a terrifying chasm that she desperately attempts to erase before finally despairing and gassing herself; she dies in a manner derived equally from Ophelia and Sylvia Plath. In Desire Machines, one of the novel's many shaman/magus/puppet-master figures, Doctor Hoffman, plunders the unconscious and the gap between the concrete and the representation, so that people come face to face with their fantasies, dreams and desires. As in Love, the dangers of this exploration of the unconscious are central and explicit, causing ripples of interference. Not so much a hero as a picaro, the protagonist of Desire Machines, Desiderio, perpetually avoids closure throughout his picaresque adventures. The idea of an end to the road is held up as an impossible ideal, with his final evasion coming about because he cannot face the Doctor's

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[1] As the latter has such an unwieldy name it is usually abbreviated as Hoffman but, because I wish to discuss the writer E. T. A. Hoffmann in this chapter, as well as Hoffman the character in Carter's novel, I will be using the form Desire Machines. Three different signifieds for the one signifier (with very minor variations) would produce an interesting breakdown of boundaries and consequent merger of identities, a fitting effect considering the individuals involved, but would do little for the coherence of this chapter.

plans for him. Instead, he resorts to killing Hoffman's daughter, his own beloved other, Albertina.

Both novels are fuelled by extremes of vision, and by a sense of violation; obscure corners of consciousness, of the mental landscape, which are usually treated sketchily are instead foregrounded and studied with an unswerving gaze. Their "unliterary" concentration on the despised genres of pornography, the "B" movie and science fiction also complicate the reader's reactions. The emphasis is on dislocation, distortion, alienation and isolation, and because of this dynamic, although Carter leaves plenty of clues as to her sources, influences and parities for the reader to follow through, actually tracing back connections and panning for meaning is counter-intuitive. Instead the current flows towards displacement and fragmentation. Reflecting this trend, the title of this chapter echoes a phrase from Susan Sontag's essay, "The Pornographic Imagination", which talks of the writer's perilous task of travelling to the "frontiers of consciousness" and then reporting back, acting as a "broker in madness".[2] At the same time, while there is clearly a need for an awareness of this impetus, in order to function effectively, some kind of coherence within the chapter must be allowed.

To cheat the dispersing current then, I shall begin by summarising the events of the two novels, emphasising their spatial peculiarities, and the conflicts between inner and outer perceptions of self and surroundings which they relate, and then use the rest of this section to outline the main issues and dilemmas that I deal with in this chapter.

In (apparent) chronological order, Love comes before Desire Machines. The only one of Carter's nine novels to be revised and given an afterword, Love is a slim, elegant work which depicts in fastidious detail the disastrous three-way relationship between Annabel, her husband Lee, and his half-brother Buzz. Unlike his brother, who drifts through a succession of casual jobs, steals habitually and cannot seem to put down any roots (the transient picar in a kitchen sink drama), Lee has taken advantage of the post-war Welfare State. He is training to be a teacher when he wakes up after a party to find a strange girl asleep beside him. He takes her home, but continues to sleep with his philosophy tutor's wife until he has taken Annabel's virginity.

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[2] Styles of Radical Will (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969) 45.

From the beginning of their acquaintance, Annabel is shown as passive, bewildered by the rest of the world, understanding "the play of surfaces only superficially; she was like a blind man at a firework display" (24). Her inability to discern causes Annabel to inhabit a different world from the people around her. The opening scene of the novel reveals her cowering in terror in a park because she can see the sun and the moon in the sky simultaneously and feels herself, the axis of the world, to be crushed by the resulting dilemma (3). In short, she cannot distinguish between her dreams and her memories so her own history and ideas of the possible are distended. Freud, in his full-length study on dreams, described how the literal content of a dream, which may be obscure, nonsensical and grotesque, might be found to contain a "poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance" that allows it to be integrated and understood within the realm of waking reality,[3] but Annabel is travelling in the opposite direction. Her energies are directed towards encoding and defamiliarising her surroundings and giving herself up to immanence. When she drifts into Lee's life, she takes over his bare, white room and peoples it with her nightmare figures apparently without realising what she is doing, so that, from being an arena of possibility, hypersensitive to seasons and shadows, the room assumes the air of a "witch's house" (7). Covered in Annabel's cabalistic drawings, it becomes a place of obscure destructive meaning: a bunker, which she is increasingly reluctant to leave.

Lee's room, the locus of the action in this novel, changes to reflect with increasing blatancy his alienation from Annabel, and her alienation from the world. It also expresses his relationship with his brother, for Buzz's room is separated from theirs only by a flimsy door, so that whether the flat consists of one or two rooms is actually unclear. In many ways the brothers function as opposite aspects of a bipartite entity, known to their acquaintance as "the Collins brothers, like bandits" (13). Buzz's room is like a "doodling pad" in its haphazard eclecticism (28), his own "cult of appearances" foreshadowing the eventual state of Lee's own room (25). Yet it is the differences between Lee and Buzz which maintain their relationship, and it is shown to be breaking down as their rooms begin to merge. When Lee makes love to Annabel, Buzz on the other side of the door lies "writhing" (24), unable not to hear and take a vicarious part in the proceedings. Successive incidents like this chart the change in balance

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[3] Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. and ed James Strachey (1953, London: Allen, 1954) 278.

and consequent breakdown of their relationship until in the end, Buzz very publicly takes Annabel away from Lee, and in a macabre scene has unsatisfactory sex with her.

One of the reasons for this anticlimax is that in their turn, Annabel and Buzz are presented as doubles by the text. The same age, height and build, they exhibit signs of closer kinship as well. Both are petty criminals, stealing habitually rather than from need. They are also able to enter each other's arcane games with ease; co-conspirators, they exclude the comparatively socialised Lee. When Lee first sees Annabel, dressed in Buzz's clothes, and drawing on the wall, he mistakes her for his brother - except that while she records what takes place inside her own head, Buzz can only reproduce photographically, translate one external into another. This, in the end, is what precipitates their division and separates their fates. Buzz is interested only in performance, while Annabel seeks an inverted reality. Thus sex with Buzz finally unhinges her, breaking her tenuous links with humanity.

Buzz's misanthropy leads him to examine her carefully for vagina dentata before intercourse in a re-enactment of taboo very like Melanie's destruction of her parents' room. Evidently he perceives Annabel as an empty space that is, nevertheless, harmful to him. At the same time, he has to imagine her as dead, absent, empty of consciousness, in order to desire her. Unsurprisingly, she is very disappointed by the experience, both sexually and because by fulfilling her fantasy, to couple with her brother-in-law who is also her other self, she has severed her last links with existence. On the subject of fantasy-fulfilment, the analyst Adam Phillips finds that desire "without obstacles is merging or incest, and so the death of desire".[4] With no more obstacles to protect her and now desiring death, the doomed Annabel begins her elaborate preparations. After a final carnivorous sexual encounter with Lee, (which Carter goes so far as to call "mutual rape" (97)), she ritually transforms herself into an icon of femininity, in a bridal gown with dyed blonde hair and a painted face, before turning on the gas taps. Lee, who has spent the night with one of his pupils, arrives home too late to save her, and when Buzz appears and wants to take photographs they fall to quarrelling over whose fault it was.

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[4] Adam Phillips, On Kissing, Tickling and Being Bored: Psychoanalytic Essays on the Unexamined (1993; London: faber and faber, 1994) 88.

This is the way the book initially ended, although that is not all it contains. By taking a linear look at the course taken by the chief relationships of the novel, I have had to ignore several important episodes; among them a description of Annabel's previous suicide attempts, a full list of Lee's infidelities, details of their shotgun marriage, and his psychotic encounter with a psychiatrist. This is largely because the book itself fights against such a sequential approach, as the events it contains are seldom recounted in this form. For instance, the loss of Annabel's virginity is first mentioned on page fifteen. Then the storyline lurches forward into the future and back into the past before settling back into its original groove twenty pages later. The already high levels of fragmentation and disorientation displayed by the characters are intensified by this practice. Lee, Annabel and Buzz move with difficulty through a space littered with clichés and concrete symbols, Lee self-consciously irritated by the way his life seems doomed to a " 'B' film atmosphere" (49). The manner in which the main characters script themselves, acting out externally what is usually internal, or even unconscious (the acts include Buzz's fear of the vagina dentata, Annabel eating her own wedding ring, Lee's encounter with another self) again disturbs the flow. Their wayward self-consciousnesses frustrate linear narrative.

The "Afterword", which Carter added some sixteen years after the book was originally published, acts as an additional authorial undermining of a straightforward narrative process. Carter criticises herself for her "sinister feat of male impersonation" (113), and thereby joins the characters in conspiring to promote *un*reality within the text that has just been read (upon reflection, even the author was not who she thought she was). Further, by providing all the characters with a future (except for Annabel for whom the text is "a coffin" (114)), she allows the room in Love to depressurise.[5] It is no longer held in a time vacuum. The tensions which built and destroyed it have dispersed. Instead of being held in suspended animation, the characters have changed - at the same rate as the author herself.

The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman begins and ends in an unnamed South American country, but where the rest of its action takes place is difficult to ascertain.

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[5] Oddly enough, the opposite is true in Desire Machines, where almost the last words of the narrator contrive to put a lid on the whole world. Unlike Annabel, who *imagines* she is at the hub of her universe although it continues to exist after her death, Desiderio *is* the linchpin. Thus his comment, "What a fat book to coffin young Desiderio"(Desire Machines 221) seals off the entire narrative.

The only other of Carter's novels apart from Love to include a formal framing device, Desire Machines is supposedly being written by an old man, Desiderio, who is recording the adventures of his youthful self (from whom he feels estranged) fifty years after the event in another of Carter's layered authorial impersonations. Knowing at the start what will happen in the end, he immediately reveals that he himself killed his beloved, Albertina, the knowledge of which causes the subsequent story to be read with disaffection by a reader braced for an unhappy or disillusioning conclusion. This in turn is an appropriate mind-set for a novel in the picaresque mode, whose protagonist remains indifferent and bored throughout,[6] as it provides an explicit connection between the writer/protagonist and the reader.

Indeed, it is his boredom which originally triggers Desiderio's adventures, for when Doctor Hoffman begins besieging the city where he works as secretary to the Minister, he is comparatively unaffected by the Doctor's bombardment of emanations from the unconscious because he sees but does not believe. Because of this relative immunity, he is chosen to leave the besieged city and go into the country beyond to find and stop the Doctor. He agrees to go on the mission not because of feelings of patriotism or loyalty but because of his dreams of a succession of images, both alluring and repellent, that are labelled "Albertina" and which he guesses have some connection with Hoffman (she turns out to be his daughter). He does not get very far with his initial mission as he is quickly accused of murder and is only saved by River-Indians (he himself is half-Indian rather to his dissatisfaction). They, in turn, are so delighted with him, in particular with his literacy, that they decide to eat him in order to absorb his knowledge (again a classic Freudian action). But, guessing their intentions, he escapes and joins a travelling circus. After being raped by the insatiable Acrobats of Desire, he hides in a cave while the circus and a nearby town are destroyed by a landslide and then takes up with a sadeian Count and his valet. Together they visit a fantastical brothel but the Police catch up with them and they have to leave before they have explored their desires, although Desiderio does meet Albertina again. They then try to cross the Atlantic by boat, but are captured by pirates, caught in a great storm and shipwrecked off the African coast where the Count meets his negative double in the shape of a Cannibal Chief, and is cooked to death.

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[6] Lars Hartveit prefers the term "picaresque mode" to "picaresque novel" Workings of the Picaresque in the British Novel (Oslo: Solum Forlag A/S, 1987) 11. References to Desiderio's boredom in the main text begin at page sixteen, and recur intermittently to the penultimate page.

Desiderio and Lafleur the valet (who has been revealed as Albertina) escape into a prelapsarian jungle, before finally stumbling into a community of masochistic centaurs. For religious reasons, the males gang-rape Albertina, but then treat both of them well until the centaurs discern what religious purpose they might serve. They are just about to undergo the first in a series of painful tortures that will ultimately kill them when they are rescued by the Doctor's helicopters. After spending the night in a "Foreign Legion fort" (195), they finally reach the Doctor's chateau. Here, to his disappointment and ennui, Desiderio discovers a bourgeois Wizard of Oz figure, a dull, grey man who does not appear to have been vivified by his own visions and whose house is discreetly furnished. At the centre of the storm there is no turbulence, only a hollow, empty core. To compound the anti-climax, Hoffman reveals the power source of his operations in his underground workshops. The energy of intercourse, "eroto-energy" (206), is collected from couples in wire cages. Desiderio is then confronted with his own wire marriage-bed from which his union with Albertina is set to result in a unique explosive reaction. He finally rebels and acts (rather than *reacts*), killing the Doctor, Albertina and several technicians, and eventually makes his way back to the city where he is hailed as a hero, to his own complete disillusionment.

In contrast to Love, which is concentrated on the claustrophobic dynamics of a single room in an ordinary English city in the sixties, Desire Machines roams around the earth, each adventure launching the protagonist into the path of the next. Where Lee, Annabel and Buzz continually work on new variations of their misery with the same tools and on the same set, Desiderio goes through the same cycle of assimilation, disillusionment and escape within entirely unconnected circumstances, and travels the world in a great circle (and hence makes an "O" or nothing out of it). Both narratives contain pornographic elements. In particular, Desire Machines' account of futile movement and the murderousness of unleashed desire contains obvious links to the work of the Marquis de Sade.[7] Because of this deliberate evocation, I have analysed the picaresque and pornographic elements of Desire Machines with his work in mind.

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[7] This connection is made explicit in the text, with Albertine sending Desiderio a message quoting from a speech by Noirceuil in Juliette. "My passions, concentrated on a single point, resemble the rays of the sun assembled by a magnifying glass; they immediately set fire to whatever object they find in their way" (Desire Machines 97).

Love and Desire Machines are still more intimately linked, however. One of the main features of Desire Machines is its interest in the confusion that results when dreams and fantasies are allowed to manifest themselves in the real world. When Hoffman seeks to set free the imaginary (37), the resulting forms are usually grotesque and people's reactions are often suicidal. This mechanism is, furthermore, explicitly linked to the phenomenon of film, which is itself implicated in the proceedings by its ability to capture a moment and later allow it to replay and hence re-exist (102). These tricks with time and perception are revealed in embryo in Love, in the confusion of Annabel's psychotic world, Lee's awareness of his cliché-ridden life that he never feels he is experiencing at first-hand and Buzz's photography with which he replaces real-life sensation.

The alienation, from world and from self, which characterises the earlier Toyshop and Heroes, as well as Love, is investigated by Carter yet again in Desire Machines, as Albertina, the personification of Desiderio's desire, constantly disappears, evades him and changes her form. The theme in Love, of femininity as a circumscribed and/or scripted performance is approached from another angle in Desire Machines where the prostituted women in the House of Anonymity incorporate everything that misogyny fears, holds in contempt and desires, being "part clockwork, part vegetable, part brute" (132).

Finally, a specific thematic segue from Love to Desire Machines leads the reader to speculate on whether the latter is a tangential development of the former for, when Annabel comes to life in Lee's room, her first act of appropriation is to draw a fantastic tree, which is later surrounded by jungle on his wall. This jungle is a version of the malignly Edenic forest that Desiderio and Albertina find themselves in after escaping the Cannibal King. Within it, although surrounded by poisonous plants and by a variety of organisms that straddle the flora-fauna divide effortlessly, they seem for a while to inhabit a limbo. They are in a transient "interstitial" space that allows them room for discourse before they are thrown back into the hurly-burly of the picaresque lifestyle.

Within these two novels, there are many possibilities of exploring the ways in which Carter began to develop her use of the enchanted space and the interactive environment; in what follows, I focus on death and the feminine, pornography and cinematic influences, the confinement of enforced performance and disparities of perception.

Love constitutes a static, geographically limited version of Desire Machines. Both the female protagonists, although different in many fundamental ways, perform circumscribed, stereotyped roles that result in their deaths, crucially through the vagaries of love and desire. The similarity of their fates, despite this trajectory from a close focus to a more panoramic view, recalls the mirrored relationship displayed by the similarly named Melanie and Marianne discussed in the previous chapter, and because of this evidence of complexity over serendipity, we can conclude Annabel and Albertina (both A's) have not been christened carelessly, but have names that, if looked at closely, will reveal information about the type of creatures they are.[8]

Beginning with Annabel, the most obvious resonance her name has in literature is through her union with her husband. His surname is unremarkable, but his first name, Lee, chosen by himself, provides a rich trail. Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Annabel Lee" is an apogee of his notorious, supreme poetical subject - the death of a beautiful woman mourned by a lugubrious lover.[9] As Annabel shapes herself to become this creature, killing herself largely out of spite, she emphasises the artificiality of fiction as, by behaving like a poetic subject, she snuffs herself out altogether.

Once this link with Poe is established, several of the tensions of Love can be seen in a new light. Although she had tried to commit suicide before she met him, it is not until Annabel meets and is conjoined with Lee that she is doomed, her character curtailed within the text, her identity indelibly stamped upon her. She is also burdened by the weight of Poe's other heroines and by the connotations of the other obsessions that characterise his writing. She bears more than a passing resemblance to the neurasthenic Madeline Usher, who dies in a white dress, and whose relationship with her identical brother is intimate to the point of incest.

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[8] This point is reminiscent of The Collector by John Fowles. After the death of his first victim/love object, the protagonist begins to stalk his second victim with the excuse "I have not made up my mind about Marian (Another M! I heard the supervisor call her name)" (1963; London: Cape, 1979) 283. Also, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, The Coherence of Gothic Conventions, (1980; New York: Methuen, 1986) "the initial letter A can, I think, be a cipher that signifies a blank origin where the name does not do so denotatively" (155).

[9] "Annabel Lee," 1849, Selected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe: Poems, Tales, Essays and Reviews, ed. and introd. David Galloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 88-9; "The Philosophy of Composition," 1846, Selected Writings (480-92).

These associations can be tied in more closely to Carter by reference to her short story "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe".[10] In this Poe-like tale with Poe himself as the main character, Carter highlights his authorial trademarks of neurasthenia, the double who leads the way to the subject's death, in particular to the possibility of live burial, the candles and the melodrama. By then relating it to a real-life individual, who was himself largely responsible for the form's development, she emphasises its contrived artificiality, the contortions and distortions it places upon the individual. This process reaches its zenith in the title of the tale. As I have already mentioned, Carter wrote of Love as Annabel's coffin. With "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe", Carter reaffirms her idea of text as coffin, and therefore as metonymic death.[11] The unreality of the hermetic ending is emphasised intertextually. When Carter's Poe decides that women are actresses of death, the reality of death for him is questionable. He is unable to view it as a simple ending, instead it pervades and invades his life. Early on in life he concluded of his actress mother that all "her burials were premature" (58) because he had seen her die so many times as Ophelia or Juliet. Thus his child-wife Virginia resembles a corpse, and early in their marriage begins "to rehearse the long part of dying" (60). Using Poe's life and work as her material, Carter draws attention to the interference of the text upon an attempted version of reality. She provokes in the reader an awareness of the materiality of the tale *as* a tale by associating it with the performance of other texts, and through the theatrical terms that describe Poe's most intimate experiences. His mother's rouged kiss leaves "the mark of Cain" on him; mirrors give back a truth more real than the object they reflect. In the end, he perceives himself to be only an illusion which, when the bright lights finally come on, is dissolved.

With the same regard for text over life, Annabel makes careful, elaborate plans for her final suicide attempt, and Carter makes sure that we recognise her, in her long, white, medieval dress, as Madeline/Ophelia (103). She dyes her hair and has her face professionally made-up so as to become pure performance as a preliminary step towards not existing. The success with which she has discarded her identity becomes apparent when Lee, arriving five minutes too late to save her (according to her truculent timetable), fails to recognise her. She

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[10] Published in Black Venus (1985; London: Picador, 1986).

[11] As already mentioned, this idea also occurs in the introduction of Desire Machines (as well as at the end) with the old Desiderio debating whether the text he is about to write in effect buries his younger self.

has amalgamated the roles of the pivotal women in his life - his mother, his aunt, herself and the psychiatrist - to become the eternal feminine (103-4). Elisabeth Bronfen argues that the feminine is itself equated with death within a patriarchal discourse (or discourse envisioned within a patriarchal society),[12] leaving no authorial space for the feminine. So, for women writers, the very action of writing itself becomes a form of re-reading, with the whole field of literature being re-examined as the inevitability of this situation is questioned. Yet, within the status quo, Bronfen considers that the death of the feminine might also be conceived of as authorship (401). The woman who scripts her own exit from the text that denied her movement can be viewed as behaving subversively, her exaggerated complicity with the event actually undermining it (404). Through this reading then, there is a possibility that Annabel has slipped out of the text that confined her. Rather than acting as her coffin, it is the arena from which she grandly exits, although this movement cannot be interpreted as anything more than a Pyrrhic victory.

That is one end towards which the feminine leads. Now, what occurs if we follow "Albertina" closely? Perhaps again the most illuminating course is to look again for a *co*-incidence of names in which case we uncover the fact that one of literary daughters of the Romantic writer and composer E. T. A. Hoffmann is called Albertine. This in its turn sets off another string of associations.

This other Albertine comes from a tale called "The Choosing of the Bride", a comical fantastical rewriting of the marriage dilemma set up for Portia in The Merchant of Venice. Unlike Shakespeare's version of the tale, however, when the two lovers seem about to be united with all their obstacles removed, the young man, Edmund, opts out of the union, leaving the bride-to-be looking foolish and casting about for another lover. In E. T. A. Hoffmann's story, Albertine works simply as a plot device. The developed characters are Edmund, his fairy godfather Leonhard, Albertine's father and the Counsellor. *They* all display hopes, fears and ambitions, whilst she on the other hand, has no choices: she is destined to marry and is not even allowed to decide whom she weds. Like the female protagonist in another of Hoffmann's stories, "The Sandman", she is a mere puppet, although the latter

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[12] Elisabeth Bronfen, Over her Dead Body: Death, femininity and the aesthetic (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992) 396.

figure, Olympia, *is* literally an automaton with whom the unfortunate hero of the story, Nathaniel, falls in love. Although she is preternaturally still and almost silent he manages to interpret her passivity as evidence of her love and admiration for him, and this departure from rationality (along with his other psychical problems) plunges him first into madness and then from a tower to his death. Carter's Albertina, like Olympia, functions as the bait of a trap set by a father figure according to a script conceived of by that figure, but unknown to the young man who is the prey. For Desiderio, this means that however random and far-flung his adventures appear, most of the time they are in fact occurring within the tightly controlled parameters calculated by the Doctor's sterile laboratories. The apparently randomised, liminal existence of the picaro is in actual fact drawing him towards a centralised goal.

I have already looked at the blending of roles between character, author and reader that Carter customarily engages in, and in Desire Machines we begin to see fully the effect that this practice has on the negotiations between self and situation. By pulling the authorial figure of Hoffmann into the text, as she has already done with Poe, and giving him an attempted authorial function within it,[13] perceptions both within and outside the novel become distorted, and the other characters' autonomy is threatened.

The threat itself is represented by the feminisation of the object or person at risk. So the desultory Desiderio originally describes the city where he lives and works as "thickly, obtusely masculine" (15), by which he means that it has a commercial, self-satisfied, static atmosphere. When, however, the Doctor's forces begin their attack, Desiderio begins to see the city in terms of a doomed feminine, possessed of "a desolate beauty, the beauty of the hopeless, a beauty which caught the heart and made the tears come" (21), (this description also contains echoes of Edgar Allan Poe's favourite subject). Desiderio's sexual ambiguity is further illustration of the novel's system of gender symbolism. The somnambulist Mary Anne (whom he is later accused of murdering) calls him "the desired one" (54), and then preys upon him in the night. His rape by the Acrobats takes place inside a "whorish" caravan covered in mirrors, with the Acrobats acting out a stereotypical extreme of rapacious masculine

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[13] Intriguingly, although Carter changes the spelling of the name from E. T. A. Hoffman*n* to Hoffman, not everyone does. Susan Rubin Suleiman does not make the distinction whilst at the same time pointing out that it was a Hoffman who invented LSD. See her essay, "The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle," in Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1994) 104.

dominance. Even more telling is Desiderio's association with Albertina, the product of his desire (who herself suffers frequent rapes in the course of the narrative). From his introduction to the narrative he stresses that her death and his are linked even though they take place fifty years apart for, as she is dead, he cannot properly be alive. Thus she lives on in his memories and dreams. They are also identified with each other physically. At the Doctor's castle, Desiderio sees himself in the mirror for the first time in a long while and sees someone else besides for that "is why I know I was beautiful when I was a young man. Because I know I looked like Albertina" (199).

What is the effect, or what are the consequences, of this feminising? Within the confines of Desire Machines there is a consistent drive towards circumscribing, inhibiting and confining the feminine. The women of the River-Indian tribe are forbidden any contact with outsiders to the extent that they are deliberately dressed and made up in such a way as to repel them. The brothel, known as the House of Anonymity, contains women who exist solely to be victims. More generally, all the characters in the novel seem to have no choice but to act according to gender stereotypes, with the Cannibal King ensuring that there is not a single intact clitoris, nor many full sets of teeth and nipples, amongst the women of his tribe. The centaurs' Puritan ethics cause them constantly to attempt to mortify their human aspects and, because of their mythology, the females are banned from the complexities of the religion while being compelled to suffer its harsher penalties in the extent and complexity of their tattooing.

Carter began her exploration of the art and sociology of tattoos in Heroes, with the representation of the Fall of Man on Jewel's back. From then on it reappears regularly in her work with its most rigorous fictional investigation occurring in Desire Machines.[14] For Donally, the shaman in Heroes, tattooing is the supreme post-apocalyptic art because "its materials are flesh and blood" (125). In other words, it replays the attack on the human species by its own kind. In both Love and Desire Machines, however, it represents an attempt to frame an instant or single aspect of a multi-faceted object or person, and attach it to them, compelling them to be defined by it. Annabel demands tangible proof of Lee's commitment to

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[14] Carter's first collection of journalism has a consideration of Japanese and Western methods of tattooing. She examines the art, speculating on how its elements of sheer ordeal, branding and human being as work of art combine. See "People as Pictures", Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, 1992) 33-8.

her in the form of her name in a heart etched over his real heart. In this way she hopes to prevent him from redefining himself. The centaurs in Desire Machines, by their sadomasochistic decorations, condemn themselves to perpetual re-enactment of their originary myth. They are de- and then re-forming themselves; marking out their abject human halves and creating simultaneous punishment and beauty. In an additional intertextual twist, which may allow a certain degree of extrication from the endless cycle, Carter describes one of the young centaur females as looking "as if she were peering through a vineyard" (181). Instead of a one-way dynamic, where the internal becomes external and fixed, ideas etched on the skin, there is movement in the other direction as well. The external is shadowed, a full view of it is endlessly deferred, while the centaur-girl seems to be receding to the point of disappearing from the text. This description harks back to an earlier scene, it is as though she is *merging* with the prelapsarian forest from which Desiderio and Albertina have just *emerged.* She is also linked, through the theme of her tattooing, to the earlier Heroes and to its enigmatic product, Jewel. Finally, through her concrete union of the recurring image that haunts Desire Machines, of a young girl and flying horses' hooves, this amalgamated creature epitomises the intangibility of representation, which is the disputed site throughout the novel.[15] All the time in the city the Minister is intent upon closing the gap between the signified and the signifier, while Doctor Hoffman is trying to split the two apart as widely as possible, or make them clash in fruitful permutation. Ultimately, though, his endeavours have an entirely opposite effect, for the quintessential movement of desire that fuels his war is that of copulation. There is no choice and no variation (other than a choice of partner). Suleiman has pointed out that in his privileging of machines over desires, Hoffman has managed to reverse the effect of the desiring machines posited by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in Anti-Oedipus; as Desiderio points out, only a few of the transformations are "lyrical" (20). Whilst Deleuze and Guattari looked to convert work into play, the grey humourless Doctor has managed to convert everything into work,[16] and the lack of choice, or even knowledge of choice that characterises the feminine in this book generates a vulnerability that cannot be

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[15] This always elusive image appears in various guises throughout the novel. See especially 107, 109-10, 179-80.

[16] Suleiman, "Surrealist Imagination" 112. She quotes the French edition of Anti-Oedipus, L'Anti-Oedipe (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972) 34.

over-emphasised. The inclusion in the analysis of another novel dealing with the fascination of death underscores this.

In Bram Stoker's sensationalist novel, Dracula,[17] to be ignorant is to be at risk of becoming one of the undead. At several points in the novel, danger could have been averted had certain characters been informed of the real significance of events. If they had known the true purpose of the garlic flowers that Lucy Westenra wore round her neck at night then she and her mother would not have removed the garland, leaving her unprotected against the vampire (133). Similarly, Mina Harker's acute observations are useless without the additional information that the Professor, her husband and friends withhold from her, and she too succumbs to Dracula's advances (287). The three women are denied access to the men's counsel on the grounds of weakness: it is Lucy's mysterious illness that sparks off the initial alarm (110-11); her mother is secretly, terminally, ill (109); and it is coyly hinted that Mina's recent marriage may have given her additional reason for frailty (285). However, the chief reason for their exclusion is their femininity (which itself seems to be a perennial mystery to the men). Even Mina, who both earns a living and is a valuable contributor to their counsels, is pushed out of the charmed circle made up of science, medicine, the law, the old establishment and the new (235). Instead she becomes a quasi-member who has to use guesses and hints to piece together a version of events. This world of shadows and half-truths is in many ways akin to that of the supposed enemy who cannot bear sunlight and who seems both dead and alive by turns. In other words, the women, who do not take a full part in the rational, intellectual aspects of life in this late Victorian sensationalist novel, are "naturally" associated with the partly legitimate, secretly subversive world of the vampire. This insight is reinforced by the section in the book where Mina has herself become a vampire and so must be even more rigorously excluded from the men's discussions and plans because of her telepathic link to Dracula (311). Within the scope of the text it is far more natural for her as a woman to fall into this parasitic polluted state than for a man. It is also a tempting state. As Rosemary Jackson has pointed out (and as explored in the last chapter), fantasy's ultimate desire is to transcend barriers.[18]

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[17] Introduction and notes by A. N. Wilson (1897; Oxford: OUP, 1983).

[18] Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion (1981; London: Routledge, 1988) 72-3.

Drawn inexorably to the shadows, Annabel, the gaunt death-obsessed girl who cannot die, attempts to stem the tide of her annihilation by a last seduction of Lee. In her description of this final encounter, before Annabel finally finds some kind of rest, Carter emphasises its supernatural aspect by including in her account a description of the Haitian "*diablesses*" (96), vampirish female demons who are the death of their lovers and associating Annabel with them: "a changeling Annabel attacked Lee with gross, morbid passion and such a barrage of teeth and nails he struck her on the side of the head to stop her inflicting any more damage" (97). The scene climaxes with Annabel crying out "in a lonely voice" because she now inhabits a different world, and then attacking Lee "so savagely he wondered if he would survive the night" (97). It is with this last seduction, which fails to re-establish her intimacy with Lee, that Annabel establishes her flickering territory of space. Now floating between the two brothers, not wholly attached to either of them, she is at last able to stage her own ceremonial death. By abandoning her tenuous ties with the rest of the world she is finally able to function using her own perceptions, fully accessing her perilous, liminal Gothic world. In her hands, (self)knowledge is death. Again the image of a diabolic and parodic Eden rises. The centrepiece of the fabulous garden that she draws on the walls of Lee's room is not the tree of life, as he thinks, but a type of "the Upas Tree of Java, the fabulous tree that casts a poisoned shadow" (32). Shadows are now her province.

This dangerous living-by-archetype, which attempts to transcend the personal, results in the characters being seduced into static archetypal scenarios - the environment occupying them, rather than the other way about. So when Lee goes for a walk in the park with the schoolgirl Joanne prior to sleeping with her, the personal level of their encounter is blotted out. In the moonlight she becomes something other than the gauche teenager she appears elsewhere: "She could have been an illusion, a trick of the moon and the perfumed air of midsummer's night, and, indeed, in this aspect of a flowering siren, she was the artificial creation of his habitually romantic imagination" (110). It is the ultimate abdication of responsibility.

This temporary regression, into something like Annabel's world, signposted by the overt refusal of the symbolic to stay symbolic, reveals Lee's own growing detachment from her as he wants, and is able, to climb out of it. After his tempestuous mutual rape with

Annabel, Lee strides off to the park where he is jumped on, albeit harmlessly, by a young boy "with wild eyes and floating hair" (100), who is clearly associated with the Gothic features of the park itself and with Lee's own past. Lee himself is reminded initially of one of the patients at the hospital from which he had collected Annabel after one of her abortive suicide attempts, and gives the boy his money and wedding ring (another symbolic act). When the boy bursts into tears their identification becomes closer: "Lee thought that he must somehow have hired the boy to act out his ugly grief for him, like a professional mourner" (101). In this strangely unconnected, liminal space, where Annabel felt she witnessed such impossible conjunctions as the sight of both the sun and the moon in the sky at once and giving equal amounts of light (2-3), Lee has encountered himself. He senses that he is both involved and detached from events and that a part of him inhabits "the centre of the labyrinth" (101) that has unwisely been created. It is also obvious that by his recognition that such a place exists he has found his way out of it. Knowledge, that led to Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, also provides the key to Lee's escape. Annabel and Buzz are, conversely, associated with darkness and the diabolical. Lee asks Annabel when she returns from her anti-climactic liaison with Buzz: "Did he ask you to lift up his tail and kiss his ass-hole?" (95). For them this is a natural realm, although whilst Annabel is annihilated, Buzz eventually prospers because he is not defined as being so completely part of the material of darkness itself, as demonstrated by their phobic intercourse. He is able to allot representation. By forcing Annabel to be *like* the dead, he shores up his own defences *against* death. His examination for the teeth his unconscious tells him might be lurking in her vagina is a sign that he has converted her into the space, the fringed hole that Carter discusses in The Sadeian Woman: "Woman is negative. Between her legs lies nothing but zero, the sign for nothing, that only becomes something when the male principle fills it with meaning" (4).

With her positive existence extinguished in the face of the "supreme" erect phallus, Annabel can only embody the most exaggerated version of her archetype and become dead; like all the women in these two novels, she is simultaneously preyed upon and despised. This is especially true with Desire Machines where, attempting to define desire, Ricarda Schmidt's

phrase that is: "*It* is given the name Albertina".[19] Albertina is a prototype of the mechanical soubrette maid in Carter's later collection, The Bloody Chamber, who doubles as a replacement for the real daughter. This retelling of the Beauty and the Beast tale, "The Tiger's Bride", shows how there can be no progression and no real intimacy in their relationship if what the father demands from his daughter is a series of restricted, scripted performances that have no connection with the individual's thoughts and emotions.[20] The young woman is not in fact considered to be an individual at all but is seen only in terms of being an interchangeable representative of Womankind.

As he observes and interacts with women, Desiderio's own perceptions are problematic for them, although as Suleiman shows, he is sensitive enough in his own outcast situation to sympathise with the outrages they are subjected to within the novel ("Surrealist Imagination" 114). When he is being cared for by the River-People after being shot whilst escaping from a corrupt police force, he watches his nurse, Mama, with an outsider's eyes and notices that:

> she used a limited repertoire of stiff, exact gestures, as if these gestures were the only possible accompaniments to her action....Later, I found that all the women moved in this same, stereotyped way, like benign automata, so what with that and their musical box speech, it was quite possible to feel that they were not fully human (73).

Needless to add, the men's appearance is nothing like so stylised. Unlike their womenfolk they move between worlds.[21] Men are the conduits, women the source of desire in this book.

In Desire Machines Carter shows how the unleashing of this desire - a part of us that is unfettered by the reality principle - causes all manner of problems and consequences. For Schmidt, the result is actively unpleasant, and the effect on the people of the Doctor's emancipation is one of "anxiety and melancholy" (Schmidt 60). Whilst David Punter regrets

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[19] Ricarda Schmidt, "The Journey of the Subject in Angela Carter's Fiction," Textual Practice 3 (1989): 57, my italics.

[20] The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories See 51-67.

[21] Akin to the Victorian behaviour described as the "type of vice" and "type of virtue" by Angela Leighton, where "virtuous" women are kept separate from prostitutes because of an idea that the one may be infected by the other. Men, however, are able to move from one to the other without fear of contamination. See " 'Because men made the laws': the fallen woman and the woman poet," New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992). See also Introduction.

Desiderio's choice of the Minster's mundane reality (211), Suleiman sees the Doctor's world as being "extremely drab" ("Surrealist Imagination" 108). She finds the essential contradiction, that Hoffman's enfranchisement depends upon a (love) slave economy, to be too nightmarish and hypocritical to be allowed to perpetuate. Furthermore, when desire is unleashed it proves to be overtly misogynist, to say the least. Religious contempt for women tinges every aspect of the centaurs' existence; the scientism of the Doctor's establishment excludes them from all levels of participation except that of being penetrated. On the other hand, it must be added that the Minister's world is similarly, if less spectacularly, chauvinist. Again women are conspicuous by their absence except bounded within stereotyped roles as nuns, prostitutes, nurses, fey young virgin, or as the desires themselves. Suleiman feels that the novel is clearly stating the need for women to be re-envisaged, and I would build on this by pointing out that Desiderio's choice between the two worlds is described in terms associated with the same stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics he used to describe the city at the start of the book. "I, of all men, had been given the casting vote between a barren yet harmonious calm and a fertile yet cacophonous tempest" (207). This indicates that no progress has been made, and condemns him to existing in a timeless vacuum.

We saw in Chapter One that fairy tales often reflect the society that creates them, and this seems to work within the fictional "reality" set up in Desire Machines where, quite early on in the book, Carter examines the necrophilia of the Sleeping Beauty tale at the same time as she finds a way of portraying the feminine within a two-dimensional framework. When he first emerges from the city on his secret mission Desiderio stays in the house of the man whose disappearance and possible death he is investigating as his cover (and of which he is later accused himself). Like Annabel, the man's daughter, Mary Anne, is a death-obsessed, sleepwalking "drowning Ophelia" (53), who comes to him in the night, asleep, wearing a long white dress. At the peep-show the next day, he examines a series of Hoffman slides telling the story of the Sleeping Beauty, with a Beauty who bears more than a passing resemblance to Mary Anne, being "as white as my last night's anaemic lover, and, like her...in black" (59). This version of the story goes further than most Sleeping Beauties, which end either with the marriage of princes and princesses or with the death of the wicked stepmother. In the final slide, entitled "DEATH AND THE MAIDEN", the girl is entwined around a skeleton whom

she is obviously going to take as a lover; the next time Desiderio sees Mary Anne, she has resolutely drowned herself, as indeed he had subtly predicted by casting her as Ophelia. There is no gap between his evaluation of her, the slide narrative and her actual fate. The representation painted on glass, and viewed by the voyeur, *is* her reality. Her very existence is posed as an illusion to be viewed by a male onlooker in punctuation of his own narrative. Within Desire Machines' epistemology, these "vistas" (45) behave as unreality squared, and in turn comment upon the unreality of the onlooker's own position (and therefore, by implication, the reader's).

Death and the feminine mingle and infuse both texts with uncanny resonances. It is often difficult to tell if the women are animate or if they have been entirely reduced to their fleshly component: meat. This is certainly true of Annabel and Mary Anne, who enact death even when alive; the continuation of Albertina's relationship with Desiderio after he has killed her, conducted through his dreams, blurs the distinction still further. I want to go back now to see how this tension may be related to the structurally unreal world of the cinema which also generally assumes a male onlooker, and requires a circumscribed performance from the female. Yet this in many ways treacherous medium, if its materiality is examined and included in the account, may be able to contribute to the obvious need expressed by Love and Desire Machines to develop new ways of envisaging women and the feminine. With this project in mind, I want to look firstly at the way cinematography is specifically used in Desire Machines to complicate reality.

The peep-show proprietor had once been Hoffman's and his visionary friend Mendoza's professor, and is able to give Desiderio mini-lectures on the germ of their grandiloquent work. He explains how, in their terms, the "motion picture...offers us nothing less than the present tense experience of time irrefutably past" (102). Whilst in one sense time has been bypassed, as the figures participate in the same actions over and over again, in another sense, because the film itself exists in time, becoming worn and scratched, there is an ageing process. For Mendoza, this meant ultimately that "if a thing were sufficiently artificial, it became absolutely equivalent to the genuine" (102). Using these tenets and through investigation of the time-transcending qualities of the orgasm, the two men began the work

that would climax with Hoffman's assault on the city, evolving a supremely avant-garde type of cinema that through its very innovation, utterly excluded women from its production.

Laura Mulvey, in her book of essays on the cinema, Visual and Other Pleasures, tries both to express the difficulty of the articulation of women's narratives and to begin formulating her way out of the conundrum. She asserts that certain standard cinematic practices are derived from the traditional stories that women customarily told, in terms both of form and of content (30-2). There is, consequently, a largely unacknowledged transvestism underlying the predominantly masculine cinematic process. Overwhelmingly though, as we saw in Chapter One, popular cinema assumes a masculine (or male-identified) spectator whose feelings of omnipotence are the result of an identification with a male protagonist or hero in a process akin to the Lacanian mirror stage that idealises another version of the self. Mulvey shows how a similar process of identification is made difficult for feminine members of the audience, since the male lead commands "the stage, a stage of spatial illusion in which he articulates the look and creates the action" (20). Mulvey wrote this particular essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in the mid-seventies, yet it continues to be a valid analysis, for cinematic codes unless they are being transgressive for dramatic effect, continue to operate in this direction with women denied control of the space around them. Among Mulvey's remedial suggestions to disrupt this mechanism is the placing of emphasis on the materiality of production, as such a use of the camera could produce in the spectator a conscious awareness of the operations of the medium. Similarly, the violation of cinematic codes of time and space will also disrupt the pleasure resulting from identification. In short, every means available should be used to distance the spectator from straightforward identification with a conventional male hero by the privileging of form over narrative content (Mulvey 123).

Once we have viewed Desire Machines from Mulvey's position it is easy to see that although Hoffman and Mendoza have envisaged a highly innovative cinema, a virtual reality that impinges itself inexorably upon what already exists, they have also managed to circumvent any emancipation that might result. Crucially, they have achieved this by pulling together the roles of male spectator and hero until the two are identical. Thus by interacting directly with his own and others' fantasies the male spectator becomes the hero of his own amorphous adventure where the means of production are unheeded. At the same time,

although the Doctor manages to sabotage its appearance, the city's power structures become if anything more patrician. There has not been a re-visioning of time, only a plundering of what is already stored in history's memory. There is also a curious gap in Desiderio's account of the besieged city's travails which does not mention female emanations of desire except for that of their dead children. Any other dreams they might have are ignored. Within the framework of human relations in Desire Machines they are apparently not supposed capable of desires or dreams that are of sufficient impact to be included. In the one instance where a female fantasy not in that category is described - when Albertina has been raped by the centaurs in "nebulous time" - her belief that she unconsciously willed the attack is countermanded by Desiderio's own determination to be responsible for it. Albertina is cut off even from perversion.

There has always been a tendency for psycho-analysis to assume that because women so rarely seem to exhibit symptoms of perversions such as sadism, fetishism, necrophilia and so on (they are comparatively well-represented among masochists at around one in twenty), that they are not in fact subject to such compulsions. Louise J. Kaplan in her book, Female Perversions, disputes the truth of this view, asserting rather that perversions "are as much pathologies of gender role identity as they are pathologies of sexuality" (14). Rather, other methodologies have not paid attention to cases which "serve as screens or disguises for a woman's forbidden and frightening masculine wishes" (18). Instead, Kaplan sites the script of women's perversions round "cleanliness, innocence, spirituality, submission" (16), which all move towards the effacement of one's sexuality and self. If woman is characterised by *appearing* absent, then even a conspicuous absence (a hole) can be significant. This does not at first appear a positive route to trace in search for evidence of subject development, but in the next section I shall be unravelling some of the principle intricacies of the pornography debate and in so doing will begin to include and involve women.

Let us return briefly though to the screen-room in Love that gradually fogs over, becomes clouded. As Annabel fills it with fetishistic artefacts which both display and hide her own perversity, it metamorphoses from the "fresh sheet of paper" (28) that demonstrates an almost photographic sensitivity to its surroundings, to being "choked with things, painted out in such thick, dark colours and filled with such rich, sombre gloom one took a deep breath before stepping over the threshold, knowing one was about to plunge into another, heavier

kind of air", a "witch's house"(27, 7). Illusions have become incarnate until they take up enough space to crowd out the original occupants. So, from existing in an ever-present potentiality the room has mutated into a time-hoard. Weighed down by the objects Annabel uses to shore up her own identity, time begins to act anomalously, so that although it is early June outside, the room itself is autumnal (82-3). Time is not so much transcended as that the room's occupants become oblivious to it.

This does not, at least at first glance, cause any empowerment for the doomed Annabel yet she continually disturbs the unity of the text, interrupting its play of surfaces through her relationship with Lee. Because her own obsession and involvement are so intensely focused on the surface, Lee is forced to interact with her on this restricted plane. Her actions are always surprisingly grotesque and work to "disjoint" the narrative. She is an animated text or moving picture that he has to learn to construe and interpret, and unfortunately he is not proficient enough at this task to forestall her self-destructive agenda. He is compelled to try to understand her in terms of a different genre from that which she inhabits so that in the midst of his disorientation after one of her suicide attempts, Lee finds himself musing that everything "is subtly out of alignment. Shadows fall awry and light no longer issues from expected sources" (55).

The alienating series of actions and events that constitutes Annabel's world of palpable thoughts and dreams is made more complicated in terms of the reality it encompasses by the "Afterword", where Carter states firmly "I can't resurrect Annabel, of course" (113). Nevertheless, by reopening the novel that ends with her death, and then announcing this supposedly impossible task, the idea of a re-run of Annabel's life complete with a new ending *is* raised. Love itself appears to aspire to the state described by Mendoza's theory of cinema, to be a text altered by time. As well as the "Afterword", there are other, more subtle differences between the two versions which swing the balance of the relationship.[22] Alterations in the main text, marking its passage through time, award it additional authenticity whilst Carter's own addendum of comments upon the novel and its characters give an explicit foregrounding to the artifice of the whole procedure, which is in sympathy with some of

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[22] "The effect of these changes is to diminish the amount of subjective sympathy Lee is allowed, and so reinforce what was anyway the original implication: that the hero has no power to redeem." Lorna Sage, Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992) 173.

Mulvey's suggested techniques of disruption. In the juxtaposition of the main body of the text and its afterthought "Afterword", we begin to see how the rehabilitation of women within the film theory paradigm might be conducted: by providing the spectator with another perspective, another time, from which to view the proceedings in terms which allow women to occupy and move through space freely and as subjects rather than as freakish captive objects. Another method, used this time in Desire Machines, is to introduce the mechanism of looking explicitly into the narrative with, say, Desiderio's examinations of Hoffman's samples. In this way, the reader-spectator's identification with the protagonist is fragmented because of the latter's method of projecting what he sees. He describes the slides in such an attenuated way that the reader is continually forced to double back and re-form his or her mental picture. So instead of unity, there is a widening divide.

New ways of seeing will have to be formulated, and while the contents of the samples are disappointing from an emancipatory point of view, as they deal with reactionary instead of radical images, there is still a suggestion of a different set of values. Freud's essay on "The 'Uncanny' " contains a description of the (male) subject's position in relation to the uncanny object or event that so coincides with Doctor Hoffman's "samples" as to provoke the thought that Carter had it in mind when she wrote Desire Machines. Referring to Hoffmann's "The Sandman", which he used to illustrate his line of thought on the subject, Freud wrote that "we perceive that [the author] intends to make us, too, look through the demon optician's spectacles or spy-glass - perhaps, indeed, that the author in his very own person once peered through such an instrument" (Freud, "Uncanny" 230). With the emphasis beginning to shift from product to process, the subject will begin to be evaluated differently. Lee's failure to recognise Annabel in her funereal finery (product) is tempered by Carter's detailed description of the steps she took to achieve that state (process). While for Lee she has become an unearthly amalgam of everything he has experienced, feared and hoped for in a woman, the reader has witnessed her raid of her cash-box and her visits to various shops and is party to her desire to dissociate herself from her self. Mythology consequently gives way to social realism. In contrast, Lee's own self-awareness contributes to the building up of a different set of connections with his analysis of his situation as a game, a labyrinth, a "B" movie, going some way towards extricating him from it. Unlike Annabel, he survives into the "Afterword"

where, with three daughters of his own, "he can hardly bear to think [they] might meet young men like him" (119). Similarly, Desiderio's refusal to be unthinkingly masculine and his disinterest in the majority of the action of the novel, uncovers ripples of insecurity in the extreme positions of both the masculine and feminine camps.

In both Love and Desire Machines, Carter is intent on looking through the glass from both sides. The absurdities to be found in cultures (including our own) which deny women full humanity are pursued and highlighted particularly through the examination of the tyrannically unbalanced behaviour of men which results. At the same time, we are made aware of the women's own collusion in their fate, and their determination to remain within the cramped roles allotted them. In answer to this imperfect situation, everyone needs to look for new ways of understanding, as Love's "Afterword" shows. The shadowy world where the partially animate, partially material (exemplified by the subjects of Annabel's painting) reside needs to be re-examined with a view to enfranchisement and diversity. Love and Desire Machines depict women with very low levels of autonomy, a characteristic that is largely the result of the sheer weight of their male-created literary forebears in, for example, The Time Machine or Dracula. Significantly, in many ways the chief function of both these books (and this generalisation works to a greater or lesser degree for all Carter's work) is to work as an interwoven series of literary references within a fictional frame. Earlier, I mentioned Elisabeth Bronfen's assertion that when women write they are also undertaking to read, that is, to position themselves within a field that has traditionally only had a marginal place for them. So Carter with, say, Desire Machines, is actually performing the very act she has the River-People prepared to inflict on Desiderio. She incorporates the elements of others' work and makes them her own, in line with Bronfen's exhortations to women to "change representation into a performance which exceeds the text it represents" (433). The feminised characters, through overplaying their prescribed restricted behaviour, disrupt the narratives and so evacuate the texts. This in turn leaves the remaining masculine characters to come to terms with the shape of the gap that is left. By allowing both of her female protagonists to die, Carter strongly emphasises the claustrophobic nature of the two worlds where death is seen as the natural state for women. This obscene viewpoint has been dealt with, until now, in theoretical terms that have denied, or rather looked beyond, the strong elements and links to

pornography that these novels contain. The next section of this chapter, however, will investigate the debate that they enter into, and seek to establish the implications it has for the maintenance of subjecthood in a hostile environment.

The Battle Zone

Over the course of her career, Carter wrote several times about the effect the Women's Movement had upon her and her work in the late sixties and early seventies when she felt a space had been opened up for new modes of discourse that investigated and re-viewed men's and women's relative positions.[23] As works written during this period of flux (part of which time she was living an awe-inspiringly alien existence in Japan), Love and Desire Machines look to take part in this examination, in accordance with Carter's adage that "a narrative is an argument in fictional terms".[24] Pornography's place in this equation needs to be investigated not only because of the overt references made to it throughout both texts, which include in Desire Machines the specific link to the picaresque of the Marquis de Sade, but also because of its divisive properties, for it has had a profound and often damaging effect on the relationships between feminists.

In 1985, Carter told Kerryn Goldsworthy that in her view, art for art's sake was an empty, frivolous point of view.[25] Pornography has a notoriously practical purpose: it must provoke sexual arousal in a spectator/reader through the manipulation of gender stereotypes and power relations. This project must have interested Carter, for throughout her work, but particularly in these two novels and in her polemical study The Sadeian Woman, she explored this world and investigated the possibilities of delineating new gender relations through the site "where we believed we possessed most freedom" but which is "the most ritually circumscribed" of all.[26] This site, where individual and archetype meet and clash is, unsurprisingly, a point of controversy not only between men and women, but also between different feminist factions and in this section I wish to concentrate on the latter dispute.

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[23] "Truly, It Felt Like Year One," Very Heaven: Looking Back at the 1960s, ed. Sara Maitland (London: Virago, 1988); "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983); Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, 1992) 28.

[24] Come Unto These Yellow Sands (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1985) 7.

[25] "I don't see art as distinct from work....Show me somebody who writes for art's sake and I'll show you a bad writer," "Angela Carter," meanjin 44.1 (1985): 8-9. See also Chapter 1.

[26] Angela Carter, The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (1979; London: Virago, 1987) 21. This was Virago's first non-fiction publication and there is evidence that she began writing it in 1973, soon after completing Desire Machines. See Carmen Callil, "Flying Jewellery," Sunday Times 23 Feb. 1992, sect. 6: 7; and The Path of a Writer.

For Catherine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin, a woman is literally confronted by a rape when she sees it in a pornographic setting (book, film or photograph). They portray pornography as active.[27] As Susan Sontag has pointed out in "The Pornographic Imagination", it is seen as a "for or against" issue that is denied artistic analysis (36-8). When exploring its banishment from the canon, she links it to science fiction,[28] seeing the two as alike in their being perceived as products of "deformed imagination" (38). She also points to the "ahistorical dreamlike landscape where action is situated, the peculiarly congealed time in which acts are performed - these occur almost as often in science fiction as they do in pornography" (46). For Carter, this "mythic dream-time of religious ritual" promotes the assumption of false universals and stabilises the reactionary viewpoint from which pornography customarily emanates (Sadeian Woman 9). This in turn allows the pornographer to screen out the economic and historic elements upon which the genre depends. To counteract this tendency, to allow pornography to be invaded by "an ideology not inimical to women" (37), Carter posits a new type of pornographer, the "moral pornographer" or "pornographer as terrorist" (19, 22). This innovative creature would destabilise the cosy Kater Murr philosophy of travestied stereotype,[29] using instead the explicit material at "his" disposal as a "demystification" device (Sadeian Woman 19), to ascertain how the sexes really interact and to explore how male and female consciousnesses may be emancipated from these tropes.

This viewpoint has inevitably thrust Carter uncomfortably in the line of fire between Sade's new "Justines" and "Juliettes", the pro- and anti-censorship campaign factions, and resulted in attacks from the latter.[30] Robin Ann Sheets has asserted that The Sadeian Woman, which was published a year earlier in the United States than in Britain, marked "the beginning edge of a controversy that would be at the center of feminist discourse for more than a decade" (635). According to Dworkin, with this "pseudofeminist" work, Carter joined "the boys" (Pornography 85), conspiring with them to redefine Sade and his existence until "Sade the Victim is writ large" and "Sade's victims are written out" (83). Meanwhile, Susanne Kappeler

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[27] Andrea Dworkin, Pornography: Men Possessing Women (London: The Women's Press, 1981) 24.

[28] Another genre in which Carter was interested. See Chapter 4.

[29] Robertson Davies, The Lyre of Orpheus: A Novel (1988; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989). Kater Murr is a feline philosopher created by E. T. A. Hoffmann who speaks the opposite of what Hoffmann the Romantic himself believed in.

[30] Robin Ann Sheets, "Pornography, Fairy Tales and Feminism: Angela Carter's 'The Bloody Chamber'," Journal of the History of Sexuality 1.4 (1991): 637.

accused Carter of being amongst those "Playing in the Literary Sanctuary", and of removing herself from reality to write esoterically about it.[31] Carter's annexation of the Marquis de Sade, indeed, is a leap from the safe path into a terrain full of traps and pitfalls. Past attempts have included Simone de Beauvoir's essay "Must We Burn Sade?", first published in the early 1950s, which presents what is in many ways a lenient and admiring picture of his life and work before stressing that we should be very wary about sympathising too easily with him (61). However, as this warning itself appears after around sixty sympathetic pages, this conclusion is in danger of looking like lip-service paid to a prevailing anti-Sade viewpoint that subtracts from the impact of the rest of her essay by clouding her own position.

Carter, like Sontag and de Beauvoir, is trying to find a way of existing in the non-existent (impossible?) space between the binary opposites, the Justines and the Juliettes. According to Patricia Duncker, for whom the concept of a moral pornographer is "utter nonsense",[32] she has taken the wrong decision by marking out too modest a territory. "Carter chooses to inhabit a tiny room of her own in the house of fiction. For women, that space has always been cripplingly small" (12). Due to its complexity, this debate on the functionality of porn, and Carter's course within it, is best examined using the structural framework of another genre. The picaresque, which links Desire Machines to Sade's Juliette and Justine novels, depicts a particular sort of relationship between the subject and the environment, lending the debate an additional perspective.

In 1974, Ulrich Wicks attempted a satisfactory definition of the characteristics of a picaresque narrative which isolated the elements that go to make it up, and ultimately aimed to reaffirm a generic awareness of the picaresque range.[33] In keeping with his concern with circumscribing an elusive mode through definition is the language that he uses to describe it. Making it sound very similar to the Gothic, he decides that the picaresque "focuses on details, on surfaces, on fragments and on discontinuous and fleeting experiences and reactions" (246). Its central, often narrating, character, the picaro, typically occupies a dual or split position between two roles and is customarily "as illusory and as illusive as the very illusory world he confronts" (247). There is constant turmoil between the picaro's desire for freedom, which

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[31] The Pornography of Representation (Oxford: Polity, 1986) 133.
[32] "Re-imagining the fairy tales: Angela Carter's Bloody Chamber," Literature and History 10.1 (1984): 8.
[33] "The Nature of Picaresque Narrative: A Modal Approach" PMLA 89 (1974): 240-9.

manifests as disorder, and "the yearning for order and God" (242). Finally, the picaresque is situated in a landscape potentially as (and here I am incorporating Sontag's phrase again) "ahistorical and dreamlike" as is that of pornography.

For de Beauvoir, a point of considerable interest is that Sade wrote whilst he was in prison. She believes that it "was by means of his imagination that he escaped from space, time, prison, the police" and so "the places he evokes are not of this world, the events that occur in them are *tableaux vivants* rather than adventures, and time has no hold on Sade's universe" (33, 37). This theory, that the extent to which the author's body is constricted during the time of writing will have an effect on the spatial construction of their work, was applied by Carter to herself in her "Afterword" to the first edition of Fireworks (a collection which was also written in Japan): "I started to write short pieces when I was living in a room too small to write a novel in. So the size of the room modified what I did inside it" (121). Granted that she wrote Desire Machines at around the same time and almost preternaturally quickly, we may be justified in finding the sense of space in both authors' texts to be inherently imaginary.[34] Thus, when Desiderio boards a ship with the Sadeian "Count" and his valet Lafleur to escape the police, he speculates on where the Count will take them: "I had not the least idea what time or place the Count might take me to though, since his modes of travel were horseback, gig and tall-masted schooner, I guessed, wherever it was, it would be somewhere in the early nineteenth century" (143). The fundamental assumptions upon which our lives are based simply do not apply, a conclusion which is further strengthened by examination of Sade's own locus of dislocated reality. The libertine's orgasm is an elusive entity that must be pursued and coaxed by means of increasingly complex rituals which in turn have to be choreographed beforehand in detail. Because of all the preparation involved, the emphasis is inclined to shift from the actual participation in the orgy to the narrative that comes before it, creating in this double experience an echoing *déjà vu* effect. For Julie Crofts this is the exemplum of pornography, as in order to read it we have to stave off real sexual activity.[35]

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[34] Susan Rubin Suleiman reports that the novel only took Carter three months to complete. See "Surrealist Imagination" 100. See also Chapter 1.

[35] Julie Crofts, "The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman: Representation and the Pornographic Text," Paper, Fireworks: Angela Carter and the Futures of Writing, Conference, University of York, 1 Oct. 1994. This (in)action is necessary also in Adam Phillips' model of desire. See above note 4, 82.

Carter's picaro, Desiderio, and Sade's picaras, Justine and Juliette (two more paired names), travel inadvertently through hostile country, encountering set piece scenarios and having their identities interpreted from the outside. For contingency's sake, or for survival, they acquiesce in this to a greater or lesser extent, while suffering its penalty of erosion of self-identity. In the definition of the mode, Wicks quotes Stuart Miller, saying that the picaro is "every man he has to be, and therefore no man".[36] The individual's own personality and the type s/he represents become confused, thereby precluding progress as their travels, although apparently extended geographically, do not get them anywhere. From the beginning of his narrative, Desiderio makes it clear that he has since spent a long, disillusioned existence in the city he had exited with such alacrity in his youth. In what looks at first glance to be contrasting behaviour, the initial typecasting of both Justine and Juliette sets the pattern for what is to recur repeatedly - Justine is to be criminalised and impoverished, while Juliette is rich and admired - yet the two women do not, as would truly picaresque characters, alter their sense of themselves. Justine is always the negatively virtuous Daddy's girl and Juliette remains a gleefully avaricious entrepreneur. Only Desiderio exhibits thoroughly protean behaviour as he assimilates the morals of successive societies, the River People, the Circus folk and the Centaurs. Yet all the while, he is acting with the same object in mind as Justine: each is looking for a master.[37]

Juliette, on the other hand, has no such need or lack. The "free woman in an unfree society", who is consequently "a monster" (Sadeian Woman 27), she is also "the personification of the whore as story-teller" (81). She ensures that she will never be written out of the narrative because the gap within it is a pornographic one. The listeners need their Scheherezade to navigate them through the "inverted fairy tale" (82).

The sense of space and place that is generated by these narratives with picaresque tendencies seems at the moment to be conspiring against Carter's project of heightening historical awareness of the flesh. Yet if we pursue further the theatricality of pornography and

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[36] See Wicks 247. It originally appears in Stuart Miller, The Picaresque Novel (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve UP, 1967) 71.

[37] "But I only wanted to find a master, the Minister, the Count, the bay, so that I could lean on him at first and then, after a while, jeer" (Desire Machines 190). "[Justine] is at the mercy of any master, because that is the nature of her own definition of goodness" (Sadeian Woman 55).

the spirit with which it utilises scripts and props, perhaps some mediation of the difficulty may be achieved.

For some feminists, the accoutrements of a pornographic view of sex "fantasy...scripts, costumes, and props" point the way towards a wider view of and greater possibilities within the field of sexuality (Sheets 636-7). Yet while this may be so in some cases, for those documented by Kaplan, the opposite is true. As well as arguing that perversions generally are "as much pathologies of gender role identity as they are pathologies of sexuality" (14, see above 123), she sites them within "normal stereotypes" and "infantile ideas" of sexuality (14, 16). Whilst admitting that to some extent everyone is perverted (280), she nevertheless asserts that beyond a certain point the scripts are enacted because, crucially, the subject has no choice.[38] She asserts that female perversions are materially less obvious than the male (sadism, transvestism etc. are all almost exclusively male preserves as they are currently defined) working as they do as "screening" devices to protect the woman from confronting her own "masculine wishes" (18). This in turn risks confining the woman's life, which may become shallow and rigid as she denies her knowledge of herself. In Kaplan's illustrative case-study, the insecurities and perversions displayed by "Janet" a successful career and family woman, become apparent in her sex-life, where there is no time in her "erotic script for suspenseful absences, the scattered, the undetermined, the enigmatic" (280).

If we then insert Kaplan's theory into the feminists' pornography dilemma, the possibility of a mediating position begins to emerge. Kaplan's schema of sexual relations is congruent with the self-conscious "de-universalising", historically finite movement that Carter complains we are being lured away from by the mythologising (universalising, seamless) process that characterises Western attitudes to sexuality (Sadeian Woman 9). It also offers an alternative examination of the argument for a playful performance advanced by the new Juliettes, as it looks instead for gaps and spaces to emerge. While Kaplan seeks a sexuality that is highly idiosyncratic and involves areas that may not necessarily be understood, Carter is pushing against the "all or nothing" binary opposition which insists on either alienation or engulfment while attempting to accommodate the contradictions and divided loyalties that result. As I have already stated, Sontag remarks that the artist should venture towards such

[38] "All perversions are preoccupations that have an addictive, compulsive quality" (Kaplan 440).

extremes of human experience that s/he becomes "a broker in madness" (45). Mandy Merck, in her own study of Perversions, states categorically that the: "Sex Wars have taught us the error of attempting to fuse our political and sexual imaginaries, but they have also demonstrated the futility of trying to keep them apart" (266). All four writers are advocating a method of experiencing the space of desire without occupying it in a territorial sense through the development of a curiosity (a desire) that is boundless but has no wish to colonise or engulf.

How does this then affect our readings of Carter's novels? Desire Machines, full of Sadeian characters and stolen Sadeian fantasies, has a truly picaresque protagonist; constantly shifting personalities and roles, he behaves unpredictably and his mental processes are complex. Because of this, the pornographic mechanism is frustrated as, instead of containing a hole the size of the reader's penis which would identify it with an unselfconscious masculinist point of view (Sadeian Woman 81), the text interrogates the reader's sexuality through the medium of Desiderio. He experiences sexuality both actively and passively (that is, in both a stereotypical masculine and feminine manner). He "takes" Mary Anne but is himself raped by the Acrobats of Desire. His position as the eternal outsider has already been assured by his half-caste ancestry and by his uncanny resemblance to Albertina. Consequently, he is sensitised to both the male and female situations while seeming at times to occupy neither niche. He cannot be pinned down and categorised and so has an unsettling effect on the other characters and therefore on the narrative as a whole. However, it is the things that *fail* to happen to him that are the most disruptive. He chooses not to avail himself of the "part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute" women of the House of Anonymity; the sailors are prevented from raping him; and ultimately and most importantly he never consummates his relationship with Albertina. This suspended sexuality provokes the reader to a level of consciousness ignored in regular pornography - as s/he is called upon to question her/his reactions to what is or is not happening and to confront her or his own imagination or desire. With this shifting focus, Carter relocates the text from the realm of representation towards reality. In analogy with Freud's terms when he investigated the uncanny, this

narrative can no longer function as a fairy tale as it no longer occupies an *other* world.[39] Instead, largely because of the protagonist rather than his environment, the correlation between this experience and our own is too close for comfort. Not only is he ambiguous in gender and sexuality, but also generically: Desiderio's is a realist consciousness trapped inside an artificial world produced by a "War of Dreams".[40] He is a misfit in every way possible. He is not involved in the world around him, remaining always bored and detached, and able as a result to see it all the more clearly. His desire, made incarnate by the metamorphosing Albertina, leads him through a dangerous, threatening, surreal landscape where all through his adventures he continues to adjust in accordance with the demands desire makes upon him until finally it threatens to betray and engulf him, whereupon he transmutes it. By killing Albertina, Desiderio prevents this journey from ending. If instead he had surrendered to her and to her father's wishes and climbed into the wired marriage bed, the curiosity (and desire) would have been lost.

Love, in contrast, has fallen from the main focus of the debate. This is rather because Desire Machines contains so many more stylistic and thematic borrowings from pornography at a fundamental level than Love, which does, however, contain its own species of obscenity. The "charmed circle" of Lee, Annabel and Buzz is hermetically sealed against the world and within it their violent desires and hatreds clash, causing death and destruction. Pornography plays a significant role in this, in particular between Annabel and Buzz. She aspires to and copies the "bland, white, motionless" deadpan look of the woman in the hard-core photographs he gives her (4). He, in the meantime, is busy turning real life into pornography (his late blooming during the punk era being Carter's comment on that movement). At times, he seems on the verge of acquiring something of the perspective of Carter's "moral pornographer", as when he photographs Annabel during her suicide attempt and then tries to get Lee to co-operate by putting his foot on her neck after her death. The resulting picture would have been a stark, personalised representation of their combined relationship. Yet there are problems. First, Buzz is so preoccupied with taking the pictures that he has no time to try to resuscitate Annabel. The detachment necessary for the moral pornographer to produce his

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[39] "In fairy tales, for instance, the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted" "The 'Uncanny' " (250).

[40] The War of Dreams is the US title for the novel.

working art may be too costly in human terms, both to himself and to his models. Secondly, in his own dismal sex scene with Annabel he emphatically, and terminally, reduces her to the pared-down universalised female sign of the fringed hole. The moral pornographer has collapsed into his negative opposite because their juxtaposition is too precarious. Unable to maintain the ideological space between them, and with no interpretative gap in which to express her anguish, Annabel as a self is extinguished. For the time being, the moral pornographer remains an abstract, lurking in the limbo between representation and reality.

In 1988, Carter told Lorna Sage that while she was teaching in New York State University she was boycotted by the women's studies department.[41] Her own brand of feminism, which investigated as many possibilities for re-thinking and new actions as she could invent using her own reading and imagination, disturbed the advocates for dichotomy who take refuge in an "essential" view of the nature of male and female. For Carter, our flesh "comes to us out of history" (Sadeian Woman 11). Her opinions have sometimes led to her being isolated and identified with the exploiting enemy. The payoffs and consequences of this multivalent point of view are examined in the concluding pages of this chapter.

[41] Quoted by Paul Barker, "The Return of the Magic Story-Teller," Independent on Sunday 8 Jan. 1995 suppt.: 16. See also the Introduction.

Alienated is the only way to be, after all [42]

In this chapter I have tried to show Carter "looking at things very very carefully", as she seeks new ways of approaching and relating to the structures and experiences of relations between the sexes.[43] Through this process, she has made us aware of unlooked-for possibilities, of doors that were hitherto forbidden but which may be opened, revealing unexplored territories. Her work has consistently been associated with otherness, and to enter these zones is to encounter experience from the "other" end of the spectrum accompanied by the potential for new methods of experiencing, without attempting ownership, through self-consciousness and curiosity. At the same time, this project is not devoid of hazard. Biographical details reveal that Carter's own career was disrupted by an agenda that ran the risk of alienating readers and critics alike.[44] Similarly, disaffection for, and alienation from, the world they find themselves in contributes to the difficulties experienced by Desiderio and the trio in Love.

This reversal of perspective is expressed explicitly in one of Carter's short stories from the Fireworks collection, which was written at the same time as, and is closely related stylistically and thematically to, Desire Machines. "Reflections" tells of a supposedly male but sexually ambiguous narrator who, rather like a male Alice through the looking-glass, changes places with his reflection when he kisses his own imaged lips.[45] He is goaded into this action by two women who are themselves conspicuous for their "ambiguity" (93): a phallic girl with a gun and an old, knitting androgyne who sports an impressive erection. On the other side of the mirror, he discovers a perfectly negative world lit by black light. The young woman follows him, and he kills her as she rapes him, and then escapes back through the mirror to kill the old (wo)man. Having freed himself from their enchantment, he turns back to try to reach his other self, recognising the power and energy that result from this species of transgression where everything is turned topsy-turvy. "Full of self-confidence, I held out my hands to embrace my self, my anti-self, my self not-self, my assassin, my death,

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[42] Barker 16.

[43] Angela Carter, Nothing Sacred (1982; London: Virago, 1992) 28.

[44] In 1991, Carter told Susannah Clapp that Desire Machines was "the novel which marked the beginning of my obscurity. I went from being a very promising young writer to being completely ignored in two novels". "On madness, men and fairy-tales" Independent on Sunday 9 June 1991, suppt.: 26. See also The Path of a Writer.

[45] Fireworks (1974; London: Virago, 1987) 81-101.

the world's death" (101). Apart from its cavalier treatment of the "given", gender, the power of this tale lies chiefly in its iconoclastic treatment of myth; just before death, the old crone reveals him/herself to be Tiresias. The narrator, however, is unimpressed by this revelation and responds by fashioning his own destiny through self-reliance and the desire to set up a new series of connections within this new and other space.

This fictional reversal of values, which contrives to pull the values themselves loose from fixed moorings, is also demonstrated in another Fireworks tale, "Master".[46] This disturbing piece gives an account of the revenge of the victim on her Sadeian master. A white European hunter travels to South America (the New World as well as the world of Desiderio) to satisfy his hunger for big game shooting. Once there, he buys a young brown girl to be his servant and to accommodate his penchant for sexual abuse. Although "savage" and "uncivilised" on several counts (she is female, black, a servant who cannot speak English) it is he who teaches her to be a killer and to eat meat. Despite, or perhaps because of, the damage he inflicts on her and on Nature generally, he is finally destroyed by her whilst she, more subtly, undergoes a transformation. She is able to blend in with, and become part of, the jungle that surrounds them. Both characters are faced with death, and while one is consumed by it, the other adapts to it by turning into a jaguar and moving on, in a vivid, surreal (and violent) telling of a tale to which Carter later returns in a different spirit.[47]

In her "Afterword" to the first edition of Fireworks, Carter highlights the single-faceted, amoral quality exhibited by the tales. Their limited scope has the effect of allowing their agenda to be easily discerned in comparison with the more diffuse novels (even when they are as short as Love, at a hundred pages long). Because of this they reveal more clearly her project of the time, the deliberate tipping of perspective, a journey into the surreal where the protagonist is immersed in the strange. Like water or glass, this "atmosphere of palpable illusion" bends the sense of space and the subject's relation to its surroundings.[48]

Consequently, the set of samples in Desire Machines is simultaneously a collection of fragile glass plates, and a tumult of elemental forces that suspend the world, literally causing

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[46] See 71-9.

[47] See "The Tiger's Bride," The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 51-67.

[48] Lorna Sage, "Introduction," Flesh and the Mirror 10.

the ground to disappear from under everyone's feet. In this world, the mode of the feminine is exaggerated to the point of collapse or annihilation, yet it has its counterparts in our reality. Thus, tellingly, women move but not in a meaningful progressive way. Epitomised by Annabel and Albertine, they are trapped within a limited repertoire of gestures, in madness, or else they appear in too many roles in an incoherent multiplicity that serves only to heighten the impression that their manifestation is regulated by men. Yet although male, the feminised Desiderio inhabits this borderland and despite the fact that all he accomplishes is the loss of his desire, there is a sense of development. At the end he is at last able to act, and to extricate himself from the plot that was his narrative, but which was choreographed in combination by the Minister and the Doctor: opposites who are also the same in their domination of those around them. Through this fictional exploration of the extremes of femininity, the symbolic position of women is revealed as cramped, rigid and untenable. Because of this they have the right to use any means at their disposal, including the sex industry, to break down the barriers that inhibit them. Pornography, whilst it seeks to objectify, unusually places the woman on the centre-stage with all eyes upon her. The reverberation of a different kind of performance and, through the film industry, camera behaviour would be profound. Many borders and boundaries between masculine and feminine have become steadily more flexible and difficult to ascertain in recent years which, while in many ways encouraging, also provides a flexible space wherein the feminine can be kept separate and "complementary".[49] The borders around pornography at the time of Carter's writing had nothing like this elasticity. The burst of energy which resulted from transgression in this field was considerable, and her attempt to harness it in the cause of gender re-organisation, innovative.

From differing perspectives Love and Desire Machines confront a situation where something is very wrong, with Annabel and Desiderio craving death, an attitude which when viewed with Bronfen's analysis in mind is hardly surprising. Carter advances the possibility of resolution to the reader, only to deprive it simultaneously of its satisfaction. Emancipation is not found by simply passing over to another side. Where for Poe, the death of a beautiful woman was the most poetic subject in the world,[50] Carter exposes both the attraction and the

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[49] See Genevieve Lloyd, The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy (London: Methuen, 1984) 104.

[50] See Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition". See n. 9 above.

futility of this drive. As an alternative, she advocates moving into new arenas, but mediating them with what is already known so that elements of both new and old may be reconciled. In the next two chapters, her explorations into new ways of configuring gender give rise to a revitalised subject able to soar to new heights. Carter pushes at the boundaries of her ideas on gender-fusion and exaggerated stereotyping and, through further transgressive readings, challenges notions of the feminine and the construction of the narrator.

Subject to Change: The Passion of New Eve and Transitions

In the last chapter I charted Carter's use of pornography, the picaresque and an exaggerated rendition of the feminine, and showed as a result how re-evaluation can award the subject a new set of significances. Up to this point in her longer fiction we have seen how gender has functioned to blur and confuse identity, so that Desiderio and Lee cannot recognise Albertina and Annabel as individuals; both women become in different ways composite figures. Albertina is at one point a chaste prelapsarian Eve and at another a madame in a brothel, leaving Desiderio unable to find the link between these roles. Meanwhile, Annabel's baroque death-guise blurs her unique characteristics with those of all the other women who have been significant to Lee. In contrast, in Carter's later works gender completes, even names, identity. Now as malleable as the warmed amber in Eve's hands, gender is governed from within (unlike Albertina's gender which is controlled by her sinister father), by the subject him or herself, and independently of external sex.

This new position, which holds far more scope for the development of a flexible and survivable femininity, is possible because of an equally new bilateral treatment of her characters as Carter begins to award gender to men. In so doing she consciously highlights its usually unquestioned location within women's bodies.[1] However, while Carter's ideas on identity are explored in the course of this chapter and, in a wider context, this thesis, I do want to stress that these ideas emerge through the application of reading strategies designed to illuminate each text's particular contribution to the theme of subject-environment interaction through the theme of spatial exploration. A "straight" reading would be misguided in view of Carter's own interaction with a dizzying variety of literary and cultural themes and theories.

Also by way of introducing this chapter, I want to explain its rationale as expressed by the difference between its structure and the structural arrangement of the chapters which surround it. While the other chapters that deal with full-length texts are arranged in a series of

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[1] In so doing, she is proleptically taking on some of the arguments put forth by such feminist/queer theorists as Monique Wittig and Judith Butler. See 154 below.

pairs, I have placed Carter's seventh novel, The Passion of New Eve by itself.[2] This is a slightly risky departure from the norm as the flow of Chapters Two, Three and Five is partly generated through the interaction of the doubled texts in each instance. A rhythm results for both the writer and the reader. Yet by providing an other chapter, analogous to a syncopated beat or a middle-eight bar section, I want to produce, rather than just disruption, a chapter which will interact with the others *because of* rather than *despite* its contrasts.

To omit New Eve would have been a questionable decision with respect to a thesis which presumes to cover the major movements of Carter's work. Carter's own favourite novel, it also forms a crucial part of her *oeuvre*.[3] She originally conceived it as the middle book in a trilogy, flanked by The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman and Nights at the Circus.[4] It is linked thematically to both the earlier and later novels, providing a refocusing of what has gone before and a prefiguring of what will happen next. Thus, in New Eve, Desiderio's picaresque journey is recommenced and taken back over the Atlantic, and Sadeian scenarios and figures re-emerge from within an apocalyptic landscape. Conversely, an incidence of straight oral sex in the cinema in New Eve is replayed in same-sex mode in Wise Children, while a Hollywood switching of gender *à la Tristessa* is the climax of the late story "The Merchant of Shadows".[5] It is also one of the most misread of her works. Carter commented to John Haffenden that "I spent a long time on that novel, which meant so much to me for various reasons, and obviously I was disappointed that it should be treated as just another riotous extravaganza".[6] Elaine Jordan, meanwhile, locates the tendency for readers to assume that Eve is supposed to be a role model in the tyranny of "the empire of US sociology".[7]

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[2] (1977; London: Virago, 1982) henceforth New Eve. All quotations are taken from the Virago edition.

[3] "[M]y favourite of my novels because it is so ambitious, so serious and so helplessly flawed - flawed, I guess, partly because I started off writing the novel thinking I was interested in myth with a capital M., [deletion] you know what I mean, and ending up realising that Myth bored me stiff which is why Mother has a nervous breakdown when the revolution starts." Angela Carter in a private letter (undated) quoted by a sympathetic Elaine Jordan (who also prefers New Eve over the other novels), in "The Dangerous Edge," Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994) 213.

[4] "*The Passion of New Eve*, carries on where *Hoffman* left off, and she sees it as the second instalment of a trilogy of 'speculative novels'." Lorna Sage, "The Savage Sideshow", New Review 4.39-40 (1977): 53.

[5] In American Ghosts and Old World Wonders (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993) 66-85.

[6] "Magical Mannerist," Novelists in Interview (London: Methuen, 1985).

[7] "The dangers of Angela Carter," New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992) 122.

Set in a near-future to its publication date, New Eve centres round a young Englishman, Evelyn, who travels to New York to teach, but discovers that his imagined city of enlightenment and reason has fallen apart. Instead of "hard edges and clean colours", he finds "a lurid, Gothic darkness" of personal and societal breakdown (10). In the confusion, a static relationship between the self and the environment is impossible to maintain. The city utilities stop working so that residents have to slop their waste into the street as in medieval times; groups of "Blacks" and militant "Women" are beginning to claim a part of the city for their own, and to barricade themselves in; the rats are getting larger. In this rotting, "syphilitic city",[8] where time and space are metamorphosing, Evelyn is supremely unsafe; his only friend, a Czech alchemist, is beaten to death outside a shop. Evelyn then pursues, cohabits with, impregnates and abandons the teenage black siren Leilah, in the space of a few weeks. However, it is not until he has left the city and been captured in the desert by the latter-day Amazon women of Beulah that his own fragility is exposed. After being transformed into a woman (in a transgressive reworking of Virginia Woolf's Orlando) by a being known as the Mother, Evelyn, who has been rechristened Eve, flees enforced parthenogenesis by returning to the desert and thus falls into the company of further separatist communities (very much in defiance of the "melting pot" ideal the United States has long claimed for itself). The first is led by Zero, the one-legged, infertile, howling poet and is a harem church of Zero-worshippers. They take Eve to the remote retreat of Tristessa, a film star in the Dietrich mould and would-be transsexual who lives among waxworks of dead Hollywood luminaries.[9] After Tristessa and Eve have escaped from Zero, and have coupled in an act of love of which Doctor Hoffman would have been most covetous (they exist for a while in "the self-created eternity of lovers" (148)), a proto-fascist troop of boys crosses their path. Towards the start of the book (although Eve only realises this much later), Zero killed a mysterious bird because he was jealous of its beauty. In a parallel act of callousness, the boys kill Tristessa because they cannot tolerate his/her ambiguity. Eve then continues "on the run" until she reaches the other side of the desert, and discovers a ruined Los Angeles in the throes of guerrilla warfare. She again meets Leilah (now known as Lilith) who suggests that perhaps Eve is now pregnant and

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[8] Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Angela Carter," meanjin 44.1 (1985): 12.

[9] The connection with Dietrich is strengthened retrospectively by "The Merchant of Shadows" as the transvestite film star in the latter story originally came from Germany.

takes her to the coast where she meets the Mother again (now much diminished) and has a mystical experience of time running backwards which culminates in a vision of the "archaeopteryx", an unclassifiable part dinosaur, part bird, almost feathered creature. Abandoned by Leilah/Lilith to exile, Eve's final action in the novel is to attempt to thwart her archetypal fate by launching a small boat into the ocean and paddling away. Thus we are left with a final mystical union between Eve and the ocean, uncertain of her fate, and of the nature or even existence of the child.

The Passion of New Eve is preoccupied with breakdown and renewal, conveying the randomness of contemporary existence through the tropes of societal and architectural structures, gender, language and alchemy, with each working as symbol for the others. A refusal to contemplate ultimate closure is played out through gothic nightmare scenarios that are ultimately defeated by dreams, visions and snippets from film archives. This defiance is clearly signalled by the circularity which pervades the book. Tristessa's spinning house (which Carter has plucked from Chaucer's "House of Fame", another dream-narrative) is a macrocosm of his subterfuge in passing as a woman with "his cock stuck in his asshole" to form "the uroborus, the perfect circle, the vicious circle, the dead end" (173). By turning the organ of generation back into the body, Tristessa has devised an alternative form of parthenogenesis, of self-connection, which perfectly encapsulates the stillness-in-movement paradox the book as whole engages with continually. On the last page of the book a philosophical as opposed to external depiction of cyclical motion is revealed when Eve muses that "We start from our conclusions" (191). This mystic mantra heralds an other way of thinking, which chimes in with the surrealist note the book also sounds. Noting the atmosphere which spills from Desire Machines, William Bedford called the setting of New Eve "a Dali landscape".[10] Surrealism is given intertextual thematic prominence as well. Evelyn's chase of Leilah, as Susan Rubin Suleiman points out, is taken from *La Liberté ou l'amour!* by the surrealist writer Robert Desnos.[11]

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[10] "Get Carter," Harpers and Queen Feb. 1979: 93.

[11] Susan Rubin Suleiman, Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde (London: Harvard UP, 1990) 137.

Running through this text then, as through Carter's work as a whole, is a debate on the nature of beginnings and endings paradoxically expressed through ideas about eternity, wheels and continuity with a postmodern slant which incorporates the alienation of the subject and the collapse of post-industrial society. With reference to this, Suleiman's definition of the postmodern centres on: "that moment of extreme (perhaps tragic, perhaps playful) self-consciousness when the present - our present - takes to reflecting on its relation to the past and to the future primarily as a problem of repetition".[12] New Eve is revealed as the culmination of Carter's postmodernist tendencies in its continual interrogation of the givens of time and a sense of history; the fullest expression of her critique of society and the dislocated individual.

Where, in the last chapter, we examined Carter's treatment of the associations contemporary culture makes between death and the feminine, we now witness the development of a new set of significations for the feminine. Meanwhile, death appears in a modified guise. In New Eve, Carter uses Hollywood as a background in drawing on the kind of dark repression that characterises the work of Edgar Allan Poe to depict a culture obsessed with death,[13] which illustrates perfectly Nina Auerbach's observation that death "is central in [North America's] contemporary myth of stardom, as if the loss of character can find its essential meaning only in its own mortality".[14] Zero the poet is a succinct image of the wider breakdown of communication the book describes. His misanthropy (and misogyny), his refusal to use language and his enslavement to the image of Tristessa in the medium of film, (it is she whom he blames for his sterility), reveal him as the incarnation of the postmodern subject. Travelling by helicopter and fanatical about Wagner, he is a precursor to the US soldiers in Coppola's film Apocalypse Now which depicts events in the Vietnam War, which Frederic Jameson termed the first "terrible postmodern war".[15] So politics collide with myth in the subject's consciousness which is fed with an arbitrary eclectic mix of cultural iconography and ephemera. The result is not one of Carter's easiest novels. She herself

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[12] Subversive Intent p.xv.

[13] Evidence of Carter's fondness for Poe includes her short story "The Cabinet of Edgar Allan Poe," Black Venus, see also Chapter 3 for more of this story; as well, see her comment "I'd always been fond of Poe". "Afterword," Fireworks: Nine Profane Pieces (London: Quartet, 1974) 121.

[14] Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1982) 226.

[15] "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," Modernism/Postmodernism, ed. and introd. Peter Brooker (Harlow: Longman, 1992) 176.

admitted that "It's a bitter and probably quite uncomfortable book to read" (Haffenden 86). To read it carefully, however, is to engage with Carter's own narratological debate about the nature of myth and the need for a radical overhaul in the ways in which we see and represent ourselves.

Rather than show us the lives of ordinary people, this novel is peopled with magicians and hermaphrodites, chimeras and beings without history to whom fantastic events happen with unforeseeable consequences. In this chapter I look first at the nightmare cities and different communities that Eve/lyn encounters in her/his travels, how they work changes on her/him, and what they signify for Carter's overall postmodernist agenda. I then go on to examine the ways in which gender is de- and re-constructed in this novel. This is tied up with Carter's evaluation of Hollywood, which in turn collides fairy tale and film theory, investigates ideas of closure, the public/private divide and the relationship between gender and myth, particularly Christian myth. In the concluding section, I evaluate New Eve as part of Carter's canon, speculating on the place she created for "beings without history", on the materiality of this text and her own connections to the narrative.

Much to his surprise, Evelyn finds New York is all dissolution and decay when he steps off the plane from England, but perhaps that is just a sign of his naiveté. As we saw in the introductory chapter, contemporary cities are very much places of change. Working as the building blocks of ideologies, they reflect and inscribe the ways in which their inhabitants behave and feel about themselves and each other. Amongst the New Yorkers in Carter's novel, for example, paranoia and factionalism are rife: life on the street is nasty, brutish and short. As a result, despite its obvious kinship with a medieval city, increasingly evident as its inhabitants' lifestyles change to accommodate the breakdown of the modern sewage and other utility systems, in many crucial ways this New York has nothing at all in common with that type of city, where a great deal of life was lived communally.

To Thomas V. Czarnowski the street is ideally a place of exchange of ideas so that by implication the city would be a conglomerate of communications artefacts, supplying all sorts of opportunities and spaces for interaction with each other and with the architecture itself. However, in reality he admits that this ideal has been greatly diminished in recent times.[16] Far from being made up of isolated units, a medieval city worked as a body, with compensatory mechanisms such as hospitals and orphanages making up for malfunctions elsewhere.[17] Yet, although we are now in many ways better served through superior electronic systems and faster vehicles, the organic nature of that network has been lost. Richard Sennett's call that we must accept "permanent exile from radiance, to a realm of fragmentation, mistakes, doubts" (Quoted in Warner, "Magic Zones" 14-15), therefore does not seem too extreme a response to the danger, anomie and isolation of the "dead space" of the contemporary Western metropolis.[18]

If "dead space" encroaches on us, then it seems logical to suppose that the sites of fragmentation will begin to shift in order to take into account new social truths. In Joseph

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[16] "The Street as a Communications Artifact," On Streets, ed. Stanford Anderson for The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1978) 206-12.

[17] Marina Warner, "Magic Zones," rev. of Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilisation by Richard Sennett, London Review of Books 8 Dec. 1994: 14.

[18] Richard Sennett, "The body and the city: Looking for 'live space' in the modern townscape," Times Literary Supplement 18 Sept. 1992: 3.

Rykwert's words, "the cosmopolitan population will not amalgamate into an undefined social porridge but is fissuring along the borders of new loyalties, around new centres of power".[19] The boundaries between the various parts of Carter's New York, for instance, have hitherto existed on a cultural rather than a physical plane, although that is certainly effective at separating various groups from each other. So the Blacks' construction of a wall around Harlem is not noticed until they reverse their ghettoisation and come out to do battle. A real-life parallel for this event may emerge when we examine Elizabeth Wilson's ideas about the ways that minority groups can protect themselves in an urban setting. In her words, in the 1980s, despite the backlash of conservatism, "the lesbian and gay urban communities of many world cities continued to create a space for themselves, a space dependent on urban forms, and the unique chance, offered by the city, to escape from patriarchal social formations".[20] The Blacks and the women in Carter's novel have simply taken this social trend to its logical extreme and have begun holding the rest of the city to ransom in a more insidious version of the siege in Desire Machines. This intertextual connection is further strengthened by the gendered associations which accompany the act of besieging. Desiderio's city was transformed by the bombardment. Once "thickly, obtusely masculine" (Desire Machines 15), it acquired a "desolate beauty" (Desire Machines 21). In New Eve emancipation from the "doctrine of reason" is also associated with femininity (16). Tristessa, whom Evelyn dubs "Our Lady of Dissolution" (15), presides in film form over the fragmentation, undergoing a cult revival amidst the chaos. Leilah, too, is associated with the break-down of matter, with her dance called "The End of the World" (174).

This movement away from a centralised segregated society, then, is not just a gender/minority dynamic. In her book, Space, Place and Gender, Doreen Massey asks "Who is it who is so troubled by time-space compression and a newly experienced fracturing of identity?" (122). She suggests as a response that those who were set in power by old high modernisms are the ones who are most threatened, whilst those who were already liminal have always in fact experienced the splitting of identity which postmodernism expresses (123). In the discourse of postmodernism as a whole then, as well as in New Eve, there is a

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[19] The Necessity of Artifice: Ideas in Architecture (London: Academy, 1982) 58.
[20] Elizabeth Wilson, The Sphinx in the City: urban life, the control of disorder, and women (London: Virago, 1991) 119.

"queerifying" (queenifying?) and blackening of the subject as well as a feminising. The urban guerrillas are using their position in the unstable reality of the city to *exist in* this reality of their own devising: so, for example, the women start policing men's sexuality by posting snipers near posters for blue movies, while the Blacks take over the university where Evelyn is supposed to be teaching. Ultimately, the city seems to have taken on the role as canvas upon which individuals trace their own personal narratives - any concept of an objective reality has been abandoned. Nicoletta Vallorani astutely recognises the increasingly mythical status of New Eve's New York when she stresses: "The frequent repetition of reference to nightmare" which "marks the ultimate breakdown of borders between reality and imagination, which are placed side by side and given exactly the same sort of fictional existence".[21]

The resulting chaos revitalises the rather neurasthenic Evelyn, who finds his own dread "queasily delicious" (15). His feverish fascination for and willing engulfment within the city echo the characteristic state of mind of the gothic heroines of the eighteenth century.[22] The ubiquitous ruins of the city lend it a similarly archaic air, the whole atmosphere combining to suggest strongly, as Vallorani points out, a text which can be located within the theory of female gothic outlined by Ellen Moers (Vallorani 369). Moers' delineation of the female gothic narrative includes a female picaresque mode in which the lack of a cohesive religion has given rise to "that vague paranoia of the modern spirit" very similar to the dislocation described by Carter.[23]

Then there is Beulah, the city in the desert. An underground labyrinth, its curves lead to a "simulacrum of the womb" (New Eve 52). A report in the Independent indicates that the form of the labyrinth is symbolically imbued with fecundity; in Finland and Sweden, people reproduce "the symbolic journey of the male seed to the female egg. In traditional dances, a virgin waits in the centre of the maze while the dancers weave uncertainly towards her".[24] Having carved out an architectural structure from the body of the earth, the women of Beulah re-form their femininity by removing their right breasts for the Cause (many of these breasts

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[21] Nicoletta Vallorani, "The Body of the City: Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve," Science Fiction Studies 21 (1994): 376.

[22] See above, Chapter 2.

[23] Ellen Moers, Literary Women (London: The Women's Press, 1978) 91.

[24] Jonathan Glancey and Georgia Glynn-Smith, "New twists in the tale of an ancient puzzler" Independent 22 Sept. 1993: 20.

end up adorning the Mother, who by contrast has a "patchwork quilt" of them (60)). According to Molly Hite, in doing this they seek to disrupt the coherence of the dominant culture's rhetorical constructions in which "patriarchy refashions corporeality to its own specifications".[25] A misreading of Bunyan and Blake, Beulah is a wilful reorganisation of patriarchal mythology. The scientist-priestesses have revolutionised architecture to wrest it away from the failing androcentric model of reason as they have re-sculpted their own images.[26] The result of this is that Sophia appears as "a woman who has never seen a mirror in all her life, not once exposed herself to those looking glasses that betray women into nakedness" (54). The Beulah Women have re-aligned themselves as the subject rather than the object, but they have also moved towards the disruption of this sort of economy of difference altogether. Massey, again, writes that "It is now a well-established argument, from feminists but not only from feminists, that modernism both privileged vision over the other senses and established a way of seeing from the point of view of an authoritative, privileged, and male, position" (232). In contrast, the Beulah women are searching for new ways of looking at things and of regarding themselves in their environment. The operation they perform on Evelyn, "Psycho-surgery" (68), blends science with alchemy to produce extraordinary results, as if, as Eve/lyn speculates, "magic, there, masquerades as surgery in order to gain credence in a secular age" (49).

The "secular age" can also be perceived in the women's practice of recycling their urine as drinking water, ignoring powerful taboos against this. Their days are spent in the laboratory and their nights at military drill practice. All of this sounds worthy feminist practice, however, these technologies and behaviours result in an all-pervasive artificiality of taste and smell, and their fixation with "re-integration of the primal form" is inherently unsatisfactory, involving as it does regression and subordination to the all-powerful Mother. Ultimately the maze defeats itself; it is not worth entering the labyrinth because the

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[25] Molly Hite, "Writing - and Reading - the Body: Female Sexuality and Recent Feminist Fiction," Feminist Studies 14.1 (1988): 134.

[26] Roberta Gilchrist has pointed out how androcentric theories of architecture have led to the misunderstanding of the gendering of space. Taking the medieval castle as her paradigm, she has shown how the building's military function has been allowed to completely overshadow its domestic aspect. "Gender and Space in Medieval Castles," Material Culture Seminar, University of Oxford, 10 May 1995.

impossible being who attempts to embody the archetype, the Mother, is ludicrous. We know that Carter is in the "demythologising business".[27]

Having looked at two major sites in New Eve, I want to examine the working of its roads. In Los Angeles, for instance, it is the road rather than the city itself which has taken the brunt of the fighting (165), an acknowledgement, perhaps, of its importance as a psychological as well as physical means of connection, for many of the vehicles featured in the text can travel through the desert quite easily. In addition, the inner nature of the landscape is continually emphasised by Carter. Eve/lyn's first flight into the desert, for instance, is clearly also an expedition into his/her own self: "Descend lower; while the world, in time, goes forward and so presents us with the illusions of motion, though all our lives we move through the curvilinear galleries of the brain towards the core of the labyrinth within us" (39). The inner and the outer geographies are able to co-exist and provide hints at the possibility of developing a new kind of sensibility. When she is bombed in Los Angeles, for instance, Eve obeys an ancient human instinct by sheltering in the shopping mall, in "the cave-like remains of a sporting goods store" (170). This seemingly irreconcilable hotchpotch, where cave and sports shop are juxtaposed to occupy the same time and space, is mediated by Massey, who believes that it is "not that the interrelations between objects occur *in* space and time; it is these relationships themselves which create/define space and time" (263). She exhorts us to think in terms of an n-dimensional space-time model (269), which by implication actually allows different times to co-exist because time itself is no longer a given value. Taking all of these co-existences into consideration then, the mutilation of the body-politic, which has whole geographical sections amputated because of the fighting, results in the opening of fissures in the working of the nation-state. The consequences of this are particularly severe in the US, which relies on the arteries of roads and airways, and swift information exchanges to enmesh communities of increasingly culturally diverse groups. Thus, even as Evelyn speeds out of New York, he comes upon almost instantaneous detachment and indifference along the way. Watching old men watching the violence on

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[27] Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 71.

television, he concludes that "It was so much entertainment to them. They had retreated into apartness, already; what business of theirs was New York?" (40).

A more time-based distortion is apparent in the deserted town where Zero and his wives live, which is able to illustrate time far more realistically than the surrounding organic scenery. Eve muses that "the ruins of this miners' town, though it had been built no longer ago than my own great grandmother's lifetime, looked, in the analytic light of the desert, far older than the rocks on which it had been built" (93). As we have seen, the idea of the ruined city has cropped up before in Carter's work. When in Heroes and Villains Marianne's father asks her for a definition of "city" she hazards "Ruins" as the only form of city she knows.[28] Carter also wrote quite enthusiastically in "Notes from the Front Line" that "Ten years ago, I'd have said that I, myself, wanted to write stories that could be read by guttering candlelight in the ruins of our cities and still give pleasure, still have meaning".[29] Perhaps New Eve could in part be seen as a warning prequel to Heroes and Villains, showing the first few steps towards the diminished world Carter has already portrayed. In any case, the subject's senses of history and geography have both gone haywire as everything around him/her indicates the fragmentation of structures and frameworks in parallel with the subject's own inner experience.

Thus in New Eve most people no longer know where - or when - they are, and the communality of the street in the medieval city which the theorists and planners still apparently hanker for is in decline due to the dynamics of post-industrial society. New methods of self-definition then are called for. For instance, on a preliminary note there can be very few commuters in the new New York, as the station has been blown up, but far more alchemists will be able to flourish; their chemical programme of melting, separating and causing revolution is well-suited to the new age.

Significantly, reaction to the situation as a whole appears to be gendered. Wilson has pointed out how modernist women, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson were far more at ease with the submerging of identity which can occur in a city than their male counterparts.[30]

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[28] Heroes and Villains 7. See also 69 above.

[29] 77. See also 4 above.

[30] "For them, urban life offers not only adventure, but reassurance....Instead of disintegrating, they are held by it" (158).

In the desert the Beulah Women are conducting what is an organised, if perhaps misguided, response to the situation in contrast to the chaos in the masculine urbs. In short, subjecthood is manipulated by the self. The body is reconfigured, gender a matter of interpretation. With all the shards broken down in the crucible, what kind of being will be able to emerge successfully from the maelstrom?

As we have already begun to examine, in New Eve Carter investigates the assignment and performativity of gender and is thereby able to theorise a more diverse series of fates for her heroes than would otherwise occur. In the course of her own examination on the nature of gender, Judith Butler makes a provocative point, which I will use to inform this section, that "perhaps there are genders, ways of culturally interpreting the sexed body, that are in no way restricted by the apparent duality of sex".[31]

The possibilities of proliferation as opposed to duality are suggested throughout New Eve. In the last section, we looked at the breakdown and reformation of the subject with the loss of a sense of the normal, to new possibilities of self-definition due to the undermining of the *mores* of society. The carnivalising of the city environment is accompanied by the carnivalising of the body. Eve/lyn's new female form, for instance, is made grotesque because "it is seen in the process of becoming something else" (Vallorani 368). Meanwhile, the bodies of the Beulah Women and Zero have the wrong number of appurtenances (having a single breast or leg respectively) and Tristessa's transvestism duplicates one of the most popular masquerade costumes of the eighteenth century, as identified by Terry Castle.[32] Throughout the novel there is a significant mismatch between bodies and the consciousnesses which inhabit them: Tristessa's amazement at his own erection is a signal instance of this (137), as is Sophia's reaction to Evelyn's rape by the Mother (which she watches with "the prim enthusiasm of a college girl at a football ballgame" (65)). By opening up this space, Carter has given herself room for manoeuvre in her project to outrage duality and "hybridise". The space itself is a variant of the gothic impossible space developed in Chapter Two which is now inhabited by the chimera and the hermaphrodite.

When Evelyn is first inside his female body he is effectively still a male. Not only does he need to learn how to look after it, he also has to learn to move within it, and how to act and react in order to dispel his initial reaction to his own reflection. "I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And - how can I put it - the cock in my head, still, twitched at the

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[31] Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (London: Routledge, 1990) 112.
[32] Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction (London: Methuen, 1986) 22.

sight of myself" (75). However much the women at Beulah can teach *him*, though, it is his apprenticeship in wife-slavery with the poet Zero that teaches *her* the performance of gender. S/he is not always a quick study: "I would often make a gesture with my hands that was out of Eve's character or exclaim with a subtly male inflection that made them raise their eyebrows" (100-1). This excessively minute inspection of her/his behaviour prompts Eve to realise something that is often opaque to those who have only a single gender identity: "I was passing as a woman, but, then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations" (101). Moreover, her very perfection begins to arouse suspicion, prefiguring the revelation of Tristessa's maleness, so that Zero's minute physical examinations of her prompt the question in the reader's mind, does this Barbie doll-like creature have "Made in Beulah" stamped on her bum? Zero's desperate search for something wrong is a quest for the validation of this method of categorising, and his continual acts of violence and degradation upon Eve, and subsequently upon Tristessa, are signs of his inability to find the exact point where gender lies.

Part of his suspicion is predicated on the fact that Eve's surface is unmarked by the wear and tear of life. If Carter's comment to Lorna Sage in the year New Eve was published that "Everybody's appearance is their symbolic autobiography" is true within the confines of the novel,[33] then Eve truly is "an amnesiac" (New Eve 78), outside of history because nothing has happened to her. By implication here, gender is formed through a series of acts or experiences, it has no pre-existent status. Carter turns this point of view to ironic use in the text's evaluation of the *male* film star, Tristessa's own "symbolic autobiography" (New Eve 129), which is the history of degradation and loss that Eve has so far evaded but which appears to characterise the stereotyped heterosexual feminine. Carter raises many issues here about the ways in which the feminine is depicted in society, and as in the last chapter, we are left with the uncomfortable impression that complicity is part of the deal.

The depiction of masculinity is far less widespread. Tristessa is a man, but her/his gender is female (apart from "the awful ineradicability of his maleness" that renders him a hermaphrodite (173)). Otherwise, both Evelyn's (when male) and Zero's interaction with women is dependent upon the latter's debasement in a master-slave dialectic. The Sadeian

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[33] "The Savage Sideshow" 56, see 14 above.

dynamics, as seen in Desire Machines, reappear in closer focus and with their inherent vulnerabilities explored. Where before we only had Desiderio's sympathetic but uninvolved account we now have Eve/lyn's dual outlook - first perpetrator, then sufferer. Chinks in the master's armour can consequently be discerned as Ricarda Schmidt astutely connects Zero with one of the Sadeian figures who interested Carter: Gernande. "Like all Sade's libertines, Gernande is a great coward; he is terrified, alone and helpless....As soon as she asks for punishment, Gernande is reassured. Now he knows who he is;...she has told him he is her master".[34]

As well as these extreme, but unstable, genderings Carter also investigates "ungendering". Indeed, some of the characters appear to be beyond sex. When she reappears on the beach, the Mother is "old enough to have been either man or woman" (190). Meanwhile, the Beulah Women have cast aside a part of their sexual characteristics and the sound of the commune, like "hives of contented bees", signals their neutered status (78).

In further contrast to them, Eve and Tristessa manage to make a multitude of sexes when they couple in the desert. The "great Platonic hermaphrodite" (48) is a new incarnation of a philosophical idea that casts them as more than the sum of their parts. The act is seen as death defying and magically time-stopping. Even so, part of this last is achieved through the Hoffman/Mendoza theory that time can be captured on film, for "yet even then I saw fragments of old movies playing like summer lightening on the lucid planes of his face" (149). Film is inextricably entwined throughout this text where gender is worked through as a series of performances with much reference to both theories of film and representation and to Hollywood.

Carter's writing became progressively more preoccupied with the cultural impact of the United States, or "Amerika" as she liked to spell it, her use of Kafka's spelling highlighting both its alien quality and the fact that we all have our own individual impressions of that culture.[35] Her strongly ambivalent attitude smacks of Gothic contagion and sexuality and seems to stem from a childhood during which she felt the United States "colonised the

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[34] The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (1979; London: Virago, 1987) 52-3, quoted by Schmidt, "The Journey of the Subject in Angela Carter's Fiction," Textual Practice 3 (1989): 75, n 17.

[35] "Introduction", Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992) 4.

imagination of the entire world and was turning us all into Americans. I resented it, it fascinated me".[36]

Of course a great measure of this fascination was due to "the fantastic power of the silver screen" to which New Eve pays a great deal of attention.[37] That Carter's next book was a collection of fairy-tales is surely no coincidence. Whether dream or nightmare, it is in fairy-tale mode, through the medium of the screen, that Tristessa casts a spell in a book in which s/he scarcely appears in person. S/he has been imbued with power because of the power of the film-image to the extent that images of Tristessa both characterise and influence the disintegration of New York and Eve/lyn's re-education at Beulah and Zero describes Tristessa's house as the "Witches' lair" (109). It is indeed a magical place. Its translucency, which conceals ingenious defence mechanisms, works as an analogue to Tristessa's own paradoxical identity. First seen among the waxworks of Hollywood stars who had "died of fame" (117), Tristessa is "a sleeping beauty who could never die since she had never lived" (119). Talking to Haffenden, Carter mentioned a phrase which had been going through her mind when writing the book; a slogan coined to promote Rita Hayworth in Gilda it ran: "There never was a woman like Gilda" (86). The phrase is both a joke and an encoded truth which Carter interpreted in her own way.

Tristessa's very perfection in the assumption of a different gender from his biological sex, read alongside Carter's own attitude towards him (she tells Haffenden that he is the "central character" of the novel (85)), combine to produce the notion that within the logical structure of New Eve it is he who is the central religious focus as a transgressive Christ-figure and role model. When Eve first sees him she can "make no connection between her face and any notion of common humanity" (123), seeing him as something other or apart even before the revelation of Tristessa's complex sexuality. The first sight of him stuns even the Maenad harem into reverence, although they soon recover enough to perform a sacrilegious crucifixion scene, forcing him and Eve to have intercourse while the two are tied up.

Tristessa's undoubted charisma is contingent upon the scale of the film-image. Elsewhere, Carter is not coy about her inability to take television seriously. For her it has "an

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[36] Expletives Deleted 5.

[37] Elaine Jordan, "The Dangerous Edge," Sage, Flesh and the Mirror 204.

in-built ability to cut people down to size, to reduce them to gesticulating heads or, in long shot, to friezes of capering dwarfs" which has the result of its being remote, "somehow always composed at a distance, in the third person".[38] In contrast to this "domestic medium",[39] Tristessa occupies a public cultural space.[40] Performance is witnessed as larger than life to the extent that the performer's face can no longer be responded to as though it were an ordinary "private" face. Tristessa's face like Dietrich's, of which Carter asserts that "Nobody but Dietrich had a Dietrich-shaped mouth for thirty years" ("Public and Private Face" 208), is iconic to the point that it is somehow detached from the usual standards of assessment, and the difference is accentuated by the Brobdignagian proportions of the screen-image. Mary Ann Doane speculates that perhaps the close-up, where the face can no longer be taken in at a glance, "overwhelms" the spectator,[41] so that instead of being powerful he or she is instead engulfed by the dizzying expanse of flesh as landscape.

Where Laura Mulvey called for films to be made differently to problematise the gaze of the spectator (see Chapter Three), Carter posits something slightly different but more far-reaching. Instead of requiring a parallel movement of small-budget (small audience, small distribution) films to contrast with the big-budget, mainstream stock, she has instead adroitly used conservative material (Tristessa's films are all about suffering in typical Hollywood scenarios) to highlight the problematics of gender representation. The artificial nature of the social convention that seeks to appear natural is revealed by the scale of the medium and the effect of the camera, mirror and gaze upon the object struggling to emerge into subjecthood. Extremes and stereotypes are literally sterile in New Eve, desexed in a fundamental way. But while both femininity and masculinity are seen as socially constructed, new sorts of behaviour may indicate new ways of being, with Tristessa as a precursor of Luce Irigaray's model of new masculinity.[42]

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[38] "Acting it up on the Small Screen," Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, rev. ed. 1992) 144, 145.

[39] Carter, "The Public and the Private Face," Vogue (May 1977): 208.

[40] Leilah, who is also pretending to be something she is not (being a spy for the Mother) also has a "public face" which appears gradually as she gazes at herself in the mirror (30).

[41] "Veiling Over Desire: Close-ups of the Women," Feminism and Psychoanalysis, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989) 108.

[42] The penis is postulated as an instrument of nurturing and mediation. See "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother," The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray, ed. and introd. Margaret Whitford (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 42.

A Fortunate Fall?: Myth and Religion

The fluctuatingly gendered subject inhabits a gendered environment in this novel. The amnesiac Eve moves through the destructive nightmare as a "tabula erasa" (83), displaying a pre-lapsarian state in a fallen world. I want to say something more here about Carter's interaction with religion which is evident throughout her work, but is particularly so in this novel. We have already seen how Tristessa emerges as a Christ figure, and the novel's title suggests a flamboyant rewriting of certain key Judeo-Christian myths. However, in the main I agree with Elaine Jordan's recognition that Christ is not the main role model the book implies, and that the reading is "blasphemous not authoritative".[43]

Talking to John Haffenden in 1984, Carter explained what she had been trying to convey in her writing as far back as the end of The Magic Toyshop.

> They're escaping like Adam and Eve at the end of *Paradise Lost*. Megalomaniac as it might seem, that was the image I wanted to leave - two people alone, about to depart from a garden....the theory of the Fortunate Fall has it that it was fortunate because it incurred the Crucifixion, an idea which I think only an unpleasant mind could have dreamt up. I took the Fortunate Fall as meaning that it was a good thing to get out of that place (80).[44]

With her deliberate misreading of Milton's epic poem, Carter is fulfilling her career-long objective of creating intertextuality wherever possible. In New Eve, the use of archetypal figures makes representation economical as it results in a palimpsest text not only in terms of the Bible and Paradise Lost, but also with her previous novels. Apart from the Toyshop connection, Marianne (in Heroes) is similarly threatened with being cast as "Eve at the end of the world".[45]

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[43] "The dangers of Angela Carter," New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992) 122.

[44] See above Chapter 2. The Relevance of Gothic.

[45] Heroes 124. The actual quote is "Pretend you're Eve at the end of the world." Donally and Jewel finally decide that she is actually a "little Lilith" (124). This is also hinted at by Leilah's/Lilith's dance in New Eve, which is called "the End of the World" (174). Lilith, Adam's first wife, who left him. "But she remained with him only a short time, because she insisted upon enjoying full equality with her husband. She derived her rights from their identical origin." Louis Ginzberg, quoted by Barbara Hill Rigney, Lilith's Daughters: Women and Religion in Contemporary Fiction (Madison, WI: U of Wisconsin P, 1982) p. vii. Thus Marianne is prefiguring another of the characters in New Eve.

The New Eve has a self-conscious awareness of her archetypal status, at one point observing that "I might have been the only human left alive in all the world, Eve and Adam both" (165). As with all Carter's protagonists who have to wrestle with the myth of the Fortunate Fall, however, she develops her own interpretative strategies and manages to evade several archetypal fates, such as life as the mother of an immaculate conception or abandonment in the manner of Dido or Ariadne. Instead:

> Eve's 'passion' is both her suffering and her desire; that she may know both, Tristessa, before Carter kills him off, gratifies Eve with her first experiences of true, erotic love and - in an arid desert rather than the fertile garden of traditional iconography - impregnates her as neither Mother nor Zero was able to do.[46]

The "passion" is in the transgression.

Elsewhere, Carter asserts that our perception of both myth and gender shapes the ways in which we perceive ourselves. "All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth, anyway".[47]

However, in New Eve, by denying the existence of a singular overarching interpretation of the myth of the Fall, she begins to perform her own sort of redemption upon it. As we saw in Chapter One, Carter regards folklore as a perennially-enriching source of inspiration, and by interrogating the ideology of Paradise Lost, replacing certainty with possibility, she either converts the poem into material for the "folklore of the educated" (Haffenden 85) or transforms the entire myth-making apparatus by allotting agency to individuals and communities, for: "In Beulah, myth is a made thing, not a found thing" (56).

If Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge, regardless of the rather unpleasant trick played on them by God, at least they left the Garden of Eden equipped with Knowledge. By suggesting a transgressive reading of the Fortunate Fall Carter does not dismiss myth altogether, although her reading of the myth of Creation is full of ambivalence. There is an interest in, and zest for, it which recalls her comments on watching the film Gone with the

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[46] Harriet Blodgett, "Fresh Iconography: Subversive Fantasy by Angela Carter," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 51.

[47] The Sadeian Woman 5.

Wind. "I still think it stinks, this movie famous for being famous....But, goodness me, how enjoyable it is!"[48]

[48] "The Belle as Businessperson," Nothing Sacred (1992) 160.

This is the first time we have been able to see one of Carter's heroes *after* she has escaped the clutches of the magus/puppet-master. Up to this point, although Melanie and Marianne did break free, both their narratives end with the realisation that the spell has been broken. There is simply nothing else to be said within the limits defined by the narratives. Heroes, for instance, ends with the words: " ' No more,' he said and relapsed into silence" (151). By contrast, Eve/lyn experiences, admittedly brief, periods when there is no magus or puppet-master available to tug at her/his strings. Self-possession at last seems possible, although there are still problems because of the ways in which gender is portrayed in this book

In New Eve, the separately fluid gender identities that were displayed by Albertina and Desiderio in Desire Machines are finally given full rein. Albertina's body integrity is fluid and permeable throughout, allowing her to appear as, among other things, a sensuous oriental, a syphilitic boy, a masked brothel keeper and a hermaphrodite (and these were only her human forms). Desiderio is less protean, but his physical identification with Albertina, his name, meaning the "desired one" and his sexual objectification all point towards an unstable sexual identity. The ultimate "boy meets girl" scenario takes place when Evelyn is transformed from *male* to *female* and when she encounters Tristessa the effect is squared and has intertextual import as, through their successful union, Albertina and Desiderio finally achieve a sort of consummation. Furthermore, where beds and books seemed equally likely to function as coffins in Desire Machines, Eve wriggles out of this resigned symbolism and, at the end of the book, converts the old crone's skiff, ("It's not a boat, it's a coffin" (189)), back into a boat by using it to escape from the beach where Leilah/Lilith abandoned her. In so doing she opens up the novel, leaving the reader with the task of constructing her/his own ending.[49] Because of the flexible time-system employed in Carter's books, Eve's child will be Fevvers, the hero of her next novel set in 1899.

In Nights at the Circus, Fevvers' given name is Sophie (a godmother's privilege?), and her body is very much the hybrid being prefigured in Evelyn's original reason for entering the desert, "there, in the ocean of sand, among the bleached rocks of the untenanted part of the

[49] Roz Kaveney, "New New World Dreams: Angela Carter and Science Fiction," Sage, Flesh and the Mirror 183.

world, I thought I might find that most elusive of all chimeras, myself" (38). The doubled parentage, both Eve and Tristessa qualify as father and mother, and Eve's vision of the "archaeopteryx" point towards a celebration of amalgamation, of blurred and mixed sexualities (Schmidt 65-7). For Heather Johnson, New Eve centrally concerns the "relocation of the chimerical, the hermaphroditic, within the realm of possibility, as a source of origin and a site for pleasure".[50]

Carter has also re-formed her own depiction of gender. In her earlier work, the sexes battled, and there was little or no real tenderness or reciprocation. Desire was dangerous, and when bodies came together the outcome was often rape. Eve's pathway through this terrain of polarities is a thread that pulls the disparities into congruence. On a personal, if not societal, level progress has been made. We have already seen that she and Tristessa make the "great Platonic hermaphrodite" (New Eve 148) together, but, as Ricarda Schmidt suggests, the language used to describe this encounter, with its male-active, female-passive dialectic, still conforms to the perennial misogynist schema (64).

In a book where alternative power structures attempted to transcend time and history by way of myth and technology, there has been some failure but also some success. More than any other of Carter's books, it is New Eve that most fully examines the vagaries of contemporary urban existence and is perhaps the first to begin truly to theorise its way out of the mess. The loss of the self, so threatening to the male modernist, is experienced as an arousal which, like Freud's is "not about pleasure" but instead "lies in the more bitter act of self-displacement" (Sennett 4). At the beginning of this chapter I quoted Suleiman's definition of the postmodern. The self-conscious present, which denotes a dislocation from the environment, evokes the same sense of time-travel as Vallorani's comment on New Eve where existence is "not only squeezed into a narrow present reality, but projected towards a possible future, either utopian or dystopian" (367).

This, however, still leaves the question of the narrator's identity. Eve/lyn does radically change in the course of (or perhaps because of) the story s/he tells to the extent that Rubin Suleiman wants to know how we, the readers, can trust such a Janus-faced persona

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[50] Heather Johnson, "Review of the Double-Gendered Body: Forms of the Grotesque in The Passion of New Eve," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 47-8.

(Subversive Intent 136). Meanwhile, other commentators have tried to locate Carter in the text with varying degrees of success. Notably Robert Clark interpreted Tristessa de St Ange as "a self-admonitory figure - the sadness of Saint Angela",[51] and Harriet Blodgett believes that the New Eve is "not only Evelyn transformed but Carter herself: the androgynous symbol maker" (51). There are certainly plenty of clues, but to what avail are they pieced together in those ways?

In his essay on the author function, Foucault asks a similar question when he quotes Beckett: "What does it matter who is speaking?"[52] Foucault locates our interest in the site of authorship in a desire to order and to uncover and decipher puzzles. Pointing out that the author's name is not just a proper name (106), but is "the equivalent of a description" (105), he progressively unpacks our tendencies to project a version of the "author" from the operations we perform on the texts (110). In a novel precisely about this packaging process Carter speculates a great deal upon the nature of authority, and where the narrating subject is situated.

Her own life history includes elements of several characters' lives. Like Evelyn, Carter went over to the States to teach in a university, and her own initiation into the culture of performance and Hollywood took place largely at the cinema when she was a child. Alternatively, Sage's description of Carter's "general air of displacement" echoes the profound alienation that Tristessa feeds upon.[53] Centrally, however, the book outlines, and facilitates the development of, a new kind of being. Eve believes that s/he and Tristessa "are outside history. We are beings without a history, we are mysteriously twinned by our synthetic life" (125), and by implication this puts them outside the usual confines of the text, an unruly position which, Barbara Johnson notices, prompts the question "which side of the paper [is] the narrator...on"?[54]

Putting Eve and, more particularly Tristessa, outside the scope of history signifies possible "witch-hood" (see earlier chapters). By implication, Tristessa is a witch, so perhaps

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[51] "Angela Carter's desire machine," Women's Studies 14 (1987): 159.

[52] Samuel Beckett quoted by Michel Foucault in "What is an Author?" The Foucault Reader ed. and introd. Paul Rabinow (1984; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 101.

[53] "Savage Sideshow" 52.

[54] "Is Female to Male as Ground is to Culture?" Feldstein and Roof 260

Carter might also be construed as one.[55] However, she evades attempted definitions of her self as much as she does with regard to her writing, her advice to Haffenden being that he "could read [my novels] as science fiction if [he] wished" (87). This does, however, open up a new way of looking at her authorial persona. A contemporary writer of fantasy/SF, who includes several witches among his main characters, Terry Pratchett has commented that Carter: "had an intelligence that radiated for twenty-five metres around her", and "a way of looking which made you feel that whatever you were going to say next had better be interesting" (Kaveney 188). This blend of admiration and apprehension is strongly reminiscent of the effect on those around her of Granny Weatherwax, a witch who is one of the few people in Pratchett's Discworld who has a sense of locatedness.[56] As well as this, she is wholly unclassifiable, even by other witches. It is common knowledge on the Discworld that witches come in threes, "the maiden, the mother and the...other one".[57]

The Passion of New Eve delineates a new relationship to time, a new kind of body to experience it with and a renegotiation of the relations between the sexes. Moreover, its suggestiveness prompts a renegotiation in our attitudes to the Fortunate Fall which reverberates through Carter's *oeuvre*: a useful, informative discourse, it is *not to be taken for absolute truth.* She has firmly moved away from any pretence to a "natural world", her fantastic realities instead bearing a strong resemblance to Maggie Humm's definition of a liberating science fiction where "Women characters can explore change by moving across the border of 'given' realities to an imagined elsewhere".[58] Still, she needs to create a New Woman to fit and, having developed the concept of the impossible, magical chimera in New Eve, and rescued the blonde from the necessarily bad end of traditional Hollywood,[59] Carter finds in Fevvers and the twins Nora and Dora brave, resourceful figures who can further allow her to carry on her ideas. "The future, if we can sustain it, is going to be surreal".[60]

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[55] She certainly is labelled in this fashion by her friends and readers in her obituaries. See The Path of a Writer.
[56] See Lords and Ladies (1992; London: Transworld, 1993) 253-4.
[57] Maskerade (1995; London: Transworld, 1996) 13.
[58] Maggie Humm, Border Traffic: Strategies of Contemporary Women Writers (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1991) 53.
[59] See The Sadeian Woman 57-71.
[60] Andrew Ballantyne, "Gathering-places," Times Literary Supplement 18 Sept. 1992: 10.

5

Dancing, disorder and doubles: travelling heroes in Nights at the Circus and Wise Children

With her last two novels, Nights at the Circus (1984, henceforth Nights) and Wise Children (1991, henceforth Children),[1] Carter performed the duel task of travelling to new places (often in double-quick time) and surveying from new perspectives many of the areas she had already covered in her earlier work. There are obvious implications here for a spatial conception of her work which this chapter investigates. A summary of Carter's two last novels is followed by five sections addressing in turn: travel; cities; communities; the performing space and space/time. Each section focuses on the construction of the novels' environments and how the subject adapts and modifies itself so as to survive them from a different viewpoint.

First, however, I would like to reiterate the point that Carter's work resists linear accounts both on the level of individual text and across the entire corpus. Action does not run along smoothly. Her texts are unruly, darting back into the past, leaping from one narrator to another, and causing all sorts of trouble to a reader trying to find coherence, to homogenise the whole. Lorna Sage writes that Carter "preferred surreal and metaleptic transformations, nothing to do with autobiography, or confession, or testament. But that seeming impersonality was, I'm arguing, entirely personal at base - a refusal to be placed or characterized or *saved* from oneself".[2] Carter's work always contained difficulties, particularly in her contentious treatment of issues such as pornography and violence. In these two late novels, style is highlighted as a way of de-centring the reader's viewpoint and making the reader work to gain enjoyment of the text. With their ambiguities and apparent contradictions, Nights and Children invite their readers to construct their own routes across the text, and to grapple on an individual basis with the amorphous narratives.

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[1] Quotations from both novels will be set in the text. The editions used are Picador (1985) for Nights, and Chatto & Windus (1991) for Children.

[2] Lorna Sage, Angela Carter (Plymouth: Northcote House in association with the British Council, 1994) 52.

Set right at the cusp of the nineteenth century, Nights at the Circus is organised into three sections, each with its own location: London, Petersburg and then Siberia. It is principally concerned with the circus performer Fevvers, the winged Cockney Venus and *aerialiste extraordinaire*. The first section takes the form of an interview between Fevvers and the sceptical young American journalist Jack Walser. He is intent upon getting to the bottom of the tantalising conundrum "Is she fact or is she fiction" which she uses for publicity, in order to expose her as a fraud (7). She is just as keen to construct a past for herself. In this way we learn of Fevvers' shadowy origins, her unknown parents, childhood in a supportive brothel, imprisonment in a very different bordello as a freak-cum-whore by the uncanny Madame Schreck, and narrow escape from ritualised murder. Walser is so intrigued by all of this and fascinated by Fevvers herself that he too joins the circus on its world tour. Meanwhile, other stories begin to spin out from this central narrative. In particular, the women working in both brothels are allowed the space to tell their histories and are then awarded happy endings (which sometimes, but by no means always, contain marriage).

The second section begins with Walser in permanent clown make-up continuing to send bulletins to his newspaper until his arm is mauled by a tiger in Petersburg and his surface disguise becomes an effectual reality. If he cannot write then he is no longer a journalist. In the meantime, while conducting a clandestine correspondence with Karl Marx, Fevvers' greed almost causes her downfall. A lecherous Duke tries to lure her into a literal gilded cage - with a Faberge egg. She only just manages to escape but although she is temporarily diminished both physically and mentally by successive setbacks she is not easily cowed. Some of the circus folk are likewise celebrated for their resilience. The waif Mignon is plucked from her abusive husband the Ape Man (so-called ostensibly because of his profession rather than his behaviour, but his apes are far more humane) and finds love and a voice with the silent pianist and tiger-trainer, the Princess of Abyssinia. In tandem with this, Samson the Strong Man discovers that there is life beyond the body. In contrast, the all-male clown troupe is already beginning to disintegrate, with Buffo their leader drinking himself into a permanent state of the horrors.

In the third section the circus train, travelling through Siberia on the way to Japan, is derailed and all the performers are taken hostage by bandits, with the exception of Walser who

is knocked unconscious and completely loses his grip on his memory. At this point, another story strays across the picaresque path of the Nights narrative as an isolated panopticon-full of husband-murderers sets itself free, pairs off with its (female) wardens and marches into the sunset. When they find the train, having no use for men, the women stop merely to raid it and incidentally to free Walser before going off to found a women-only community. In the meantime, the clown troupe and the bandits (both all-male cliques) are consigned to oblivion.

The terrain occupied by this section of the novel appears extremely crowded because of the different paths everyone insists on taking across it, even though Carter describes it as a "white world" that looks "newly made, a blank sheet of fresh paper" (218). This mirrors the state of Walser's mind, full of gaps but at the same time teeming with images and memories; blank even though it is full because he does not know what to make of them. He stumbles off into the forest and is inadvertently adopted and apprenticed by a Shaman. Time, which throughout the novel has been an unstable entity, plays its biggest trick on the characters by passing at two distinctly different rates; this is somehow connected to the fact that Fevvers' foster-mother Lizzie's clock was broken in the train-crash. Consequently, what is only a few days for Fevvers is enough time for Walser to grow a long beard. Eventually, they do manage to reconnect however and the book ends with their coming together in bed, Fevvers emitting a rollicking carnival laugh that shakes the world as she finally admits that she has been lying all the time, not about her wings, but about her virginity.

Nights is a riotous celebration of the processes of life which not only re-examines the gender politics of the end of the nineteenth century as viewed through those of the late twentieth, but also harnesses earlier rituals and understandings, of what Terry Castle terms "an ancient, numinous sense of the connectedness of all things" which had, she theorises, already become brittle by the eighteenth century.[3] The lives of the silent and liminal, those without voices, are placed at the centre of the narrative. These invisible figures are reinserted into history, and evolve links to its mechanisms, to economics, business, and politics, as well as having a personal existence. On the personal level, the fact that the narrative gives time to farting, belching, gluttony, sex, blood, urine, and faeces as well as to art, culture, and the

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[3] Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction (London: Methuen, 1986) 105.

exquisite can be related to Susan Stewart's thesis in On Longing.[4] She associates the miniature with the fairy, the doll, as an aperture-free body which consequently does not exist in time. In contrast, the gigantic, the body whose openings to the outer world are used and known to be used is very much *of* the time in which it exists. The materiality of the body is emphasised.

This latter materiality is very much Fevvers' terrain. As Magali Cornier Michael comments, she "asserts her authority by simply taking up space".[5] She physically dominates the spaces in the novel, and in so doing she squeezes out lingering traces of doubt, and establishes her own reality. She emerges from the text as the archetype of a new kind of woman, all set for an equal place/space with men in the next century.

Wise Children is also constructed around a complex time scheme. The book is narrated by Dora Chance who, like all her relatives, is a twin. However, due to their illegitimacy, she and her sister Nora are treated as outsiders. They are never wholly accepted by the rest of the family, which adds an edge to Dora's version of their family history. The action of the novel takes place simultaneously over a single day and a hundred years. The former is the twenty-third of April, Shakespeare's birthday as well as Dora and Nora's (seventy-fifth) and their twin fathers' (hundredth), signalling "the Bard's" presence as a major organising force of the novel.

Like Fevvers, Dora and Nora are unclear about their parentage, a vagueness that is thoroughly explored by the book, which examines the contingent nature of life and relationships. Fathering in particular emerges as a hit-and-miss or group activity. Commenting on their father/uncles' (Melchior and Peregrine's) own origins, Dora remarks of the possible candidates, Ranulph Hazard and Cassius Booth, "I like to think they *both* of them had a hand in it" (22). Throughout this narrative, which has at its centre two women whose motto is the same as Fevvers', that "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive" (Nights 279, Children 54), there is an emphasis on the rootlessness of existence, the weakness of the family tree as a symbol from which to extrapolate identity. Dora and Nora are brought up by the

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[4] Susan Stewart, On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984)

[5] Magali Cornier Michael, "Feminism and the Postmodernist Impulse: Doris Lessing, Marge Piercy, Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter", PhD, DA 9027929, Emory University, 1990: 240.

woman they call "Grandma" Chance (who may or may not be a blood relation), and from an early age are smitten by the show business bug. They earn their own living "treading the boards" in painful contrast to their half-sisters/cousins Saskia and Imogen, who attend RADA and contrive to collect all manner of inheritances on their way to prominent careers in show business. This is very much the flavour of the novel. While the Hazard family inhabit the glamorous (and lucrative) end of the theatrical spectrum, the Chances find themselves in a declining medium, reaching the end with a "nude show-cum-pantomime in Bolton, *Goldilocks and the Three Bares*" (105). The two camps intersect rarely, but always in Shakespearean settings: the hit revue What You Will, the Hollywood flop A Midsummer Night's Dream, and at Shakespearean themed parties which never fail to go with a bang.

Throughout, the narrative is obsessed with the idea of separation and doubling: "With London, it's the North and South Divide...the *bastard* side of Old Father Thames" (1). Dora and Nora have been cast by their family as "Other", but their twinned state enables them to problematise the dynamic. As Nora points out, they were "a pretty girl" (110), and indeed they furnish a left hand/right hand view of one. By making Dora the narrator, Carter both submits to the dynamic of complementary terms and subverts it. Nora recedes into the background. Dora comes to the fore. Armed with an ad-hoc education acquired from an alcoholic Hollywood scriptwriter (a cameo F. Scott Fitzgerald), she writes herself into the family history, a tale which climaxes in both her and Nora finally being acknowledged by Melchior as his own. Narrative thus emerges as a device that can have a real effect on the world. Carter is, however, careful to make the caveat that the "carnival's got to stop, some time" (222). The utopianism and empowerment which characterise Nights are acknowledged but tempered in order to accord folklore with reality. In 1985, she told Kerryn Goldsworthy "I read One Hundred Years of Solitude when it first came out, and, rack my brains as I might, I couldn't see a way of writing about Britain, which sometimes seems to me quite an imperative thing to do, in these terms of folklore and so on".[6] One of Carter's projects in Children is to chart a century of a family's history (an English One Hundred Years of Solitude) and, by constantly intermingling "high" and "low" cultures, she manages to make "folkloric" connections. I would suggest that both books represent rewritings of her own *oeuvre* up to

[6] Kerryn Goldsworthy, "Angela Carter," meanjin 44.1 (1985): 5.

that point, and that Children provides a reassessment of the conclusions and projections described in Nights.

In essence Children represents a more pragmatic traversing of the space so triumphantly travelled (flown over?) by Nights. "[H]atched" the Chance girls might have been (26), but although in that sense they may be Fevvers' spiritual daughters (and therefore Eve's grand-daughters), they have failed to inherit her rambunctious optimism as well as her financial security. It can be no coincidence either that Dora's and Nora's profession as live entertainers is very similar to that of Fevvers. Furthermore, although Fevvers is a remarkable feat of evolution (based on the archaeopteryx and the surrealist Apollinaire's New Woman of the century), by dint of technology, she has been out-evolved. The pace of performance has changed. As we saw in Chapter Four, Carter herself wrote about a cinema of her childhood where "real marble" met "painted plaster".[7] Opulence and the later illusion of it blend so imperceptibly that the surface has to be touched to be identified. Children charts this decline in fortune and the enormous implications it has for Fevvers' "New Women". With these two novels Carter has devised a dual, or twin, reality. Travelling through her own corpus she has come to two differing, although not wholly contradictory, conclusions about the possible limitations of carnival. That women can contrive to evolve and to adapt she does not dispute; the change lies in the environment in which they are compelled to achieve this. From the "blank sheet" of "fresh paper" in Nights, she gives us in Children contingent hope peppered with disappointments, a minefield indeed.

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[7] Susannah Clapp, "On madness, men and fairy-tales," Independent on Sunday 9 Jun. 1991, suppt.: 26.

Travel

Increasingly Carter made her heroes travel. In Shadow Dance, The Magic Toyshop and Several Perceptions her protagonists have an inability to shift out of their appalling situations. From Heroes and Villains (but with the exception of Love) there is a certain amount of half-reluctant half-eager travel. Although not altogether free agents, by their choices Marianne, Desiderio and Eve/lyn all to some extent bring their nomadic, liminal state upon themselves although when they make the decision to embark upon their journey they cannot in any way predict what the consequences will be.

The situation in Nights is rather different. Fevvers, without the burden of a history or family (the two are intimately linked in Carter's teleology), is born to wander, or perhaps more accurately given her wings, to migrate. Her narrative is organised around a journey, and as it is in the very nature of a circus to be transient, the nights are going to be in different places. On a more personal basis, her facility for languages is a sign of her adaptability, as is her evident wide reading. In her examination of Bruce Chatwin's Songlines, Eleanor Porter pointed out that Australian aborigines, who have the most direct contact with the type of nomadic existence that it is thought all of our ancestors originally lived, traditionally orientate themselves by casting their surroundings as storied and reading them accordingly.[8] Fevvers mimics this method and is consequently able to move from one environment to another. She escapes the murderous Christian Rosencreutz by correctly *reading* his behaviour, seeing it as indicative of a "neo-Rosicrucian platonic Manichean" sect.[9] Her use of the slogan "is she fact or is she fiction?" makes her own story an intriguing conundrum and allows her free rein in self-interpretation. This also works within a biblical framework, for if both the Old and New Testaments begin with the assertion that the "Word is God", the very last book, Revelation depicts the end of the world heralded by the appearance of part birds part people. Nights, like Eve, emerges as another of Carter's travestied readings. Fevvers, then, travels ambiguously through the text, partly upsetting it through her disregard for its sovereignty, partly facilitating its hold through her capable reading. This also mirrors the effect of the text on the reader who

[8] "Mothering Earth and the Wandering Hero," Conference on Women/Time/Space, University of Lancaster, 25. Mar. 1995. Nancy D. Munn made the same point in "Excluded Spaces," Frazier Lecture, University of Oxford, 16 May 1995. See Introduction.

[9] Page 77. Lorna Sage also makes this point in "Death of the Author," Granta: Biography 41 (1992): 247.

is simultaneously swept along in her wake and periodically checked by being obliged to consider (or dismiss, but be obliged to be aware of such a dismissal) questions about the relationship between author, text and character. When wandering rootlessly in Siberia, Carter has Fevvers question her own reality status: "Am I fact? Or am I fiction?" (290) The possible answers to this, which necessitate careful sifting through various narrative "I"s, ultimately reflect the reader's own relationship to the text, to the self as construct and consciousness as a linguistic entity.

The nature of Fevvers' reality is also played out by way of her literal movement through the text. For a start there is something innately unfeasible about her flight. It takes her far too long to fly across the ring and yet her flights outside and beyond London are described so as to give the impression they are accomplished almost instantaneously. Apparently born to inhabit new heights and places, journeys are nevertheless difficult for her. Her unscheduled flights are associated with pursuit and injury and when travelling by train her exotic vitality is diminished.

In Children Dora and Nora substitute for each other in scenarios reminiscent of All's Well that Ends Well and Measure for Measure (149). Yet while they seem interchangeable to prospective husband "Ghengis" and father Melchior, for uncle Peregrine, mother-figure Grandma and interestingly sinister half-sister Saskia, there is no problem in distinguishing them. Most obviously, the difference is that one is "voiced" and the other "voiceless" (Nora's name incorporates a negative "Nor her").[10] However, there is a further narrative twist in Dora's own shifting position. When referring to herself as the author or storyteller, "Dora" alters her geographical position, state of mind and apparent mode of expression by apparently moving imperceptibly from an office environment of card catalogues and word processor (3) to a pub, much the worse for wear (227). Carter is using mutability to explore the nature of the narrative process. By locating the narrator in several places and modes she places doubt on our certainty of recognising her identity. Sometimes, indeed, she casts doubt upon the narrator's own state of consciousness with throwaway comments such as the self-accusation "Drunk in charge of a narrative" (158).

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[10] I am grateful to Ros Ballaster for pointing this out to me. Dora is also the one to whom more of the crucial events actually happen or who is the more confided in: "He loved us both but I was the one he talked to" (116).

In keeping with their (at the least) dual identity, Dora and Nora are globetrotters while being simultaneously firmly rooted in their birthplace. As show girls, they tour the country and sail to Hollywood; yet they are able to grow old in the house in which they were born. The enforced travel highlights their precarious position in wider society, playing out the theme that they have no fixed place within it. Travel emerges for them, as for Fevvers, as a feminine occupation, a stimulating if sometimes frightening experience and one which is necessary in order to shake off the "woman as home" or representative of the private domestic sphere ethos. In the quest to develop a spatial subjecthood Doreen Massey's advice to women is to "keep moving" as a way of avoiding this stifling representation (11).

This picaresque mode, to which Fevvers and the twins subscribe ("to travel hopefully is better than to arrive") implies the necessity of experiencing such movement. This sits very uncomfortably with the postmodern concept of instant travel proposed by the geographer David Harvey, where technological capability is such that we do not have to experience the scale of our travel either through sight or duration.[11] Already, although we do not, yet, have teleportation, we can circumnavigate the globe in a matter of hours. As the reality of travel has been eroded, so has the difference between the places we find at the end of the journey. Novels such as Anne Tyler's The Accidental Tourist[12] and David Lodge's Paradise News: A Novel[13] have utilised these trends to great effect. The former recounts how the reluctant business traveller can pretend he has never left home wherever in the world he is, while the latter novel explores the extent to which homogenisation takes place so that the genuinely different becomes mere effect.[14] In both Tyler and Lodge, the matter of traversing, moving from one place to the other, is treated not as an experience in itself but as liminal, as a limbo. The hidden nature of travel, out of time, contributes to the construction of a type or sense of mythical place not through distance but through another kind of ordeal, through jet lag and travel sickness: a sort of purgatory.

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[11] See David Harvey, The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change (1990; Blackwell: Oxford, 1991). See especially Chapter 15.

[12] (1985; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

[13] (1991; Harmondsworth: Penguin in ass. with Secker & Warburg, 1992).

[14] For Harvey, this means that the earth itself has effectively shrunk, see 242. Yet there must surely be more specific implications for our experience?

In Carter's epistemology, myth is found to be the result of a trickle-down effect that tries to lie, and so restrict, the majority of people. Religion is definitely included within this blacklisted canon. Folklore, on the other hand, often derived from oral tales, with a multitude of different versions, gives the oppressed cause for hope.[15] In any case, her work challenges travel's increasing tendency to opt out of history. In Children Dora talks of their journey to Hollywood in terms of pilgrimage, "Hollywood was a long haul from London in those days" (112), while Nights, in many ways an archetypal picaresque narrative,[16] a genre that "moves inexorably onward, ever, onward", should be understood as text-as-journey or songline: narrative expressed in terms of movement.[17] If travel were instant then there would be no room for debate or development. It is the process and the progression rather than the destination that Carter is concerned with, which drives her heroes and ultimately pulls the reader into the text without providing her with a clear path out of it at the end of the narrative. The recurring cry in Children - "What a joy it is to dance and sing" - illustrates perfectly how integral movement is, for its own sake as well as for artistry and enjoyment for Carter's speculative carnival heroes (5, 34, 232).

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[15] See "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 69-77; and "Introduction," The Virago Book of Fairy Tales, illus. Corinna Sargood (London: Virago, 1990).

[16] See the discussion on Ulrich Wicks in Chapter 3, The Battle Zone.

[17] Sage, Angela Carter 50.

Cities

As I mentioned earlier in this piece, Nights is organised in three sections. Two of these are named after cities, London and Petersburg (which in 1984 was still hidden behind the disguise "Leningrad"). Children also centres round London with a brief foray to Hollywood. Fevvers, Nora and Dora are all Cockneys, city dwellers, at their best in the crowded manmade disorder. Excursions into the wilderness, confrontations with nature unnerve them at best, and make them feel exposed and vulnerable. Because of this, after being stranded temporarily, they return thankfully to the arms of Mother London,[18] and to the company they find there. With this dynamic in mind, and following on from Chapter Four, this section examines Carter's cities - their appearance, organisation and ambience - concentrating all the time on the effect of gender.

In Eve, we saw how the city was physically returned to something like its medieval avatar without any re-injection of the medieval communality. The city as a space is concerned with separation despite proximity and with the concept of more than one city existing in the same place: possibility rather than order is proffered. Yet there is a more sinister side to this potential freedom. Mary Russo, Terry Castle and Elizabeth Wilson, among others, have charted the additional dangers women face in carnival situations, which are particularly associated with cities.[19] Wilson believes this is because women's (and other minority groups') signification as Other emerges as a cultural alternative at certain times and must therefore be firmly quelled. In her own words: "Urban life provided the space in which subcultures could flourish and create their own identities, yet the more visible and confident they became, the more vulnerable that made them to surveillance and containment" (120). Because of this, at highly ambiguous times, the tenor of a situation might turn against the protagonist at any point. Freedom could become isolation or invasion with only a slight adjustment. As we saw

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[18] See Carter's review of Michael Moorcock book of that name. There, London emerges as somewhere to be returned to, not so much the worryingly conservative "woman as genre" which was examined in the last section, but constructed through the voice of the people. "The narrative is seamed with...voices in a multitude of tongues, speaking platitudes, mouthing sexual paranoia, prejudice, gossip, wild talk, abuse...the city talking to herself. She is not a loving mother. But we must take her as we find her; she is the only one we have" ("Michael Moorcock," Expletives Deleted: Selected Writings (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992) 117).

[19] Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," Feminist Studies/Critical Studies, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: New Indiana UP, 1986) 213-29; Castle, Masquerade and Civilization; Elizabeth Wilson, The Sphinx in the City: Urban life, the control of disorder, and women (London: Virago, 1991).

in Chapter Four, the attitudes of male and female modernist writers vary widely. Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson found the city (with its changeable aspects and consequent infringements on the boundaries of the self) to be an invigorating environment (Wilson 158). Many of their male counterparts, however, were unable to summon up the same enthusiasm as such eclectic tumult unnerved them. This, in turn, points to a connection between women's writing and a reaction against or type of antithesis to modernism: precisely the point made by Ann Ardis.[20] Her study of the late nineteenth-century burgeoning sub-genre of the "New Woman" novel shows that it functioned as modernism's other, a shadowy disruptive unspeakable aspect of modernism's apparently apolitical neutered stance.

How do these viewpoints compare with Carter's versions of the city in Nights and Circus? For a start, her fin-de-siècle London is indisputably female. On the night of Fevvers' first flight, she and Lizzie watch the sun rise "over London and the gilded great dome of St Paul's until it looked like the divine pap of the city which, for want of any other, I needs must call my natural mother. London, with the one breast, the Amazon queen" (36). The city works as a macrocosm of Fevvers herself, who overwhelms the flâneur Walser, just as New York overwhelms Evelyn. Fevvers' London links give her access to the carnival and to the New Woman genre whilst simultaneously breaking her potential connections with eco-feminism, where woman is associated with the ground as an anthropomorphic figuring of nature. This image does not suit the dynamic role Carter has constructed for her. Instead she is an agent of change very much in the mould of Luce Irigaray's envisioned angels, messengers who "are never immobile nor do they ever dwell in a single place".[21] In The Sadeian Woman, Carter decided that a "free woman in an unfree society will be a monster" (27), and in Chapter Three we saw that figure linked with a restrictive poetics of femininity. Yet in Fevvers she has managed to create a being both apocalyptic and sympathetically human. Associated with the city and with change, Fevvers can move and mediate.

London works slightly differently for Dora and Nora. In a novel obsessed with right hand/left hand divisions they are firmly defined as being from "the wrong side of the tracks" (1). Londoners all their lives, in the course of the narrative the reader gleans facts in the

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[20] Ann Ardis, New Women New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism (London: Rutgers, UP, 1990).
[21] Luce Irigaray, "Sexual Difference," The Irigaray Reader: Luce Irigaray, ed. and introd. Margaret Whitford (1991; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) 173.

course of the narrative that indicate the changes London has undergone in the past three-quarters of a century. Movement is restricted in the parts of the city where the Underground does not penetrate, where residents are dependent upon infrequent buses. The sense of community which pervaded their childhood, both repressing and reassuring, has dissipated. Dora remarks archly that these days "you could stage a three-point orgy in the garden and nobody would bat an eye" (27). The very Englishness of London has gone through a sea-change; there is a hitherto unimaginable variety of people whose origins are (the inevitable) "other" and who import new cultural signifiers, from food to clothes to languages.

Dora and Nora were outsiders from the very beginning of their lives because of their lack of history. This is emphasised by their Grandma who herself seems not to have existed before the first of January, nineteen hundred. The London of Children emerges as a series of interlocking , often wildly tangled, strands which the twins have to weave through, make space for themselves amongst. Their own duality aids them in this. They are simulacra, in a typically postmodern trope. (Writing on this subject, Michael Hardin goes so far as to say that "in the postmodern world there cannot be an origin or a privileged perspective".[22]) Their twin bodies give the impression of a co-existing image and reflection, which in turn implies, for those viewing them, a sort of time-hop, a concept strengthened by Dora's omitting to reveal which twin is the first-born which in turn substitutes for a personal history. So they do manage to attain some kind of legitimacy - albeit through reinterpreting what legitimacy itself entails.

Carter uses this novel to explore the multiple levels of reality to be found in the city, eventually reaching the point where "Right hand/left hand" is too simplistic a label to use on the enmeshed but separated existences lived by her Londoners. Dora and Nora's existence is so totally removed from that of their half-sisters (or perhaps cousins) Saskia and Imogen that they might as well be living on different planets. Yet although they are spatially removed from each other in the normal course of events, from time to time their paths cross. This first occurs, crucially, when Dora and Nora are in a pantomime that Saskia and Imogen are taken to see, and recurs at intervals when the carnival element of the novel is at its strongest. These

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[22] "The Other Other: Self-Definition Outside Patriarchal Institutions in Angela Carter's Wise Children," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 82.

meetings are by no means always joyful, celebratory or life-affirming events however. Instead, the equivocal use of carnival echoes the equivocal place the twins find in their family and society generally. Where Fevvers is ultimately affirmed, sufficient unto herself, at seventy-five Dora and Nora experience the customary "invisibility of old ladies" even in their outrageous star-spangled, party attire (199).

Outside London Fevvers travels well, at first, and as long as she remains in an urban setting. Petersburg provides her with a new arena and audience at the same time that Walser discovers himself capable of a new prose style that reflects his own stimulated senses; thus he sees the city as being built of "hubris, imagination and desire" (97). Yet this fairy tale city contains ogres like the runaway tigress who mauls him and the Duke who tries to entrap Fevvers as well as the fairy tale small boy who runs away to join the circus and his "picturesque" peasant grandmother.

In Children, Hollywood is the destination of pilgrimage but on arrival the twins find a fallen paradise. Enclosed, a walled city, it acts as both a sacred place and as a prison. In fact it "acts" in more ways than one for, from within, it is neither real nor convincing, nor does it entice its inmates into any kind of willing disbelief. The sun is harmful as are the sets and the director of the film on which the Chances and Hazards are working - "Ghengis Khan" - is a Bluebeard figure of dread. The artificial parasitic city is dedicated solely to reproducing itself on film and disseminating its image to as large an audience as possible. It has an enervating effect on both Dora and Nora, both of whom get closer than ever before or since to marriage. This recalls Carter's remark about her female heroes who "are always wearing wedding dresses in my fiction....It's usually a prelude to something ghastly."[23] Because they have stepped outside the polyvalent existence to which they are accustomed, they have been thrown back onto the traditional conveyer-belt of marriage followed by the "happy ever after" that Hollywood proposes.

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[23] Moira Paterson, "Flights of Fancy in Balham," Observer 9 Nov. 1986, mag.: 45. See also 69 above.

Cities, then, work as the building blocks of ideologies, the concretisation of narratives and as paradigms for characters' personalities as well as having a "bricks and mortar" aspect. All of these factors have some effect on the communities, relationships and households both within and outside the city, in which case, how well do these more separated fragments of society function, and how does Carter's attitude change from Nights to Children?

In terms of "community", Nights features: two London brothels; the Circus itself within which the Clowns and the Apes are sub-groups; the all-female panopticon; the bandits; the conservatory and the Siberian village. The first brothel, Ma Nelson's, where Fevvers was brought up, appears to work like one of the female-centred family arrangements described by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg.[24] Prostitution is seen largely as an economic necessity with which the women comply in order to be able to achieve their ambitions, thus exemplifying Carter's assertion that as a profession it is inherently honest and can on no account be considered as interfering with a woman's honour.[25] Instead she is playing with Victorian social "truths" which, as we saw in the Introduction, can be broken down into a determination to keep "good" women away from "bad" in accordance with the underlying Victorian social system of types of "virtue" and "vice", which can be mediated only by the non-signified man.[26] When Ma Nelson dies and the "cold light of early dawn" (49) reveals their threadbare surroundings, the women perceive that they have a choice. They do not remain within the rigid boundary of classification, a typology imposed from outside. Instead they embark upon careers and marriages that are profitable both economically and spiritually. Under the auspices of the very female London of Nights, this sub-society is successful to the extent that it is able to thwart Victorian inheritance and property laws, thus preventing Nelson's clergyman brother from converting the house into a home for fallen girls. In doing so they prevent the future terrorising and punishing of a similar set of women to themselves,

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[24] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: OUP, 1985) e.g. 254-5.

[25] The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (1979; London: Virago, 1987) 47-8.

[26] Angela Leighton, " 'Because men made the laws': the fallen woman and the woman poet," New Feminist Discourses: Critical Essays on Theories and Texts, ed. Isobel Armstrong (London: Routledge, 1992) 344. See also 11 above.

and even beyond the confines of the house they continue to network; Fevvers goes on the stage at the suggestion of one of her former colleagues. Something more far-reaching than merely living in the same house is happening. The industry and creativity of the women have changed the nature of the space they occupy.

The atmosphere in Madame Schreck's establishment, although mutually supportive among the "freaks" is altogether different. These women are held in unpaid thrall, displayed in a cold, damp crypt. The way in which they are exhibited, the manner in which their clients survey them and the long, long time it seems to take Fevvers actually to reach this brothel in the first place all point to its existence on the very edge of society and humanity. This is so all-pervasive that Fevvers narrowly escapes being murdered because a middle-aged politician wants to absorb her supposed supernatural powers as the Angel of Death in a darkened interpretation of Fevvers' symbolism. In the end, however, it is revealed that Madame Schreck herself was only an empty threat clothed in black. Once Fevvers has defied her she shrivels away into nothing, like the Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz, leaving the inmates to leave and pick up their lives again in a variety of arenas.[27]

The most disturbing aspect of this second brothel is its likeness to Colonel Kearney's circus. The Colonel uses every trick at his disposal to disempower his performers - his motto, like W. C. Fields', is "Never give a sucker an even break" (275). His lack of ethics is so pronounced that, like Schreck, he substitutes appetites for character and so cannot be modified by his experiences. It is as though the brothel and the circus-ring, as well as the panopticon, need a dead centre, a pivot from which the enclosed community fans out, from which it takes its reference, but which is not itself affected.

The circus, then, bears more than a passing resemblance to the freak show, while Kearney bears more than a passing resemblance to P. T. Barnum, the famous circus-proprietor and freak-displayer of that era,[28] in one of the anchors of truth and fact which connect Carter's texts to our world. Its population is eclectic, a "motley crew" (279), and the names of many of the "inmates" point towards the unruliness of the gathering and the inevitable storms which will result. Fevvers' rivals are the Charivaris, the trapeze-artist family (the OED definition of

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[27] Doctor Hoffman also appears as an "Oz" figure. See Chapter 3.

[28] An *F.* T. Barnum suggests to Ranulph and Estella Hazard that they play "*Hamlet* in a tent in Central Park" (Children 16).

"charivari" is "rough music", "a confused discordant medley of sounds; a babel of noise"). The Ape-Man might well be some missing link judging by his behaviour. Then there are the Clowns.

An all-male group, they exist in a self-imposed exile in apparent similitude, but actual contrast, to the freak women of the first section of the book. Unlike the members of Schreck's brothel, whose peculiarity is in their unique body features, the Clowns assume their freakishness with the aid of make-up, clothes and behaviour. They give up their names, taking on generic or nonsensical titles, such as Buffo, Grik and Grok. Also unlike the women they have, and cultivate, a genealogy, a history of their craft in which they subsume themselves. Their mode of expression is active, physical to the point of violence, where the women were displayed in tableau. Both groups travesty humanity for humanity's amusement but with an undercurrent of menace. With the women it emanates from the onlooker, but in the circus ring the Clowns mock and threaten each other and the audience. Walser's mock execution as a Christmas dinner is very nearly carried out; Buffo ventures too far out into the domain of nonsense and goes mad; and, in the end the entire troupe dance their way to oblivion. Carter chooses the same fate for this group as she does for that other, intransigent all-male set, the bandits who capture them, and also for Zero and his harem in Eve, by simply blowing them away, refusing to deal with them any longer. In a gesture which seems like impatience, she rids her narrative of these destructive groups. Authorial omnipotence allows her to remove them so there is room for the white spaces of possibility.

The circus has a complex, almost mystical, sentience. In her account of life with a modern day Mexican circus, Trip the Light Fantastic, Katie Hickman found that although the performers led a picaresque existence, there was nevertheless a strict hierarchy which was arranged through a complex set of kinship ties (98). Although it may seem strange to compare a real, contemporary circus to a fictional nineteenth century one, Hickman's words to the proprietor when she was trying to persuade him to let her join the circus for a while reveal the relevance of this analogy. Speaking about Latin American writers, she asserts that:

> There's nothing *magical* about what we write, they say - not because they do not believe in magic, but because they know that we in the West only use the word to describe what is not true. Your novelists write this way because this is

> their truest expression of what life is like. This is real. This is your reality. (14-15)

I am not arguing for a total suspension of disbelief, merely for the admission of a flexible reality. In the course of this study we have looked at the pragmatism of fairy tales and, more generally the uses of fiction. The Latin American way of mediating reality, magic, language is different enough from the traditional Western models to allow comparison between it and Carter's fantasy to be taken on its own terms.

Although it gives the illusion of freedom, the circus is insular; regarded with suspicion by its host towns, the inhabitants are isolated. In Hickman's words again: "In Mexico the circus is a marginalized world; a caste of untouchables, as some would still see them, existing only on the fringes of society" (58). As with Schreck's brothel, there is a sense that the circus folk have very little autonomy because there is nowhere else left to go. They have already run away, or been ejected from, any other possible niches. Yet there are still plenty of attempts made to escape. When, for instance, Carter's circus reaches Petersburg, many of the more casual employees simply slip away, whilst the Apes settle on a new contract and make a bid for freedom.

The circus can be considered as akin to a vacuum flask. A number of potentially incompatible elements are put together in a confined space and compressed until something gives way as a spark or an absence or a change of state. The "in-built narrative drive" Carter spoke of in the context of the picaresque narrative turns out to be a witch's spell for trouble. Its inner instability fuels its external or geographic variability.

Carter sets up a similarly explosive situation with the panopticon. Taken directly from Foucault's Discipline and Punish (see the Introduction), which is in turn based upon Jeremy Bentham's design, this edifice in the shape of a "doughnut" (210) carves up the space it contains so that the husband-murderer prisoners are constantly confronted with their consciences by way of the opaque, dead-white stare of the Countess, a woman who is similarly guilty but whose guilt is being expiated through *their* incarceration. She sits in the middle of the prison from which the cells radiate; there is a case for asserting a metaphysical as well as physical significance for the mini-spaces/enclosures. Carter said that "a circus is

always a microcosm",[29] but here she is apparently asserting that a cell is a microcosm as well. Each cell, with its inmate almost in a state of suspended animation, contains an infinitely drawn-out, indefinitely postponed version of the process of crime, apprehension and retribution. This illustrates perfectly Foucault's explication of the aim of justice as it evolved in early modern Europe to more recent times, its focus transferring from an external inscribing to an internal reconfiguration of which the panopticon is the archetypal instrument. Thus Carter ensures that the reader is fully aware of this set of inner processes by describing the invasion of inner space experienced by one of the prisoners, Olga Alexandrovna, who finds herself compulsively going over her trial day after day as she sits in her segmented, generic space. Yet these rigid walls, solid and ideological as they are, can be ignored, as Carter shows. Once Olga has overcome the room's function of infinitely perpetuating her guilt, by silently declaring her own innocence to herself, she is able to transcend it, by touching her warder's hand as her breakfast is delivered. In transferring the central locus of information exchange from the distancing look to the communicating, mediating touch she breaks down all manner of boundaries. It not only disturbs the silence and order of her room when it sends her tray hurtling to the ground, it undifferentiates the division between bodies and between prisoners and guards, between incarceration and freedom. It stops the panopticon clock, jamming its mechanism, and also precipitates the women into the main body of the text itself. On leaving the prison the women find themselves in the " white world" where "they could inscribe whatever future they wished" (218). They troop confidently across the grain of the main narrative, complicating the space of the text with their pursuit of their utopian vision in conjunction with a profound disinterest in the other figures and plots. Carter has replaced a static, introspective image with an active one. This in turn mirrors the effect of the text as a whole which, in conformation with Carter's own aim, shoots threads of stories out beyond the confines of the text (Haffenden 91). The reader is induced into continuing to think about the characters beyond the end of the physical artefact.

With its less optimistic mood, and greater awareness of limitation, Children is occupied with filling, in fact peopling, emptiness. The twins, (proclaiming their connection

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[29] John Haffenden, "Magical Mannerist," Novelists in Interview (London: Methuen, 1985) 89.

with the Miss Haversham-like Tristessa[30]), retreat from the contemporary world into their own past. While the latter literally entombs herself among her fellow icons James Dean, Marilyn Monroe, etc., the twins return to their family home, cats, gin, old films, and keep the same style of make-up that had been prevalent "in the period at which we peaked" (5). Elsewhere, Carter has admitted that she had so few mothers in her novels that the houses/homes which do appear perhaps stand in for them.[31] For the twins the house is part prison, part retreat, wholly redolent of their Grandma. Indeed, at one point it is as though she has come back to haunt them through the house itself. Standing in her old bedroom, Dora and Nora are feeling sorry for themselves because they are old and never had a "normal" family, whereupon they are bodily assailed by Grandma's old hat and her gloves, in one of Carter's freak gusts of air which clears the topology of the novel for new journeys, patterns and characters (189-90). The rupture provides space for reassessment.[32] They are promptly snapped out of their doldrums.

Barbara Johnson, in her essay on the quintessential troubled modernist female text, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's novella The Yellow Wallpaper (1892), points out that its disturbing merging of figure and ground prompts questions about where the narrator is situated. Speculation over which side of the wall she is on cannot be answered definitively,[33] and in the resulting confusion, an aura of menace and madness is created. Johnson then goes further to draw a comparison between Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark" and Gilman's story, asserting that in "the male writer's story, the birthmark is an overinvested *figure* inscribed on a page that should be blank. In the female writer's story, the wallpaper is an overinvested *ground*" (258). The possibilities that this movement opens up are seductive for, "if at first it seems that the woman projected into the paper is trying to move from ground to figure, by the end of the story the narrator has moved *herself* past the outside, upper figure into a ground that cannot be located in real space" (261). In Children's case, Grandma's spirit's cryptic emergence from the fabric of the house, whilst on one level alarming in its violence, is also reassuring. The blurring of figure and ground allows a sense of continuity to

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[30] Carol Siegel, "Postmodern Women Novelists Review Victorian Male Masochism," Genders 11 (1991): 12.
[31] Lorna Sage, "Angela Carter," New Writing, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Cooke (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1992) 190.
[32] I am paraphrasing Hardin 77.
[33] Barbara Johnson, "Is Female to Male as Ground is to Culture?" Feminism and Psychoanalysis, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989) 260. Of course the Chances have a mother in Grandma, but in the absence of a biological mother the relationship becomes more of a "movable feast" (13).

enter into and counter the twins' bleak mood even as the message, "Memory Lane is a dead end" refutes it (190). An almost intoxicating sense of freedom and release is created.

In fact, the twins have succeeded in constructing their own extended family as an alternative to their tenuous connection with the hazardous Hazards. Apart from Grandma, there is "Our Cyn" who becomes one of the "fixtures and fittings" (34, 35), and who provides them with generations of proxy descendants. Similarly, the white cat they bring back from Hollywood becomes "the founding mother of the Chance cat dynasty" (161). Their multiracial, multi-species family contrasts favourably with the incestuous Hazard clan which in turn is more closely paralleled by the twins' transitory associations with theatre and Hollywood societies. These relationships are often stormy, exploitative and hierarchical. Dora, for instance, carries on an affair with a "Mr Piano Man" simply because of the presents and because he enhances her part in the musical "*What? You Will?*" (88); while Nora and Tony's and Melchior and Daisy's own love affairs prove to be less real than the film-set upon which they are played out (160-1).

These latter experiences provide an outlet for exploring the general precariousness of the community through a cinematic paradigm. Mary Ann Doane, thinking about filmed close-ups of women, reasons that psychoanalysis depends upon the instability of the visual, as it rests upon the tenet that "truth resides in the image".[34] The Chances are surrounded by images of themselves on film, in stills, and of course in each other. They are background, foreground, acutely aware of themselves as identical but separate, indeed, while Dora reveals that the twins had their own ways of looking at each other: "We never saw what other people saw" (95). The economy of the gaze, with its pinioning effect has been frustrated. This effect is similar to that precipitated by Olga Alexandrovna in Nights when she disrupts the purity of the gaze-system in the panopticon by substituting touch. Once a site where segmentation and separation was mandatory, now the spaces are beginning to be formed in a new way.

The disparity of vision with other, perhaps more accurate, senses is also apparent in the progress of some of Nights' secondary characters, in particular that of Mignon, the Princess of Abyssinia, Samson and the Professor of Music. Whilst a "motley crew" on first glance, they achieve a profound connection through music which is itself a transitory,

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[34] Mary Ann Doane, "Veiling Over Desire: Close-ups of the Women," Feldstein and Roof 107.

reverberating mutable entity. Ultimately, Mignon sings herself into existence in a manner reminiscent of the aborigines in Songlines. As part of her song she asks "do you know the land?" thereby creating a metaphysical space with it that chimes in with Johnson's interstitial cultural space, and with Michèle Roberts' "place of imagination" which invites us "to a crazy kind of dance, inventing some new steps, humming some new kind of time".[35] Motifs outside the usual verbal means of expression are hugely important in the articulation of these other sorts of reality.

Reviewing the arguments of these last two, closely-linked sections on cities and communities, it appears that ultimately the inherent dishonesty of the gaze - through the attempt to place the marginalised subject as other, and blame her for instability - creates danger particularly for women in cities, as well as frustration and restriction in smaller segments of society. Modes of communication which reflexively acknowledge their own characteristics of contingency and change are far more likely to provide the means for constructing a dynamics of space that work for, rather than against, fluidity and movement. It is with this potential in mind that I address the next section, which deals with the space of performance, its mixture of sense-engagements, its problematics of the actor-viewer and dynamic possibilities of intense narcissistic masochism from, in particular, female performers.

[35] Michèle Roberts, "The Place of the Imagination," The Cardiff Lecture, 17 Feb. 1994 (London: Random House, 1994) 31.

The Performing Space

As the above quotations suggest, my thinking about the performance space is based on the premise that a particular kind of hierarchy is formed through the mechanism of spectacle. Both performance and spectacle are closely linked to Hollywood, the unreal city which appears endlessly fragmented and endlessly concerned with constructing facades of itself for export around the world in a caricature of the Western drive to colonise. Theatre and film are, of course, very different in terms of venue, budget, style, scale, the skills required, and many other factors. However, they have in common a shifting of identities, the spectator/voyeur audience and a frame or space wherein the performance takes place. For Carter, these several spaces have obvious disparities. In real life, she stopped going to the theatre in the late fifties: "that dreadful spectacle of painted loons in the middle distance making fools of themselves",[36] and Children depicts the failure of an immensely successful actor to make the transition between media. Yet, because she has given her late heroes careers based on the live stage, I want to consider the two modes together as far as possible in this section, allowing theoretical cross-pollination to enrich the debate.

The space of performance, on stage and screen, is consequently of interest to those for whom this spectacular dynamic is problematic. As well as film and drama theorists, it also concerns feminist theorists and postmodernists, not to mention architects and human geographers. The ways in which it is theorised, though, the differing agendas and methodologies which various parties bring to the debate, contrive to make the arena exciting but perilous. As Carter's writing is particularly sensitive to the shifting grounds of the postmodern, the effects of the visual and of feminist theory, I shall start this exploration into the nature of the performance space with an initial rehearsal of the work of Laura Mulvey.

As previously noted in Chapter Four, Laura Mulvey, in her ground-breaking essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", observed that not only were female spectators coerced into adopting a male viewpoint, thus complying with the classic patriarchal

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[36] "Acting it up on the Small Screen," Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (1982; London: Virago, rev. ed. 1992) 144.

standpoint, but that female characters were physically constrained by the workings of camera and narrative.[37] Crowded out of the screen space, constrained by roles that imprison her in her body, the effect on the actress is of a deactivated sexuality; constantly on show but actually a hollow burden reminiscent of the image of the curvaceous metallic torso, denoting stricture, which famously decorates the cover of Germaine Greer's The Female Eunuch.[38] Writing with this sense of stasis and infertility, Mulvey demands new ways of looking at cinema and at women which allow the two to find new methods of relating to each other.

In Chapter Four, we saw Judith Butler in Gender Trouble revealing that gender is not a state, but rather that it is a process, a continually refined series of acts or performances, a *becoming* (112, my italics). The effectiveness of this performance is gauged from the outside, with women moving within a constricted gender/generic space. John Berger, looking at "ways of seeing", posited a consequent internal monitor developed in woman, which sounds very like the electronic device used on paroled prisoners which supposedly triggers an alarm when its wearer strays beyond the places he (!) should be. In Berger's words:

> Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female.[39]

Ways out of this claustrophobic stranglehold include Luce Irigaray's "masquerade" (from This Sex Which is Not One) which rather perilously concerns an overconformity within the prescribed canon of behaviour in order to highlight its absurdities. Butler's solution is similarly problematic. It follows on from Irigaray's concept, in involving parodic performances that function as "imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original" and so "imitate the myth of originality itself" (Gender Trouble 138). The background to this way of thinking lies in Butler's association of femininity with melancholy which is in turn associated with the mask as a "way of holding on to and becoming part of

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[37] Originally, in Screen (1975), reprinted in Visual and Other Pleasures (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989). See especially 19-23.

[38] (1971; London: Paladin, 1987).

[39] Ways of Seeing: based on the BBC television series with John Berger, [a book made by John Berger et al.] (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972) 47.

refusal" (50). This is apparently the refusal to follow stereotyped roles blindly, and is concerned with the possible enfranchisement of a "loss of the sense of 'the normal' " (138).

Hélène Cixous' and Catherine Clément's hysterical woman in The Newly Born Woman uses her own distress/disorder to remember and relive a traumatic event she finds herself unable to express except through her body. According to Cixous, certain arenas exacerbate the consequences of the action; loci of disturbance develop. Thus, with "the circus and the cinema, we have moved into the institutionalisation of hysteria: spectacle cashing in on the exchange of money".[40] Cixous then, not only concurs with the others in identifying spectacle with power and gender, she also makes the inevitable, troubling link between power and money. Although the whole point of a successful performance hinges on the apparent spontaneity of an apparent jouissance, at the same time, someone is paying. In The Sadeian Woman, Carter argues the case for marriage to be considered as a dishonest form of prostitution, as money is a major factor in any sexual relationship but with marriage we pretend it is not relevant (9). John Berger's theory of the gaze also hinges around "the principle protagonist", "the spectator in front of the picture" who is "presumed to be a man" (54). The performance space, then, exists as a feminised place that is occupied by one person, or set of people, but which is customarily owned or controlled by another. The magic apparently generated in Nights, is usually built upon a foundation of misery, cruelty, violence and betrayal; Schreck and Kearney make slaves of their performers; the Clowns derive their comedy from tragedy and alienation, and many of the other performers seem driven by hatred or by professional rivalry that can run completely out of control (160).

Men as well as women and animals can be caught up inside this economy of prostitution. In Children, Dora speculates of Melchior Hazard: "I wonder if he lent his mouth here, his arsehole there, to see if that would do the trick" (24). Yet the entrapment tends to work along the usual gender lines. The clichéd "casting couch" makes an appearance. Significantly, the Hollywood director, "Ghengis" lures girls onto it after watching them, supposedly without their knowledge, through the hollowed-out eye of a painting of Christ. The mask of sanctity covers a multitude of sins. Brought up in a brothel, the pragmatic

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[40] Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing. introd. Sandra Gilbert, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 24 (1975; Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1987) 13.

Fevvers' very anatomy is modified by money. When she received a gift of diamonds, with the prospect of more, we are told her pupils "narrowed down to the shape of £ signs" (172). Yet she does separate her honour from her sexuality/favours even as her greed is shown to be a threat to her self. Her theme tune, "Only a bird in a gilded cage", is, when *she* uses it, a wry understatement which actually negates the fact of the cage. By naming it she controls it. Her desire for riches however, seduces her into temporarily allowing someone else to "play the tune". Consequently, she only narrowly escapes being trapped within the cage which the Russian Duke has had made into a Faberge egg.

Mary Ann Caws finds herself asking whether there is not "some way of looking that is not as consumers?"[41] Following Norman Bryson she suggests that an interrupted gaze, a glance, which withdraws afterwards into the calm of non-seeing, might perhaps bring about a disruption in the boundaries of the performing arena (270). Carter has apparently adopted a variant of this stratagem, again with Fevvers. Giving the effect of a flickering glance, something like the first cinematic devices, Carter has Fevvers moving impossibly slowly, in a "*mooch*" through the air (17, her italics), so that the spectator's controlling gaze becomes a helpless stare of disbelief. The power-dynamic starts to work in the opposite direction as the spectator, like an animal first watching, then caught in headlights, begins to feel torpid.[42] The Clowns contribute to this feeling as their act also contrives to turn the spectator into something of a victim.

There are other, alternative, ways of thinking about the space itself, and about the divisions between performers and spectators that may facilitate some reshuffling of their relative positions, so changing the nature of the space with which their relationship is negotiated. In Children, Carter exploits the device of the Shakespearean play, and its own typical mechanism, the play-within-the-play, to break down the barriers between spectators and characters. Hollywood itself is a mixture of the functional and the fictional within the scope of her book. The self-conscious, self-commodifying city has a type of spectacular female sexuality as explored in Chapter Three. It is apparently inviting, but empty.

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[41] Mary Ann Caws, "Ladies Shot and Painted: Female Embodiment in Surrealist Art," The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives, ed Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985, 1986) 269.

[42] The OED defines "torpid" as "Benumbed; deprived or devoid of the power of motion or feeling; in which activity, animation, or development is *suspended*" (my italics).

Hollywood is Melchior's chimera. The intersection of money, fame and a chance to relive the past are too intoxicating for him. If Carter's ontology included at this point a viable concept of the soul, his would have been sold.[43] As it is, he leads his troupe into the "wood where you go mad" at the same time as he exposes them to all kinds of scrutiny, manipulation and exploitation (Children 158). In true "play-within-the-play" fashion, a series of sub-plots begins to form around the main theme of the production of the film itself. Among these are Melchior-as-Oberon's affair with his Titania, Daisy Duck; Nora's romance with Tony the cook; and Dora's affair with "Irish", not to mention her near marriage to Ghenghis (who is also Daisy's husband) which is thwarted only by his own first wife fortuitously appearing at the wedding as Dora's double, courtesy of plastic surgery. Over all these unravelling threads hangs an atmosphere that deceives and confuses. Melchior marries Daisy and then discovers that she is not pregnant after all; Nora thinks she is married and finds out she is not; Genghis originally wanted Nora, Dora substituted for her, then abdicated in favour of a third candidate. Furthermore, not only are identities and roles blurred and changed, but the very stage is dangerous with its burrs and thorns. We are back in the realm of the wicked stepmother. There is, for Dora, a perceptible difference between the stage space she is used to and which she loves, and the sinister film set. The space itself emerges as a character, or series of related characters, in the story, an active rather than passive force.

The performance space, thus, emerges as feminised, marginalised, exploited, fought over and confined by establishment currents that themselves only appear by proxy or effect, much like Carter's winds of change. Yet at the same time, it is highly visible and potentially influential. It also reveals a quality to women's sexuality that, though problematic, may itself be exploitable in their favour, the exploration of androgyny. Perhaps, like pornography, the very act of performing, while it inhibits women in one sense, also provides a possibility for change and development. This has been picked up by Butler who concludes that "drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (137). Juliet Blair, in her own examination of actresses' professionalising of "the behaviour of all women", sees the

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[43] See Lizzie's comment in Nights, where she asserts that a soul is "a thing that don't exist. So, scrub the 'soul' from out of your discourse" (239).

change in the nature of stage space when women organise a heterogeneous mixture in the place of the public and the private, high and low culture and other supposed contrasts as "turning museums of culture into soup-kitchens, delivering daily bread for the mind".[44]

Throughout Nights and Children there are signs that Carter is thinking along the same lines. Gender- and other kinds of blurring are common, and specifically associated with people who perform for a living. Ma Nelson always dressed as her namesake; there is the ultimate confusion in the hermaphrodite Albert/Albertina; and Lizzie's moustache, while it marginalises her in terms of standard definitions of woman, enhances her affinity with bears. Most importantly, if we read the Chance twins as daughters of Fevvers, who is herself Eve's child, it somehow does not seem surprising when Nora announces out of the blue: "We're both of us mothers and both of us fathers" (230). The possibilities of reality are extended by the imagination.

[44] Juliet Blair, "Private Parts in Public Places: The Case of Actresses," Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps, ed. and introd. Shirley Ardener (Oxford: Berg, 2nd rev. ed. 1993) 210, 217.

Space as time

In this section, I look at time experientially and conceptually both as a counter*part* to space - as the fourth dimension which shapes our movement and understanding of the external environment, and as its counter*point* - through the dynamics of the Western Hegelian dyad, that is, time/space. Since our trajectories through time, as opposed to through space, are at first glance hapless one-way journeys, from birth to death, actually finding ways of conceptualising and understanding time is a challenging activity.

Our culture is obsessed with time, its measurement, the fending off of old age. I would argue that at present, this behaviour is intensified as it is being enacted within a framework bound up with a sense of fin-de-siècle, of doom, the unknown overshadowing. Elaine Showalter finds that the "ends of centuries seem not only to suggest but to intensify crises",[45] and Carter herself, writing in 1972, commented that "It looks like the *fin* has come a little early to this *siècle*".[46] This totally artificial phenomenon reflects our reactions to our inevitable fate and provides one of the elements of Carter's explosive games with time.

Is it possible, then, to study time impartially? The most far-reaching examinations on the subject have been conducted in the field of geology. Even here, however, any explanations emerge as constructions which Frederic Jameson finds "inaccessible to us except in textual form" because in order to have access to any knowledge "the Real itself necessarily passes through prior textualization".[47] Intriguingly, the debate on the nature of time cannot be contained within the boundaries of a narrowly-defined science. Instead it extends to the realms of religion and culture, most obviously because Creation had for many years to be taken into account. Thus the work of the evolutionary biologist Stephen Jay Gould, with which I begin, connects with that of Julia Kristeva. Different ways of thinking about and existing in (or out of) time find ways of touching each other, raising obvious political connotations.

Gould begins his exploration into the influence of metaphor on our conception of time in, Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle, with the Foucauldian proviso that scientists are not

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[45] Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle (1990; London: Bloomsbury, 1991) 2.
[46] "Fin de siècle, " New Society 17 Aug. 1972: 354.
[47] Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1981) 35.

calculating machines possessed of omnipotent, sexless minds. Instead they "are human beings, immersed in culture, and struggling with all the curious tools of inference that mind permits - from metaphor and analogy to...flights of fruitful imagination".[48] Consequently, whatever "facts" there are to be discovered and expressed they must be filtered through individual, contingent, socialised consciousnesses. Time comes to us out of political agenda, dogma and prejudice.

Gould then focuses on the familiar way in which arguments within a discipline will tend to be expressed in terms of dichotomy. In particular, the riddle of time, the deep time in which terms the age and workings of the Earth and the Universe are expressed, has caused a great deal of trouble for those seeking to understand and describe it. Two contrasting images predominate. Time's "arrow" conveys the idea of direction, progress, change and, perhaps most alarmingly for humanity, beginning and ending. Time's "cycle", on the other hand, encompasses an inevitable repetition of events implying eternity, breakdown followed by renewal, and subjection to the power of the "laws of nature". Strict adherence to this latter mode, though, necessitates a denial of history as it does not allow for the concept of unique events. Gould, conceding the problems that both symbols bring with them, proclaims not only that we must have both (16), but also that the two concepts "do not blend, but dwell together in tension and fruitful interaction" (200). Seasons and cycles co-exist with the gradual expansion of the universe, the extinction of some species and the emergence of others. We have reached, in other words, a point in the debate where dichotomy is no longer descriptively adequate. New ways of regarding structures are required in order to release the pressure. Despite its dependence upon geology, time is revealed as an entity that requires conceptualising at least as crucially as organising.

Theorising the workings of deep time, a time that we cannot experience directly because of its sheer magnitude, becomes subordinate to the world-views of those taking part in the argument for its existence. Consequently, perhaps by theorising an individual can opt into or out of the various schemas on offer. Julia Kristeva picks up on this idea in her essay

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[48] Stephen Jay Gould, Time's Arrow, Time's Cycle: Myth and Metaphor in the Discovery of Geological Time (1987; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991) 6-7.

on "Women's Time".[49] Here, she, too, identifies at least two "temporal dimensions", comprising "linear" and "another" type of history (189). What is intriguing about her analysis is her assertion that certain groups of people are positioned at a diagonal in time, that is, they are not properly inserted into the workings of the progressive, "cursive" dimension. Of particular interest to Kristeva, female subjectivity hinges around the cyclical (mystical, religious) sphere.

Charting the rise of feminism, Kristeva announces two distinct stages. The first phase was characterised by its members demanding to participate in linear time, to be "inserted" into history. The second phase, post-May 1968, pulls in a different direction, towards the "intractable subjective and corporeal experiences left mute by culture in the past" (194). Essentially, Kristeva traces in feminism "*its own* notion of time" (193, her italics), which looks to challenge the mechanics of identity formation that rely on the dominant/subordinate dichotomy. With her third generation, whom she explicitly defines in terms of space rather than chronology, Kristeva looks for the finding of the self, singularity, followed by a multiplicity that is as yet not only impossible to achieve but also to envisage (210). Worried that feminism will fall, or has already fallen, into the trap of acting as a replacement religion (such as eco-feminism) she tries to express the new, empowered multi-self that would have no need for such stifling constructs.

Like Gould, Kristeva is searching for a diverse temporality, which she connects to a corresponding empowerment of the self, together with the possibility of new ways of looking at history. With this in mind, I want to go back to Carter's work via a short consideration of the elements of science fiction and fantasy writing it contains, thinking about how this mixture is effective in its assault upon the clichéd *mores* of our environment.

Popular genre fiction, in particular fantasy and science fiction, has sometimes seemed the ideal landscape in which to search for epiphanies, for new narratives about new places, by a going beyond the usual limits of experience. This is not an unproblematic view, however. Shirley Ardener has noted that the results of supposed forays into this new territory have

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[49] The Kristeva Reader: Julia Kristeva, ed. Toril Moi, trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake (1986; Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

"often looked disappointingly familiar".[50] The accepted boundaries of the genre can prevent the text from offering anything innovative. Yet after examining the possibilities that these often disparaged forms offer, Nicci Gerrard sounds a cautious note of optimism, finding that it "is when they are ruptured that genres become fascinating and challenging".[51] In the course of this thesis we have established that Carter's work is widely recognised as containing the flavours of particular sub-genres of fiction, such as fantasy, the gothic, SF and the postmodern; perhaps fabulation would come closest to a defining term (as a self-conscious language-oriented genre), together with echoes of absurdism, "where our expectations of rational coherence, fair play and justice, whether from God or from Man are often disappointed".[52] Roz Kaveney notes that

> Carter's occasional uses of SF material, and her constant use of material in which genre fantasy tries to claim a proprietary interest, made her one of the non-genre figures that fans and writers from the notoriously inward-looking SF genres tended to read....she was interested in, and interesting about, SF ways of handling story material however different her own preoccupations.[53]

Part of the power and appeal of Carter's writing emanates from her blend of individualism and eclecticism, her simultaneous habitation of both the outer limits of genre fiction and, particularly after her death, in the so-called "mainstream". How then does she contrive to express the conflicts and questions about space and time that her novels engage in? While considering this question, it is important to keep in mind her refusal to take dichotomy seriously as well as her insistence on narrative freedom and ironic outlook. These are indications, perhaps, of the multiplicitous and a-religious identity Kristeva hopes for.

One of the key iterative themes of Nights is the proximity of the end of the century. Images abound throughout the text, from "the fag-end, the smouldering cigar-butt, of a nineteenth century which is just about to be ground out in the ashtray of history", to

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[50] Shirley Ardener, "Ground Rules and Social Maps for Women: An Introduction," Women and Space: Ground Rules and Social Maps 28.

[51] Nicci Gerrard, Into the Mainstream: How Feminism has Changed Women's Writing (London: Pandora, 1989) 148.

[52] The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction: an illustrated A to Z, gen. ed. Peter Nicholls (Granada: Roxby, 1979) 15.

[53] Roz Kaveney, "New New World Dreams: Angela Carter and Science Fiction," in Flesh and the Mirror: Essays on the Art of Angela Carter, ed. Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994) 183-4.

"midnight, that moveable feast" which rolls "over the taiga...disturbing nothing in its passage in spite of the era it was dragging in its wake" (11, 294). The authorial voice often seems ambivalent to the New Century which, though overtly heralded as Fevers' rightful place as New Woman, is not represented as a wholly positive future. This is due in part, of course, to the fact that the book was actually written over eighty years after the events it describes. Not only has this century brought its own atrocities, but the figure of the New Woman herself was vilified to the point of extinction in its first few decades. Yet the sense of foreboding is not wholly reserved for the reader to supply. Fevvers and Lizzie speculate that one of the women rescued from Schreck's brothel, the Sleeping Beauty, has found a way into the future: "we do believe...her dream will be the coming century./And, oh God...how frequently she weeps!" (86). By placing the mythical space of a character's dream experience actually within the novel, Carter converts the passing of time into a place which can in turn affect the "real world" of the novel, and through the collapsing of such real-imaginary boundaries our own world also becomes implicated in this chain.

The relevance and impact of dreams is reinforced by Walser's experiences in Siberia which further undermine the concept of an easy, unproblematic sense of time. When he has been hit on the head, his life comes back to him in the form of dreams or visions. He cannot make sense of them because he now lacks the Western, dichotomising (etc.) interpretative skills to do so. Because he no longer has a corresponding sense of history he is unable to negotiate his own time scale. He exists everywhere and nowhere. On reaching Carter's perilous, not quite real, end of the century, Walser falls out of time.

In problematising the concept of the fin-de-siècle, upon which the novel depends, Carter also emphasises the Western imperialism it represents. The Siberians are not aware of this particular time-scale, for " 'history' was a concept with which they were perfectly unfamiliar" (253). Carter makes it clear, however, that this state of affairs is endangered now that a railway line has come into their vicinity. Now, "how much longer would this community of dreamers be able to maintain the primitive integrity of its collective unconsciousness against the brutal technological actuality of the Age of Steam?" (254).

Systematising the organisation of space sets a homogenising force to work. This, in turn, leads to a unifying, through interconnection, of time. In other words, everyone's

differing times are pulled together. David Lodge's Paradise News lists some of the consequences of this globalising. "Tourism is wearing out the planet....In 1939 a million people travelled abroad; last year it was four hundred million" (78-9). As even the most remote places become more accessible, they lose their self-sufficiency and instead become plugged in to the world clock and calendar, to dates, schedules and the global information grid, the internet. Yet there is a qualitative difference between these systems for, while there is an emphasis on time's arrow in the technology and the dating system, the internet is an ad hoc, apparently decentralised, entity which seems to hold "cyclical" possibilities.

In Nights, the different sorts of time get mixed up together in the "blank" Siberian snow-desert. The industrial-age train carrying the circus, very much the envoy of "time's arrow" in this remote part of the world, is derailed, plunging its occupants into an arena constructed in quite another way. In the panopticon, the only movement is that of the Countess, going round and round in her observer's chair under the clock that controls the prison (and the factory and our lives). This very circular (very female) version of time is also disrupted when the Countess shoots the clock, thereby stopping time in that establishment altogether. Further, when Fevvers meets Walser after they have been separated for, from her point of view, only a week, he has obviously been *somewhere* for much longer. Echoing the earlier "trick" (292) played on him by Fevvers and her companion Lizzie, where, during the all-night interview Walser hears Big Ben strike midnight repeatedly, the piece of fairy tale magic has become something more sinister. When she discovers that she has lost her clock, Lizzie warns Fevvers that they will "soon lose all track of time, and then what will become of us" (226). However, although this state of affairs holds terrors for the characters, it is still exciting in the promises which rise up in the narrative. For instance, an equivocal narrative voice describes Fevvers in the wilderness: "[f]reed from the confines of her corset, [Fevvers'] once-startling shape sagged, as if sand were seeping out of the hour-glass and that was why time, in these parts, could not control itself" (276-7). Although at first glance this is an image of decline, it is also an opening up of potentiality. Fevvers needs to re-form herself without the *man*-made constrictions that she has hitherto, admittedly, made quite subversive use of.[54] She is no longer an unreal woman for whom the normal strictures of her sex do not hold, but

[54] See also the discussion on the corset at 34-5 above.

becomes more representative. She is simultaneously discovering her edges, her limits, and her power over her own destiny. She can shape her environment herself:

> Of course her wing would mend - it would mend when the snow melted to reveal the whole taiga covered with violets; and that was when she would soar up on her mended wing above the village, above the forest, above the mountains and the frozen seas, her loved ones in her arms. (290)

In Children, the action of the novel takes place over a century and on a single day at the same time, which itself challenges the norms of consciousness. Dora's narrative consequently has several characteristic flavours. As well as a constant flicking back and forth between the past and the present channels, Children also has the air of a fairy tale, specifically the Sleeping Beauty, again giving rise to an underlying notion of a "dream time". An air of enchantment infuses the text so that, for instance, the same things happen over and over again. In particular, Melchior begins living his own father's life by marrying his Cordelia and dressing up as Ranulph Hazard's King Lear on his hundredth birthday.

An influential text on Carter's thinking about time and reality in her later books is Djuna Barnes' modernist narrative Nightwood, which contains many of the same elements as Nights, including a circus, people who are or see themselves as freaks and an underlying fairy tale or fantastical generic feel.[55] One of its central characters, Doctor Matthew O'Connor, points out that the nature of the night is change, that it is a time/space when people dream themselves into situations they would not dare to contemplate in daylight, and where things seemed clear in the daytime they now appear shaded. The all-night interview in Nights blurs waking and sleeping senses. In Children, the dream/Dream becomes a chimera which, when entered distorts all other senses of proportion.[56] Like a dream, time is infinitely extended and the body becomes grotesque. Of the actors on the film set of the Dream, we are told: "some had antlers sprouting out of their foreheads...others were done up as flying beetles...and one or

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[55] "The stories could not have existed the way they are without Isak Dinesen, Djuna Barnes and Jane Bowles" (Haffenden 84).

[56] The Oxford English Dictionary defines wood (in its archaic form) as adjective "Out of one's mind, insane, lunatic", and (verb) "to go mad, to rave, rage". Carter's awareness of this underlying resonance is evident from her interview with Lorna Sage in Minerva: "that was pure serendipity" but "it's actually a rather good description of Hollywood in its heyday" (193). See also Children: "as if Hollywood were the name of the enchanted forest where you lose yourself and find yourself, again: the wood that changes you; the wood where you go mad; the wood where the shadows love longer than you do" (158).

two with boughs, not arms" (129). You also end up married to someone you would never have chosen in real life. The logic of the dream, with its own rules about identity and movement, is played out with a vengeance within the confines of this small self-contained city of dream-making.

This disorientation is further emphasised when, during the making of the Dream, Dora notes that something starts "to go wrong with time" (143). The film schedule becomes infinitely stretched, entrapping its helpless occupants Rip Van Winkel-like. Like Fevvers' Siberian episode, the film emerges as a traumatic and dangerous time. Judgements become impaired and the twins nearly succumb to what would be disastrous marriages. More specifically, the end result of taking part in the film is that in their old age the twins feel as though they have, in some infinitesimal way, defied time. Watching it again Dora remarks: "if you've put your past on celluloid, it keeps. You've stored it away, like jam, for winter" (125). There are multiplicitous ways of making a mark in history - feminist theory accounts for creativity as well as *pro*creativity - and this narrative provides a comment on the possibility of immortality which the book itself carries out. Through telling their story, Dora validates her and Nora's places in the family, while, within the fantastic setting of stage and screen Carter finds ways of manipulating time in a simulated real-world situation.

Like Gould's geologists, although with a good deal more self-awareness, Carter explores methods of expressing our existence in time through narrative. In Nights, there is an air of collective turmoil over time which has far-reaching consequences for landscape and identity, whilst Children expresses our simultaneous intimations of immortality and closure. While the novels cover much of the same ground, Nights, in Gould's typology, has more of the "arrow" characteristics, being picaresque, turning on the fin-de-siècle device in a new era, and through its incorporation of revolutionary politics; while Children is more focused on cyclical dynamics: with events repeating themselves, the chorus of "what a joy it is to dance and sing" bringing the reader back repeatedly to the same position, and by characters generally acting as though they are beyond time, witness the twins finally becoming mothers at seventy-five. It is by reading both together that we can gain the most insight into Carter's viewpoint.

Both novels have the same elasticity as Katie Hickman's Mexico, where "all time is present simultaneously...all history happens, and can happen, today" (113). By connecting

and reconnecting people, events and ideas, Carter overloads our conceptions of space and time until they topple, making new shapes and experiences. These in turn require us to find new ways of negotiating a transformed narrative landscape which cannot be navigated with reference to the usual generic and subjective guidelines. Carter is calling not so much for a mere transferral to a mythical "women's time" frame as for reverberation, the agility to hop from one frame of reference to another.

6

(In)Conclusions: the Dream and the Labyrinth

Carter's imagination had a peculiarly unfettered quality and her work was characterised by its innovation, yet throughout this thesis I have been developing the argument that she returned to certain issues, themes and devices again and again. In 1983 she wrote: "I am all for putting new wine in old bottles, especially if the pressure of the new wine makes the old bottles explode",[1] and she applied this adage to her own *oeuvre* as well as to the canon as a whole. However, this continuous rewriting is not to be seen as a progression in its simplest sense. None of the works I have examined in detail could justifiably be described as amateur or unfinished;[2] rather, Carter reconsidered and adapted her views over time. In the "Afterword" added to the 1987 reprint of Love, which was originally published in 1971, she discusses how "I've changed alot since 1969, and so has the world; I'm more benign, the world is far bleaker",[3] while in a 1988 interview she asserts:

> When people are writing over a period of years, what they think they are writing about and what they believe in is a continuum; it's not "specktic." I've been publishing fiction since 1966, and I've changed a lot in the way I approach the world and in the way that I organize the world.[4]

As a result of this fluid perspective, her work investigates possibilities, maintaining a developmental coherence, but certainly without a static point of view. In fact, in order to conduct her "investigation of the social fictions that regulate our lives", she *has* to ask questions.[5]

Her explorations cause her writing to explore, play with and subvert the accepted forms of narrative in typical postmodern fashion, yet concern with the materiality of the text and commentary upon language and literature are not sufficient in themselves. I am wary of attacking the label without discrimination, however, I concur with Beth A. Boehm's

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[1] "Notes from the Front Line," On Gender and Writing, ed. Michelene Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 69.
[2] However, see above Chapter 2, note 3 for her views on Shadow Dance.
[3] Love: A Novel (1971, rev. ed. 1987; London: Picador, 1988) 113.
[4] Anna Katsavos, "An Interview with Angela Carter," Review of Contemporary Fiction 14.3 (1994): 12.
[5] "Notes from the Front Line" 70.

description of the perceived flaw in self-conscious literature, specifically the postmodern. She notes that critics of postmodernism feel that "by questioning the ontological status of fictional worlds [it] makes a mere game of the literary transaction and undermines the potential for writers of fiction to make ethical statements about the world" (37). In contrast to this, Carter is looking for a politically engaged form with which to ask her questions, and the forms she discovers transgress the boundaries of various realities and genres. Her preoccupation with the materiality of narrative has ramifications both within and outside the worlds described in her texts. Textual awareness allows Marianne and Fevvers to transform their places within the societies around them, whilst Dora's assured narrative - "Don't knock it. That's lyricism" (119) - poses question about systems of education and privilege in our own society. Beyond the scope of her fiction, much of Carter's non-fiction and others' critical writing about her work has a "storytelling" approach, which incorporates varying positions in relation to the narrative as well as to environmental challenges and factors.

I have been loath to attempt an outline of her full cultural significance in this study. Although her influences, connections and allegiances were and are considerable and varied, it is too soon after her death for her contribution to be assessed adequately. Much of her work has not been given sufficient airing, and editions of her collected works are still coming out.[6] I would also wish to rule out any attempts to build a case for her innovative use of fractured identities or selves, or of a general tendency to "pluralise", although such a case may indeed be made for those activities in her writing.

Instead, the core of my thinking about her fiction has been formed by its delineation and interaction of the subject and the environment. Throughout Carter's writing the one negotiates the other through a mixture of recurrent physical and metaphorical motifs. Alienated protagonists, orphans, hermaphrodites, bastards and freaks, face tropes of entrapment interspersed with the possibility of escape and reformation. Unlikely trapdoors open: on the stage, inside an egg, in terms of the plot itself or by way of a surprising choice of genre, such as an emancipating pornography. Conversely, the environment is itself open to

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[6] In a recent review of Carter's collected journalism, Lisa Jardine wondered that "surely it is about time someone staged her 1987 play *Lulu*?" "Carter's recipe for greatness," rev. of Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writings, by Angela Carter, ed. Jenny Uglow, Times 19 Jul. 1997, directory: 9. A well-informed academic, she was unaware that it was premiered in Harrowgate Theatre earlier in the year. (Kaleidoscope, Radio Four, 21 Apr. 1997.)

reading strategies. The pleasures and perils of transgression are investigated through the impossible space and the contingent, continually reconstructed, subject.

In light of this, my concluding chapter will, appropriately, concentrate on the collection which appeared after her death, American Ghosts and Old World Wonders,[7] in particular, the last two pieces, "Alice in Prague or The Curious Room" and "Impressions: The Wrightsman Magdalene". I will provide a reading of them which is achieved in the light of the observations and conclusions that have gone before, taking special account of the motifs of the dream and the labyrinth. In their paradoxical renditions of experience and connections with myth, magic and the imagination, these two pieces epitomise the claims I have been making for the complex nature of reality in Carter's work.

American Ghosts reads as a distillation of Carter's subject matter, style, and narrative devices, and consists of nine generically varied and transgressive "pieces" rather than short stories, which together give the impression of a cumulative vision.[8] For instance, the first of these, "Lizzie's Tiger", is a prequel to "The Fall River Axe Murders" (Black Venus (1985)) detailing a young Lizzie Borden's encounter with the big cat and evoking a haunting sense of foreknowledge in the reader. Meanwhile, its title and location contrive to suggest the circuses in Nights at the Circus and Desire Machines, as well as Fevvers' foster-mother, another Lizzie, and Carter's retelling of the Beauty and the Beast, ("The Tiger's Bride" in The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)). The other pieces are similarly hallmarked. "John Ford's "*'Tis Pity She's a Whore*" is clearly the result of the "new wine and old bottles" technique, taking a Renaissance play interspersed with a Western. A new Tristessa is revealed in "The Merchant of Shadows", while "In Pantoland" works as an non-fictional rendition of Dora Chance's narrative. Like Carter's fairy tales, "The Ghost Ships" is a re-animation of a familiar image which is justified because of its combined sensuality and erudition; and the encounter with the Devil in "Gun for the Devil" recalls one of the subplots of the film version of The Company of Wolves. Particularly noteworthy, in the light of my assertions about Carter's rewriting, is "Ashputtle or The Mother Ghost". It consists of three versions of a Cinderella-

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[7] American Ghosts and Old World Wonders (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), (henceforth, American Ghosts).
[8] "[M]ore than a miscellany: [the pieces] work together to form a coherent vision". Lucasta Miller, "Mandrakes in little linen gowns," Independent 14 Apr. 1993: 21.

like story which bind together familiar and unfamiliar material to produce a series of related, but alternative narratives in a manner clearly related to The Company of Wolves (short story, radio play *and* film).

It is not plot but situation that holds the next piece, "Alice in Prague or The Curious Room", together. Like the much earlier tale "The Executioner's Beautiful Daughter" (Fireworks), its time scale is an infinitely prolonged instant.[9] Set at around the turn of the sixteenth century, it focuses on a forbidden room, containing many wonderful and bizarre objects as well as an alchemist John Dee. A benign Doctor Hoffman figure, in the spirit of his age he searches for wisdom from the birds and believes in angels. The room, or case of curiosities, belongs to an eccentric Archduke whose chief contribution to the text is the narrator's gleeful outline of his sexual predilections. Humorously recast from the grotesque automated whores in Desire Machines, his partners are made of fruit artificially animated by Dr Dee.[10]

Into this room falls Lewis Carroll's Alice, through a door drawn on misted breath on a mirror in her world, via the Doctor's crystal ball.[11] True to her character type, she grows and shrinks according to what she feeds on, and then sets Dee and his assistant, an anachronistic Ned Kelly, three logical conundra.

Two slightly different versions of the text exist, a not uncommon state of affairs with Carter.[12] Initially rendered as a conference paper read at the University of Basel, "where Paracelsus graduated" (217), the later collected version dropped its scholarly framework, an explication of the piece with biographies of the protagonists which contains several important key clues towards an interpretation. Drawing tacit parallels with our own time, Carter writes of a "crisis in representation" in the late sixteenth century due to the clash of belief systems between science and tradition. This, she asserts, resulted in "an aesthetic dominated by irony, eccentricity, wit, strangeness".[13] The movement which arose - mannerism - had already been

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[9] John Haffenden, "Magical Mannerist," Novelists in Interview (London: Methuen, 1985) 90.

[10] "Today, her hair is largely composed of green muscat grapes, her nose a pear, eyes filbert nuts, cheeks russet apples somewhat wrinkled - never mind! The Archduke has a penchant for older women" (136).

[11] She, too, has made a previous appearance in Carter's work, see "Wolf Alice," The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979; London: Penguin, 1988) and the discussion in Chapter 1.

[12] See the Chapter 1 discussion of "Peter and the Wolf" and "Cousins".

[13] "The Curious Room," Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 5 (1990): 216.

claimed by Carter, who told John Haffenden, "I started off being an expressionist, but as I grew older I started treating it more frivolously and so I became a mannerist" (Haffenden 91).

In "Alice in Prague", mannerism's strangeness is expressed partly through the Archduke's fey sexual practices, but more important are the alchemist's attempts to investigate the world through a mishmash of science and magic. Yet rather than treat this archaic workshop either with derision or unmeasured enthusiasm, Carter reveals that she has chosen this "impossible" place for a particular purpose. It is the site of an important enquiry:

> There's a theory, one I find persuasive, that the quest for knowledge is, at bottom, the search for the answer to the question: "Where was I before I was born?"
>
> In the beginning was...what?
>
> Perhaps, in the beginning, there was a curious room, a room like this one, crammed with wonders; and now the room and all it contains are forbidden you, although it was made just for you, had been prepared for you since time began, and you will spend all your life trying to remember it. (127)

This passage encapsulates Carter's encrypted narrative strategy, echoing back across the breadth of her work, part of the basic continuum around which her explorations were made. It also recasts, in a less horrifying light, Kafka's short story "Before the Law", where a man who wants to go "before the law" is made to wait at a door until he dies. "Just before his death he is told the door was meant specially for him", and that the doorkeeper will now close the door.[14] Whether or not Carter was aware of this text, which certainly predates her own work, the comparison between the two accounts certainly reveals the relish with which she incorporates "irony, eccentricity, wit, strangeness", and contrives to open up possibilities rather than portray the transfixing of a helpless subject within a conniving environment and a preordained fate. Whatever the stage of their emancipation, Carter's protagonists take Doreen Massey's advice and "keep moving".[15]

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[14] John Collick, "Wolves through the window: writing dreams/dreaming films/filming dreams," Critical Survey 3.3 (1991): 284

[15] See above 174. Melanie, of Toyshop, is an apparent exception. She is going more in the direction of Ellen Moers' "female gothic", as her explorations take place on the inside. "She embarked on a tranced voyage, exploring the whole of herself" (1).

In earlier chapters, I examined Carter's use of the disorienting and paradoxical, the ordeals her subjects undergo, the generic environments they find themselves in. In Chapter One, the search for an elusive author in the maze of her text revealed the extent of the reader's connection to the narrative and author and the drive to know the unknowable, to believe the fairy tale. In Chapter Two, Gothic difficulties with movement in the early novels were illustrated and exemplified by the "impossible space", entrapment scenarios and unresolvable confusion between the internal and external. In Chapter Three, the middle novels dealt with dislocation from reality, the picaro's eternal travels which preclude a destination, and the text itself as a coffin, another sort of forbidden room. I then explored the taboo of occupying a body of the opposite sex in Chapter Four, and finally in Chapter Five investigated Carter's rendition of the experience of actually being one of the curiosities and the sense of having memories or dreams of wondrous things but lacking the interpretative matrix with which to make sense of them. Throughout, the forbidden and the hidden are held tantalisingly before the subject, with the way forward being found in oneself.

Balancing "Alice in Prague", the final piece, "Impressions: The Wrightsman Magdalene", a meditation on Georges de la Tour's painting, acts as a consolidation of these experiences and guide towards the door to the curious room. Used as the paper cover for the hardback edition of American Ghosts, the painting shows a woman with freshly brushed hair and wearing a red skirt sitting in front of a mirror with a candle, gazing into the doubled flame. As she describes the scene, Carter wonders whereabouts Mary Magdalene is within her largely apocryphal history. Is she still in Israel, is she just about to go into the wilderness where she will live for thirty-three years, praying and fasting, or is she already in her final "cave in the woods" (144)? Neither virgin nor mother, Mary Magdalene is a paradoxical figure: she is fascinating and potentially dangerous. "Note how the English language doesn't contain a specific word to describe a woman who is grown up, sexually mature and *not* a mother, unless such a woman is using her sexuality as her profession" (142). By describing Mary Magdalene in these terms, Carter echoes earlier remarks about some of her heroes, particularly Eve, Tristessa and Fevvers, as well as *herself* as a "new kind of being", a "voluntarily sterile yet sexually active" woman.[16] As a result, it is unsurprising that she inserts

[16] "Notes from the Front Line" 74.

herself into the frame, of the picture and the meditation, to recount her own experience when giving birth, an experience that changed her state from unprecedented being to that of mother. Both Carter and Mary Magdalene are drawn by "the blue absence in the heart of the flame" (145), which seems to hold some secret, promising to be a place of possible transformation, even metamorphosis.

No fan of Carter, whom she dubs the "high priestess of postgraduate porn", Amanda Sebesteyen points out that mannerism evolved, among other things, a certain sort of art. "Special kinds of pictures grew up for the cognoscenti, incomprehensible to outsiders...a kind of painted text".[17] Reminiscent of some of the articles collected in Nothing Sacred, where Carter sites herself as the onlooker gazing at the scene "closely" and "very, very carefully",[18] "Impressions" *is* about the unravelling of a series of signs to construct a narrative. However, Carter's intention to produce both intellectual and commercially viable work is too democratic to necessitate absolute knowledge or a single coherent explanation. Instead, she asks questions, drawing the observer's attention to details they might otherwise have missed, inviting fellow speculation. "But why has she taken her pearl necklace with her...Is she, yet, fully repentant?" (142). Like "Alice in Prague", "Impressions" has a mystical quality which is perhaps difficult to square with Carter's irreverence elsewhere. Her depiction of the Mother deity in New Eve manages to be both awesome and ridiculous. Michèle Roberts defends mysticism, however, allowing that while it "carries pejorative connotations for many people", yet "it's crucial for a writer to examine what we call reality" (Wandor 68). Congruent with this, "Impressions" offers a method of exploring impossible space, the curious room through the cultivation of a receptive state of mind, an entranced, dream-like state. Not only is the paradox of the absent heart of the flame necessary, but so is the questioning. Dreams are important in Carter's work: Desire Machines was re-christened The War of Dreams in the United States, and she based a short story, radio play and fictional film on her favourite Shakespeare play, A Midsummer Night's Dream.[19]

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[17] "The Mannerist Marketplace," New Socialist 47 (1987): 39.

[18] Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings (London: Virago, 1982) 84, 28.

[19] "Overture and Incidental Music," (Black Venus), Come Unto These Yellow Sands (Come Unto These Yellow Sands), Melchior's film in Wise Children. See also Carter's comment that "I like A Midsummer Night's Dream almost beyond reason," Lorna Sage, "Angela Carter," New Writing, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Cooke (London: Minerva in association with the British Council, 1992) 187

The concept of the curious room is itself analogous to a dream-narrative. Alice's entry to Dee's laboratory through a mirror signals a translation within Carter's teleology. Mirrors are crucial, for instance, in the Doctor's plans to fill the city with "real images" in Desire Machines.

> *Ambassador*: I understand you have broken all the mirrors.
>
> *Minister*: That was to stop them begetting images (38).

Carter uses the dream motif to convey a heightened reality, to allow juxtaposition, confrontation and interpretation of the overtly disturbing, and to increase vastly the possible correspondence between the inner and the outer. However, it is not an unproblematic tool. We saw in the last chapter that the Sleeping Beauty's dream in Circus is thought to be the coming century: "And, oh God...how frequently she weeps!" (86); and in Children, the film of A Midsummer Night's Dream turns into a nightmare for the cast. In its limited licence and fantastical images, the dream can be closely linked to the carnival, where a temporary proliferation and permissiveness is inevitably pushed aside in favour of real life, "The carnival has to stop" said Carter to Lorna Sage (Minerva 188), which may be a warning rather to face real-life as a crucial element of any sane world view than to trivialise the experience of the fantastic.

Labyrinths and labyrinthine journeys also appear regularly in Carter's work. Eve/lyn twice experiences womb-like tunnels as well as an eerie ruined road-system and, more generally, Carter's characters are always getting lost in forests, both actual and symbolic. In Chapter One I linked this "straying off the path" to the exploration of the authorial terrain and the insertion of an authorial self into the text, another sort of translation. As well as capturing the sentience of the landscape, in the implied antagonism for the protagonist, the maze evokes a map of cerebral folds which contain the mysteries of consciousness and personality: a place of origin.

In Roberts' directions towards the curious room, "through dreams, sleeping or waking [t]he bed as sybilline cave",[20] dream and labyrinth collide both with each other and with another quasi-religious symbol: the sibyl. Marina Warner, in her extensive study of the history, characters and tellers of tales, From the Beast to the Blonde, recounts how the sibyls,

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[20] "Questions and Answers," Wandor 68.

unfettered by time or history, had access to knowledge (71). Although they were sought for advice, people could not cheat destiny as the knowledge was often in the form of riddles or tests. The sibyl "fulfils a certain function in thinking about forbidden, forgotten, buried, even secret matter" (11), and legend has it that the sibyl's cave was destroyed and it can no longer be entered. In "Impressions", Mary Magdalene is either already in her own "cave in the woods"(142) or she has not yet found it. Going back to "Alice in Prague", it is as though "the door marked 'Forbidden' opened up again" (135) because the sibyl, who is character, reader, hero and text, is perhaps accessible again. Certainly she is tantalisingly close, to be reached only if you have enough imagination.

The sibyl is a positive rendition of the witches and hysterics who have appeared periodically throughout this thesis. By using maladjusted protagonists, anachronisms, prophets and hermaphrodites, Carter produces a heightened textual awareness. Their very fragmentation makes easier the taking up and setting down of roles that she herself conducts. For instance, in her Little Red Riding Hood renditions, Carter-the-author can also be connected to Red Riding Hood, the Grandmother and the Wolf as well as narrator and evoker of Perrault, on whose version of the tale our own readings are based. Yet we are not left with the profound disquiet that A. S. Byatt's narratologist Gillian Perholt outlines for the reader in her portrait of Walter in Chaucer's Clerk's Tale: "The story is terrible because Walter has assumed too many positions in the narration; he is hero, villain, destiny, God and narrator - there is no *play* in this tale".[21] By contrast, Carter fragments the control mechanisms of the text or the narrative. This in turn allows the struggling subjects to come to a greater self-awareness and epitomises the movement this thesis has taken, from textual edifices which inhibited the subject's development to a position where, with knowledge of its materiality ,the subject can begin to construct an autonomy.

Bluebeard's castles are scattered throughout Carter's works, although the entrapment they symbolise together with the mad puppet-masters, magicians and shamans who work in symbiosis with them are progressively stripped of their powers. Meanwhile, the subject-protagonist explores the labyrinth and gains access to the "white world of dreams", the blank

[21] The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994) 120.

page of possibilities, the impossible space which is full of potential wonders if the subject has sufficient powers of invention. For Cixous the uncanny is labyrinthine (Chapter One), and it seems obvious that for Carter the labyrinth is also uncanny. Its complex structure allows the same space to be crossed in the course of different journeys, each journey leaving a palimpsest trace like footprints in snow. For Gerardine Meaney, "Nothing is stranger than where we come from"(109), and similarly Carter is always concerned with beginnings rather than endings. More knowledge means more questions while endings are contemplated only to be refused. The Wrightsman Magdalene is holding a skull "where, if she were a Virgin mother and not a sacred whore, she would rest her baby" (146). By this jumbling together of birth and death, Carter succeeds in emphasising the cyclical nature of existence. Consequently, far from detracting from the pragmatic, political aspects of her work, her uses of mysticism and magic are revealed as empowering strategies for the subject to see him or her self as astonishing, and so be moved to look for answers from within.

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